Mkombozi

Participatory Action Research

Local causation of primary school drop-outs and exclusions in Kilimanjaro Region

VOLUME 2

Mkombozi

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What is this handbook about?

This is the second volume of a two-part series which documents the process and learning from participatory action research (PAR) that Mkombozi undertook from 2004 to 2007. This research was part of Mkombozi's project "to provide appropriate education for marginalised children", which had the following objectives: to establish an inexpensive, transparent and user-friendly framework for integrating out-of-school children into the state school system; to strengthen the state school system to identify and assist children who are "at risk" of dropping out; and to achieve acceptance of complementary non-formal education for out-of-school children who cannot be mainstreamed into the state school system.

We recommend that Volumes 1 and 2 are read together. Volume 1 describes the background of the project and the context of education in Tanzania from the perspectives of policy, the economy, families and educational practice. It also explains the research methodology in detail, and presents the findings from the initial research period in terms of the situation of vulnerable children in the 10 target communities. Volume 2 is directed at development practitioners who work with communities in Tanzania, and it:

- revisits PAR as an intervention for transforming communities;
- describes actions undertaken by schools / communities in response to Volume 1;
- explores the impacts on schools and communities involved in the research process;
- describes how schools identified as "dysfunctional" changed and the extent to which their student enrolment, retention and performance were impacted;
- discusses learning that has emerged for Mkombozi as a result of the project, in the hope that those readers who would like to engage in a similar process can benefit from our experience.

Who is this handbook for?

Researchers and academics: There has been some debate in Tanzania about whether PAR as used by NGOs[1] is an appropriate academic research discipline. In fact, Volume 1 was subjected to some pertinent questioning around its methodology (Prof. Issa Shivji, REPOA Conference, 2006). Mkombozi has tried and continues to advance the cause of PAR. We believe that PAR can be a practical and authentic research approach which fosters a shared commitment to understanding the problems a community faces and developing locally appropriate solutions. We argue that, although the outcomes of such a locally-oriented study may not be generalisable, the PAR process itself has much to recommend for wider application in Tanzania.

NGOs and development practitioners in Africa: It is challenging to work within the dominant development paradigm that demands predefined outcomes, whilst maintaining the freedom for locally expressed needs to emerge and be responded to during a project period. Certainly there has been a tension throughout this PAR process between working within the predefined outcomes that were necessary to obtain the funding for the project and giving schools and communities full rein to identify their own problems and create their own solutions. Mkombozi never fully resolved this paradox. However, we hope that reading this book may inspire NGOs and others who want to work authentically with communities to take heart and negotiate more confidently with their partners and donors for the freedom to trust dialogue and let collective wisdom emerge from the process. We ask that if you "take-away" anything from this book, let it be that you trust communities to know their problems, and that you start to see your role as an "enabler of change".

The Mkombozi family: This book is intended for Mkombozi stakeholders, staff, partners and donors. It is an attempt to consolidate and learn from a project that has been much of the inspiration behind Mkombozi's philosophy as an NGO working with children and young people. The "highs" and "lows" of the PAR process have been instructive in teaching us that it is not our job to control outcomes, or to offer solutions, but that it is our job to challenge the status quo and to challenge people's "resistance". It is our job to enable people to embrace new perspectives. It is our job to acknowledge that everyone we come into contact with has remarkable gifts, and we should help to unleash those gifts. Simply put, it is to the children, parents, teachers, government officials and the people of Tanzania that we dedicate both this handbook and our work.

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ACTT: Affordable Computers and Technology for Tanzania

CTLC: Community Technology Learning Centres

CPP: Child Protection Policy

CYP: Children / young people

DEO: District Education Officer

ICT / IT: Information (communication) technology

LGA: Local Government Authorities

MoEVT: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

MoF: Ministry of Finance

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NNOC: National Network of Organisations Working with Children in Tanzania

NSGRP / MKUKUTA: National Strategy for Growth or Reduction of Poverty

PAR: Participatory Action Research

PER: Public Expenditure Review

PEDP: Primary Education Development Plan

PSLE: Primary School Leaving Examination

SEDP: Secondary Education Development Plan

SDQ: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

STD: "Standard"; education levels (e.g. I, II, III) used in Tanzania

TEN/MET: Tanzanian Education Network

UNCRC: U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child

WDCs: Ward Development Committees

WEC: Ward Education Coordinator

1. Glossary and definitions

Full-time street child: A child who lives, sleeps, works and eats on the streets without adult supervision and care.

Part-time street child: A child who comes to the street environment for part of the day, often to beg or work as a vendor, and then returns home at night.

Truant: A child who is enrolled in school, but attends sporadically.

Drop-out: A child who has left primary school prior to completing Standard VII due to his/her own accord or that of his/her caregivers.

School exclusion: The suspension or expulsion from, or the refusal of admittance to, primary school, by school authorities.

Out-of-school child: A school age child who is not attending primary school or the Tanzanian Government's school programme for out-of-school children (i.e. MEMKWA).

MEMKWA: The programme developed by the Ministry of Education as an intervention to "fast track" out-of-school children so they are either mainstreamed into primary school or sit public examinations via a MEMKWA centre. Mkombozi is the first NGO registered as a MEMKWA provider and coaches teachers in nine other MEMKWA centres in Kilimanjaro.

Primary Years Programme: The PYP programme, which works to build inquiring and collaborative learners, is created by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (www.ibo.org). Mkombozi is piloting PYP as part of its MEMKWA curriculum. In addition to delivering this curriculum to street children in residential care and on the streets, we have started a training programme with MEMKWA facilitators from nine centres to enable them to deliver a more integrated and participatory approach to student learning. Moving ahead, we will continue the training of MEMKWA facilitators, offer them coaching and mentoring support, and advocate for the wider use of the PYP model.

Resilience: Resilience refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. Implicit with this notion are two conditions: (1) Exposure to significant threat or severe adversity; and (2) The achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process. (Luthar, 2000). Instead of a focus on negative symptoms and behaviours that define "mental illness" (which carries stigma and social resistance), this perspective offers an alternative focus on the factors that support and promote a child's emotional and mental health. It focuses on enhancing a child's strengths and positive qualities by encouraging "protective factors", including: (1) the child's attachment to a healthy competent adult; (2) healthy attached relationships with peers; (3) the learning of problem-solving skills (including developing cognitive skills and understandings in order to better deal with stressful and uncertain adverse situations); and (4) the act of giving back to the community in which they live.

2. Introducing PAR and Mkombozi's education project

This research process was based on the fundamental principle that the people best equipped to research, understand, explain and address any issue are those who experience it every day (Mkombozi, 2006). Within the PAR paradigm, the researcher's function is to serve as a resource to those being studied - typically, disadvantaged groups - as an opportunity for them to act effectively in their own interest. The disadvantaged subjects define the remedies desired, and take the lead in designing the research that will help them realise their aims (Babbie, 2002). Implicit in this approach is the belief that research functions not only as a means of knowledge production but also as a "tool for the education and development of consciousness as well as the mobilisation of action" (Gaventa, 1991).

Mkombozi argued in Volume 1 that although the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) has increased enrolment, it has done so within the limitations of a generic approach. Consequently, we used this PAR approach to catalyse specific and local school and community based interventions that would support the educational prospects (enrolment and retention) of vulnerable children. Specifically, we followed a cyclical approach: (1) Using interviews, focus group discussions, literature reviews, our target schools reflected upon what they were finding out; (2) By asking deep searching questions, they were then able to generate new understandings about what made children vulnerable in their schools and communities; (3) This new learning enabled them to take action and initiate responses to the factors that make children at risk; (4) Finally, these schools were able to move forward and incorporate their new learning and experiences in their future planning. Simply put, phase 1 of the research (2004-end of 2005) involved research by school teams about what made children vulnerable in their communities, and phase 2 (2006-2007) involved initiating and sustaining actions at a school and community level to address these problems.

Ultimately, we discovered that using a PAR approach in a project with predefined outcomes and outputs was restrictive. This tension was something that we became more comfortable with as our confidence in the PAR process grew and as it emerged that our original situational analysis of the extent of school drop-outs / non-enrolment was verified by communities. But there was, in phase 1 particularly, an ongoing challenge in managing the expectation of foreign partners and donors on delivering "results" whilst we knew that PAR demanded a significant investment in its process.

Now, at the point of completion of the project, we know that we would have missed out on an important element of "grounding" the research into people's daily practice and lives with children if we had: skipped the relationship and trust building phase with the schools; hurried them in the data collection and analysis phase; and/or rushed them into developing activities to address vulnerable children. The research would have become an "add-on" rather than something that took a life of its own and whose impact should live beyond Mkombozi's involvement in the communities.

Immediate results:

An 80% reduction in drop-outs, exclusions and truants in the target schools at the end of the project.

Medium-term benefits:

Reduction in the number of children on / migrating to the streets.

Improved attitude and practice towards primary school enrolment and completion among parents, teachers and target communities.

Increased teacher morale as they learn new skills and as children continue in education for longer periods.

Increased teacher understanding of alternative approaches to discipline and children's rights in daily practice.

Re-invigorated school committees that effectively oversee school attendance.

