

# Day of the AFRICAN CHILD

"Orphans Our Collective Responsibility"

June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005

## Gaudensia: Crushing stones sole survival

By JOSEPH KITHAMA

At the age of four and a half years, a good looking Ms. Gaudensia Chuki was supposed to enjoy parental love, the right to play children's games and her internationally- recognised basic right to education.

However, the lifestyle of Gaudensia, a resident of Isamilo in Nyamagana District, is virtually a negation of all the children's basic rights enjoyed by her age mates elsewhere in the world.

Her tender hands have never touched a toy or a computer game for children and instead at the early age of three years, Unaiwe Perusi Yusuf (56) handed-over to Gaudensia a comparatively small hammer to crush stones.

"She started crushing stones with that small hammer but now she uses a bigger one, she is used to it," said her grandmother, who is heading a family of three abandoned children and her sick sister.

To Gaudensia, crushing stones is the only assurance for survival, she has taken it not as child labour, universally outlawed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but as sheer means of making ends meet.

Gaudensia crushes stones enough to fill two bi-sected gallons of stones a day, alongside her elder brothers and their grandmother who has to crush stones to fill 12 buckets in a battle to keep alive the abandoned children living in a mud-hut on the rocky slopes of Isamilo.

The orphaned family that lives in extreme hardship has to crush stones everyday to fill a truck and sells it for Tsh. 30,000. "Usually, we sell buckets of crushed stones at between Tsh 200 and Tsh. 400, just to get a few coins to buy flour and small fishes," said

Gaudensia.

The father abandoned Lenatus Tito (13), Lucas Peter (10) and Gaudensia several years ago for reasons best known to himself. "Some people say he currently resides in Dar es Salaam. Who knows! We are in the dark on his whereabouts.

The family has no any other source of income except stone crushing. It is a landless household headed by a grandmother with no financial muscle even to rent a plot to farm, which changes hands at Tsh 30,000 for half an acre.

The market for crushed stones is not always guaranteed. When there is construction work, the family is assured of a place to sell the crushed stones as it is the case now at Isamilo where a gravel road is currently under construction.

"On several occasions, we go down to Tsh. 200 for a bucket of crushed stones for lack of reliable market at Isamilo, an unique ward in Mwanza, characterised by a mixture of affluent people and most vulnerable ones, but who seem to little concern over the disadvantaged class.

The family cannot afford to pay any medical expenses, except for panadol tablets, which are mere painkillers. "We earnestly pray to God to save us from falling sick," said the grandmother, folding her hands resignedly.

Just a stone-throw away, there is another grandmother Ms. Sawata Mayo (50), who single-handedly looks after seven children who are from three different families related to her.

Out of the seven children aged between two and 13 years, three children failed even to enrol for free education provided by Government because they are too poor to afford a skirt of Tsh 2,000.



Gaudensia Chuki, crushing stones is the only means of income for the orphaned family

Three different couples who either died of AIDS or simply abandoned their off springs at the grandmother home to draw water to fill between two and three drums daily in order to get Tsh. 3,500 to ensure that the children survive in the face of the experience they face.

Although the ongoing rains are a good omen for most people, for Sawata whose survival wholly depends on selling water, the rains threaten the very survival of her vulnerable children.

This boy has been able to attend school after being offered a second-hand trouser by a Good Samaritan, said the grandmother who feeds all the stomachs of children around her by selling water carried on her head from

a tap water point installed by a well-established Isamilo resident.

Ms. Christine Mashiku, the Ward Executive Officer for Isamilo, says that well-to-do personalities in Mwanza reside in Isamilo, an exclusive area that could be compared to Oysterbay neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam. But the ward is also home to over 500 most vulnerable children (MVs) under the age of 18 years, according to a survey on MVs conducted in January 2005.

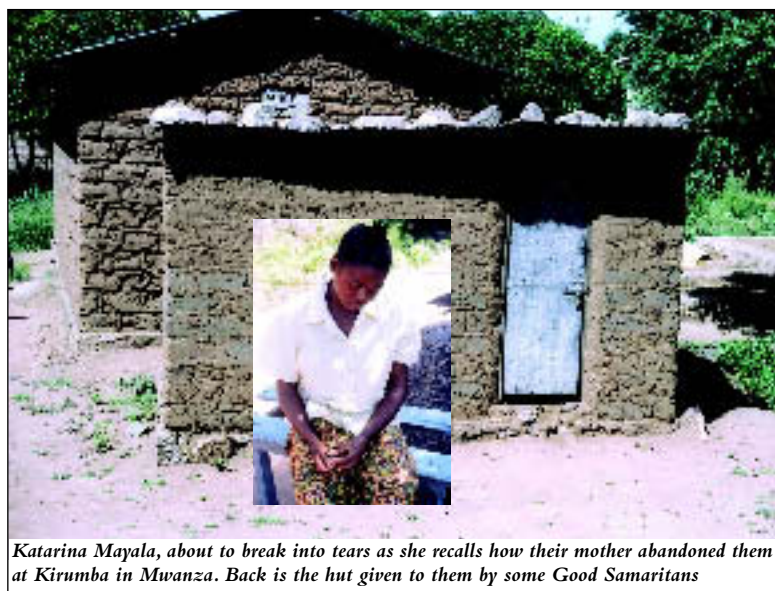
Most vulnerable children in Isamilo Ward account for 6.3 percent of nearly 15,000 children under the age of 18 years who live within the stone-engulfed Mwanza ward. Identified challenges that vulnerable children face in Isamilo include lack of basic

