

# What Do the Children of Tanzania Imagine for Their Future? Rights to Be Listened to, Play, and Participate: The WeWorld Toolkit

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As part of UNICEF's Call for Papers "*Building Brighter Futures: Evidence for Children*", WeWorld submits a paper addressing the third theme: "Survive, thrive, and fulfil the dreams and aspirations of children and adolescents".

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## Objectives

This paper aims to:

1. Present original quantitative and qualitative data on the conditions of 200 children and adolescents in elementary schools across Chake Chake and Mkoani (Pemba), Ludewa (Njombe), and Temeke and Kinondoni (Dar es Salaam).
2. Provide a detailed description and critical evaluation of the implementation of a methodology centred on play and peer dialogue.
3. Develop policy recommendations and identify areas for targeted intervention, informed by the needs and priorities expressed by children and adolescents. These recommendations are framed within the concept of the right to the future, emphasising the importance to giving agency to children and youth, and advocating for a paradigm sharing power among adults, younger and future generations.

## Background

WeWorld<sup>1</sup> is an independent Italian organisation with a 50-year history of advocating for the rights of people in vulnerable and marginalised conditions, particularly children and adolescents, in over 25 countries. As the sole Italian member of the ChildFund Alliance<sup>2</sup>, WeWorld is part of a network of 11 child-focused development and humanitarian organisations reaching nearly 30 million children and their family members in more than 70 countries.

The organisation conducts extensive research and analysis on children's rights, focusing on emerging threats in the context of global poly-crises. Emphasising the rights of children and adolescents to their future, WeWorld adheres to the principle "Nothing About Us, Without Us," ensuring that research processes are deeply rooted in child participation.

### WeWorld's Presence in Tanzania

Since 2010, WeWorld has operated in Tanzania across various sectors, including climate change, education and child protection, human rights, WASH, and urban regeneration. The organisation maintains five offices in Dar es Salaam, Tanga, Mtwara, Njombe and Pemba. Funding sources include the European Union (EU), the Educate a Child Foundation (EAC), UN agencies, and private donors.

### WeWorld's Innovative and Child-Centered Approach in the Education Sector

WeWorld has extensive experience in implementing education programmes that incorporate a robust child protection component across emergency, protracted crisis, and development settings. The organisation's country offices benefit from technical support provided by headquarters, which ensures the seamless integration of education and child protection in proposal development and capacity strengthening efforts. This support is particularly focused on enhancing the skills of both international and national staff in the fields of education and child protection. Additionally, WeWorld promotes cross-cutting learning across the organisation, encouraging the exchange of best practices and fostering innovation in targeted areas of work. This integrated approach ensures that WeWorld's education initiatives are not only comprehensive but also responsive to the evolving needs of children in diverse contexts.

WeWorld's interventions aim to provide children in vulnerable conditions with access to quality, inclusive education in safe and supportive learning environments. Recognising that inclusivity is essential to overcoming barriers to learning, WeWorld focuses on cultivating an inclusive culture within educational communities. This is achieved through awareness-raising activities that engage students, teachers, parents, and community members, as well as through capacity-strengthening initiatives for educators. To meet the diverse needs of all learners, teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to create safe and inclusive classrooms, with a strong emphasis on child-centred pedagogical approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on WeWorld see <https://www.weworld.it/en>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on ChildFund Alliance see <https://childfundalliance.org/>

In collaboration with national institutions, WeWorld promotes continuous professional development for teachers in areas such as active learning, inclusive education, child protection, psychosocial support, and peace education. WeWorld has successfully experimented with various play-based modalities across different contexts, applying them to awareness-raising activities related to topics such as handwashing, disaster risk reduction, and menstrual hygiene management. Building on empirical experience and activities implemented over the years, WeWorld has produced a series of publications containing guidelines and examples of play-based activities. Some examples are *Manual de Jogos. O jogo como método educativo e de apoio psicossocial* (Handbook of Games. Games as an educational and psychosocial support method) published in 2021 in Mozambique as part of an educational programme implemented in the province of Cabo Delgado and funded by the European Union's DG ECHO; and the *Social Inclusion through games and sport: strategies and reference models* booklet published in 2019 in Lebanon as part of the HOPE programme - health, protection and education for the most vulnerable groups among refugees and host communities - funded by the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development. Additionally, WeWorld strongly believes in and advocates for the promotion of a "learning through play" pedagogy, which combines child-led activities with guided learning to enhance children's cognitive and problem-solving abilities.

Moreover, the use of artistic expression is widely acknowledged as an effective strategy for providing children with alternative forms of reflection, expression, and action. This approach enables them to develop new ways of navigating challenges within their lives and communities (INEE, 2023). Artistic activities with educational purposes have demonstrated significant benefits, including enhancing student participation in the learning process, fostering the inclusion of vulnerable populations, improving academic performance, and supporting overall well-being by encouraging the free expression of feelings and needs.

In Mozambique, WeWorld developed and successfully implemented the "Oficinas de Arte" programme, which integrates art into both curricular and extracurricular activities. This programme includes teacher training to equip educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to incorporate artistic activities into their instruction, and structured extracurricular sessions facilitated by artists. These sessions employ various art forms—such as visual art, music, theatre, sculpture, and poetry—and utilise participatory methodologies to promote cooperation, inclusion, and cohesion among students.

In Tanzania, WeWorld has been implementing art therapy sessions for several years, specifically working with children with disabilities, special educational needs, and children who experienced abuse or psychosocial distress to enhance their well-being, support them in processing emotions and in developing healthy coping mechanisms. Currently, Art Therapy sessions are implemented in 10 schools in Dar-Es-Salaam targeting 800 children

Students participating in art therapy are often survivors of violence or have been affected by psychosocial distress. However, many children may be unaware of their rights or may struggle to articulate their feelings due to the trauma they have endured. In this context, art therapy provides a safe, non-judgmental, and child-centred environment where participants can develop self-awareness, express themselves through non-verbal means, and begin to process their experiences, thereby initiating the healing process. Moreover, the activity has demonstrated additional positive outcomes; by the end of each cycle, students typically exhibit enhanced socialisation skills, greater autonomy, and increased self-confidence.