Longer-term changes and improvements:

Recapturing the spiritual, physical and mental potential of children and youth that is currently lost by school drop-outs, truancy and exclusion.

Reconnecting the target communities to their schools by increasing community participation in schools' operation and by increasing the community's sense of school ownership.

Reconfiguring the educational system to create a more socially relevant and child-friendly learning environment that is conducive to meeting the needs of all Tanzania's children, including those who are marginalised and / or vulnerable.

We recommended in Volume 1 that "PAR must challenge the status quo and ensure that the most excluded young people and families obtain opportunities to initiate and manage school and community based interventions that address their needs (as they perceive them)" (Mkombozi, 2006, pg. 28). Certainly during phase 1 of the project, which centred on data collection and analysis, we found it challenging to capture the voices of the truly marginalised within communities. Such is the stratification within communities in Kilimanjaro and the negativity towards the most poor (Mkombozi, 2006). Thus, phase 1 centred around enabling the data collectors (who came from the student, parent and teacher bodies within the schools) to challenge their own assumptions about the poor and their own judgements about why children were out-of-school. We found that the natural tendency of all data collectors was initially to resort to blaming macro-factors that were beyond their control (e.g. drop in coffee prices, "poverty") and / or to stigmatise those who were vulnerable (e.g. "they are drunk", "they have bad ethics", "they don't care for their children").

In phase 2, where schools started to initiate responses to the factors that made children vulnerable, we found a quite noticeable change in attitude towards the poor. We can attribute this to the research team members who became touched by individual cases once they saw how poor people were living in real life. This revealed to them that they could not generalise about the poor, but that each case differed. Additionally, they realised that the rate of change within their communities was so rapid that they could not see "poverty" in the same sense that they had traditionally done. For example, poverty does not manifest just in a lack of money, it also manifests as abuse, isolation and a sense of complete disempowerment.

Concurrently with the PAR process, Mkombozi undertook the following initiatives to reinforce the schools' activities:

Popularising policy in a handbook for parents: A handbook "Pata Elimu Sasa" (Get Education Now) was disseminated through the Ward Education Coordinators. It gave clear and user-friendly instructions to parents on the importance of education and how to enroll / transfer a child into school.

Broadcasting weekly radio shows on Radio Sauti ya Njili: The radio shows presented both the messages of Pata Elimu Sasa and the findings of the phase 1 PAR in radio plays performed by Mkombozi children and youth. There were also opportunities for listeners to phone-in to the show.

Offering training to facilitators in nine MEMKWA centres: A series of trainings were delivered that supported MEMKWA facilitators to offer a more child-orientated approach to teaching. Individual coaching of MEMKWA facilitators has also taken place so that they feel more supported and less isolated in their work.

Collaborating closely at all times with the Ward and District Education authorities: Throughout this three-year project, every initiative has been taken in partnership with local Government. They have been invaluable in giving the work legitimacy, in offering technical advice and in promoting a focus on vulnerable children in schools and communities.

Though desirable, it is not always possible for NGOs to deliver such an all-encompassing project that builds on the PAR process. But we would strongly recommend that the value of PAR in Tanzania is contingent on working with local Government. Without their collaboration and backing any initiatives taken within individual schools and communities tend to lack legitimacy and thus sustainability.

3. School and community actions to advance the findings from phase 1 of the research

During phase 1 of the research there was a tendency for the researchers in schools to devolve responsibility for vulnerable children to other agencies. References to "establishing NGOs to support children in difficult circumstances", "educating communities and local Government leaders about the services provided by NGOs", and "increasing transparency and consistency of government support mechanisms" were commonplace.[2] What was not mentioned however, was the need for school members, parents and community leaders to take personal initiative and responsibility for addressing the problems of vulnerable children.

At the start of the "action" phase it was possible to see a lot of commonalities in the problems and potential solutions between all 10 schools. These could be broadly summarised under the following headings:

Contact and follow-up: This refers to contact and follow-up of children and their families when the child is truant / dropping out of school. Even during the data collection period, a number of school research teams had started following up individual children and in the Moshi Rural schools - importantly, this was attributed as a primary reason that 50% of known truants returned to school.[3]

Poverty: This refers to an inability to afford uniforms, school materials, etcetera.

Child abuse: This refers to abuse that is related to child labour (and linked back to poverty), as well as physical abuse (linked to parental alcoholism and sexual abuse).

Lack of information: Problems included not knowing when the child is meant to be enrolled in school, not knowing that they need to be enrolled in pre-primary first, not having documentation to prove a child's age, not knowing about other agencies working in the area who could help them solve their problems.

Given these rather broad categories, there was a remarkable diversity of responses by each school. For example, with regard to addressing truancy, Kibaoni School in Hai conducted seminars on the causes of truancy with parents and teachers and brainstormed ideas on how to deal with it. Together with Street Leaders, Kibaoni initiated a "truant patrol" around the school. They attributed the success of this patrol to the fact that a number of varied and locally based people were involved, including the PAR research team, the Ward Councillor, Ward Education Coordinators, teachers, pupils and even the other schools in Hai ward. Notably, the PAR process leveraged the engagement of other schools in the area so that they developed a joint response to truants across the entire town of Boma Ngombe.

Pasua School is another example of an organisation that capitalised upon the project to mobilise the community in addressing the issue of vulnerable children. They undertook a wide-ranging response to the problem of truancy, which combined direct support to vulnerable children with community awareness-raising and infrastructural development of a borehole. Significantly, the Pasua research team were committed to the idea that this was a joint project with Mkombozi, the Pasua community, schools and local leaders. They invested considerable effort in mobilising the community to become more active. Specifically the community elected a committee to monitor truants and to bring them to school. Additionally the School started a committee, supported with advice from Mkombozi, which had the remit to visit and support children who are living in difficult circumstances. Finally, they were keenly involved in the distribution of "Pata Elimu Sasa" and in organising community meetings to discuss and develop strategies for addressing truant children.

At a final "action learning" on the project, the Pasua School research team felt that there had been good management of the projects, but that their challenge would be to continue motivating the community to maintain and build on the ownership that had been catalysed. Specifically, they have established systems, through local committees, to continue working on managing the borehole renovation project and for maintaining the school fence.

Other schools took a more holistic response to the issue of truancy by trying to address some of the underlying problems around the poverty that children face. For example, Mwenge, Rau, Lambo Extended, Manushi Juu and Mnini Schools all believed that the purpose of their project was to ensure that children obtained their basic needs (food, uniforms, school materials) and that if this were achieved, truancy would reduce. Again, the responses were varied, but the key success factor in each case was collaboration between school, parents and local leaders:

- Lambo Extended and Mwenge Schools raised funds from within the local community that were matched by Mkombozi and established a school shop. The profits from the shop provide uniforms and school materials for poor children.
- Manushi Juu worked consistently over the project to mobilise parents to contribute to a school fund for vulnerable children.
- Kombo and Mnini schools both established a pig project, whereby poor parents cared for the pigs on a rotational basis. When the pigs bred, the parents were then able to take the litter for their own pig project - like a rotational loan, using pigs instead of money.
- Rau School initiated a rolling fund for loans for poor parents that would enable them to engage in income generating activities.
- Kombo and Pasua Schools purchased a sewing machine and hired local women to fix school uniforms. The women can use the machine for their own business, on the agreement that they fix all school uniforms for free.[4]

Notably, these initiatives are examples of the mutual reciprocity that has been established between schools and the communities surrounding them. A significant finding of the research in phase 1 was the perceived alienation between schools and communities (Mkombozi, 2006). We have noticed that these gestures by the schools towards improving not just their environment, but that of the wider community, had a noticeable impact in reducing the opposition between schools and community members.

A number of schools were ambitious and launched infrastructural development projects to address the underlying causes of children's failure to attend school. For instance, Kombo School launched a water project, linking the school to the main water pipe, and Pasua School renovated an old, malfunctioning borehole. These were important projects in communities where children were skipping class to fetch clean drinking water for the schools. Notably, Kifumbu School now also has permanent access to water and this has enabled them to start a vegetable garden as an income-generating project to support vulnerable children in the school.

