



COVID-19 PANDEMIC: How safe are Children A brief

For a Just and Equitable Society



INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health issue. The Corona Virus pandemic does not only affect people health wise, but it affects their daily lives socially, economically and even politically.

A child is any person below the age of 18 as per the Law of the Child Act. With the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the needs of protecting children is of highly importance, Section 9 (3) of the Law of the Child Act gives responsibility to parents to ensure that children are safe and protected, which means that even in the current pandemic children safety and welfare should be of high importance to everyone.

As of April 22nd 2020 Tanzania has reported 254 cases of COVID 19 and 10 deaths now. The initiatives on COVID by the country started on 17th March, 2020 when the government of Tanzania closed schools, universities and learning institution, prohibited meetings and crowds, large groups like weddings and other social gathering. The government has also been providing awareness on COVID 19 aiming at ensuring

that everyone is taking care and ensuring they are responsible to the care of others including the use of masks and sanitizers, washing hands with soap; prohibit crowds in public transport also set special medical centers to assist COVID 19 cases.

But in all these children are left out without much care. The community has focused on taking care of themselves, ensuring their safety, and that they follow up on updated and understand well about the coronavirus pandemic but in all these children are not part of. They are now at home as schools are closed, but they are living normally as if there is no pandemic outbreak out there. To them it is a holiday and to them it is a good time to play and meet friends in their respective streets the fact that puts them more at risk of being infected.

Street connected children are more at risk with the most limited access to prevention services, testing, treatment and other essential support. In addition, the pandemic and containment measures are likely to have negative consequences for their safety and education, which were precarious even before the outbreak of the disease. Going to school was already a daily challenge or impossibility for many streets connected children in Tanzania and with the pandemic it is even hard for them to continue with their daily activities and normal lives which will not put them at risk.

The pandemic risks have turned back hard-won gains that had been made in ex-



panding access to protection, healthcare and education for children.

All children deserve a fair chance in life, and to see their rights fully realized. Though they may be in different chapters of life with some being more privileged their chances for a dignified future will be bolstered if they have equitable access to the support and services they need. Even though the Corona Virus pandemic does not affect many children but is important to ensure the future by protecting children

IMPACTS OF COVID 19 TO CHILDREN IN TANZANIA

- i. FGM; this has been a challenge for Tanzanian young girls even before the pandemic, efforts have been made to ensure girls are protected from FGM. With the corona pandemic most efforts have focused on the pandemic than other social and society issues that are affecting the communities, especially children. People who practice FGM use the gap to conduct the same to girls as they believe that the focus on them have diverted.
- ii. In Mara region it has been reported that families have started practicing FGM to their children and some have been rescued, this is due to the fact that they believe that the government and other stakeholders are more fo-

cused on the Corona virus pandemic and thus cannot focus on the issues of FGM. The situation is increasing in places where FGM is practiced; to them the corona-virus is a loophole they can take advantage of.

- iii. Child marriages: many girls are at risk of being forced into marriages in this time of pandemic. Most people use time of emergency like this one as a loophole to marry off their daughters as the government and other stakeholders have focused more on the emergency situation.
- iv. Sexual violence and other violence's; children are at risk of being sexually exploited during this time as schools are closed and children mostly do not have anything to do at home thus roam in streets especially those who do not have guardian and parents to look after them. With other pandemic in place like the Ebola pandemic, it has proved that during any pandemic children and women are more at risk of facing sexual violence.
- v. Burden of work and child labor; the Law of the Child Act and the Employment and Labor Relations Act allows children of ages 14 to work and be employed, school was helpfully to children as they would use the time for school but



- since schools are closed these children will then be subjected to child labor. Children at normal families also will be subjected to many house chores than schools and hence burden them with lots of work. This has the health effect to children if not monitored.
- vi. Street children do not even have help or have any means of receiving services including awareness on COVID 19, medical care, preventive tools for COVID19 and support system that is more crucial to them at this time.
 - vii. Children education has been affected as schools have been closed. Almost 80% of Tanzania children are in public schools who have been sent home without even homework's as compared to children from private schools who have homework and the means to be updated in the respective school activities. Also most of the parents are not aware of their children education importance and thus make it hard to assist their children focus on their education at this time of the pandemic where schools are closed and children are at home all the time.
 - i. Children safety is parents' responsibilities, but at this emergency time where children are

supposed to stay indoors, they are seen loitering and parents do not even see if it is a problem at all. Some parents even take their children to public places like beaches, visiting relatives and also playing with other children in the streets. This is even harder for street connected children as they do not have people to look after them or even houses and support system.

- ii. Awareness on COVID 19; not all children understand about COVID 19 and what to do in order to stay safe. Most children in Tanzania do not understand as many were not even told when schools were closing and many parents too are not aware enough on COVID 19 to pass their knowledge to children.

RECOMENDANTION

Parents

- i. Report issues of violence against children to relevant authorities.
- ii. Ensure they are keeping their children safe by keeping them indoors and finding things that could keep them busy
- iii. Make sure they supervise their children in their school assignments for those who have received the assignments from



- iv. schools.
Ensure that they teach their children on COVID19 and provide them with preventive gears and knowledge.

Government

- i. Strengthen online services so that children facing violence can be able to receive help.
- v. Ensuring government responses to COVID 19 also addresses protection concerns and ensuring quality, child-friendly response services; and identifying barriers.
- vi. Ensure decision and protective responses also consider the most vulnerable children and those from marginalized families and communities.
- vii. To ensure national awareness campaign on COVID 19 include children as they are most vulnerable.
- viii. To ensure that in medical centers that are set for COVID 19, children are given more priority
- ix. Prepare a solution that can help children go back to schools as soon as possible when it is safe to do so.

Community

- i. Report issues of violence against children to relevant authorities.
- ii. To assist in protecting children from Corona virus by ensuring

- iii. safe environment for them in the communities.
To ensure that they educate children about COVID19 and how to prevent themselves from it.

REFERENCES

- i. WHO website





Norwegian Embassy



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE - HEADQUARTERS

Justice Lugakingira House, Kijitonyama,
P. O. Box 75254, Dar es Salaam - Tanzania

Tel: +255 22 2773038/48 **Fax:** +255 22 2773037

Email: lhrc@humanrights.or.tz **Website:** www.humanrights.or.tz

ARUSHA OFFICE, THE LEGAL AID CLINIC

Olerian Street, Plot No. 116/5, Sakina kwa Iddi
P. O. Box 15243, Arusha, Tanzania

Phone: +255 27 2544187

Email: lhrcarusha@humanrights.or.tz

Isere Street – Kinondoni, P. O. Box 79633,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Phone/Fax: +255 22 27612015/6

Email: legalaid@humanrights.or.tz

DODOMA OFFICE

Plot No. Area D, P. O. Box 2289, Dodoma, Tanzania

Phone/Fax: +255 262350050 **Email:** lhrc@humanrights.or.tz



@humanrightstz



HakiTV

For a Just and Equitable Society

