

Re-thinking MEMKWA to meet the needs of Tanzania's vulnerable children and youth

(i) Introduction

This paper is the second in a series of position papers which document Mkombozi's experience using Mpango kwa Elimu Maalum kwa Watoto waliokosa (MEMKWA) to deliver education to street children and youth. MEMKWA is "a type of educational activity that is organised around the learning needs of specific target groups and which takes place out of the formal school system"¹. Mkombozi's MEMKWA position papers advocate for forms of education that move beyond the issue of access itself and actually address children's psychosocial and behavioural needs. The issues discussed and the recommendations provided are intended to facilitate a more extensive debate amongst policy makers, civil society and education actors on how to most effectively provide quality basic education to all vulnerable out of school children, including street children.

In the first MEMKWA position paper², Mkombozi recommended the need for greater clarity, relevance, flexibility and resources for MEMKWA. We concluded that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT's) MEMKWA does not provide appropriate education for vulnerable out of school children (particularly those with special needs) and that there are many gaps that need to be addressed if MEMKWA is to serve its purpose. In fact, there is a need for an urgent rethink how MEMKWA and primary education is being delivered in Tanzania. However, it is impossible to develop a relevant methodology for the education of vulnerable children unless there is a clear understanding of what makes certain children vulnerable.

The purpose of the present position paper is to:

- ① detail the findings from Mkombozi's recent research study on the factors that cause children to drop out or play truant from schools in Kilimanjaro Region³;
- ② propose a radical re-think of the role of MEMKWA centres which departs from a sectoral / linear approach to education toward a more holistic approach - an approach which includes community centres that provide multi-faceted and locally relevant services to various community members, and as such, address many of the factors that cause children to become vulnerable, drop out of school and ultimately migrate to the streets.

(ii) Current profile of "vulnerability"

Tanzania's poverty reduction strategy, MKUKUTA⁴, mentions vulnerable groups such as youth and street children, and specifically aims to strengthen social protection measures for these groups. Problematically however, the prevailing analysis of "vulnerability" tends to focus on the economic and income forms of poverty that make children vulnerable. Policy-makers, planners and communities fail to acknowledge the complex regional, social and cultural factors that make children vulnerable - this means there has not been a proportionate focus on resourcing and implementing safety nets for children who have been abused⁵, bereaved or exposed to domestic violence. Simply stated, there continues to be a lack of investment in essential child protection services.

1. Working Definitions of Key Terms-strategy paper AE-NFE.

2. Mkombozi, "Demonstrating the potential of MEMKWA to respond to the learning needs of street children". Position paper. (November 2005).

3. Mkombozi, "Participatory Action Research: Local causation of primary school drop-outs and exclusions in the Kilimanjaro Region". Research paper. (February 2005).

4. In 2005, Tanzania approved the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), also known by its Kiswahili acronym: MKUKUTA (Mkakati wa Kukuza uchumi na Kupunguza Umaskini).

5. The World Health Organisation defines "child abuse" as "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."



In three schools, class teachers⁶ were asked to indicate how many children demonstrated any of the specific behaviours or traits considered "risk factors". These factors identify children who may be at risk of truancy, dropping out or exclusion from school, and thus, children who may ultimately be at risk of migration to the streets. Specifically, these risk factors are:

- ① poor relationship between parents / guardians and the school;
- ① child is distracted and disinterested in school;
- ① child working outside school (child labour);
- ① child is regularly punished in school;
- ① parents are drinking excessively;
- ① suspicion of domestic violence or abuse in child's home;
- ① child lacks school uniform and other costs;
- ① parent / guardian not following up on child's school progress.

"Why do children drop out of school? The state of marriage, the marginalisation of women, parents failing to use family planning."

Lambo Extended School

Overall, it was found that there is a relatively small, but significant, number of children in each class who demonstrate multiple risk factors. The teachers are quite clearly able to identify these children, although it is unclear what procedures are in place within schools to link these children to child protection services or other assistance. Notably, a trend in demonstration of risk factors was actually noted, such that one class is divided into groups of A and B - that is, one group tends to demonstrate significantly more risk factors than its counterpart class. Is this an indicator that when the classes were split teachers placed "vulnerable" or "needy" (as they may be perceived to be by teachers) children in one group and "easier" children in the other? Or is this a reflection of the individual teacher's knowledge of and relationship with the students in their class?

It was also found that parents routinely fail to follow up their children's progress at school; in fact, in many classes 86% to 100% of parents are not supervising their child's school attendance or performance at all. Given the differing levels of parental follow-up between specific classes however, it seems that parents do become more involved if a teacher expresses his/her expectation of follow-up directly to the parents, and/or if teacher-parent relationships are positive.