Kibaoni, Pasua and Rau and Majengo Schools were keen to build fences around the school plots. Indeed, the fencing issue is a problem on two levels - in terms of child protection and in terms of further development of the school facilities. For example, at Kibaoni, cars drive across the playground endangering children. Additionally, empty buildings surround the school, providing a place for truants to hide, and more frighteningly, a place for girls to be lured for sexual relationships with older men. Notably, fencing a school such as Kibaoni was not a manageable cost for this project. Thus, the school team was flexible in its thinking and decided to build a grass fence as opposed to the more expensive concrete fence.
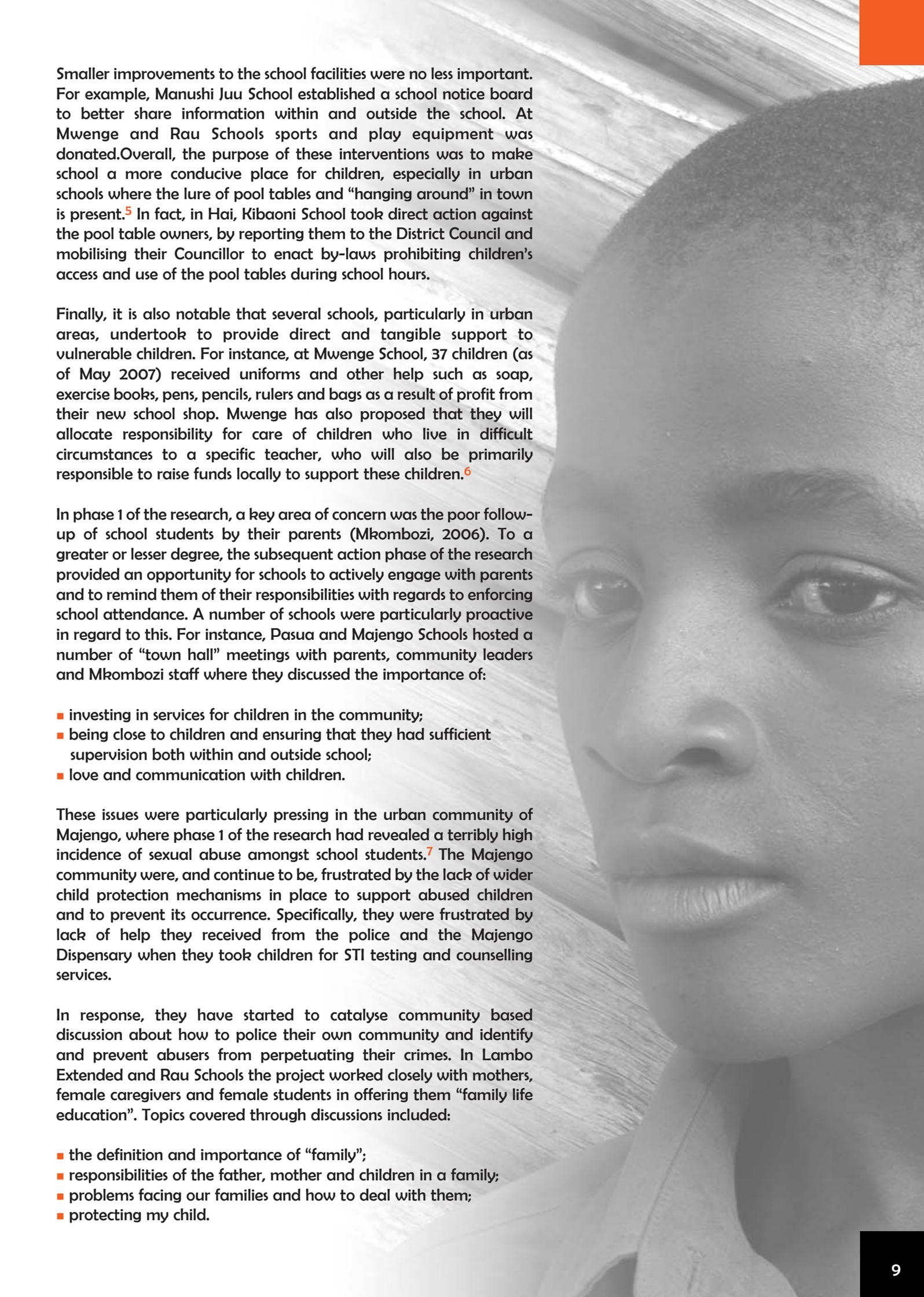
Smaller improvements to the school facilities were no less important. For example, Manushi Juu School established a school notice board to better share information within and outside the school. At Mwenge and Rau Schools sports and play equipment was donated.Overall, the purpose of these interventions was to make school a more conducive place for children, especially in urban schools where the lure of pool tables and "hanging around" in town is present.[5] In fact, in Hai, Kibaoni School took direct action against the pool table owners, by reporting them to the District Council and mobilising their Councillor to enact by-laws prohibiting children's access and use of the pool tables during school hours.

Finally, it is also notable that several schools, particularly in urban areas, undertook to provide direct and tangible support to vulnerable children. For instance, at Mwenge School, 37 children (as of May 2007) received uniforms and other help such as soap, exercise books, pens, pencils, rulers and bags as a result of profit from their new school shop. Mwenge has also proposed that they will allocate responsibility for care of children who live in difficult circumstances to a specific teacher, who will also be primarily responsible to raise funds locally to support these children.[6]

In phase 1 of the research, a key area of concern was the poor follow-up of school students by their parents (Mkombozi, 2006). To a greater or lesser degree, the subsequent action phase of the research provided an opportunity for schools to actively engage with parents and to remind them of their responsibilities with regards to enforcing school attendance. A number of schools were particularly proactive in regard to this. For instance, Pasua and Majengo Schools hosted a number of "town hall" meetings with parents, community leaders and Mkombozi staff where they discussed the importance of:

- investing in services for children in the community;
- being close to children and ensuring that they had sufficient supervision both within and outside school;
- love and communication with children.

These issues were particularly pressing in the urban community of Majengo, where phase 1 of the research had revealed a terribly high incidence of sexual abuse amongst school students.[7] The Majengo community were, and continue to be, frustrated by the lack of wider child protection mechanisms in place to support abused children and to prevent its occurrence. Specifically, they were frustrated by lack of help they received from the police and the Majengo Dispensary when they took children for STI testing and counselling services.

In response, they have started to catalyse community based discussion about how to police their own community and identify and prevent abusers from perpetuating their crimes. In Lambo Extended and Rau Schools the project worked closely with mothers, female caregivers and female students in offering them "family life education". Topics covered through discussions included:

- the definition and importance of "family";
- responsibilities of the father, mother and children in a family;
- problems facing our families and how to deal with them;
- protecting my child.

4. Project impact

At the outset, we anticipated measuring the impact of the project by looking at three areas of change. Firstly, we employed a quantitative analysis of truancy, drop-out and enrolment data from the 10 target schools and 9 MEMKWA centres. We assumed that if these rates show an improvement we could, at least partially, attribute these changes to the efforts of the project.

Our second indicator of change was slightly more tangential; we measured the number of children coming to the streets from the communities and schools where Mkombozi conducts outreach and preventative work.

Finally, our third measure was the school / community members' perception of change. This final area of evaluation is centred on capturing people's subjective perceptions, rather than a specifically objective measure. This was done using a combination of action learning, appreciative inquiry and World Café type fora with the schools, local government and other stakeholders.

4.1 Quantitative analysis of truancy, drop-out and enrolment data

When the project was conceptualised in 2002 the 10 target schools had demonstrated a history of progressively increasing truancy and drop-outs amongst their students. At its peak in 2001 this meant that almost 250 boys were truant from the 10 schools, whist almost 100 boys had actually dropped out from schooling. When the project was initiated in 2004 this trend continued, with an alarming spike in 2005. We believe that this spike was as a result of better data collection within the schools, since Mkombozi had just started the wider PAR project and schools were now sensitised to monitoring truants and drop-outs. Certainly at the time there was no indication from the schools that the project itself was exacerbating the existence of truants and drop-outs.

From 2006 there began a rapid decline in the problem of truancy and drop-outs. By 2007 the following reductions had taken place:

- Female truants reduced from 134 cases in 2004 to 55 cases in 2007 - a reduction of 59%. Taking 2001 as a baseline, there has been a reduction of 64% (i.e. from 154 cases to 55 cases).

- Male truants reduced from 170 cases in 2004 to 46 cases in 2007 - a reduction of 73%. Taking 2001 as a baseline, there has been a reduction of 80% (i.e. from 234 cases to 46 cases).

In 2001 at the high point of school drop-outs almost 85 males and 60 girls had dropped out of school. Drop-outs then spiked again in 2005 to almost 100 males and 70 females. Again we believe that this is due to better reporting of the issue in school records, as a result of the awareness bought about by the project. Towards the conclusion of the project in 2007 female drop-outs numbered 30 cases and males 37. This is a reduction of 56% for males and 50% for females from the 2001 figure. From the high point in 2005 there has been a 63% reduction in male drop-outs and one of 57% for females.