WeWorld is also dedicated to continuously enhancing its capacity to ensure meaningful participation by children, affirming their right to express their views and be heard. In collaboration with ChildFund International, a member of the wider network ChildFund Alliance, WeWorld conducted a Community-Based Child Protection (CBCP) Mapping in Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique. This initiative, using Participatory Action Research, aimed to identify child protection concerns and strengthen community-based mechanisms for addressing these issues during emergencies or disasters. The mapping process involved engaging with children, adolescents, and adult community members through various tools, including art-based methods such as drawing and individual expression, as well as group discussions based on these activities.

The toolkit presented in this paper is developed from lessons learned from these experiences and other relevant initiatives.

### **WeWorld's Mixed-Method Research**

WeWorld developed comprehensive mixed-method research through a multidisciplinary team comprising the Education Focal Point in Tanzania, the Global Education Expert, the Global Child Protection Expert, and the Research Centre Coordinator.

Our mixed-method research comprises two investigative phases. The first phase involves a quantitative consultation conducted with 200 children and adolescents. The second phase is derived from the application of a toolkit developed by WeWorld's multidisciplinary team. This toolkit, among other elements, revisits some items from the initial consultation to further elucidate the issues raised. This qualitative phase, as will be elaborated upon, centres on peer-to-peer dialogue and play-based activities. The following sections provide a detailed discussion of the methodological approaches and results from both phases of the research.

Such methodology serves as an essential resource for understanding and addressing the multifaceted needs and aspirations of Tanzanian children. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, the outcome not only highlights the challenges faced by these children but also provides actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners. Through its commitment to child participation and rights-based methodologies, WeWorld aims to foster an environment where Tanzanian children can envision and realise a brighter future.

### **Object of investigation**

With a current population of 61.7 million and a fertility rate that is declining only gradually, Tanzania's population is projected to grow substantially, reaching between 120 million (low fertility scenario) and 141 million (high fertility scenario) by 2050<sup>3</sup>. Tanzania, like much of the African continent, has a predominantly young population. However, despite their numbers, the voices of these young people are often marginalised, with limited influence over decisions that shape their future. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child underscores the fundamental importance of a child's right to be heard. Yet, this principle must extend beyond the mere acknowledgment of children's needs and aspirations—it should be translated into tangible actions that empower young people to actively participate in shaping a future that reflects their perspectives and desires. Ensuring that the voices of the youth are not only heard but also integrated into decision-making processes is crucial for fostering a society that is truly inclusive and responsive to the needs of its emerging generations. This approach will be instrumental in building a sustainable and equitable future for Tanzania and the wider African continent.

This is why the framework guiding the development of our investigation is the concept of the "right to the future," an emerging and influential notion within academic and international discourse. Currently, the right to the future is not legally recognized. However, it could be derived from other established rights, as it happened for the right to water. Initially, access to water was acknowledged as a human right to protect the right to life, given the critical link between water and human survival, and later as an extension of the right to an adequate and dignified standard of living (WeWorld, 2024, *Flowing Futures Atlas on Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, and Human Rights*).

Human rights law and development policies implicitly recognise the right to the future, reflecting concepts like sustainable development, intergenerational justice, and child and youth participation. Edith Brown Weiss's influential work, *"In Fairness to Future Generations"* (1989), calls for integrating the rights of future generations into legal and policy frameworks, emphasising long-term impacts and intergenerational justice. In 2020, the UN's Secretary-General proposed initiatives in *"Our Common*

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank (2024), [https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/africacan/achieving-demographic-dividend-tanzania-economic-growth-afe-0324#:~:text=With%20a%20current%20population%20of,high%20fertility%20scenario\)%20by%202050.](https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/africacan/achieving-demographic-dividend-tanzania-economic-growth-afe-0324#:~:text=With%20a%20current%20population%20of,high%20fertility%20scenario)%20by%202050.)



*Agenda*” to address future considerations, but it lacked explicit recognition of future individuals' rights and connections to past injustices. In response, from 2017 to 2023, a global coalition developed the “*Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations*”, adopted in February 2023, supported by leading experts. In May 2023, the UN System Chief Executives Board endorsed the “*Common Principles on Future Generations*”, developed by the High-level Committee on Programs (HLCP), to establish unified values for future-oriented actions and policies.

The right to the future could be embraced as a guiding principle for formulating policies, interventions, and a new, forward-looking social contract. It could be understood as the inherent entitlement of individuals and communities—both present and future, with particular emphasis on children and youth—to live in and contribute to a world that fosters sustainable and equitable growth and development opportunities. In our view, this concept invites us to take a holistic approach to the complex and interrelated challenges faced by today’s younger generations—and those yet to come. It calls for a fresh perspective on both the present and the future, giving agency back to children and young people, empowering them to actively shape the world they will inherit.

Our investigation, therefore, sought to address several critical and pressing issues, children’s fears, hopes and aspirations for their future in the light of critical events that might jeopardise their prospects.

### The Consultation with 200 Children

The initial phase of our investigation involves a quantitative survey conducted with 200 children and adolescents in early 2024.

### Sample Overview

The sample consists of 200 boys and girls aged 10 to 18 interviewed in 33 schools in Chake Chake and Mkoani (Pemba), Ludewa (Njombe), Temeke and Kinondoni (Dar es Salaam). The analysis provides disaggregated data by gender, age, disability, migratory background, minority, and socio-economic status, revealing critical issues. This sample is not representative of the entire population of these districts but was specifically chosen to include children and adolescents who have been engaged in WeWorld's projects. The responses revealed no significant differences based on the participants' district of residence or the location of survey administration.

Initially, participants were asked a series of questions to gain a deeper understanding of their social profiles, enabling a nuanced analysis of their responses according to diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and circumstances.