necessities: food, shelter, lack of education, missed affection, chronic diseases and getting involved in crime.

Recent World Bank studies in Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia have found that grandparents made up single largest category that cares for orphans. Older people are selling land, property including cattle and other assets in the struggle to meet their own basic needs, and to take care of their grandchildren.

Current global figures estimate that 16 million children under the age of 15 years have lost either one or both parents due to AIDS, and another 40 million children will lose their parents within the next 10 years.

## Child struggling to support siblings



Katarina Mayala, about to break into tears as she recalls how their mother abandoned them at Kirumba in Mwanza. Back is the hut given to them by some Good Samaritans

A mud-brick hut, devoid of windows and roofed with loose corrugated iron sheets pressed in place by scattered stones, stands in Mwanza close to the tomb of the deceased father of three children, who have been abandoned by their mother.

The late father might be resting in peace in the nearby family cemetery, but the three children are battling for their very survival under the cover of the corrugated sheets donated by a Good Samaritan after a complete collapse of another hut, which used to belong to their grandmother who also passed away.

Only three years after the death of their beloved father, Katarina Baliba (17), Mayala Baliba (13) and Emmanuel Baliba (11) were dumped at Kibuhoro in Kirumba Ward by their mother, who moved to Nyegezi to marry another man.

Occasionally, she comes empty-handed to visit her children and leaves them in the same situation without any sign of remorse, neighbours of the children narrated in the presence of Katarina, who

was weeping.

Katarina was compelled to shoulder the responsibility of heading the family of three children at the age of 14 years, with absolutely no financial resources to support her herself and her two young brothers.

The psychological wounds the mother has inflicted on Katarina are far above her emotional powers to contain. "Every time we come to visit Katarina she makes us cry," solemnly said Ms. Iluminata Mwita, Senior Community Development Officer for Mwanza, as another lady, Rose Ahmed, who guided us to the dumped children was shedding tears.

Katarina has never attended any formal primary school classroom because she has to take the role of her mother.

At one time she decided to leave their single bed to her two brothers and spend nights on an earth floor, which proved to be wet, a condition caused by rains.

"Sometimes we have to vacate the hut during midnights to save our lives from the loose sheets, which are likely to be swept

away by stormy rains or leakage during the rainy season," said Katarina, amidst bitter weeping.

As if the endless story of the agony suffered by the children who qualify to be abandoned children were not enough, Katarina had to drop out from a vocational school in Mwanza where she had wanted to learn welding, due to ill health.

Good-hearted people in Mwanza are looking at the possibility to sponsor Katarina to undertake sewing courses believed to be compatible to her health status. The community development department is coordinating offers to support the child.

The survival of the three children absolutely depends on food supplies provided by a Catholic institute, named as SHARON. The relief organisation is the only assurance of their survival on the earth.



Since 1991, The Day of African Child has been celebrated all over Africa, as an opportunity to build greater public awareness on issues affecting children's lives. In Tanzania, the Day is being commemorated with participation of children. This year's theme is: 'Orphans Our Collective Responsibility'.

# The UNICEF Representative to Tanzania, Mr. Rodney Phillips, in an interview on the situation of orphans in the country.

**Q. How should grandparents who make single largest category of orphans in Tanzania be supported?**

A. HIV/AIDS has almost wiped out a whole generation of parents and guardians of children. We now see grandparents who are also sick taking care of their grandchildren. Households headed by grandparents and children themselves are extremely vulnerable. Thus the caretakers of orphans and the most vulnerable urgently need support. The magnitude of the problem requires a community-based approach. The communities have to mobilize and organize themselves to see how they support orphans and other most vulnerable children. UNICEF provides support to identification of the Most Vulnerable Children in various communities by transferring cash and commodities directly to those communities.

**Q. How is UNICEF assisting Tanzania to cope with over 2 million orphans?**

A. Essentially, the responsibility of looking after the orphans falls under

the leadership of the government in collaboration with the community and civil society. The Ministry of Labour, Youth Development & Sports has developed an excellent strategic plan on how to support orphans in the country. UNICEF will be supporting the implementation of this strategic plan, and the mobilization of resources that it will require.