Importantly, it would be inappropriate to rate the risk factors in terms of any factor being more or less "risky", since they tend to manifest in multiples; that is, a child suspected to be a victim of domestic violence also tends to have parents who are drinking excessively and are uninvolved in their school progress. However, by numbers alone, it is worrying that (in all three schools) teachers indicate 5 to 7% of parents have a poor relationship with the school, and 3 to 4% of children are distracted and disinterested in school. In Mkombozi's experience, both of these factors could indicate neglect and abuse of a child, and both factors are especially worrying when considered in combination with an overall rate of 2 to 5% of parents drinking excessively⁷.

(iii) Factors leading to vulnerability and school exclusion/drop-out

There are a myriad of complex and interconnecting factors within schools and communities that make children at risk of dropping out or exclusion from education. These factors can be categorised according to whether they relate to people's **knowledge**, their **attitudes** and their **practices** - categories which affect and interact with each other. These factors must also be further understood to include **immediate**, **underlying** and **structural** causes. (Categories and factors are visually depicted in Appendix on page 8.) This means that the (apparent) immediate reason that a child is not in school (e.g. distraction and disinterest) has actually been influenced by an underlying cause (e.g. psychological trauma, which is not accommodated within the school's practice) and a structural cause (e.g. HIV/AIDS pandemic resulting in a massive increase in orphans and vulnerable children).

Structural factors that make a child "at risk":

National poverty monitoring indicators rate Kilimanjaro Region as performing better than many other regions in Tanzania. However, conditions for farmers have become precarious since the coffee price crashes in the 1970s and the withdrawal of state and donor support to Tanzania's marketing cooperatives during the 1990s⁸. The precarious economic situation for Kilimanjaro's coffee farmers provides a significant backdrop against which the non-attendance of children in primary schools must be evaluated. As one farmer put it: "What has happened to the price of coffee is a disaster. Years back, when coffee prices were good, we could afford to send our children to school. Now we are taking our children out-of-school because we cannot afford the fees"⁹.

Community members (from Kibaoni, Rau, Mnini, Kombo, Manushi Juu and Majengo schools) cite poverty as a primary factor that excludes children from school. They explained that parents' inability to obtain employment meant that they could not meet their basic needs and so were forced to use their children to engage in small income generating activities. Specifically, they mentioned children are often sent to gather scrap metal for sale and are kept busy roasting and selling maize. In Machame and Kibosho, the proximity of large coffee plantations was also cited as an immediate reason that children are out of school - many actually work harvesting coffee.

Notably, the Chagga tribe of Kilimanjaro is uniquely renowned for its entrepreneurial culture. One of the primary strategies that the Chagga undertake in response to income poverty is to leave the region and look for work in towns. This has the following results:

⁶. Teachers are (or should be) a key attachment and source of assistance for school children. Therefore, it is important to identify how conscious these adults are that some children are "at risk", and for what reasons. The teachers' findings may be subjective, but they provide an important indication of the teachers' perceptions of child vulnerability in their communities.

⁷. An additional point of interest is that the consumption of local brew is completely normalised and accepted - this means that when a teacher comments on it as an issue of concern, the drinking behaviour should be considered alcoholism.

⁸. Gibbon, M. and Pokhrel, D. "Social network analysis, social capital and their policy implications" (1998).

⁹. Oxfam International (2001).

- ① a significant increase in the number of youths migrating to the streets;
- ② a distortion of community structures in the rural villages of Kilimanjaro.

With respect to the second point, consider that dependents constitute 52.3% of the population, but only 46.9% are economically active¹⁰. This distortion of the community's social fabric exacerbates income poverty and (perhaps more importantly) it exacerbates the non-income forms of poverty that cause social exclusion of children and young people in the region. In fact, recent studies of poverty, including the World Bank's "Voices of the Poor", have emphasised that poverty is not just a lack of income, it is the experience of multiple forms of vulnerability including (but not limited to) exposure to violence and unlawful activities, poverty of expectations and inability to access services.

During consultations for the Review of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy¹¹, street children and youth explained that income poverty in isolation did not push them to the streets; if they had been living in a poor, but loving household they would not have run away. Although lack of money and resources within the family is a factor in pushing children to the streets, it is the non-income forms of poverty that give children the final impetus to leave. Children explained that it was a concurrence of factors that forced them out of the family home, including: a lack of basic needs; family conflict; exclusion from support services and school; and marginalisation within the home environment because of their youth. The fact is that Tanzania's children are marginalised by society because of gender and age. This means they are victims of poverty in the present, and (most likely) victims of poverty in the future - many will be handicapped by their childhood experiences and therefore prevented from fully contributing to society as productive adults¹².

In short, the congruence of social breakdown, marginalisation and poverty makes children vulnerable. In the Kilimanjaro Region, the urban migration of males, the resultant pressures on women and the social acceptance of alcohol use, combine to exacerbate family conflict. In this context, income poverty makes children vulnerable and pushes them away from school, home and ultimately to the streets.