GRAPH 1: Total numbers of truants and drop-outs for the 10 target schools (2000-07)

NOTE: Schools do not keep records for "exclusions"; they mark them as "drop-outs". Also, data is collected retrospectively from schools each January; thus, data for 2007 refers to actual figures for 2006.
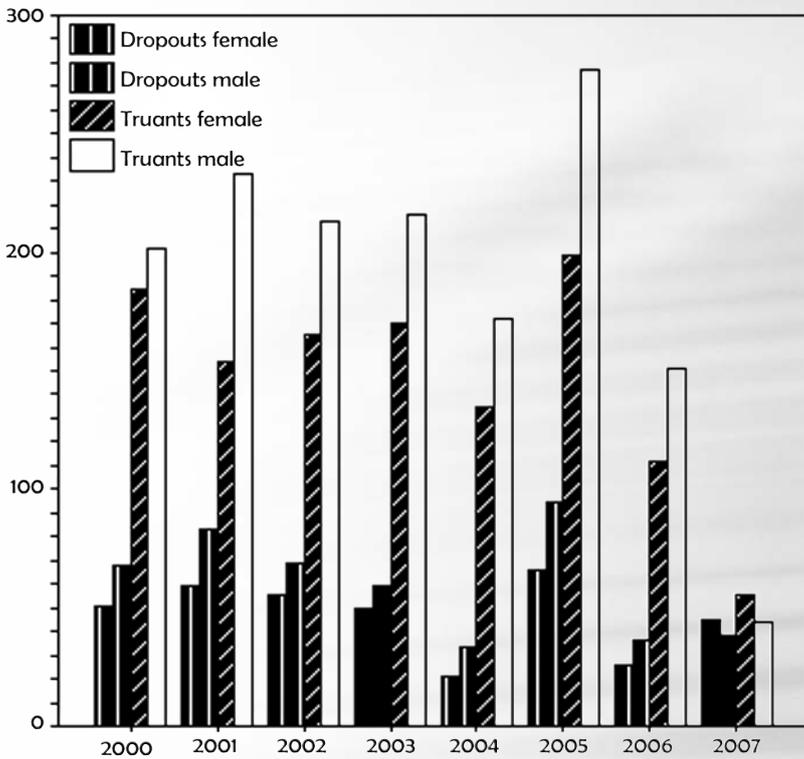
GRAPH 2: Mean student enrolment for the 10 target schools and 9 MEMKWA centres (2000-07)

NOTE: Enrolment data for MEMKWA is only available for 2006 and 2007, since this is when Mkombozi started working with them.

Although there had been a spike in enrolment in Standard I (and to a lesser degree in Standards II - VI) amongst both boys and girls upon the relinquishment of school fees in 2001, enrolment had rapidly dropped off since 2002. Mkombozi's Education project started in 2004. Despite its engagement with schools through the PAR process and its support of MEMKWA facilitators, we did not see any noticeable improvement in enrolment rates until 2006-7. The key variable that we believe caused this turnaround was the production and extensive dissemination of "Pata Elimu Sasa" (<< read more about the handbook in sidebar at left).

Tanzania has an Adult Education (AE) / Non-Formal Education (NFE) Strategy focused on offering high quality education to out-of-school children, youth and illiterate adults. Despite much positive development in the education sector since 2001, there remains significant challenges relating to the quality of education offered to children and to accessing those children and youth outside the formal school system.

The MEMKWA programme has been developed by the MoEVT as an intervention to fast track out-of-school children so that they can either be mainstreamed into primary school or sit public examinations via a community-based MEMKWA centre. Mkombozi was one of the first NGOs registered as a MEMKWA provider and now coaches facilitators in nine MEMKWA centres in Kilimanjaro Region. We have found that MEMKWA centres are under-funded (e.g. at some MEMKWA centres in Moshi Urban District, teachers only sporadically receive their Tsh20,000 (£10) a month stipend[8]) and that the MEMKWA capitation grant for student costs is not being paid to Local Government Authorities (LGA) by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) because LGAs do not factor these costs into their annual budgets and plans.

It is within this context that the data showing little improvement in the enrolment rates of Standard II - VI students must be read. In 2001 there was an initial "amnesty" where this age group of children were mainstreamed into the primary school system, but since then these out-of-school children should be entering MEMKWA centres. As such, one would expect to see a progressive increase in enrolment in Standard II - VI students through the fora of MEMKWA, but this has not been realised.

Mkombozi's experience working in MEMKWA centres is that there are numerous drop-outs from primary education who need to complete basic schooling. Education for All (EFA) and Vision 2025 work towards educating children to become self reliant but the curriculum as it stands (both primary and that used in MEMKWA centres) does not build children who are life-long learners and it doesn't teach the necessary skills of inquiry.

Moreover, Tanzania lacks a real and practical focus on offering "quality education" to vulnerable children who come into contact with MEMKWA. The PEDP target to recruit and train 2,604 para-professionals to work in MEMKWA centres is evidence of this. Given that children who are in MEMKWA education tend to have special educational, and often behavioural, needs, it is clear that these needs are of a low priority when the expectation is that they will be taught by under-qualified and inexperienced non-professionals.

Additional evidence that this project has had a positive impact on more than truancy and enrolments is the data relating to the success of students sitting the primary school leaving examinations (PSLEs). As seen in Graphs 3 and 4, the pass-rates for this exam amongst both boys and girls has been erratic over the years; increasing and decreasing year by year. There has been little evidence of a long-term trend of either improvement or failure for children sitting and passing the PSLE and of those subsequently being selected for secondary school. What is clear, however, is that the proportion of male students who are being selected for secondary has noticeably diminished in the period 2005-2006. This is in line with a national trend, now considered to be a priority focus, whereby the increase in primary school enrolment is impacting upon the limited places for secondary students. This issue is discussed further in relation to the migration of primary school leavers who are increasingly coming to the streets in search of opportunities and employment, in the absence of access to further education.

GRAPH 3: Male PSLE success rates (2000-06)
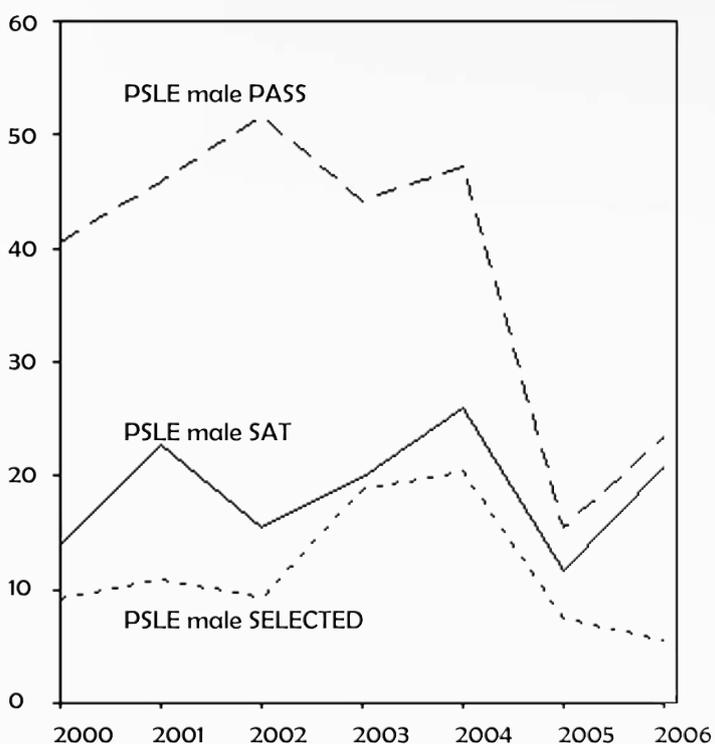
GRAPH 4: Female PSLE success rates (2000-06)
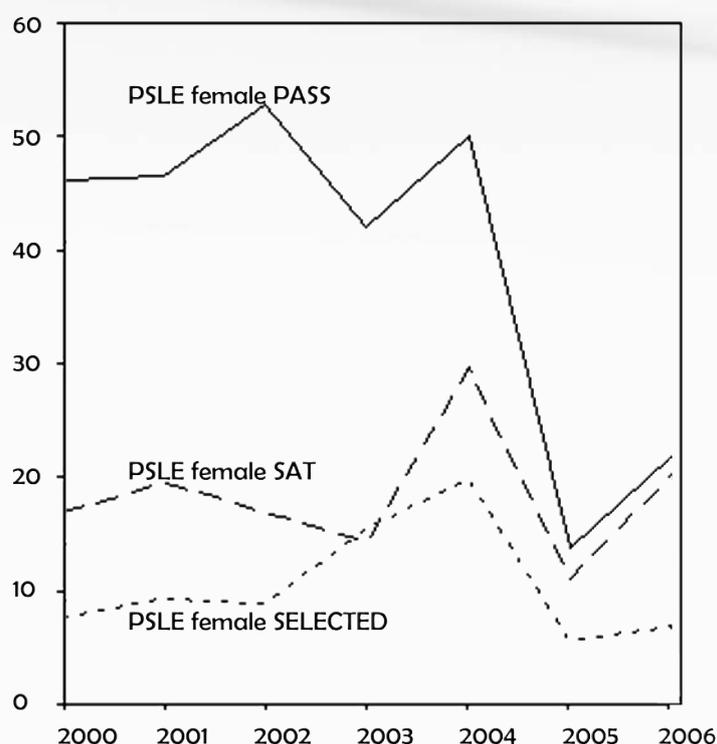
While the number of street children migrating from the rural communities has decreased, migration from the urban suburb of Majengo increased dramatically...

For years, Mkombozi has been highlighting the lack of leisure and recreational facilities for urban children - young people spend time on the streets in the absence of any other constructive way to spend their time after school. They also come to the streets in pursuit of employment...

4.2 Migration to the streets from Mkombozi target schools and communities

Mkombozi assumes a "linear theory of causality based on the degree of family connection" (De Moura, 2002), proposing that once children drop out of school, or become dislocated in some way from their families, they are consequently more at risk of being attracted to the streets in urban centres (Mkombozi, 2006). Consequently, we try to evaluate the impact of our preventative work in schools and communities by conducting a regular census of street children in Arusha and Moshi. This census gives us an indication of how many children are coming to the streets from areas in which we work. We recognise that in addition to Mkombozi's interventions in these communities, there is an array of contingency variables that affect whether a child leaves home or not for the streets. But given the difficulties in leaving the streets once a youth becomes entrenched in the culture (Barry et al, 2002), we believe that we and other agencies need to engage in research, advocacy for policy and the development of services that work with children and youth who are at risk of becoming homeless.