The sample is nearly evenly split by gender, with 50.5% identifying as boys and 49.5% as girls. Age-wise, respondents are divided into two groups: pre-adolescents (10 to 13 years old) represent 58% of the sample, while adolescents (14 to 18 years old) represent 42%.

Participants were also asked whether they identify as individuals with disabilities. The question was framed to avoid specifying the type of disability, in order to mitigate potential stigma associated with these conditions. Among the respondents, 81.8% identified as not having a disability, 1.5% opted not to answer, and 16.7% identified as having a disability.

Furthermore, 9.6% of the sample has a migration background. This classification is based on whether the child was born in a different country from their current residence or if their parents or guardians were born abroad.

Lastly, 36.4% of the sample belongs to an ethnic minority. This classification is derived from responses to two questions: whether the children speak a language other than the majority language in their country or practise a religion different from the predominant one.

## Socioeconomic Conditions

- **Material well-being:** The consultation revealed several critical issues regarding the material well-being of the sample. A notable proportion of respondents, specifically 35.9%, lack essential school supplies, and 39.1% do not have school uniforms or clothing in good condition. Additionally, a significant majority, 77.9%, lack access to an Internet connection. Food security was assessed by inquiring whether the children usually feel full after meals. More than 27.7% reported that they do not. Disparities in food security are evident among different groups within the sample. Pre-adolescents are more likely to experience food insecurity, with 35.4% reporting not to feel full after meals, compared to 17.1% of adolescents. Children with disabilities also face higher levels of food insecurity, with 43.8% reporting such issues, compared to 25% of those without disabilities. Those with a migration background are particularly affected, with 58% experiencing food insecurity compared to 27.7% of their peers without a migration background. Furthermore, children from ethnic minorities report greater food insecurity, with 37.5% indicating insufficient food compared to 22% of those not belonging to ethnic minorities.
- **Socio-economic background:** To assess the socioeconomic status of the respondents, a composite variable was created by aggregating indicators related to material well-being (such as availability of school supplies and clothing) and food security with school attendance. A low socioeconomic status is identified based on any of the following conditions: irregular school attendance, lack of school supplies, inadequate clothing, or not feeling full after each meal. According to this measure, 62.6% of the sample is classified as having a low socioeconomic status. The prevalence of low socioeconomic status is notably higher among pre-adolescents, with 73% falling into this category, compared to 48.2% of adolescents. Gender does not appear to significantly influence socioeconomic status, but disability status does. Among children with disabilities, 84.6% have a low socioeconomic status, whereas 57.4% of those without disabilities fall into this category. Additionally, low socioeconomic status is more common among children with a migrant background, with 90% of those in this group experiencing it compared to 60% of those without a migrant background. Similarly, children from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to have a low socioeconomic status, with 72.2% falling into this category compared to 57.1% of those not belonging to ethnic minorities.
- **School attendance:** 21.4% of the sample, or more than one in five children, report irregular school attendance. This issue is slightly more prevalent among boys, with 22.5% indicating irregular attendance, compared to 20.4% of girls. A significant disparity is observed among children with disabilities, with 39.4% reporting irregular school attendance, in contrast to 18.1% of those without disabilities. Children with low socioeconomic status are notably more likely to experience irregular school attendance, with 33.9% falling into this category. In contrast, children with better socioeconomic conditions attend school regularly. A positive correlation between irregular school attendance and lacking essential school supplies or having inadequate clothing is reported. The highest rate of irregular school attendance is found among children with a migrant background, with 63.2% reporting inconsistent school attendance compared to 17% of those without a migrant background. A critical situation is also evident among children from ethnic minorities, with 34.7% experiencing irregular attendance compared to 13.7% of those not belonging to an ethnic minority.
- **Child labour:** 13.7% of the sample reports being currently engaged in work. This figure is higher among pre-adolescents, reaching 16.5%. Child labour is more common among boys, with 15% reporting to work, compared to 12% of girls. The prevalence of child labour is significantly influenced by socioeconomic status, with 22% of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds reporting that they work, whereas none of those from more advantaged backgrounds do. Additionally, 36.4% of children with disabilities are involved in work. There is also a notable link between child labour and school attendance: one in three children who do not attend school regularly are working.

- **Happiness:** To complete the characterisation of the sample, children and adolescents were asked about their overall happiness. Over 34.5% of children report not usually feeling happy. This condition is more prevalent among girls, with 35.7% expressing unhappiness, compared to 33.3% of boys. This issue is markedly higher among children with disabilities, with 69.7% reporting not to usually feel happy compared to 28% of those without disabilities. There are also significant age-related differences: 49.6% of pre-adolescents report not usually feeling happy, in contrast to only 13.4% of adolescents. Economic status further influences happiness; 48.4% of children with low socioeconomic status report not feeling happy, compared to 11% of those with higher socioeconomic status.

### Children as Rights Holders

This second section of the consultation explores the current circumstances of children and adolescents, with a focus on their perceived rights, the challenges they encounter, instances of rights violations, and the role of adults in protecting these rights.

The analysis also delved into children's self-awareness of their identity as right-holders, referring to the CRC, and how these rights are guaranteed by duty-bearers (adults) in their lives. A rights perception variable was created to measure the strength of children's perceptions of their rights.

Children were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale—ranging from totally agree, mostly agree, little agree, to not agree at all—with a series of rights outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which are internationally recognised as children's rights.

The rights addressed included:

- The right to be heard
- The right to express their opinions
- The right to attend school and receive an education
- The right to access water and food
- The right to play and interact with other children
- The right to live in a clean, healthy, and sustainable natural environment
- The right to safe housing
- The right to good health and proper medical care
- The right to have a family
- The right to protection from all forms of violence
- The right to access the Internet
- The right to not be discriminated against based on gender, origin, religion, disability, or other factors

To develop a composite measure for this group of questions, each positive response (either "totally agree" or "mostly agree") regarding the recognition of a specific right was assigned one point. This approach generated a score for each child ranging from 0 (indicating no rights acknowledged) to 12 (indicating all rights acknowledged). The resulting metric displayed a notable skew towards the higher end of the scale, suggesting a generally high level of rights recognition among the children. Based on this distribution, two categories were established: children scoring between 11 and 12 points were classified as having a strong perception of their rights, while those scoring 10 or lower were classified as having a weak perception of their rights.

