

Statement on Children's Rights – for UPR-Tanzania

October-November 2021

This statement is made on behalf of 7 organizations working with and for street children in Tanzania. In this statement we will talk about three fundamental children's rights.

1. The Right to be protected against Violence and Abuse

Based on recent headcounts, we estimate that there are between 25,000 and 70,000 children living or working on Tanzania's streets.

Most of these children turn to the streets because of poverty and *especially* because of violence and abuse – often in the form of severe beatings by parents or family members.

Unfortunately, corporal punishment and disciplining by beating are common practice in Tanzania and *are allowed* under the country's policies and regulations.

We believe that this explicit allowing of corporal punishment, including in schools, reinforces the wrong message that beating is good -- which, when applied by the wrong adults, can lead to excessive beating. As a result, way too many children run away from home, and end up in the streets.

Our Call to Action: to request the Tanzanian Government to review all its laws, policies, and regulations, and to *ban all forms of government-approved corporal punishment of minors.*

2. The Right to Education – including post-primary-school education

The Tanzanian Government has made impressive progress in improving school enrolment, especially in primary schools.

Unfortunately however, about 1 out of every 5 children still fail their end-of-primary school exams every year.

Once this happens, they normally do not get the chance to repeat their exam, and then under Tanzanian regulations are *not allowed* to continue with (government) secondary education. Alternative pathways, incl. vocational training, are few and unaffordable to most families.

As a result, more than 100,000 children every year are denied their right to continued education, and, at the age of 13 or 14, many are driven to the streets to work.

Our Call to Action is two-fold: to request the Tanzanian Government to ensure that all Standard-7 students who fail their exams, will repeat the same year of schooling, and will be allowed to *retake those exams*.

We further request the Tanzanian Government to ensure that there is free, or highly affordable *vocational training* available to children who keep failing their primary school exams, so they will not end up in the streets.

3. The Rights to Safe Shelter and to Living in a Family Setting

We are encouraged that both in its policies, and in its ‘Heart’, the Tanzanian Government would like to see all street-living and street-working children OFF the streets, and live safely with family instead.

Unfortunately, to accomplish this is not easy. It will need smart strategies to be developed in close collaboration between the government and NGOs.

It also needs dedicated budget.

Our Call to Action: We ask the Tanzanian Government to partner with relevant NGOs in the country, to explicitly commit to building *a joint, well-budgeted national strategy* to help street children.

To get there, we request the government to start city-level, combined “*Government and NGO*” Task Forces on Street Children in the biggest cities – with dedicated budget. Together, these Task Forces can develop best practices which can then inform the national strategy.

We hope you will understand that these recommendations are coming from a sincere interest to join hands to reduce the numbers of street children in Tanzania, and to uphold - as best as possible - children's fundamental rights.

Thank you for your attention. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss any of these matters further.

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