The October 2006 census gives us a snapshot of the trends and the situation of vulnerable children on the streets in Arusha and Moshi towns. It also indicates whether Mkombozi's preventative work with vulnerable young people in their communities of origin is influencing how many are coming to the streets from these rural and urban areas. This research is significant from an organisational perspective, in that it enables Mkombozi to evaluate its outreach interventions, whilst also throwing light on the lifestyles and strategies used by children and young people who are spending time on the street. Within the larger research and policy-making communities, this research contributes to the limited literature on street children, adding to our understanding that street children do not present a homogenous population (Ayuku et al, 2003). This census contributes to practitioners', policymakers' and academics' understanding of whether Mkombozi's community based preventative approach is an appropriate and useful way of addressing the numbers of children spending time on the streets in northern Tanzania.

When compared to the census data from January 2005, it can be seen that whilst real numbers of part-time CYP in Moshi have increased from 301 in 2005 to 411 in 2006, the number of full-time has reduced from 169 CYP to 51, a 70% reduction in numbers. In Arusha part-time CYP appear to have reduced from 522 in 2005 to 467 in 2006; an 11% reduction. This is matched by a notable reduction from 354 full-time CYP in Arusha in 2005 to 173 in 2006, a 51% reduction. Ten percent are female and 90% male. These figures indicate a positive shift in the demographics of street child populations in both towns.

During the census children and youth on the street were asked whether they attend or have attended our 10 targeted primary schools, as well as their current status (attending, playing truant, recently dropped out or recently graduated). This information gives us an indication of whether the participatory action research process that we have been conducting within these schools has impacted the number of children dropping out and coming to the streets.

Data offered evidence that 15% (n. 26) of interviewees on the street had recently completed standard VII of primary education, and were attracted to the streets as a way to embark upon employment or other opportunities post school. The census revealed that children and young people continue to migrate to the towns in search of employment and opportunities - in effect, the streets are viewed as a means to lift oneself out of poverty.

This census revealed that migration to the streets from Mkombozi's rural target communities of Kibosho and Machame numbered one percent (n. 11) and 0.1% (n. 4) respectively of the total population of children on the street. This is a reduction from 63 CYP from Kibosho and eight CYP from Machame in 2005. The findings of this census encourage Mkombozi to refocus our future efforts on urban suburbs rather than rural communities, since this is where considerable numbers of street children originate from.

TABLE 1: Numbers of CYP migrating to the streets from Mkombozi's target communities

TARGET COMMUNITY	2003	2005	% REDUCTION 2003-2005	2006	% REDUCTION 2003-2006
Kibosho (rural)	86	63	23%	15	83%
Machame (rural)	26	8	69%	8	69%
Majengo (urban)	23	110	-378%	135	-487%
Uru (peri urban)	60	36	40%	24	60%

Importantly, Table 1 shows that whilst there has been a considerable reduction in the number of street children from the rural communities of Kibosho (83%), and Machame (69%), there has been a remarkable increase of 487% in those coming from the urban suburb of Majengo.

Eighty-six percent of CYP who came to the streets from Mkombozi's target communities were between the ages of 10-24 years, which would imply that a proportion of them should be enrolled and attending primary or secondary school. In Moshi of the 51 CYP sleeping on the streets 43% (n. 22) said that they were not primary school students, compared to the 29% (n. 51) who said that they were not primary school students in Arusha. Interestingly 13% of full-time street children (n. 7 in Moshi and n. 20 in Arusha) claimed that they were also attending primary school daily, as did 17% of part-time CYP (12% (n. 49) in Moshi and 21% (n. 102) in Arusha. This is extraordinary given our assumptions that life on the streets precludes attendance in school, and warrants further research to understand how these children are managing their lives and education. In Moshi 20% (n. 10) of full time CYP were primary school drop-outs, whilst 16% (n. 72) of part-time children were drop-outs. In Arusha 18% (n. 32) of full-time street children and youth were playing truant from primary school, 25% (n. 44) were drop-outs and 15% (n. 26) had recently completed standard primary education.

In Moshi 20% (n. 10) of full-time CYP had recently completed standard VII of primary education, and staggeringly, 52% (n. 212) of part-time CYP had recently completed primary. In Arusha, 15% (n. 26) of full-time CYP had recently completed standard VII of primary education and 31% (n. 147) of part-time had recently completed primary. In Arusha, 17% (n. 79) of part-time street children were school drop-outs, while 10% (n. 49) were playing truant.

Table 2 indicates two phenomena of concern. The first is the number of children who claim to be attending school daily (n = 73), whilst also spending time on the streets. Numbers are particularly high from urban schools (Mwenge, Majengo) and Lambo Extended School, which is located near to the main road into Moshi. For many years, Mkombozi has been highlighting the lack of leisure and recreational facilities for urban children - young people spend time on the streets in the absence of any other constructive way to spend their time after school. Secondly, note the number of youth on the streets who have recently completed primary school (n = 44) and have now come to the street in the pursuit of employment.

TABLE 2: School status (at Mkombozi's target schools) of children / youth on the streets in Moshi and Arusha

SCHOOL	ATTENDING	DROP-OUT	TRUANT	COMPLETED PRIMARY	TOTAL
Mwenge (urban)	19	0	1	3	23
Pasua (urban)	6	5	2	13	26
Majengo (urban)	21	4	4	14	43
Rau (peri urban)	5	5	3	6	19
Mnini (rural)	1	0	0	1	2
Kifumbo (rural)	1	0	0	1	1
Kombo (rural)	2	2	0	0	4
Manushi Juu (rural)	1	0	0	0	1
Kibaoni (urban)	1	2	1	1	5
Lambo Extended (rural)	16	10	7	5	38
Total (all schools)	**73**	**28**	**18**	**44**	**163**
None of the above	618	234	178	494	1,524

4.3 Schools' and community members' perception of change

Teachers, school committees and community leaders believe that they are neither equipped to conceptualise the scale of these problems nor to develop support mechanisms to assist these people. In fact, many are not sure that it is their responsibility to do so in the first place (Mkombozi, 2006). Mkombozi's position is that evaluation of this project must assess whether it helped people to acknowledge the problem of vulnerable children and, in so doing, altered how they engaged in their responsibility to address it. Mkombozi used three approaches (beyond the quantitative evaluation described above) to do so:

- using "appreciative inquiry" (AI) (<< read more about AI in the sidebar on p.16), we worked with children who had participated in the project to identify their dreams for the future;

- using "action learning", we worked with each school to reflect on what had worked well and how to build upon these successes;

- using a "World Café forum" for over 30 stakeholders from communities and local government, we held deep conversations about the success of the projects.

Throughout these processes, Mkombozi deliberately focussed on the positive. Thus, if we talk of challenges and problems we can create more problems; if we talk of successes we create successes. In the "dream phase" of AI people challenge the status quo by envisioning a preferred future. AI is practical in that it is grounded in the organisation's history, and it is generative, in that it expands the potential for the organisation's future. Thus, AI may be the key that generates real and committed movement to individual, organisational and societal change.

What do children's dreams for their future say about the change in their schools?

In volume one of this research we argued that some of the schools are "dysfunctional", and exhibited high rates of teacher absenteeism, inadequate infrastructure, poor teacher-learner transactions, poor teaching practice and confrontation between schools and parents. A World Café conversation with adults who were involved or affected by the project (including Head teachers, representatives of the school research teams, children, parents, village/street/ward leaders, community members, project team members) marvelled at the successes they had created in addressing the problem of truants and increasing enrolment. For example, it was noted, "We reduced the cloud of truant children in the schools and also the children who run to the streets".

It could be argued, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Need (Maslow, 1943), that the interventions within the schools only addressed basic needs of the school and children (e.g. food, water and school materials). In fact, it is significant that the interventions meet these needs. However, Mkombozi argues that the true impact of these interventions lie at the higher levels of confidence and aspiration that the process has resulted in amongst children and adults.

A snapshot of quotes from the World Café indicates the profound change that has come about in schools that were once considered to be dysfunctional:[9]

- "The project has brought light to parents and community to provide good services to their children."
- "The project has helped communication between the teachers and parents, which helps truancy."
- "The project brought together children whose parents are well-to-do and children whose parents are poor."
- "Because the community was involved in the school project, love, unity and cooperation was built."
- "We were able to understand the problems of our companions and they to understand us in solving problems."
- "Love was seen in the children, especially those who were discouraged and lost hope on life."