17% of the sample demonstrated a weak perception of their rights. This percentage increases to 18.8% among children with disabilities. Additionally, a higher proportion of girls reported a weaker perception of their rights compared to boys: 21.4% versus 13%.

We subsequently analysed the extent to which children's rights are realised and examined any violations they might have experienced. The most frequently reported rights violation is the lack of consistent access to education, with 73.7% of children indicating this issue. Additionally, 55.6% of children report feeling unsafe due to wars and conflicts. Another significant concern is that 44.4% of children state that adults engage in behaviours or make comments that negatively impact their well-being. Furthermore, 40.9% of children express that adults do not seek their opinions.



<b>Main rights violations</b>	<b>% of children who agree</b>
I don't always have the opportunity to go to school	73.7
Wars and crime don't make me feel safe	55.6
Adults say or do things that make me feel bad	44.4
Adults don't ask for my opinion	40.9
I don't always have the opportunity to receive healthcare	37.4
I don't always have access to food and water	32.3
I feel alone and not listened to	31.3
I am treated differently because of my gender, origin, disability, etc.	30.3
I was forced to abandon my home and community	30.3
When I'm on the Internet strangers try to contact me	29.8
When I'm on the Internet other children make fun of me	25.3

Differences within the sample reveal that children who generally report feeling happy are less likely to experience violations of their rights. Boys more frequently report experiencing such violations compared to girls. Additionally, children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to report rights violations.

Children with disabilities face particularly significant discrimination; 57% of them report that adults say or do things that make them feel bad.

### **Adults' Promotion of Children's Rights**

Our investigation also aimed to gauge children's perceptions regarding the actions of duty-bearers—namely, the adults in their lives such as parents, guardians, and teachers.

Children were asked a series of questions to evaluate how well the adults in their lives—such as parents, teachers, relatives, and community leaders—uphold their basic rights. In assessing daily interactions, we found that adults are least likely to ask for children's opinions, with 70.2% of children reporting that this occurs only sometimes or never.

<b>Do adults around you do these things for children and youth?</b>	<b>% of children who replied sometimes or never</b>
They ask for children's opinion	70.2
They ensure that children have access to the Internet	62.1
They listen to children and try to understand them	53.5
They treat every child the same regardless of their gender, origin, religion, ethnicity, disability,	38.4
They are committed to guaranteeing a better future for children	37.8
They ensure that children can play and be together with other children	37.8
They protect children from any violence and mistreatment	31.3
They ensure that children have a family	29.8
They protect children's health and provide the care they need when they are ill	27.3
They ensure that children go to school and receive an education	26.3

They ensure that children have access to safe housing	25.3
They ensure that children live in a clean, healthy and sustainable natural environment	23.7

Similarly to the rights perception variable, a variable was created by aggregating children's responses to gauge the promotion of children's rights by adults around them, categorised into high, moderate, or low levels. A point was assigned to each positive answer (totally or mostly agree) to the questions, creating a metric on a scale from 0 to 12 for each child. Based on their scores, children were categorised as follows: high promotion level class (11 to 12 points), moderate promotion level class (8 to 10 points), low promotion level class (7 points or lower), 62.1% of children experience a low level of rights promotion by adults, 25.8% experience a moderate level, and 12.1% report high levels of rights promotion.

An analysis of different segments within the sample reveals that boys are more likely to perceive a low level of rights promotion, with 58% reporting this compared to 43.9% of girls. Children with disabilities also report lower levels of rights promotion more frequently, with 66.7% indicating this issue compared to 48.2% of children without disabilities.

The group reporting the highest level of low promotion of their rights are those with a migration background, with 79% expressing this concern compared to 47.5% of children without a migration background.

A notable contrast emerges among children from low socioeconomic backgrounds: 62.2% of them perceive a low level of rights promotion by adults, compared to just 31% of those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

An interesting correlation is observed between the promotion of children's rights by adults and the children's levels of happiness. Specifically, 79.4% of children who do not usually feel happy report low levels of rights promotion by adults, whereas only 35.6% of children who usually feel happy report the same.

### Children's Fears About the Future

The third section of the consultation explores children's perceptions of their future, focusing on their ability to envision it and their associated fears, anxieties, uncertainties, as well as their hopes, expectations, and dreams.

To understand the main factors threatening their future that cause them the most fear, children were asked to rate a range of issues on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The overall sample rated these concerns below a score of 3.2. The top three concerns are: being forced to abandon their home, violence, and terrorism. In contrast, wars and conflicts are considered less worrying by the general sample.

Children who report not usually feeling happy assign higher scores to these concerns, indicating that they perceive them as more alarming. For these children, the top three most worrisome issues are, in order: epidemics, terrorism, and being forced to abandon their home. Once again, wars and conflicts rank as the least concerning for this group.

Children with disabilities, as well as those who report feeling less happy, assign higher scores to all listed concerns, reflecting greater levels of worry. For these groups, the top three most alarming issues are: epidemics, being forced to abandon their home, and terrorism. Wars and conflicts, once again, cause less concern.

Children with a migration background also assign higher scores to all items. Notably, their top concerns differ from those of other segments in the sample. Their primary fears are lack of food, lack of water, and unemployment.

This suggests that belonging to more disadvantaged categories or experiencing lower levels of happiness leads to a heightened perception of the world and the future as more frightening, resulting in increased concern.

Gender-based differences are also present. Although there are no significant differences in overall scores between boys and girls, their concerns differ in priority. Boys are more fearful of discrimination, unemployment, and crime, whereas girls express greater concern about being forced to abandon their home, terrorism, and extreme weather events.