**Q. Are the Millennium Development Goals on Children achievable in Tanzania where HIV/AIDS is taking its toll on more population?**

A. HIV/AIDS is itself a Millennium Goal – goal Number 6 – set globally for every country. Tanzania has to set its own realistic goals, which may not necessarily be within the timeframe of the global goals. The intermediate goals should reflect resources available in the country, and cover the next 3-4 years. This will allow the development of more accurate monitoring indicators, and greater political accountability.

**Q. To what extent is UNICEF assisting the Tanzanian**

**government in protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence?**

A. That is a critical area! Not only the health and education of children is important, but also national awareness of and action against exploitation, neglect, violence and abuse. Awareness will empower children to know their rights. A policy and a legal framework addressing the violation of child rights should be accelerated and enforced. UNICEF is supporting the government in the development of a Child Code, that will strengthen the legal protection of Tanzanian children, adolescents and young people.

**Q. Which is the best way to handle orphans in Tanzania- let them stay with relatives or send them to orphanages?**

A. UNICEF does not support orphanages as a first line of response. It is better orphans stay with relatives within the community. We try to support them through their caregivers within the household and the community. Orphanages could themselves be a source of child abuse.

**Q. Life expectancy is falling due mainly to HIV/AIDS. Is Tanzania in a position to offset the trend through improvement of nutrition and health services?**

A. Yes, nutrition and health are important in raising life expectancy but also education, which is the social – vaccine against HIV/AIDS. Tanzania has the political will to raise the life expectancy of its people using its resources. If the government, civil societies and NGOs are to work closely, they can find an effective way to reverse the decline of life expectancy. The current poverty reduction plan – the MKUKUTA – gives us grounds for much hope. Not only UNICEF, but the UN system as a whole, support the MKUKUTA objectives and strategies, in a widening partnership for children.



The UNICEF Representative to Tanzania Mr Rodney Phillips sharing a light moment with children.

## Why Tanzanians prefer making big contributions to weddings rather than supporting needy children?

Below are excerpts from a cross section of people collected in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar.

Mr. Barabona Thomas Morongo, the Executive Director of the Organization for the People in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS (WAMATA), recalls how a wedding he attended recently spent millions of shillings, raised by a handful of well-to-do people in Dar es Salaam.

The menu at the wedding had a list of redundant foodstuffs such as porridge, milk and others, some of which the guests never tasted.

Mr. Morongo says some of the people who contributed more than a million shillings during the wedding preparations, have relatives and orphans living in a pathetic situation aside them.

Mr. Morongo attributes the attitude of contributing to grand weddings instead of supporting disadvantaged children to the legacy of Ujamaa (African socialism).

“Ujamaa implanted into people’s mind the unfortunate notion that children belonged to the government. Therefore the government is the only institution that is supposed to take care of them,”

He cites the regions of Kagera and Kilimanjaro, which were not highly affected by the Ujamaa legacy, noting that in those regions many people managed to send their children to school using money contributed communally.

Dk. Mushy Conrad says that most people contribute more to weddings than for the welfare of orphans because of prestige they gain once they pledge big amounts of money in front of their colleagues. “They think contributing to the orphans is a long term plan that has to be handled by the government.”

Conrad says that many policy makers and some of those irresponsible society members actually attained their education free of charge. “If they were assisted. Why shouldn’t they not assist others?” Conrad asks.

Rose Muthamia, 20, a resident of Mwananyamala, is associating the tendency to show-off behavior they usually want everybody to take note of their presence. Another concern that Muthamia rises is of people believing that assisting orphans is the responsibility of orphans’ relatives, forgetting that some of orphans’ relatives were extreme poor.

Eating, drinking and partying are favorite social activities to most Tanzanians, says John Mujulizi, 34, a city businessman, and that contributors to the wedding are excited with self-entertainment at the wedding reception.

He says that to them, contributions

to wedding parties are eventually spent on entertainment compared to the acts of helping an orphan from whom nobody benefits directly.

However, Mujulizi says that those usually reluctant in assisting orphans are in some instances right as nowadays people are riding on posh cars and living in luxurious houses under the umbrella of orphans. “Such acts discourage people willing to assist the orphans.

“Sometimes, money given to orphans makes no impact as it is swindled by a few crooks in the society,” he says adding that nobody would be ready to see other people enjoying life with money given to help

schools.

Very few parents in the Isles consider taking their kids to the paid up Primary or Secondary schools and instead rely much on the public schools that offer free education up to secondary school level.

Unfortunately public schools lack basic requirements like desks, reference textbooks and competent staff.

While very little effort is exerted on raising funds to finance education in Zanzibar, most of the families spend chunk money to finance preparations for the wedding ceremonies.