Significantly, children affected by the project have been able to see that people care for them and have been able to translate this into care for themselves and a commitment to their lives. The current successes and dreams for the future of those children must be, in Mkombozi's opinion, the strongest indicator that the PAR process made a difference. The descriptions of "success" by children who were vulnerable before this project include:[10]

- "Father and mother are sending me to school."
- "I have lot of energy/strength to think - this helps me in my studies."
- "My father praised me for my studies in the class."
- "Teacher praised me as I passed in my trial tests."
- "My teacher praised me for my handwriting."
- "I learned how to behave."
- "I won playing football."
- "I am happy to be 6th in the quarter finals of the school."
- "I joined in the student council of Tanzania."
- "I am not a big artist, but I am very much interested to learn to draw."

The dreams of children who were vulnerable before this project include:[11]

- "I like to be a teacher."
- "I like to live a good life as a Doctor."
- "I want to help children who are living in difficult circumstances."
- "To study until Form VI."
- "To go to university."
- "Become engineer."
- "I want to be Finance Minister."
- "I want to help street children."
- "I want to be like Ronaldo."
- "I want to have power and ability to help others."
- "I want to be announcer on TV."
- "I want my family to live in peace."
- "I want to help truant children in the school."
- "When I become big I want to play football like Asumani Machupa."
- "I want to be a karate teacher."

World Café is…

…a conversational process. It is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community. As a process, the World Café can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims.

Learn more @ www.theworldcafe.com

There were successes and challenges at each level of the PAR partnership process; from the tripartite NGO partnership, to the project team and school teams...

Mkombozi took a gentle, respectful approach to working with local Government, and although the initially envisaged "project team" didn't really work, the support, engagement and encouragement from Government has been vital to the project's success...

5. Key learning from the project

Through this project, Mkombozi achieved significant learning in three key areas:

- facilitation of the PAR process, and its successes and challenges;
- leveraging community commitment and empowerment;
- the sustainability of the school based interventions.

Our learning is shared here in the hope that NGOs and development partners wishing to implement a similar type of project could capitalise on our experience.

5.1 Thoughts on facilitation of the PAR process and its inherent successes and challenges

The PAR process was structured in such a way that "partnership" was the underlying principle of the project. Specifically, the research process was structured with Mkombozi as the lead agency working in partnership with two local NGOs (i.e. Maarifa ni Ufunguo and Pamoja Trust). In turn, these organisations collaborated with a project team that consisted of representation from the District Education Offices, and Social Welfare and Community Development Departments.

The project team was initially primarily responsible for overseeing the research process and supporting the 10 schools. Within each school there was a nominated research team of six people - the research teams included representatives from the teaching body, the school committee and the students. This meant that the overall research team consisted of almost 80 different stakeholders.

There were a number of successes and challenges at each level of the partnership process; from the tripartite NGO partnership, through to the project team and school-based teams, as detailed below.

@ the NGO level:

Both Pamoja and Maarifa were keen to participate in the project in order to replicate their previous work and to build their credibility. Mkombozi, in turn, was keen to collaborate with NGO partners who were experienced where we were not, specifically in the areas of working with local Government agencies and in advocacy. The partnership was formalised in a MOU that was periodically revisited by the agencies. The partnership went through "ups" and "downs" throughout the project, as each agency was able to bring in different skills and expertise. In the beginning, Pamoja was particularly active in supporting Mkombozi to establish credibility with local education officials. At the action phase of the project, their education staff was also involved in facilitating the Moshi Urban schools with Mkombozi to identify and implement their interventions. Maarifa were involved in researching Pata Elimu Sasa and supporting the school teams during research and action phases.

With hindsight, we believe that we invested insufficient emphasis on clarifying, at regular opportunities, each partners' expectations of working together.

Neither Pamoja nor Maarifa were remunerated as organisations for their involvement, although individual staff costs for time spent on the project were reimbursed. Effectively this meant that the project became an additional 'burden' on organisations that were already stretched for staff and resources. As the project developed, and it emerged that the schools needed support (which the project team could not provide), Maarifa and Pamoja were called upon to dedicate additional staff and time to the work. This raised issues of quality control with the work and lack of clarity around which agencies' systems and processes would be followed. As it turned out, Mkombozi's systems were followed since it was the lead agency, and thus accountable for monitoring and evaluation and the use of funds. But the result of this was a disempowerment of the other two NGOs and a reduction in their sense of ownership of the project and its outcomes.

If we were to undertake such a partnership in future we would ensure that partnership was for discreet elements of the project that were time-bound and realistic. More specifically, in future, we would ensure that:

- From the outset, and then at regular points thereafter, each agency comes together and, from a strategic perspective, examines the added value they are contributing to the project and what added value the project is contributing to them as an organisation.
- Clarification is provided at the start about "norms" for the partnership, including agreement on which systems will be followed in terms of human and financial resource monitoring.
- Elements of the work would be sub-contracted to the other partners, with clear deliverables; as opposed to using vague references to collaboration and partnership as part of a wider programme of work.
- Clear principles for joint monitoring and evaluation of the project are established so that all agencies are actively learning from the experience on the ground.

@ the project team level:

DEOs gave the project important support in terms of permission to do the research, sharing information and assigning a representative to the project team. This positive working relationship with Government stakeholders and schools manifested itself in easy access to information from DEOs, data on drop-outs and enrolment and a general openness to assisting Mkombozi. In fact, this positive working relationship can be attributed to Pamoja's influence and their credibility with DEOs. Additionally, Moshi Urban and Hai District DEOs were impressed by Mkombozi's initial collection of data on school drop-outs, which tallied with MoEVT instructions to DEOs to collect such data and address such issues.

At the early stage of the project, Kilimanjaro Region faced pressure from MoEVT to address the recent fall in academic performance. This congruence in Mkombozi's aims and that of MoEVT meant that the DEOs were committed to working with Mkombozi on this project and thus the head teachers responded to Mkombozi's requests. Thus, an excellent foundation of cooperation was laid early in the project, which has paid dividends throughout. For example, at the action phase of the project, there were problems of misappropriation of funds in one of the schools, and the DEO sent a representative to help resolve the situation.

However, the primary role of the project team, in addition to giving the project legitimacy, was to support the endeavours of the schools in their research. In this respect a number of challenges were faced around deliverables. Practically, the government representatives who were working on the project had neither the time nor the skills to effectively support the schools. Mkombozi's failure to clarify its expectations of what was needed from the project team and to clearly understand from the Government's perspectives what they wanted to get from the project was part of the problem. Rather than formally sub-contracting work to the project team with a TOR, we talked the language of "collaboration" and "partnership". Notably, the issues of accountability were not broached. This was very much a result of working in a context where the Government was not accountable to the project or to Mkombozi, and where speaking the language of deliverables would have been considered both impertinent and potentially hostile. Mkombozi took a gentle and respectful approach to working with local Government and whilst the initially envisaged project team concept did not really work, the sense of support, engagement and encouragement from the Government has continued to be vital to the success of the project.

An important point to note in the context of working with local Government is that the approach that we took in 2004 was appropriate for that time and place. Now in 2007, and looking ahead to further work with Moshi Council in particular, we are in a position to formalise the partnerships in a way that was not possible in 2004. This is partly due to the local government reform process, but also because these three years of the project have been a time for Mkombozi to prove its worth to them.

Bringing government into a process with parents, children and schools had its tensions, but it also created opportunities for interaction among "equal contributors"...

PAR requires that you "trust the process"; thus, we wanted schools to take the research in the direction they felt was appropriate. However, we were also under pressure to report to partners and donors against predefined deliverables. This caused tension during data collection...

@ the school-based team level:

As a generality, the school teams have been motivated throughout the duration of the project, starting with collecting data, interviewing head teachers and visiting children who were out-of-school or truant and their families. This motivation was supported by regular visits by Mkombozi's Schools Development Officer, and was sustained by the school team members reaching a new consciousness about the existence of the issue of vulnerable children in their communities.

Additionally, the school teams reciprocated Mkombozi's investment of training them in research methodologies by demonstrating a positive and motivated approach to the project. The school research teams were immediately keen to follow up school drop-outs, even prior to finalising the collection and analysis of data. In many ways this behaviour was counter to traditional research methods whereby data is collected and analysed prior to proposing recommendations for change, but in practice we found that by following up drop-outs the schools started noticing an immediate change because fewer children played truant with impunity. There were immediate changes in attitudes towards school attendance by children and parents by the mere fact of putting the topic out for discussion within the school and community.

Importantly, the success of initiatives within the schools is directly attributable to how each school team has managed to engage with the teaching staff, parents and local leaders.

Key learning that we believe could be built upon in future initiatives:

In our experience, the scope and variety of people participating in this research process was innovative. Bringing government representatives into a process on an equal footing with parents, children and school staff had its tensions. However, it was also a significant opportunity for Mkombozi, as a facilitator, to emphasise what children bring to the process, and to remind participants that this research was a locally driven initiative and that they could use the Government officials as a resource for support.

In effect, this created opportunities for interaction between officials and people in the community in a context where they were all equal contributors. This was a unique experience for many involved in the project and marked the research as very different from the typical community development projects in which they are most commonly involved.

Mkombozi used regular action learning meetings with stakeholders to reflect upon the challenges and successes of the PAR process throughout the duration of the work. Certain issues came up time and again throughout the three-year project. These issues are synthesised and discussed , according to the following general categories:

- digging deeper
- managing multiple expectations
- how best to enable skill development?