### Children's Vision of Their Future

Children were asked to envision potential changes in their future circumstances. Despite the varying degrees to which their rights are realised, protected, and promoted, more than half of the children express optimism about their future and anticipate positive changes.

In the future you think your life will...	% of children
Get better	54.6
I don't know	33.3
Get worse	8.6
Stay the same	3.5

Children with a strong sense of their rights are more optimistic about their future, with 56.7% believing their lives will improve, compared to 44% among those with a weaker perception of their rights. The perception of oneself as a rights holder significantly influences how children envision their future. Interestingly, children who perceive a low level of rights promotion by adults tend to be more optimistic about their future. This optimism might stem from a sense of defiance or resilience. Among these children, 65% believe their situation will improve, and 25% are uncertain. In contrast, among children who experience high levels of rights promotion by adults, only 39% anticipate future improvements, while 44% remain uncertain.

Girls are generally more pessimistic compared to boys, with 16% of girls believing their lives will worsen in the future, compared to 11.7% of boys.

Children with disabilities exhibit a more varied outlook: one-third believe their lives will improve, one-third think their situation will worsen, and one-third are uncertain.

Additionally, children who do not usually feel happy are more uncertain about their future, with 50% expressing uncertainty, compared to 42% of those who generally feel happy.

Finally, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more pessimistic about their future. 20% of these children expect their lives to get worse, compared to 9% of children from more advantaged economic backgrounds.

### Children's Perception of Their Agency

In this phase of the consultation, children were asked to envision their future capabilities –as Amartya Sen intended- by imagining actions they might undertake. The aim was to assess their belief in their ability to realise a range of rights, thereby highlighting the concept of capabilities. This question focused on the respondents' confidence in their future agency and autonomy, particularly concerning personal decision-making and self-determination.

The responses revealed that the actions children felt least capable of in the future include living independently and making life decisions without requiring others' permission, with over 40% of children expressing this view. This hesitancy may be attributed to their current age and limited autonomy. Furthermore, more than 20% of children doubted their ability to make independent decisions regarding significant life events, such as marriage, having children, or earning money for themselves.

<b>Do you think you will be able to do these things?</b>	<b>% of children who do not believe they will be able to do these things</b>
To decide for my life without asking for anyone's permission	47.5
To live alone	44.5
To earn money for myself and decide how to spend it	28.8
To decide whether to have children or not	24.5
To decide whether to marry and who to marry	19.7
To decide where to live	17.2
To finish my studies	16.7
To decide which job I will prefer to do	15.7

There are notable differences in how various segments of the sample envision their future agency and autonomy.

Adolescents exhibit a growing sense of uncertainty about their ability to make independent decisions in the future, with 65% expressing this concern.

Girls are more likely than boys to feel that they will have less control over certain aspects of their lives. Specifically, 24.5% of girls believe they will have less freedom regarding marriage, compared to 15% of boys, and 26.5% think they will have less autonomy in deciding about having children, compared to 22% of boys.

Interestingly, a significant percentage of children with disabilities—75%—believe they will be able to make independent decisions about their lives in the future, compared to 47.5% of those without disabilities. This counterintuitive finding may be explained by the heightened dependence these children currently experience, leading them to hope for greater autonomy and independence as they transition into adulthood.

Similarly, children with a migration background and those from minority groups also exhibit feelings of hope and aspiration for greater agency in the future.

### **Children's Priorities About the Future**

In the final stage of the consultation, children were invited to identify key areas for intervention and suggest actions that adults should take to ensure a better future for them. This phase allowed children to voice their testimonies, propose solutions, and articulate their dreams, fears, and expectations.

Children were asked to rank 14 potential priorities for improving their future<sup>2</sup>. The top three priorities identified were: the promotion of education, the fight against all forms of violence and mistreatment, and the facilitation of access to food and water, along with the assurance that they will not be forced to participate in conflicts.

Girls prioritised education, the guarantee of the right to health, and protection from all forms of violence and mistreatment. In contrast, boys prioritised not being forced to fight in conflicts, freedom from violence and mistreatment, and avoiding living in war or crime-ridden areas. Notably, for boys, education ranked sixth out of the 14 priorities listed.

Children with disabilities placed access to food and water as their highest priority, followed by the need to avoid being displaced from their homes, maintaining good health, and receiving adequate care. Education was ranked fifth in their list of priorities.

Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds prioritise not being forced to fight in conflicts as their top concern. This is followed by the need for a clean, healthy, and safe natural environment, and ensuring good health and proper care. Education ranks fourth among their priorities.

By addressing these key areas and acknowledging the diverse needs, fears, and aspirations of children, policymakers and practitioners can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for Tanzanian children, enabling them to envision and work towards a brighter future.

Increasing awareness of children's rights is fundamental for empowering them through knowledge. Understanding their rights equips children to advocate for themselves and access the protection and opportunities they are entitled to. This awareness is essential for navigating and shaping their futures.

### Conclusions from the Quantitative Consultation

More than 6 out of 10 children and adolescents experience multidimensional poverty, which affects various aspects of their lives, including school attendance, material deprivation, and food security. This situation is further exacerbated for those belonging to particularly vulnerable and marginalised social groups, resulting in compounded discrimination. Such conditions have a profound impact not only on the lives and opportunities of children and adolescents but also on their overall sense of well-being and happiness.

Assessing children and adolescents' perceptions of themselves as rights holders is essential for fostering their agency and empowering them to actively shape their futures. The consultation reveals that more than 1 in 6 children exhibits a weak perception of their rights, with this condition being more prevalent among girls than boys—over 1 in 5 girls report a weak perception of their rights. Main violations of their rights identified include inconsistent access to education, feelings of insecurity due to wars and conflicts, and a lack of involvement in decisions where adults do not seek their opinions.