Underlying factors that make a child "at risk":

■ The role of gender inequality in child vulnerability

Due to the out-migration of productive males from Kilimanjaro Region, there is a predominance of children and youth, women and the elderly - in fact, 28.11% of Kilimanjaro's population is under the age of 14¹³. This means that the region has special development needs. These needs are compounded by the fact that many males who remain in the region are economically inactive, and as such, women and grandparents are the primary income generators, care-givers and community actors. Their responsibilities are immense and are frequently cited as reasons for frustration, corporal punishment of children and familial conflict. Moreover, the cultural attitude toward women that marginalises them as decision-makers within the family and community further serves to exclude them from potential community support. The traditional idea of the community looking after mothers and children when the father is absent has diminished both in a rural and urban context. This is particularly true for single parents, who face the additional social stigma tied to their position outside the norm of society.

■ The challenges of being a single mother or an aged carer

Community members consistently expressed the challenges facing the guardians of children in an environment where men tend to be economically inactive or physically absent. All too often, women are the primary care-givers of children, until they submit to the ravages of HIV/AIDS. Then, the grandparents are called upon to take up parenting responsibilities¹⁴, but aged carers are often unable to ensure that the child's basic needs are met¹⁵. The absence of husbands in a practical day-to-day sense (because of their migration out of the region) effectively amounts to family breakdown - community members in all four target communities commented that single mothers were incapable of offering children the care that they need. In Pasua and Majengo, it is felt that parenting by single parents or by aged relatives leads children to play truant or drop-out from school; for example, in Majengo it was explained: "Mother is away at work until midnight and so the child returns home at 11.30pm".

■ The situation of stepmothers and single mothers

Although many families with multiple wives live in the same house or within the same smallholding, Mkombozi's research found that family breakdown often stems from conflict between wives. 75% of street children live in step families where the first mother has either died, left or been left by the father. Numerous street children explain that when their parents separate, their lives became increasingly miserable. Street children have cited experiences of attempted poisoning, physical violence and ongoing verbal abuse from stepmothers. The fact is that a stepmother's position is often precarious since under traditional inheritance customs the father's land will be given to the first born child of the first wife. Mkombozi has observed instances where women adopt traditionally male characteristics of aggression towards children, almost as a means of displaying strength within the family unit. The children themselves often attribute this to the threat that they pose to their stepmother and to her children's long-term security within the family.

Unfortunately, in Tanzania, under-educated girls feel that their identity and position within society is directly derived from birthing children, and a significant number of girls get pregnant in their teenage years. Since the prohibition of abortion has not been complemented by an awareness raising campaign about the importance of family planning, many young women are birthing children with little support from a male partner. Still, anecdotal

10. Household Budget Survey (2001).

11. Consultations took place in March, 2004.

12. McAlpine, "Child Participation: Platitude or Reality?" Paper presented at ESRF Forum. (2003).

13. According to a census conducted in 2002.

14. This was cited as a particular problem in Kifumbu school.

15. This was cited as a particular problem in Kibaoni, Lambo, Mwenge, Pasua, Kombo, Kifumbu, Mnini, Manushi Juu and Rau schools.

evidence indicates that many young women get pregnant deliberately, in anticipation of support from their boyfriends.

The stigma placed on girls who birth out of wedlock results in a practical difficulty for them in accessing support and advice from neighbours and relatives. Although not all single mothers are victims of poverty, there is little doubt that the pressures they face in upholding their multiple role as care-giver, parent and income generator is unsustainable for many, given the lack of alternative support networks that they can call upon. Mkombozi's experience working with vulnerable teenage girls with babies is that despite their desire for employment, they cannot practically hold down a job because they have no one with whom to leave the child. Tusa (a street child interviewed by Mkombozi) is typical in that she initially left her child with relatives: "I become frustrated and dumped that kid to one of my relatives and came to Arusha town to find a means and ways of sustaining myself. While in Arusha I find difficult to find any job, I tried to work as a house girl but after one month I was chased away being accused that I had slept with my employer. While wandering in town year 2001 I met a friend who helped me and orient me in prostitution business".

Although traditionally it was not culturally acceptable for women to have multiple sexual partners, in an urban context women are increasingly defying these traditional social expectations. Mkombozi's research revealed that in urban Majengo there are numerous single mothers, many of whom have multiple sexual partners and do not use adequate family planning or disease protection. The impact of this increasing female sexual promiscuity on the transmission of HIV/AIDS is barely discussed in the media or policy-making circles. For instance, the "Ishi" campaign¹⁶ is aimed at people in relationships, but has little relevance to socially excluded women whose financial security and identity are tied up with their sexual behaviour.

■ The role of alcoholism in domestic violence, corporal punishment and abuse within the home

Importantly, almost every research team across the four communities cited drunkenness as a key underlying factor that caused parents to neglect their children and fail to oversee their school attendance:

- "Drunkenness all the time" (Rau School).
- "Drunkenness amongst the parents means that they cannot fulfill the children's basic needs" (Mnini School).
- "Parents are really drunk during work hours" (Kombo School).