Digging deeper: The research process was as much a learning experience for Mkombozi as for other stakeholders. The process challenged the facilitation skills of our staff. At the beginning of the project we lacked the skills to enable people to come to new learning and consciousness. Consequently, there was a tendency for the school research teams to revert to their default position when thinking of the causes of school drop-outs. These included attributing the problems to "poverty", "parental ignorance" etcetera. The research teams struggled to systematically achieve new insights from an analysis of the data. Throughout the data collection phase the researchers were challenged to be objective and not to influence the data collected. Both the project and school teams were comfortable with action and planning, but reluctant to go to reflection, let alone new learning / consciousness / commitment to change. We believe that this stemmed partly from Mkombozi's facilitation of the process, but also from a reluctance amongst stakeholders to accept the need to challenge these things, because that challenges the entire underpinning of their society and culture. For example, although the researchers began almost immediately to follow up school drop-outs, but in doing so they neglected to research why children drop out.

Managing multiple expectations: Considerable challenges were faced by Mkombozi which stemmed from the reliance initially placed on the project team to support the schools. From the outset of the research project there was a lack of clarity within project team about the expectations of the outcomes of the research. Whilst many of them saw the outcome as increasing access to education and providing services to poor children, Mkombozi's perspective was influenced by the work of Freire and Hope and Timmel (1995) who see PAR as a process of communal transformation and ownership of development. The project team were not used to the PAR style of research and found it challenging to see the process from: action >> reflection >> learning and new consciousness >> commitment for change >> planning (for more information about "action learning", see Volume 1, p.10).

Whilst we were challenged to support the project team to understand the process of action learning, the project team were challenged to support the school teams. At root, this PAR process is quite profound in that it challenges assumptions about how development happens. What we were asking of communities and schools was to take charge of their own developmental needs. We saw our role as facilitators of this process, but were operating in an environment where expectations and pressures from stakeholders, donors and UK partners were on achieving deliverables. PAR is a research approach that focuses on "process". Literally, you have to "trust the process" and "trust the people"; thus, we wanted to be able to be open to the schools to take the research in whatever direction they felt appropriate. However, we were working in a situation where we had to report to UK partners and donors against certain predefined deliverables. This caused tension during the data collection phase of the research. Mkombozi's focus was on offering a safe space and time for stakeholders to reflect deeply about the situation in their schools and communities. Challenging attitudes of rigidity takes time; and yet at Mkombozi we felt under pressure because we did not have time. We were being held to account to keep on time (collect all data by this date, analyse it by that date, and so on). In the first 18 months of the project, considerable negotiation occurred with these agencies about how we needed to invest in the process and take our time with schools and researchers; believing that if we could create positive relationships with our stakeholders, then they would fully commit to the school-based actions that we hoped they would eventually propose.

Additionally, we faced considerable obstacles in achieving consistent participation in the field by the project team. Notably, their participation was driven by an externally imposed agenda from MoEVT to address these of out-of-school children, but their involvement and the success of the research would not directly benefit their lives. Halfway through the project we asked ourselves whether the project team was genuinely part of the community. If the individuals that constituted the team were distant from the community's needs, then it makes it challenging for them to facilitate an authentic PAR process because the community's problems are not directly their problems.

How best to enable skill development? At the start of the research project training was given to the project and school teams in research methods. In practice, this was insufficient to equip them to carry out the research. The first training in September 2004 was an important kick-start to the research, in terms of building school morale, but in terms of research skills it was limited. Specifically, the researchers' use of tools was too narrow, and they focussed on collecting data using interviews, rather than a variety of data collection methods. Mkombozi would strongly recommend to others wishing to engage in PAR that they invest considerably in ongoing training of researchers so that the transference of research skills is deepened. We found that the training needs of the various members of the school team were incredibly diverse and that it was logistically impossible for Mkombozi to do individual school-based training for the research. The idea for the PAR project team to support the school teams in this skill gap was compromised by their inability to spend much time in the field and the lack of facilitation and research skills that they themselves possessed. With hindsight, at the end of the project, we would question the assumption that it is feasible to transfer research skills from a consultant, to Mkombozi, to the project team, and then to school team.

The involvement of
street leaders and
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is vital. The school
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5.2 Thoughts on leveraging community commitment and empowerment

"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 to do so" (Mkombozi, 2006, pg. 28). During the data collection period of the research we were confronted with a number of attitudinal barriers whereby schools believed that they could not alter anything beyond their immediate control. Much of the underlying PAR process was about challenging these people to push beyond their comfort zone. We asked ourselves: how can we address this sense of disempowerment and where does it come from? Does it originate from a skill or knowledge deficit or does it come from the history where schools and communities relied on the central Government? We believe that the current lack of resources facing schools and social development initiatives adds obstacles to locally driven change and further reduces community members' confidence to act.

Of course, no one can empower another - one can only enable empowerment by unleashing what already exists and is yet to be captured. This is the fundamental premise of the PAR process, but importantly, we also made the following four, key insights which ultimately better enabled us to unleash this potential:

Insight # 1: Work within current power structures and achieve the "buy-in" of those who hold local power

Although this project was about bringing the most marginalised and vulnerable people into local development processes, we found that we could not achieve this by denying the influence of local power structures. The involvement of street leaders and Ward Education Coordinator (WECs) from the start of such a project was absolutely vital. The school itself belongs to the village and thus to the village leadership. The school is the "mali ya kijiji" (wealth of the village). If the village leadership do not buy-in to the need for school improvements, nothing will happen.

At a higher level of the government hierarchy, the DEOs and Councillors are more hands-off and are ultimately "political" in their roles. So, while it is important to have their voiced support for any changes, real day-to-day influence lies in WECs and Village Executive Officers (VEOs) or street leaders. These are the people who have the authority to make and enforce by-laws and to influence local agendas for development. These are also the people who can focus the local development plans on vulnerable children as opposed to water resources. Notably, in this context, it is also important to work with local Government leaders, who often feel helpless to achieve change[12] and are keen to work with local NGOs who can build upon their capacities.

Insight # 2: The influence of individuals will make or break an initiative

In the rural schools, particularly, the initiatives established were primarily ones that would benefit the wider community. The success

of these projects was contingent upon the local leaders who tended to take on responsibility for the success of the project. In contrast, in urban schools the initiative and commitment to the projects tended to lay with the schools.

For example, at Kifumbu School in Kibosho the process of deciding which intervention they would pursue took longer than in other schools, but they eventually chose the gardening project for which they needed water. This meant that the project engaged with the system at a number of levels from the needs of the school, the group dynamics within the wider community and the requirements of the local leaders to oversee change. In this situation, the success of the project was largely due to the motivation of the village chair who engaged wider commitment from the community.

At Lambo Extended, a similar thing occurred whereby community resources were mobilised towards a school shop, whilst the services of family life education were offered to women who normally fall outside of social safety nets. At Lambo Extended, movement on the project stalled until the Head Teacher was replaced with a new man who was wholly committed to the project and moved it forward.

Mnini School struggled throughout the action phase of the process. This is a rural school, but the teacher who was a member of the school-based team was not comfortable putting the project in the hands of the parents or the community. Ultimately, he embezzled materials for the project and this has led to conflict between parents and school, who are equally frustrated at the outcome.

Importantly, deference to people in power prevails. Kombo School showed lots of successes at the beginning of the action phase as they ran projects that included sewing machine, pigs and water improvement. But as the project period comes to a close, and as we reflect with the schools about the process, parents are now voicing recriminations about the previous Head Teacher. They feel that he was "bulldozing" them, but these feelings only emerged once he left. So, although we thought the project was going well because it was producing results, actually his disempowerment of parents caused significant resentment. They didn't address this whilst he was in place because of inequality in power - the teacher was in an assumed position of power, whereas they were simply "poor parents". It is only now that new vigorous VEO is in place that these feelings are being voiced.

Insight # 3: The need to identify and capitalise on the potential points of leverage for change within the system

Kibaoni School is an example of a school that had an ambitious programme for change. They initiated a truant patrol and a local ban on children using pool tables during school hours. But at the final action learning session (April 2007) on the project, they complained that children were again using the pool tables. The local Councillor had been responsible for taking the lead on all initiatives, but even he did not understand the points of leverage in the Government system. The DEO clarified with them that they actually needed to go to see him and that he would then instruct the council planners and cultural officers to ban pool tables from around schools.

In practice, many Government representatives do not know how to use the opportunities and limitations of their power. For example, the DEO in Hai asked the VEO / WEC (the same person in this case) why they had not bought him information about the issue of pool tables. In practice, the VEO / WEC was facing opposition from the owners of pool tables and thus was reluctant to put herself in the position of being opposed.

A question that emerged throughout the PAR process was how to enable government officials to understand decision-making within their communities and to share this with key stakeholders.

Insight # 4: Interventions need to be "owned" by a wider group

A number of different approaches were used to facilitate the action phase of the project. One was to work with a small number of stakeholders asking them to feedback on research findings and to then propose actions. The risk of this approach was narrow ownership of the interventions. For example, in Kifumbu and Mnini Schools, there was a lack of community mandate. At Mnini, teachers involved from the start of the project were not convinced of the importance of involving other people. In contrast, at Pasua and Kibaoni Schools, the action phase started with re-engaging a wide group of stakeholders, including local government and children. As a result, Kibaoni School saw that the impact of reducing truancy was dependent on them working with all schools in the area.