Environments where rights are effectively recognised and upheld by duty-bearers significantly enhance children's self-perception as rights-holders. This recognition fosters trust in institutions and society, contributing to improved psychological well-being, a sense of security, and increased confidence. Conversely, inadequate promotion of rights can lead to disillusionment and detachment from duty-bearers, weakening children's sense of their legitimate rights. More than 6 out of 10 children reported perceiving a low promotion of their rights by the adults in their lives. Notably, significant disparities are observed among the most vulnerable and marginalised social groups, with children from migrant backgrounds particularly highlighting this issue.

Children's and adolescents' fears and anxieties about their future are significantly influenced by their personal circumstances, including levels of happiness, disability, and migration background. These factors contribute to varying degrees of concern, with vulnerable and marginalised groups and those experiencing unhappiness exhibiting heightened levels of worry. Gender differences also influence the prioritisation of specific fears, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address these diverse concerns.

Children's and adolescents' perceptions of their future are influenced by their sense of rights, levels of happiness, and socioeconomic status. While many remain hopeful, those from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds or with lower happiness levels tend to be more uncertain or pessimistic. The recognition of rights and the perceived promotion of these rights by adults also play a significant role in shaping their expectations.

The data reveal significant differences in how children across various groups envision their future agency and autonomy. While many express doubts about their future independence, there is a notable contrast between those who currently experience higher levels of dependence and those who feel less in control. This underscores the need for supportive measures to enhance children's and adolescent's confidence and capabilities in realising their rights and achieving greater self-determination as they transition into adulthood.



Children and adolescents identified key priorities for improving their future, focusing on education, combating violence and mistreatment, and ensuring access to food and water while avoiding forced conflicts. Girls emphasised education, health rights, and protection from violence, while boys prioritised avoiding conflict, freedom from violence, and safe living conditions. Children with disabilities highlighted the need for food, water, and health care, with education being important but secondary. Those from low socioeconomic backgrounds were primarily concerned about avoiding conflict, followed by environmental safety and health. These priorities reflect a broad concern for safety, basic necessities, and personal autonomy.

## **WeWorld's Toolkit**

The second phase of our investigation involved qualitative research activities conducted with small groups of children in the same schools where the initial consultation took place. These activities, carried out in spring 2024, were designed to build on the findings from the earlier survey and are detailed in the Toolkit produced by WeWorld.

### **Prioritisation Tool: Methodology and Contextualisation**

As outlined in the previous section, the final phase of the quantitative consultation invited children to identify key areas for intervention and propose actions that adults should take to create a better future for them. The qualitative component of the research, intended to complement and integrate with additional details the quantitative findings, aimed to delve deeper into children's dreams and aspirations, their perceptions of their most urgent needs, and the reasons behind these priorities. It also sought to understand their views on the role of parents and caregivers (the duty-bearers) in meeting their needs and fulfilling their aspirations.

To achieve this, WeWorld's Child Protection and Education experts, drawing on the Save the Children Photovoice manual<sup>4</sup> developed a participatory tool. This tool was contextualised with the support of WeWorld staff in Tanzania and designed to both prioritise and quantify the significance of various issues. It enabled participants to rank and evaluate issues through artistic expression and both individual and group work. The tool was used creatively and sequenced to allow facilitators to guide participants effectively, helping them explore thematic areas and delve deeper into key issues.

The methodology was crafted to ensure that children had a safe and inclusive space to express their views, fostering open discussion and reflection among the participants.

The methodology has been carefully designed to offer children a safe and inclusive space where they feel comfortable expressing their opinions, and to encourage discussion and reflection among them.

The toolkit comprises:

- A detailed description of the “Dream Fruit” activity, including practical information and tips for teachers and facilitators.
- A tool for notetakers.
- A final reporting template.

The activity is structured as a one-hour workshop involving up to 10 children. It is recommended to ensure equal participation of girls and boys, as well as children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, unless contextual factors prevent this. The workshop should be conducted by two individuals: one facilitator and one notetaker, ideally consisting of a teacher and a WeWorld education officer, both of whom should be trained by the Child Protection Expert.

Initially, the facilitator explains the purpose of the activity and asks the children to draw a tree on a flipchart. Each child is then given 10 cards, each depicting a fruit, and a related sentence or key aspect based on questions from the consultation form or survey. The facilitator asks the children to select the

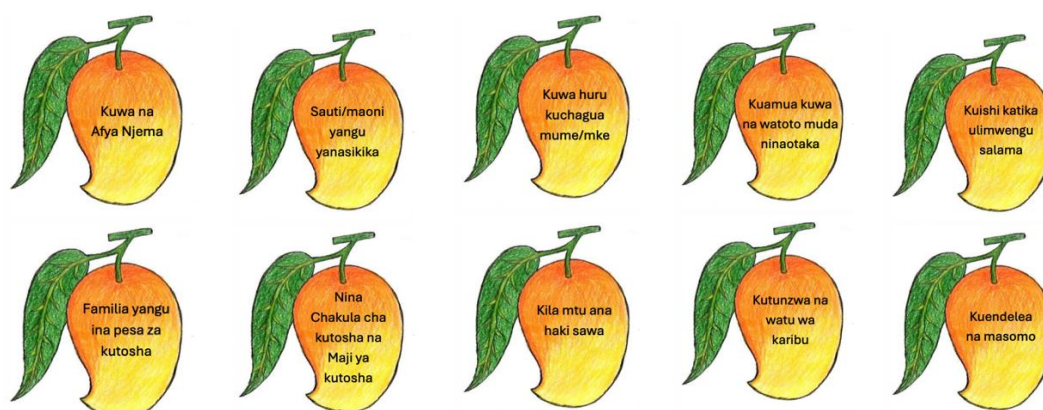
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<sup>4</sup> Gender in Focus: A guide to implementing photovoice within children lead the way.

5 cards that represent their most important needs for achieving a happy life in the future. Time is allocated for children to ask questions or comment on the cards.