Street children verify this by dramatising a common scenario wherein the father comes home drunk, the mother asks for money for school costs and he consequently beats her. In turn, the children are excluded from school because of non-payment and then ultimately run to the streets because they are unable to bear the violence at home and the lack of opportunities that exclusion from school has entailed. This demonstrates that alcoholism is actually closely inter-related with poverty and thrives on the existent marginalisation of women; that is, the man of the household invariably dismisses the woman's complaints about his drunkenness as an over-presumptive involvement in his affairs (i.e. women should not concern themselves in such matters). As such, alcoholism actually deepens the marginalisation of women through its strong correlation with domestic violence, because both alcohol abuse and domestic violence are normalised by men in Kilimanjaro Region.

During interviews with Mkombozi researchers, children explained that substance abuse is a societal problem - both a cause and a sign of poverty. The problem, it was explained, is that alcohol use is normalised amongst adults, particularly men, partly because it is (ironically) perceived to be a status symbol of wealth. That is, the marketing of beer by Tanzanian Breweries and other retailers promote it as the drink of the "aspirant middle class". Consequently, children receive mixed messages about its consumption - having experienced its relationship to domestic violence and parental conflicts about money at home, and at the same time receiving constant media messages that alcohol consumption is a positive lifestyle choice.

■ Decreased tolerance of the poor and increased communal apathy toward poverty

Within Kilimanjaro Region there is a slowly growing insinuation that poverty is caused by a deficit within the family concerned (i.e. that they are somehow to blame for it). Nyerere's powerful development discourse embodied within *ujamaa* called for the pursuit of modernisation, progress and development through the increased production, self-reliance and egalitarianism of and among the people¹⁷. Nyerere's ideas about development, participation and self-reliance became central to Tanzanian national identity. In Kilimanjaro, the rhetoric of self-sufficiency and self-reliance filtered down to those living on the mountain - these ideas are still prevalent in the way that Chagga talk about what development *maendeleo* means to them today¹⁸.

Maendeleo represents modernity and progress, but is also embedded in Chagga cultural norms and values relating to gender, education, industriousness and religiosity. These are values to which the attainment of prestige and status on the mountain are attached. To be a "good" Chagga man or woman is to actively engage, or conform, to these ideals. Most frequently, maendeleo is associated with the socio-cultural values central to Chagga identity: education, industriousness, and knowledge. Social traits which are frowned upon, such as laziness and ignorance, are regarded as the preserve of those who are "undeveloped"¹⁹. People who do not conform to these ideals, particularly those who are poor, are socially excluded because they are seen to undermine the social fabric of Chagga society.

Women's groups in Kilimanjaro Region are an example of how this dynamic tends to play out in local development; that is, group members are represented as educated and willing to share knowledge, while non-members are regarded as ignorant and non-development-minded²⁰. Pride and the public consumption of alcohol

16. Ishi translates as "Live" and is the national awareness campaign advocating for people to follow the ABC: Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms.

17. Nyerere, J. "Socialism and Rural Development", Tanzania Publishing House, Dar es Salaam (1967).

18. Mercer "Deconstructing development: the discourse of maendeleo and the politics of women's participation on Mount Kilimanjaro", Development and Change, 33, 1, 101-127 (2002).

19. Ibid.

20. Mercer (2002).

are highlighted as the undesirable practices of women who do not participate in women's groups. Village elites, and group members themselves, construct images of women's group participants as respectable Chagga who "understand" the benefits of local development. Within this context it is clear to see how teachers, school committees and community members are increasingly impatient and less tolerant of the poor and of the consequences of poverty amongst children. Since the poverty surrounding vulnerable children manifests in alcoholism, domestic violence, truancy and petty theft, these people become further excluded from society. They are perceived as undermining the social fabric and in many ways become "social pariahs" - their situation is blamed on their own ignorance and behaviour: "Parents have big families and little ability" (Kombo School).

As a result, poor children and poor families are further marginalised from traditional support mechanisms within the community. In the past, neighbours would have intervened if they felt that children or women were being mistreated, but now, as one child interviewee stated: "The rich and poor cannot be friends". The families of school truants are seen as: "lazy, irresponsible or thieves" (Rau School). Parents follow "unmeaning traditions" and are "still living in old fashioned styles that lead to gender insensitivity and children following their older siblings who have not gone to school" (Kombo School). Children are out of school because of "laziness in the family and not trying to find ways of getting income... they do not understand the importance of caring for children" (Mnini School).

■ The oppositional relationship between schools and parents

Mkombozi's target schools could be called "sink schools" - they are located in communities where there is a high incidence of social exclusion and are working with children and families whose problems are multi-faceted and complex. Teachers, school committees and community leaders believe that they are neither equipped to conceptualise the scale of these problems or to develop support mechanisms to assist these people, and many are not sure that it is their responsibility even to do so.