Notably, Pasua School engaged three other schools and community members, who then in turn encouraged the Pasua teachers to get more engaged. Consequently, the local secondary school and two other primary schools came together to resolve the water problem that was facing them all. The mobilisation of various people was also seen in Pasua's celebration of the Global Week of Action, which was the "first time in all the history of the schools where so many parents had come together".[13]

The advantages of community mobilisation lie in the sustainability and potential for replication of the interventions. For example, if the projects are located as a community initiative rather than that of the Head Teacher, then it is less likely to collapse if the teacher is reassigned. Specifically, we have found that when interventions were included as regular items on parent or community meeting agendas, they were typically maintained as a high priority issue.

Whilst the sheer numbers involved in harnessing community engagement were logistically complex, the alternative was flawed. Involving many people meant that we were not able to offer deep and intensive support to schools. But the findings of mistrust between schools and communities in the first phase no longer exist to such a degree. The PAR process was effectively used as a means to mediate the latent opposition between schools and communities. Parents now come freely to the school authorities and the blame culture has diminished. The project has "brought light to parents and community to provide good services to their children." Because the "community was involved to contribute towards the school projects" "love, unity and cooperation was built," and "we were able to understand the problems of our companions and they to understand us in solving problems and succeed."[14]

5.3 Thoughts on the sustainability of the school-based interventions

A PAR process was used in this project as an approach to ensuring that communities really engaged themselves with the issue of vulnerable children. The final actions that each school initiated were in many ways a manifestation of the degree of awareness and commitment that was catalysed to address the problem of school drop-outs and truants. As such, we anticipate that the attitudinal change will last beyond the duration of this project. However, questions will also naturally be asked about how long the school based actions will live and what efforts were made in the project to ensure their sustainability.

Significantly, each and every action that came from the schools is an authentic expression of local needs as perceived by the community. As such, they are relevant and appropriate interventions for their context. The communities will sustain them as long as they remain relevant to their needs. If the communities' needs change, one could expect the interventions to change, and this is as it should be. Development is not a fixed entity and we would hope that the PAR process has enabled communities and schools to look more consciously at their needs and develop the confidence to articulate them and plan for local solutions.

However, there are financial implications. How will the schools continue to cover the costs incurred by these interventions? When interventions were initially proposed, a key criteria placed on the schools was that they could not propose an intervention if they would be unable to sustain the intervention's costs beyond the duration of the project. Thus, there is an income-generating element in many of the schools' actions - such as local shops, vegetable gardens, rolling loan funds.

An issue that Mkombozi faced at the early stage of the action phase was to agree on what level of financial support to give to the schools. We were conscious that if we gave them too little it would be difficult for the community to make much of a difference with the money. But if we gave them too much it would raise issues of ownership because they could never have raised that amount themselves. In the end, we settled on Tsh 500,000 per school. Some schools then supplemented this amount through local fundraising, which had mixed successes. At Lambo Extended, extensive in-kind and financial support was given by the community for the school shop. At Kifumbu School however, when institutional donors were approached, this seemed to act as a disincentive for the community to support the water project because "they don't feel a relationship with the school".[15] Both Majengo and Manushi Juu Schools asked for contributions at parent meetings. In contrast, Kibaoni School had aspirations for a block wall to surround the school and found that this issue really did not touch the hearts of the community.

The fence issue was one that touched many schools due to a recent Government directive has instructed schools to demarcate their land. It is an issue which demonstrates the profound gap between what schools want to do to improve themselves / their facilities and the failure of systems to actually support these ambitions. That is, accessing funds for school improvements in infrastructure or for providing a wider range of educational services is almost impossible for most schools. Thus, although Tanzania talks about "funding quality education for all", but funding classrooms and teachers is not enough. The fact is that school improvements demand resources, and there is only so much that can be achieved through community mobilisation and attitudinal change.

So the question remains... Will the schools and communities sustain the impact of this project over the longer term, and will they continue to prioritise vulnerable children?

To these questions, Mkombozi would answer a qualified "yes" - they will do so given external focus on keeping vulnerable children on the agenda. We hope that the DEOs will ask the schools to report on the status of vulnerable children and the progress of activities as part of their regular monitoring. In turn, Mkombozi should take the initiative to continue to measure the enrolment, truancy, PSLE rates in 2008 to see what extent to which the interventions have continued to have impact. Specifically, Mkombozi should continue to follow up each school once a quarter, to sustain the relationships that we have built up in these communities over the past three years. Additionally, perhaps the best opportunity to sustain the financial resourcing of these interventions and wider services for vulnerable children lies in capitalising upon the new organisational development process within local government authorities. This is a process whereby the community identifies its development needs from the ward level, and this is fed into the wider council budgeting process. It is from this point of leverage that Mkombozi now plans to work with the Moshi Municipal Council to support wards to make children's services systemic within their planning and financing. After all, it is only possible to achieve real development for Tanzania when it is acknowledged that children and youth comprise 50% of the current population - their needs require real budgeting and effective planning today.

Mkombozi

- Empowering children
- Engaging families
- Enabling communities

Our "change vision" of the future is to be a determined, proactive, innovative, and grassroots NGO that others choose to follow; one whose work effectively changes the public perception of vulnerable and street children...

6. Endnotes

1. REPOA Annual Conference, 2006. Face to face discussion.

2. Mkombozi, 2005. Summary Report of PAR Team Workshops.

3. Dyer, K. and Mkombozi, 2006. May: Update report from Moshi Rural Schools.

4. Raj, W., March 2007. Action learning with urban target school communities on the school based interventions.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Mkombozi, 2006. "Action Alert! Sexual Abuse in Tanzania's schools: Case studies from Majengo community".

8. Meeting of MEMKWA facilitators and officers in-charge of MEMKWA during training on active learning methodologies (20th - 31st March, 2006) and during training (May 24th - 30th) at Umoja hostel.

9. "World Café" with education stakeholders, May 2007, Bristol Cottages, Moshi.

10. "Appreciative Inquiry", 20th April 2007, Mkombozi, Moshi.

11. Ibid.

12. "World Café" with education stakeholders, May 2007, Bristol Cottages, Moshi.

13. Raj, W., April 2007. Interview at Mkombozi, Moshi.

14. Ibid.

15. Interview with Jane John, Mkombozi Schools Development Officer, August 2006.

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APPENDIX: Steps in the "PAR process" in Mkombozi's 10 target schools

1. Formed Management team
Including representatives from Mkombozi, PAMOJA trust, Maarifa ni Ufunguo, as well as DEOs and Community Development from 3 districts and Social Welfare.

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2. Formed school research teams
Including a teacher, a parent, a male student, a female student, and a school committee member to comprise each team in each of the 10 target schools.

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3. Training all school teams and management team
Training in / conceptualisation of PAR methodologies, logistics, and research tools.

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4. First round of data collection by school teams
Using PAR methods, school teams collected data in meetings with parents, truant children, dropped-out children, teachers and others.

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5. Shared results / experiences
Sharing of case studies, data related to causes and difficulties encountered among four teams of Moshi Rural, four teams of Moshi Urban, and two teams of Hai District (in three different places).

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6. Second round of data collection
Using PAR tools and involving community members and leaders.

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7. Sharing of results, experiences and planning interventions
Sharing of main causes of drop-outs / truants and action plans, and deepening understandings among four teams of Moshi Rural, four teams of Moshi Urban, and two teams of Hai District (in three different places).

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8. Meeting individual teams confirming intervention plans
Including Moshi Rural (Kate Dyer, Jane John and Theobald Mariki), Moshi Urban (William Raj, Amani Lucas and Linus Kiberenge) and Hai District (Kate McAlpine and Boniface Lyimo).

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9. Piloting interventions

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10. Sharing meetings
Sharing interventions in each school team (some schools had formal launches of interventions with the whole community present).

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11. Sharing meetings
Sharing ideas, learning from one another, and reflecting together, among four teams of Moshi Rural, four teams of Moshi Urban, and two teams of Hai District (in three different places).

↓

12. Action learning
Action learning by each individual school team to wrap up the project, hand over full ownership to the team / community, and plan sustainability and continuity of achievements / interventions moving forward.

Mkombozi...

is one of the leading child-focussed agencies in northern Tanzania, working with over 1,000 vulnerable children and families a year in Kilimanjaro and Arusha regions. We help vulnerable children and youth to grow in mind, body and spirit and to build a more caring society for all.

We want a world where...

all children and youth are prioritised and can access opportunities to become well rounded, inquiring and productive people, who are working towards a more just and democratic society.

We believe that...

we can promote social justice through participation and collaboration. We capture local potential through learning and reflection and act as a catalyst for holistic development.

Our "change vision" of the future...

is to move ahead in a determined and proactive way as a leading NGO in the field of child rights. This vision defines our intentions to be an innovative, grassroots NGO that others choose to follow and it inspires our work to change the public perception of vulnerable and street children.