The cards included the following sentences/key aspects:

1. I dream of a future where my voice and opinion are heard
2. I dream of a future where I have enough healthy food and water
3. I dream of a future where I can continue studying
4. I dream of a future where I am healthy
5. I dream of a future where I can live in a safe world
6. I dream of a future where my family has enough money
7. I dream of a future where I am free to choose my husband/wife
8. I dream of a future where I have children only when I decide to do that
9. I dream of a future where everyone is equal
10. I dream of a future where I am cared for by people close to me



*The fruit cards used in Pemba.*

The facilitator's tool includes a brief explanation of each one of the key aspects, to guide facilitator in answering children's questions and doubts.

After ensuring that all children understood the content of the cards, the facilitator asked them to place the cards representing less important needs on the outer branches of their tree drawings, while positioning the cards representing their most significant needs closer to the trunk.

Once each child had completed their tree, the facilitator invited them to display their artwork on the wall and, on a voluntary basis, share their reflections with their peers. During this phase, the facilitator plays a crucial role in fostering discussion and facilitating the exchange of perspectives among the children. The next step involved asking the children to identify who or what could support them in achieving their aspirations. Lastly, the children were asked to provide feedback on the activity using emoticons.

The notetaker used a specific tool designed to ensure comprehensive data collection. Additionally, a report template has been created to assist both the facilitator and notetaker in organising and summarising the results and key findings of the activity. Active involvement of the school principal was essential throughout all phases of the process.

## **The Qualitative Research**

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative sessions held in schools, focusing on the play-based activities outlined in the toolkit described above.

### Children's Participation: Exploring and Engaging with the Concept of Dream Fruit

A total of 31 children, comprising 15 girls and 16 boys aged between 9 and 13 years, were randomly selected from schools in Dar es Salaam, Njombe, and Pemba, which had previously participated in the quantitative consultation. The group also included three children with special needs, all of whom had physical disability. The children were randomly chosen from various classes, ranging from levels 3 to 7. During the feedback exercise, all the children coloured a happy face, indicating their satisfaction with the activity.



*The results of the feedback exercise in Pemba.*

During the pilot phase, the dream fruit activity was conducted with a small group of students (10 per group) to ensure smooth delivery of the sessions. Recognising the interest among many children, teachers and school principals recommended expanding the activity to accommodate a larger number of participants in the future.

In terms of engagement with the dream fruit activity, several key observations were noted. Initially, in Dar es Salaam, children were hesitant and shy about sharing their experiences with the facilitator. To break the ice, the facilitator used an interactive open-ended question: "Can we see if we have the same dreams?" This approach encouraged children to participate more actively, raising their hands to share their views and explain their cards.

Similarly, in Pemba, facilitators observed that the initial speakers were shy and quiet, even when encouraged to speak more. Over time, as the children took turns speaking, their confidence grew, and they began to engage more openly. Notably, children tended to express their opinions only when prompted and did not initiate discussion on their own.

The quantitative consultation revealed that children are generally unaccustomed to expressing their opinions and can struggle when asked to do so. Many were unfamiliar with the concept of "opinion," and it became clear that they are seldom consulted by adults in their communities. This lack of dialogue can hinder their development by limiting their opportunities to express themselves and feel valued, ultimately impeding their active participation in decisions that affect them and fostering a sense of exclusion.

During the activity run in Njombe students raised numerous thought-provoking questions based on the cards they had chosen, leading to engaging conversations with the facilitator. Two questions emerged as particularly significant during the activity: one addressing societal inequalities and the other concerning the path to higher education. These questions stimulated meaningful discussions among the students and provided valuable opportunities for reflection and guidance on both social issues and personal aspirations.

Regarding societal inequalities, the conversation centred on how to advocate against such disparities. The facilitator encouraged students to consider themselves as role models in promoting equality within their communities. This led to a poignant moment when one student expressed frustration, highlighting that adults often dismiss children's perspectives, attributing this disregard to their age. This comment underscored the students' awareness of and concern about the lack of serious consideration given to their views by adults. This exchange highlighted the challenges faced by young individuals in voicing their opinions on societal matters they observe.

Not all children across the three locations chose to share their reasoning in the plenary session. For instance, in Njombe, only 5 out of 10 children opted to discuss their choices openly. Nevertheless, the facilitator encouraged the children to exchange their drawings and view each other's selected cards. While the children were enthusiastic about seeing their peers' work, they did not provide any comments or feedback. In districts where facilitators did not conduct ice-breaking activities, the children initially showed greater reticence. This observation corroborates the findings of the quantitative survey. Adults – the duty bearers responsible for upholding children's rights - who adopt a child-friendly approach, help to put children at ease and recognise them as equal rights holders, are able foster a climate of trust, encouraging children to perceive their opinions as valuable and worth sharing.

### Children's Dream Fruits: The Results of the Activity



*A child is describing her dream fruits to her classmates in Pemba.*

The analysis involved enumerating the cards or "fruits" selected by students, revealing that "Continue studying" was the most frequently chosen option, while "Have children only when I decide to do so" was the least selected. Although the analysis was predominantly qualitative, an effort was made to assess whether the ranking of choices remained consistent when considering only the students' first choices. The results are organised according to the order of selection, ranging from the most prioritised topic to the least. Each topic is discussed in a dedicated paragraph, providing an examination of the students' preferences and perspectives.