Such wedding contribution does not even benefit the newly weds but rather people attending the wedding.

various types of new dress shoots up, it is the same to Zanzibar’s women demanding new dresses during the wedding ceremony.

Women in Zanzibar, who are the most uneducated when compared to men, they are the major consumers of the family income in most of the wedding ceremonies that men do not have access to.

But the major question remains why in the first place, parents, relatives and husbands invest a lot in the wedding ceremonies and at the same time turning a blind eye on the most important sector such as education.

Ali Uki is journalist in Zanzibar and thinks the society needs to change if

and everyone in the family feels he/she has to conform to.

Diverting from the traditional norms, he says, positions the detractor at loggerheads with the society succumbing to unbearable sanctions let alone portraying the person in bad light with the public.

Abdul Khamis, an hotelier from Ras Nungwi in Northern Unguja region, is of the opinion that the public needs to be educated to pull most of their resources to fund the education sector.

But on why preference is more on the wedding rather than education, Mr Khamis says it is because a wedding unites two families that compete to impress each other.

Everyone from the side of either the bride or bride groom family feel that there was a need to celebrate while the issue of education is considered within reach of the single family itself.

He says that there were also no direct material benefit for distant relatives or friends when they contribute for the education of the kid while when you contribute for the wedding it is almost a must that you must attend.

That is, he says, every side of the couple feels obliged to contribute for the wedding, out of sheer fear that if they would not do that the other side would have ill feelings about them.

“Education is taken to be a distant clan or inter-family undertaking while a wedding involves a bigger group that includes bride groom and bride family making contribution to be affected,” he says.

Farashuu Ali Ame says contribution for the wedding ceremonies stems from a long time tradition of believing a marriage is not only between the couples but rather a union of two families of the bride and that of the bridegroom.

She says that what is being celebrated there is not only the wedding between the couples but the union of the two different families making it justifiable for the bigger ceremony.

Farashuu thinks that while there was a need for the parents to arrange such fundraising to facilitate their kids to attend school, fundraising for the wedding ceremony should also be sustained.

Khamis Ali Shaame, a Kidongo Chekundu resident, thinks that people feel obliged to contribute for the wedding ceremony solely because of the expected benefit of equally participating in the actual function.

He says the major driving force therefore is not to support, but to be part of the important people who would celebrate the wedding ceremony.



The Most Vulnerable: Such appealing pictures don't touch the hearts and minds of Tanzanians who prefer contributing to lavish weddings!

the orphans while the givers have to squeeze themselves to donate it.

He, however, challenges registered organizations or volunteers claiming to assist orphans to be truthful and committed to the call but not use it for self-aggrandisement.

In Zanzibar it’s now a taboo for most parents and friends not to volunteer to contribute money for a wedding or organizing an expensive reception for the newly weds. However, you hardly have such arrangements when it comes to financing education.

While attaining basic primary and secondary school education remains to be the most crucial issue among the parents in Zanzibar, the families here hardly consider organizing fundraising drive to fund their kids to paid up

A good deal of money contributed for a wedding in the Isles goes to finance expensive garments and gowns for the women attending the ceremony and other decorations, but very little is spent on refreshments and drinking.

The ceremonies remain to be lucrative projects for women to buy or show case their new and most expensive dresses acquired with very little material benefit going to the newly-wed or about to be married couples.

In mainland, the situation is rather different, refreshment and liquor takes a large portion of the money contributed for the wedding ceremony and a little goes to buying gifts for the newly weds.

Like what it is to Christmas on mainland Tanzania when demand for

Zanzibar was to prioritize education sector, saying spending a lot for the wedding, which hardly survives, was wastage of resources.

He says that it is high time parents should think of investing in their kids and one of the considerations, he says, should be spending money for the education.

Mr Uki says available education infrastructure in the Isles was not enough in providing the needful, since he says the standard of these public institutions leaves a lot to be desired.

He is of the opinion that the actual process of contribution for the wedding is what tends to bind the inter-family dependency or ties among the close family relatives.

This is the tradition that he says everyone among friends and relatives

# Retired civil servants committed to children

BY JOSEPH KITHAMA.

It's common practice for retirees from government service to spend the rest of the time looking after private businesses with a view to making both ends meet, but three of them based in Temeke- Mtoni in Dar es Salaam have a different mission.

The three spend the remaining time to provide education to street children in the city, thus translating their cherished ideal to have street children go to school, absolutely without any financial resources of their own, and above all they had no any building to run the school.

"Back in 1968, we registered the school, 'purely on donor-dependency status,' aimed at providing free education to street children, particularly orphans, primary school dropouts and orphans who have to discontinue studies due to inability to pay school

fees and other expenses," said the Executive Director of the Street Children Care and Development Trust (SCCADET), Mr Peter Nnally (69), a retired magistrate.