Additionally, there is little sense of collaboration between teachers and parents. Each group has an almost confrontational attitude, with teachers blaming parents for children's non-attendance and parents assuming that the service offered by the school is without value. Teachers and "respectable" community members frequently explained that children were out of school because "parents do not see the importance of education" (Mnini and Manushi Juu). They also tended to stereotype parents with out-of-school children as valuing money more than family and using money "badly". The implication underlying much discussion is that these parents are not engaged with their own development (maendeleo), but rather believe in witchcraft, genital mutilation and traditional celebrations that have no positive influence on lifting them from poverty. "Bad traditions" is frequently heard as a catchall explanation for why some people are poor and others not.

This attitude of "them" (the poor) and "us" (who have ability and motivation) was apparent within every target school in Mkombozi's research. In effect, resentment leads to poor communication - parents fail to reinforce what teachers do in school and teachers fail to help parents cope with children's behavioural problems. Ultimately, this oppositional relationship is causing parents to de-value education and to refrain from sending their children to school, and it is preventing the cooperation of parents and teachers to follow-up and address child truancy.

At root, schools seem to be in crisis and urgently need to clarify their role in the community. Head Teachers asked themselves "whose responsibility are poor children?"²¹ Their consensus was that, since schools are manned by the Government, their employees are thus secondarily responsible for poor children. However, given the prevailing attitudes toward the poor (detailed above), and given the inherent complexity of poverty, the tendency amongst these schools is to either adopt an ad hoc voluntary response to children in need (by asking local donors - NGOs, individual teachers, village leaders, rich business men - to assist individual children) or to blame the parents for their poverty. Neither are long-term or sustainable responses.

The situation reveals deeper issues with the treatment and handling of poor children by schools and teachers. Notably, in role plays performed by the Head Teachers, the teacher was extremely aggressive to the child who did not have uniforms, even if she was trying to help the child (i.e. chiding the child with "Acha ujnga" / "Stop your idiocy", negatively comparing the child to the "good" student, and excluding the child from class for not having an exercise book, were revealed to be common responses to poor children). Head Teachers explained that they do not know which children come from genuinely poor families and which are "lazy", and thus, they cannot know if a child genuinely doesn't have uniform or simply forgot to / didn't wash it. In contrast, class teachers usually know exactly which children come from poor and difficult family backgrounds.

Importantly, the anger expressed by teachers to students whose parents have failed to comply with "school rules" reveals a deep misunderstanding about child development and human relations and their role as teachers within the community. There is an underlying belief that the child is naturally "naughty" and that lack of uniforms is the child's mistake. Teachers explained that "There is an environment when you need to be fierce and an environment when you can be soft", but it is apparent that poor children tend to be the frequent recipients of harsh and discriminatory treatment.

Overall, there is a lack of clarity about what is done by the school to assist children who cannot afford school costs. Apparently, schools tend to respond to each case on an ad hoc basis and the response is frequently to rely on "donors" (NGOs or rich people) who buy the concerned child a uniform. Admittedly, there is a need for community support, but purchasing uniforms for individual children is not an effective or sustainable use of limited resources, particularly considering the number of children needing assistance with uniforms (195 children in Lambo, Manushi Juu and Pasua schools). It is also problematic that school interventions to assist poor students does not include proactive involvement by the child's parents - in fact, parents are not always called to meetings and decisions are made to assist them without their involvement.

21. Mkombozi process notes of: "Action learning with Head Teachers about the impact of school uniforms on school attendance". Internal documentation for PAR into the "Causation of School Drop-outs and Exclusions in Kilimanjaro Region" (5th December 2005).

■ Conflict and punishment as a common phenomenon in families, schools and communities

Conflict is endemic and latent in every human relationship. What matters is how conflict is managed so that it does not escalate into violence. Background checks on street children and youth reveal that the majority come from families and communities where conflict is poorly managed. Once on the streets, they perpetuate cycles of running away from conflict or resorting to violence when trying to cope. Community leaders in the research sites cite conflict as a common immediate reason why children run away from home, and they detailed marital, parental-child, child-child and neighbourly conflicts as types of conflict that they routinely try to resolve.

Furthermore, adults tend to blame the youth culture as the main cause of misbehaviour among children and youth - many claim that children are overly keen to claim their "rights" while failing to uphold their responsibilities. It is true that the advent of Western media is exposing Tanzania's children and young people to an alien culture, far removed from that with which the adult population is conversant. As a result, there is a real concern that youths imitate what they see and hear and that it does not follow the "Tanzanian way of life". Interestingly, this is not only an urban phenomenon, although clearly more visible in towns. Adults increasingly struggle to understand the world view of the young, and have few skills to manage misbehaviour. Even those mandated by their communities to mediate conflicts, such as teachers and community conflict management committees, lack the skills to work in an environment where there is less deference to them and their decisions.

