

African Child Week-Reflections.

“We owe our children the most vulnerable citizens in any society-a life free from violence and fear-Mandela”



The Day of African Child is officially celebrated on 16th June, it was inaugurated in 1991 by the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) currently known as the African Union (AU). The initiative was to honour the victims of the Soweto uprising in 1976 in protest to poor schooling conditions during apartheid in South Africa. Hundreds of Children were shot on that fateful day.

To date, the day remains significant and covers all the children across the continent of Africa. Today an African child is still exposed to so many atrocities that I can only list a few ranging from child soldiers, mass rapping of children in war zones, children born and die in war zone, no access to education, child trafficking, domestic abuse and all forms of sexual and physical abuse.

Instead focusing on the continent, our network resolved to focus on the children in Tanzania. While our children in Tanzania are not facing the challenges like those in war zone, they have their own challenges. This week of 16th June, 2020, we have had a series of discussions and exchange with other stakeholders on children's rights and child justice forum in conjunction with the ministry of Constitution and Laws of Tanzania. Upon a lengthy of discussions, we observed that we needed to take action by giving talks and sessions in different schools starting with pupils then at another stage to the members of staff.

Last year the mayor of Tanga bemoaned the high rate of child marriages in Tanga and invited the child justice forum to address that issue. We could not start because we had no funds and the project is huge with a lot of schools. This year we are planning on starting the project together with our partners however little we will do, the situation has become more difficult than before due to the threat of covid19.

Below are some of the excerpts from the Tanzania Human Rights Report of 2018:

The Police Data indicated that within 6 months they had received cases of abuse against children of about 6,376.

NB: Victims of violence against Children are more likely to become perpetrators of violence against children when they become adults. Let's stop the rot now!!!

“In **Singida**: There is a case of a woman who sells traditional liquor. When she comes back home, she usually comes back with a man, both drunk. They engage in sexual activity; and when they finish the man turns to her 13 year-old daughter and rapes her. Different men come home every night and rape the child. Fortunately the Child has been rescued by the Social Welfare and was found to be HIV negative.”

“In **Mtwara**: A man reportedly attacked and killed a child after the child's mother refused his sexual advances”

“In **Loliondo-Arusha**: A secondary school teacher raped and impregnated a 15 year-old pupil.”

“In **Nyegezi-Mwanza**: A man was arrested for raping a 4-year-old girl”

“In **Iringa**: a 45 year-old man was arrested for using a 14 year-old girl for commercial sexual exploitation and beating her when she refused to engage in sexual intercourse”

“In **Babati**: a primary school teacher was arrested for sodomising a standard five pupil at school.”

“In **Mbeya-Chunya**: 8 year-old girl was raped to death by a 25 year-old man. Witchcraft belief was said to be the motive behind”

“In **Kilimanjaro**: 10 pupils (5 boys and 5 girls) were reportedly sodomised and raped at unnamed school”

“At **Tabora**: a 6-year-old child in a boarding school was repeatedly sodomised at school. Once his health started to deteriorate, his parents took him to the hospital for a check up and he was found to be HIV positive. Supposedly, he acquired the virus due to sexual abuse suffered at school. His father was shocked, suffered stroke and then died.”

“At **Misungwi**: A child aged 9 years was regularly sodomised by fellow pupils, aged 12 and 13. They would pull the child to the bushes while coming from school and do it. After

sometime the teachers noticed that child was not okay, upon inquiry he told them the whole story”

In conclusion, the research findings indicated that witchcraft beliefs play a big role in prevalence of violence against children in Tanzania. People expect to get quick money through abuse of children, especially raping young girls. Majority of perpetrators of sexual violence against children in Tanzania are neighbours, close relatives, bodaboda drivers and teachers.