Mr. Nally, together with Mr. Bernard Makoja, a former teacher who later entered politics, and the head teacher of the school, Ms. Perpetua Nnali, are today a legacy of a group of retired civil servants who have conquered the natural temptation to look after their own business in order to pursue what they find a noble cause.

"During night time, we started by following-ups frequenting public places on street children, those who were peddling items such as cigarettes, roasted groundnuts and drinking water to lure them to join the free school," recalls the SCCADET Executive Director.

As part of the strategy to woo them back, the former civil servants have to convince the street children



Mr. Bernard Makoja (retired politician) teaching primary school students

that they would not forfeit the petty businesses that assure them daily incomes to buy at least basic necessities.

The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) provided the school with an old building at Temeke Mtoni, which used to operate as a beer bar.

The first batch of pupils at the school had no desks to sit on; instead they had to study while seated on a bare floor.

Few years later the building was withdrawn from the school, prompting Mr. Nnally to approach his relatives so that they would provide a tiny building that was in the shanty corridors of Temeke, which looked like a poultry shed.

It's Reverend Father John of the Benedictine Order who linked them to a German-sponsor of the little-

known school. Utilising funds from the sponsor, the management changed the house looking like a poultry-shed into tiny classrooms.

The effort done by the street children's school was ultimately appreciated by Save the Children Fund in Tanzania, which donated material and financial support to the school, including allowances to volunteer- teachers.

In 2002, the effort rendered by all the contributors enabled it to be among the first ten primary schools, which performed with flying colours in the Standard 1V national examinations.

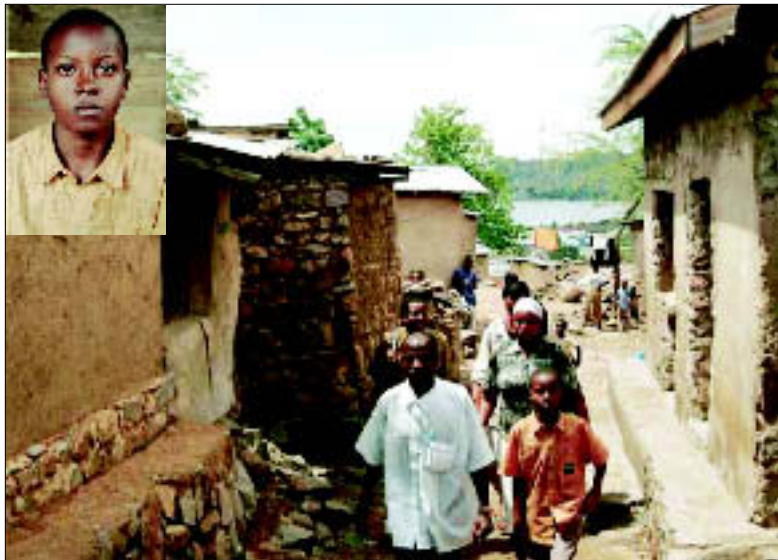
However, the situation of the school has significantly deteriorated in the aftermath of the closure of the Save the Children Fund. Only three children managed to sit for the Standard V11 examinations in 2003

because most of the children had to abandon studies due to hardships at the school.

The school has no running water; the pupils' meals depend on funds collected by the headmistress from fellow members of Christian Women Association (WAWATA) and other faith- based benevolent.

A desk placed outside the class serves as a reception and a dining table for the remaining members of the staff made of retirees. The school has never seen running water instead they depend on rainwater that drops from corrugated irons.

Currently, in pathetic situation, the street school has ten vacancies for teachers, which will indefinitely, remain unfilled as long as the school's coffers can't afford to pay Tsh. 50,000 to each teacher.



Onesphory with MVC committee members during a home visit

## A child in Orphan's Committee

Onesphory Gabriel is 13 years old, a pupil at Bugando Primary School. He is a member of the Bugando 'A' MVC committee, serving as a secretary to the committee. Onesphory is excited about his new job, and he is really determined to work hard as representative of children of Bugando 'A' ward.

Onesphory lost his father in 1996, but his mother who is working as a secretary in a private company is supporting him and his three siblings; his brother who is 16 years, his twin sister and his younger brother of 10. They all live together as a family.

Onesphory was elected to the MVC committee during the ward public meeting when the MVC identification process was being introduced to the community. Onesphory and a girl were elected members of the Most Vulnerable Committee for Bugando 'A' ward, representing the voices of orphans and other most vulnerable children.

Onesphory and his colleague nomination was made by the ward chairperson, and the children who attended the meeting were asked for comments, either to support or reject his/her nomination. The children endorsed them as their representatives to the MVC Committee.