Overall, it is problematic that the primary school curriculum does not include any parenting, communication or conflict management skills (i.e. family life education). Thus, the extended family is less of a support than in the past and parents lack the awareness and skills to handle the indiscipline that they face when bringing up their children.

■ Acceptance of aggression within families and communities of a patriarchal society

In Tanzania, there is a cultural acceptance of both corporal punishment of children and violence towards women - both are believed to keep children and women "in their place". Corporal punishment remains prevalent in schools, and almost every Mkombozi target school is grappling with the complexity of child discipline. For instance, Kifumbu School argues that "severe punishment is given to children at school and at home (which) frightens children", and also that "some of the teachers are strict beyond measure". On the contrary, Mwenge and Pasua Schools say that there are fewer drop-outs because of the punishment regime that they operate: "My school is doing well academically and in attendance because of corporal punishment" (Mwenge Head Teacher).

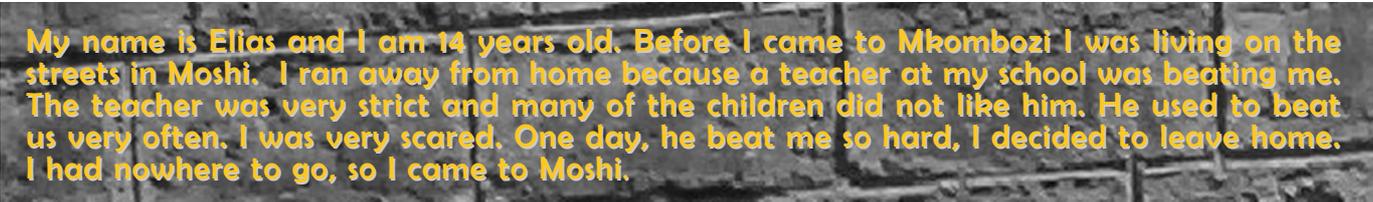
Mkombozi's research revealed 2 interesting phenomena related to child abuse and protection²²:

(1) Corporal punishment and physical and verbal abuse of children is so normalised in community attitudes that teachers and other child care agencies do not even consider such behaviour abusive to children. When teachers in 3 schools were asked to identify how many students in their class they suspected of being abused they identified an almost negligible number of children. This was despite an overwhelming concern expressed by the same teachers about parents neglecting to supervise children's progress in school. Teachers were unable to view the neglect of children by their parents as a potential indicator that actual physical, verbal and sexual abuse may be taking place within these children's homes.

Disturbingly, these classroom realities for students are compounded by issues outside the school walls. For example, in Rau, the research team reported numerous cases of rape of children. Similarly, further investigation in Majengo revealed that children (both boys and girls) are being raped by mechanics operating in the area. These paedophiles are paying the children to have sex with them and then paying them more if they introduce a friend. The situation is so extreme that teachers express concern that boys are starting to walk with their legs spread and to be incontinent. In fact, Mkombozi's census of 2005 showed an increase of 472% in the number of children coming to the streets from Majengo over the previous 18 months. These are serious issues of child protection, and yet schools and communities are practically unaware of the effect on children's development, safety and educational prospects.

(2) Many adults believe that children need to be disciplined because they are naturally disobedient. Adult interviewees often placed blame for non-attendance in school on the children, attributing the need to punish young people because of their own behaviour.

Interestingly, it was only in a couple of schools that teachers and school committees saw the link between children's "poor behaviour" and the denial of their basic rights - at Manushi Juu, interviewees explained that "children are given too much work at home and their rights to education are not upheld". Notably, children's rights are seen to be purely related to the right to education. Interviewees routinely expressed concerns about parents' failure to contribute towards the needs of the child (uniform, the afternoon meal, not enrolling children in school when they are supposed to, not following up on children's attendance and progress), but little was said about violation of children's rights to protection and development. Adults appear to be barely conscious that child abuse and neglect are having a negative affect on school attendance and children's development.



My name is Elias and I am 14 years old. Before I came to Mkombozi I was living on the streets in Moshi. I ran away from home because a teacher at my school was beating me. The teacher was very strict and many of the children did not like him. He used to beat us very often. I was very scared. One day, he beat me so hard, I decided to leave home. I had nowhere to go, so I came to Moshi.

22. Mkombozi's position is that corporal punishment is an abuse of the child's right to protection.

(iv) Recommendations for a radical re-think of MEMKWA

Currently, there is a sectoral and linear education system in Tanzania (i.e. Early Childhood Development, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary). But, given that child vulnerability manifests across sectors, Local Government Authorities (LGAs) must grapple with the resulting out-of-school child and youth population in the form of unemployment, street children and crime. For this reason it is urgently necessary to break down the sectoral boundaries within the education system at a local level, so that schools can begin to address the manifestations of child vulnerability in addition to delivering education.