He was then elected as secretary to the committee. Onesphory takes his community responsibility very seriously. On weekends he walks around the neighborhood to interact with children, and inquire about their welfare. He was the one who led us to Hassan and Samson, after he learned about their ordeal during his visits.

## The 'Malaika' Orphanage

BY GODFREY KALAGHO,  
DAR ES SALAAM.

Malaika Orphanage Foundation is a name that Mrs. Najma Manji chose for a home to raise public awareness so that the community can realize the urgency to save and protect most vulnerable children. The word Malaika means "angel or angels," likening children to the angels of God.

She is the guardian of the foundation; a centre currently hosting 15 children who are below the age of 12 years. It was formerly a four-bedroom house for her and her family.

Mrs. Manji started sheltering orphans when she got married. Her passion for taking care of orphans matched that of her husband, who grew up as an orphan himself.

"We used to live with orphans right here in our house. As they increased in number, we began to experience shortage of resources, but it was difficult to get support from the local community or NGOs. This prompted us to sacrifice our home and convert it into an orphanage center," she says.

Of the 15 children, two are social orphans, who at present attend nursery school along with five others. Six of them are in grade one, while one is in a school for the mentally handicapped children located at Sinza in Dar es Salaam. The oldest is 15 years old and currently learning tailoring at a vocational school.

It being a family residence, its compound is very small. Boys use two rooms, while girls occupy the rest. There are also four attendants who sleep in the sitting room.

When I went into each room, I saw three or four mattresses piled on one bed and learned later that they belonged to female attendants. They have to remove their sleeping mats and beds from the sitting room every morning so that the space can be used as a reception.

"This place is very small, we need to expand but we do not have funds," said Mrs. Manji, adding that Kinondoni district has many orphans and that the ones already at Malaika are lucky because the centre cannot accommodate more.

"The social welfare department still recommends children to come here, but we do not take them for lack of enough space," she said.

At noon, the children returned from school and it was lunchtime. Other street children aged below ten years, who lack

accommodation centres, had already arrived, waiting for food.

At this centre, children live as sisters and brothers of the same family. They interact so much easily with others who have not secured a place. They eat, play and sing together.

However, after eating, the Malaika orphans have a fixed timetable for other activities and have to leave to another site.

Maria Athuman, aged eight years, has no doubt that Mrs. Manji is her own mother. When I asked her about her parents, she replied: "This is my mother," she said, pointing at Mrs. Manji.

Although the centre is very tidy, Mrs. Manji is worried about three problems. First, it is the plight of children who are yet to secure an orphanage and roam streets scavenging for food. She says the government has given them 50 acres in Mkuranga district, Coast region, but they do not have the funds to develop the area.

Secondly, there is water shortage at the centre. To fill a tank they have to fetch it from a distance away. "If a child gets sick and there is no water, the disease may easily spread to others," she says.

The available water tank was provided by a Christian organization.

Thirdly, although the children get free medical service at government hospitals, medical costs are a problem if prescribed doses are not readily available.

"This becomes costly because we have to resort to privately owned pharmacies where the dose is more expensive," she said.

Habibu Henry aged 12, who is paralyzed on one side, stays at the centre. Unable to walk alone, he is always escorted to and from school. He was rescued by a society of hunters in Iringa region that brought him to Dar es Salaam for treatment.

When he was brought to the social welfare department in Dar es Salaam, it was discovered that the boy was suffering from mental problems as well.

This prompted the management at Malaika to seek a special school for him - for the mentally handicapped children. It was a wrong move.

Mr. Chelestino Msimbwa, the schoolteacher at Sinza Special School where Habibu is learning, who had once escorted the child to the hospital, said that doctors detected that Habibu suffers from "Optical atropie". This means that the optical nerve is affected, causing a failure to link messages from the eye to

the brain for interpretation. He said he is progressing well in his studies.

Mrs. Betty Shija, the school's head teacher, said that Habibu has poor eyesight. "He has a vision, but cannot read well." The social welfare department suspected the same problem, believing that it was due to his previous problems, but he has proved to be quite normal.

Owing to poor eyesight, he avoids facial contacts, but he is charming and likes to talk about his future when asked. He properly gives an account of his past experiences.

"I was born at Mbalali in Iringa region. I was a normal child...my mother is Sikamanga and my father Henry Mng'engeji. Later I realized that I was not able to use my right hand and right leg. My eyes were also itching and I would feel a severe pain. Later my eyes became very weak and I could hardly control their movements," he said.

He says doctors at the CCBRT in Dar es Salaam told him that they would not perform an operation because it would risk his life and he might become totally blind.

Habibu said that he lost both parents and used to live with his sister, Sipendeki. Although he is safe at the Malaika Orphanage Foundation, he is worried about his younger brother, Mateso, saying he is not sure about his safety.

"When I grow up, I would like to become a teacher, build my own house and drive my own car," he says. "But I will never get out from Malaika," he insists.