It has been shown that child vulnerability, in all its manifestations, includes children who are traumatised, have mental health problems (depression, self harm, attention deficit disorder), have been bereaved and/or are hungry. The fact is that vulnerable children cannot learn because they are facing extraordinary pressures outside of school and typically do not have positive relationships with adults. In such a context, teachers cannot work effectively with students without consideration for the circumstances (familial and social) of each child. Indeed, without genuine attention to child vulnerability and its role in school drop-outs and exclusions, government indicators of attendance and enrolment are mere smokescreens to convince the world that Tanzania is serious about the development of its children and young people.

Simply stated, protecting children's rights to education - in isolation from their right to protection from abuse and neglect - is fruitless. Teachers must become more than deliverers of a written curriculum; they must conduct themselves as role models and a key attachment to each child in their care. Where children are living with grandparents and single parents who are stressed with domestic violence, poverty and alcoholism, it becomes increasingly important for teachers to build these relationships with their students. But responsibility lies not only with the teachers - community and government must build locally relevant and locally managed community centres where children and adults can come together for support, learning and services.

Despite the rhetoric that MEMKWA is a programme which enables "individuals and communities to solve their own problems", in practice it is being used to speed out-of-school children through the formal school system. MEMKWA centres are becoming alternative locales for primary education, rather than delivering an alternative form of education. By failing to address the reasons that children are out of school, and by fast-tracking them through the primary curriculum instead, MEMKWA does not enable children to learn and become productive members of society.

Mkombozi strongly recommends that MEMKWA earnestly begin to offer more than the "bare essentials". Mkombozi advocates for MEMKWA centres to become forums for piloting genuine responses to the needs of vulnerable children (and adults), and offering basic education as well as social and parental care. For instance, with some radical re-thinking, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT), together with LGAs and civil society could expand the remit of MEMKWA centres by scaling them up into full community centres²³. These community centres could offer basic education as well as literacy training, IT training, childcare and early childhood education (for those under the age of 7), career guidance (for adults and youth), parenting advice, loans, leisure and recreation, library, child protection services and adult education. Such community centres could be run by LGAs in a sectoral dialogue reporting to the MOEVT. In effect, these centres would provide an opportunity to promote life long learning and to address child and youth vulnerability in a way that is responsive to the local setting and local needs.

(v) Conclusion

The emphasis in recent years within policy making circles has been to increase children's **access** to primary education, without attention given to the **quality** of education. As such, although MKUKUTA aims to cater to the needs of vulnerable children, it is impossible to develop a relevant educational practice in the absence of a clear understanding of what makes certain children vulnerable and how such vulnerability manifests in their behaviour. Catering to children's needs with a broad brush and assuming that all vulnerable children have the same learning needs will not address the problems that cause children to drop-out of school. In fact, the schools in Mkombozi's research study reveal a fundamental lack of clarity about the role of schools and education within Tanzania.

It is essential that effective interventions are developed which support the most vulnerable children and families by recognising and addressing the stigma and marginalisation that excludes them from development processes. Social safety nets and child protection services, in particular, need to be equipped with the human capital to work with people who have been abused, are traumatised and often highly disillusioned with the state of voluntary services that do exist. Mkombozi asserts that the current, national network of MEMKWA centres are ideal locales from which these services can operate. Of course, these services require serious investment, positive innovation and effective collaboration between multiple agencies, but the fact is that Tanzania's future depends upon young people being able to easily access support and services that would enable them to become productive members of society.

In summary, Mkombozi calls upon policy makers and local government officials to move beyond the simplistic view of school truancy and drop-outs as caused by children whose basic needs have not been met. It must be understood that unmet psychosocial and behavioural needs of children play a critical role in their vulnerability and cause them to leave school, and thus ultimately force them to the streets. We call upon the Government to proactively and innovatively design and establish community-based services and resources that can support and mediate the complex interrelationship of non-income forms of poverty - these services can and should be offered as an example of how MEMKWA could be strategised and scaled up to achieve such holistic goals.

23. Initially it could be piloted in 2 -3 communities, using the capital grant for social infrastructure for which Councils can apply.

(vi) Appendix

Immediate, underlying and structural factors that make a child "at risk" of school drop-out