He believes Malaika is just another home for him like the one in Iringa. His determination and ambitions depend on the people taking care of the Malaika orphanage.

Mrs. Manji runs the foundation with the help of her two former primary school pupils, who she taught way back in 1978. They are Hadija Mwambungu and Bahati Godfrey. Neighbours assist them with flour, sugar and salt, whenever they request for support. Shop owners too allow them to get goods on credit whenever they introduce themselves as attendants from Malaika Foundation.

# Challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children

More than two million children are orphaned in Tanzania. Orphans have been recognized as children in need of support, but they have so far received inadequate attention and services. More and more children are taking on

responsibilities beyond their age, including running households, taking care of ailing parents, and working long hours to secure a livelihood. A child living in a household with one or both parents chronically ill is likely not to be at school, having to raise cash

income and do a lot of extra work in the house and in the field. Such a child, while not an orphan, will not be having most of her/his rights fulfilled and will be at greatly increased risk of exploitation and abuse.

All stories by UNICEF Tanzania

## Grandparents are the largest caretakers of orphans in Tanzania

Eliza Kulola is 68 years old, and she is a widow. Sitting on a woven mat outside a thatched hut with chickens milling around, Eliza talks about the burden of raising 5 grand-children on her own.

Eliza's grand-children are aged 16, 15, 13, 7 and 4 years. She lives with all of them in Nyagusa village, since they lost their mothers. She looks tired and disillusioned as she talks about her life and the family she has now. At the moment her worry is the future of the children. 'I don't really think much of how to feed my grandchildren, as from my small garden and assistance from neighbours we can survive. My worry is how will they survive after I am gone, I am old and with frequent spells of malaria, I don't know!', said Eliza sitting on the mat with her 8 months great-grand child on her lap.

For the past 7 years Eliza has been caring for her three sick daughters, one after another, until they passed away leaving behind 5 children. Eliza still depends on casual farming for livelihood, cultivating cassava and millet near her house, just to get basic staple food, and she also sells firewood to supplement the household needs. She has never been to school, and up to now she cannot read or write.

Among her grandchildren - Emma 7, Jennifer 9 and Neema 13, are the most favourite, because they help with domestic chores. The girls collect firewood for cooking and selling, fetch water, taking care of the 4 year old sibling. It is obvious that all the duties of the household fall on them. Although they go to school, they have little time to study at home or enjoy their childhood.

Neema, 13 years, knows something about their father. She knows that he is a soldier. He has never come back to see them, since their mother passed away 5 years ago. Neema likes school, and she makes sure that she is able to acquire all her exercise books by selling extra firewood. The cost of one batch is Tshs 200 (like a quarter of a dollar - 20 cents).

Grandma Eliza looks tired, she is recovering from malaria, and she is worried that the mosquitoes will attack her grandchildren. They sleep together in one room, they don't use mosquito net as they cannot afford one.

## Robbing Children's Inheritance.

Juma Joseph, 15 years old, was in Standard 5 at Bugarika Primary School before he dropped out. He is now loitering, spending time in jobless corners popularly known as "vijiwe".

Juma dropped out because he was sent home by the teachers for lack of uniform. When he informed his uncle, he refused to buy him the uniform and asked Juma to go back to school and tell the teacher that 'there is no-one to buy the uniforms'. The boy refused to go for fear of embarrassment and decided to stay home.

His uncle who took them after their father's death, has mistreated Juma and his sibling. Juma is often subjected to verbal lashing, which has created a rift between him and his uncle. He has been telling Juma that he cannot continue feeding him and his younger brother Emmanuel who is now 12 years.

Juma and Emmanuel are orphans, they lost both parents in 1999 and 2000 respectively. The father was the first to die, and then their mother followed. They don't know what killed their parents, but they recall both were always sick, and used to go to the hospital regularly. Nobody has told them what sickness their parents were suffering from.

Juma's father has a house which they used to live together as a family. After the death of their mother, Juma and Emmanuel were transferred to the village to live with their aunts. Life was difficult in the village as school was very far away and the boys were miserable. Their elder brother decided to bring them back to town, and they went back to their old school.

The children received a second blow when their elder brother fell sick and after a hospital visit he was diagnosed as suffering from TB.

He deteriorated very quickly and died in 2004.

They were moved again to another relative, an uncle, where they are living now. The uncle, who is their caretaker, is also the custodian of their family house. He has rented out the house, collects the rent every month and uses the money for his personal needs.

He has told the boys that the money he gets from the house is what they use in the family for food and other basic necessities.

Juma and Emmanuel know that what their uncle is doing is not right, but all their relatives seem to keep mum. They have tried to seek help from the community leaders, but the process is very slow, and Juma is still not going to school and it is very unlikely that he will go back to school soon!