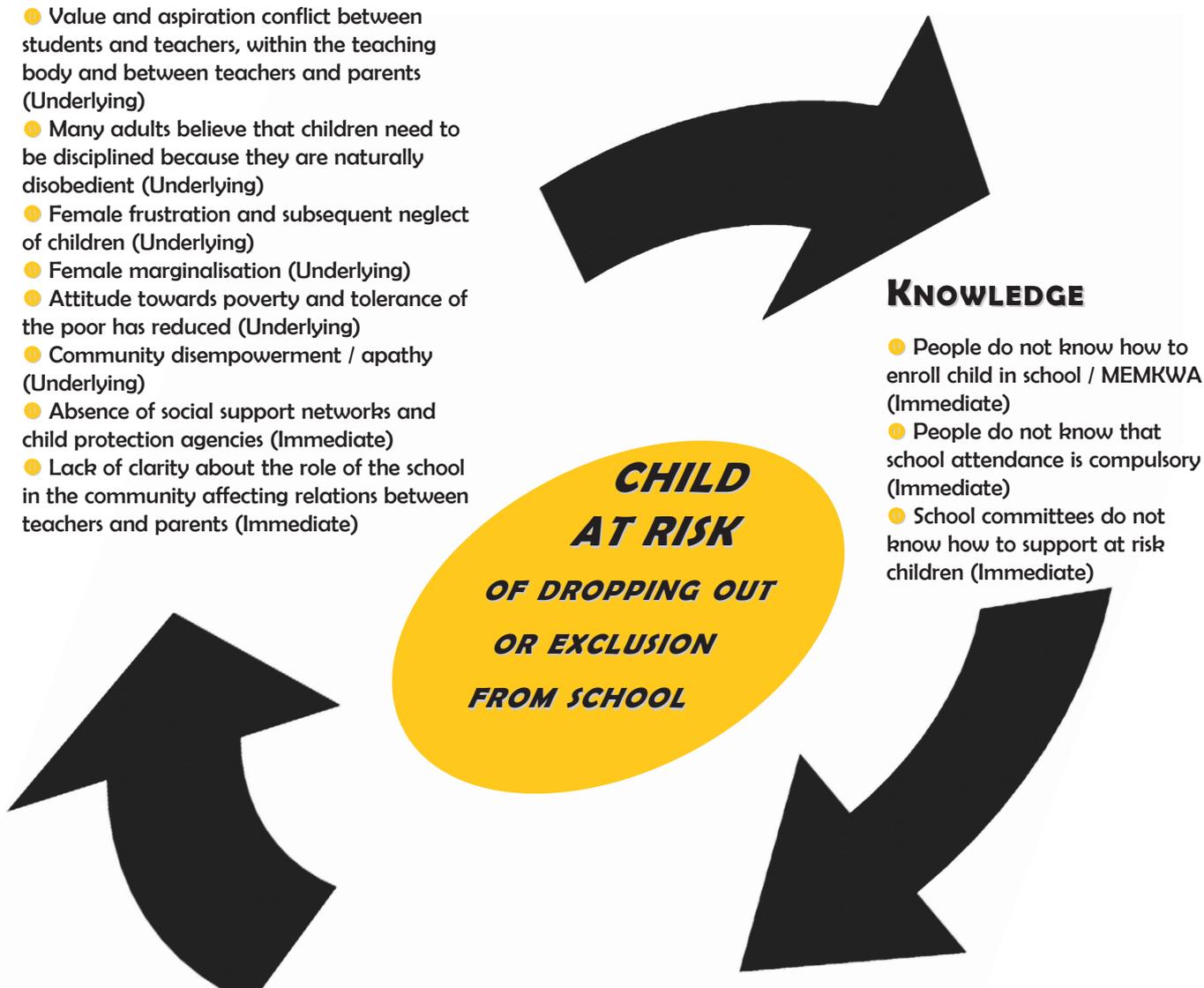
Adapted from: Local causation of school dropouts and exclusions in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania: Mkombozi 2005

ATTITUDES

- Adults do not value education (Underlying)
- Value and aspiration conflict between students and teachers, within the teaching body and between teachers and parents (Underlying)
- Many adults believe that children need to be disciplined because they are naturally disobedient (Underlying)
- Female frustration and subsequent neglect of children (Underlying)
- Female marginalisation (Underlying)
- Attitude towards poverty and tolerance of the poor has reduced (Underlying)
- Community disempowerment / apathy (Underlying)
- Absence of social support networks and child protection agencies (Immediate)
- Lack of clarity about the role of the school in the community affecting relations between teachers and parents (Immediate)

KNOWLEDGE

- People do not know how to enroll child in school / MEMKWA (Immediate)
- People do not know that school attendance is compulsory (Immediate)
- School committees do not know how to support at risk children (Immediate)



**CHILD
AT RISK
OF DROPPING OUT
OR EXCLUSION
FROM SCHOOL**

PRACTICES

- Male out-migration to urban centres in search of work (Structural)
- Poverty (Structural)
- Population pressure (Structural)
- OVCs and children living with grandparents and single mothers (Underlying)
- Birth out of wedlock (Underlying)
- Adult drunkenness (Underlying)
- Children with bereavement and psychological trauma are not accommodated within the school's practice (Underlying)
- Child labour in plantations (Immediate)
- No practice in primary education, no values linked to methodology (subject-oriented versus competency) (Immediate)
- School facilities and teaching approach fail to engage children (Immediate)
- Students distracted and disinterested in school (Immediate)
- Rapid change in school management, raising issues of capacity (Immediate)
- Lack of school costs and uniforms (immediate)
- Inability to follow-up and support child (immediate)
- Corporal punishment and verbal harassment (immediate)