Juma (15 years) and Emmanuel (12 years) have been deprived of their inherited house



Eliza Kulola (68 years) with grandchildren (from left) Neema (13 years), on her lap great grandchild Moses (8 months), Noel (4 years) and Zacharia (7 years)

## Children as caretakers of sick parents

At a very tender age, Veronica Simon is already a responsible person with family responsibility and caring for her ailing mother. The girl is 13 years old and a pupil at Nundu Primary School. Veronica lives with her mother Lucia Ganzia who has just turned 50, but she looks like a 70 year old grandmother. It is obvious that AIDS has weakened her system and has shrunk her body. She talks and walks with difficulty, and as she gathers strength to speak you can see the expression of pain in her face

Lucia lives with her grandchild Yohana Simon who is 11 years old. Yohana goes to the same school as Veronica. Lucia relies on her extended family and well wishes to feed and clothe her children, and as she grows sicker and weaker, the family support is shrinking and she depends more on the community based AIDS Centre.

And so on this particular day when we visited them, Veronica had escorted her mother to MWAOMI AIDS centre, to collect some medications and food. The center is managed by the Anglican Church, providing minimum support to people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Lucia considers herself a widow, because since 1997 she has not been in contact with her husband, the father of her children.

Lucia tested positive in 1997, and she is certain that she got it from her husband, who was constantly sick but refused to admit or go for testing. She started falling sick in 1998, she became so sick that neighbors took her to the hospital and she was sent to the TB ward. Her son who was by then 11 years old, was the main caretaker, cooking meals and taking meals to the hospital.

Over the years, Lucia has been in and out of the hospital for various illnesses and opportunistic infections, and Veronica is the only one who tends to her needs. She suspects that her son is often away from home because he is tired of caring for her.

Veronica is in Standard Five, but her school attendance has been poor, sometimes she miss school for many weeks, as she stays home to take care of her sick mother. The family depends on Veronica to raise money. The girl cooks 'mandazi' which they sell in the neighbours shop. Sometimes when Lucia feels a bit better, she helps her daughter to prepare the 'mandazi'.

As Lucia health deteriorates, no one in the extended family has come forward to discuss about the future of the two children. To Lucia, this shows that no one wants to assume responsibility of caring for her children, and this breaks her heart thinking how would they survive after she is gone.



Veronica Simon cares for ailing mother

## Families Over-Burdened

At Bugando Mission ward, Mwanza, Samson 8 years, Hassan, 10 years and Rahel Khalfan, 14 years, are orphans, who lost their parents many years ago, Rahel and Hassan at least have some recollection of their father, as a farmer who owned a large farm. They don't remember which village they were living in, only that they were in Kigoma region. Rahel recalls that you have to go by



A mother in Makete District, along with her own children and orphans she is taking care of

train to reach their village.

The children are now living with Ashura Chishako, who is a sister to their late mother. Ashura herself is a single parent after her husband abandoned her, leaving behind 8 children. Ashura has never been to school, she is a petty trader selling

bananas to get a daily income of Tshs. 500 (equivalent to half dollar) to feed a family of 12.

The children are miserable, they look ragged, starving and Hassan just shed tears. The two boys go to Bugarika Primary School, but the girl stays home to help with endless domestic chores and selling of bananas. Samson is talkative, and he quickly narrates their life story with aunt Ashura in Mwanza.

Samson's first sentence was that they eat once a day, and sometimes even that meal is not available. Since it was Ramadan -the Muslim fasting season, Samson responded saying that 'it is better we fast, because we are not eating anything during the day anyway'.

Samson and his brother have no bedroom in the family house as the single bed is occupied by their aunt with some of the younger children, and the older girls sleep in the veranda. The boys sleep in the store, where they also keep some chicken and duck. They sleep on the floor using old sack bags to cover their bodies. The place is horrible, Samson said at night the animals disturb them by litter on their faces, arms and legs.

The aunt lashes out verbal abuse and constant beat them at the slightest provocation. To supplement the family income, the boys and their sister have to work round the clock. The boys have formed a routine of daily chores after school by collecting charcoal at the city dump, for use at home. At times, when they cannot get enough, their aunt will beat them and they have to sleep without food.

Samson is seen as naughtiest an overburden. One day, Ashura gave 200 Tshs to Samson to go and buy tomatoes, but the boy bought tomatoes worth 100 shillings and used the 100/- to buy a doughnut "mandazi in Swahili". The aunt was upset and beat him until neighbours had to intervene. The abuse cases have been reported to the police, who have asked the auntie to treat the boys more humanely. Samson's attitude bores the brunt of his aunt's anger.

It is obvious that the burden of being a head of such a large household is simply too much for a single mother like Ashura. The extended family system that used to easily absorb orphaned children from relatives is becoming an overburden.