#### **1. I Dream of a Future Where I Can CONTINUE STUDYING**

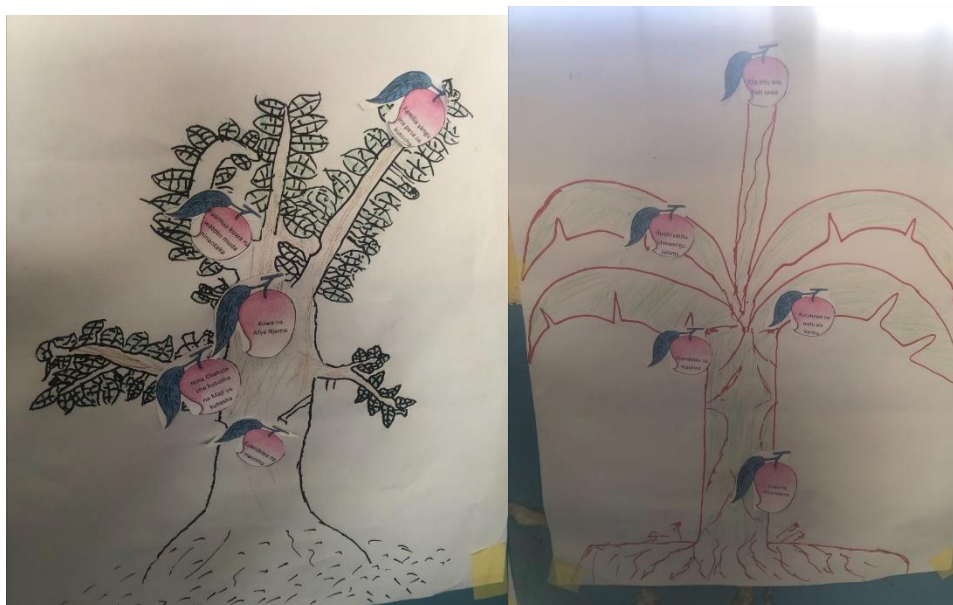
In all three locations, nearly all children (9 out of 10) identified the right to education as item. In total, 27 children out of 31 have selected this card. Continue studying dream is the most chosen option when it comes to the second-choice item (11 children out of 31). Education was viewed as a "key to success," as expressed by one young boy. 9 children in the three locations have selected this card as the first one, in Njombe specifically, 5 out of 10 children placed this item at the highest priority, closest to the trunk. The children from Njombe emphasised that continuing their education is crucial for attaining the necessities of a fulfilling life and achieving their personal goals.

Few children recognise the significance of continuing their education to gain access to higher levels of study, such as university, or to secure employment. Additionally, only a small number believe that ongoing education will enable them to better support their parents in the future.

## 2. I Dream of a Future Where I Can BE HEALTHY

In the 3 locations, 25 out of 31 children have selected this card during the activities while 11 children have selected this card as the top priority, thus making this item the most selected as the core one. Specifically, in Pemba, 5 out of 10 children selected this as their top priority, while in Dar es Salaam, 4 out of 10 did the same.

Many children view good health as essential for pursuing other goals. One girl articulated this, stating, "So as to continue with my study and achieve my dream," placing the "be healthy" card at the core of her priorities. Similarly, another child noted, "I chose this card because when I am in good health, I will reach my goals," and another emphasised, "You cannot do anything without good health." A boy further commented, "Good health can lead to good progress in studies, but without it, you cannot do anything." This widespread belief underscores that maintaining good health is considered a fundamental prerequisite for achieving academic and personal aspirations.



Some examples of dream fruits collected in Pemba.

## 3. I Dream of a Future Where EVERYONE IS EQUAL

More than half of the children (18 out of 31) believe in the principle of equality for all. Seven children ranked it as their second priority making this card the second most chosen option when it comes to the second-choice item. Only one child has chosen this card as the first priority in the three locations.

In Pemba, one child expressed the view that "There should be equal distribution of services among all people, and access to employment opportunities should be fair for everyone."

The children clearly articulated that all individuals should be treated equally, without discrimination, especially regarding their rights to education and clean water.

One boy remarked, "We are equal within the community, so those who are educated should help those who are not, and we must assist people with disabilities in securing their rights."

Another child from Pemba emphasised the importance of fair treatment within the school environment.

## 4. I Dream of a Future Where MY OPINION IS HEARD

18 out of 31 children in the 3 locations do consider important the right to have their opinion heard. It is never ranked as a top priority; however, 2 children ranked it at a second priority level in Njombe.



Particularly in Pemba, children want to express their opinion and their voice to be heard at family, school and community level. One child said: *"I need to get chance to provide recommendations at school level or family level"* while another pointed out: *"people must listen and respect our voice, ideas and views must be respected"*. Another boy said: *"I need to be listened when I talk to my parents especially when i presented request to them like requesting new school uniform or exercise book"*.

#### **5. I Dream of a Future Where I Can HAVE ENOUGH HEALTHY FOOD AND WATER**

17 out of 31 children selected this card among their dream cards, with 3 children considering it as a core priority (first choice) and 2 children as a second priority. In Njombe, one child explained, *"I chose this card because, when I am in good health, food and safe water will help me to study hard without being affected by diseases, allowing me to reach my goals,"* while smiling. Another child remarked, *"You cannot do anything without good health,"* also smiling.

In Pemba, a child expressed, *"I need access to clean water that is free from contamination,"* while another noted, *"I need to be protected from diseases that could affect my body."* Yet another child commented, *"Food and clean water are important because if you come to school hungry and there is no clean water to drink, I will not be able to study well."*

The issue of access to uncontaminated drinking water is a widespread concern in Pemba and other areas of Tanzania. It is notable that some children are aware of their right to healthy water, reflecting a growing understanding of this crucial issue.

#### **6. I Dream of a Future Where I Can LIVE IN A SAFE WORLD**

15 out of 31 children chose "Live in a safe world" as a priority, with a notable emphasis in Pemba and Dar es Salaam, where 6 out of 10 children chose it in each location. 4 children, among which 3 in Pemba, look at safety as a top priority.

In Pemba, students expressed a strong desire to live in a world free from conflict, particularly political unrest, as they believe that a safe environment is crucial for their continued education and learning. Concerns were voiced about the impact of political disturbances on their studies, with one student remarking, *"I cannot imagine how it is during elections; schools are often closed due to potential violence, causing us to miss out on our studies and remain at home until the elections are over."*

In Pemba another child said: *"I need safe world that is free from natural disasters like floods, or earthquakes that could affect developments of the country"* while another pointed out: *"I want to live in a world that does not have bad acts like rape that destroy the values of society"*.

#### **7. I Dream of a Future Where I AM CARED FOR BY PEOPLE CLOSE TO ME**

12 out of 31 children emphasised the importance of being cared for by those close to them and selected this card. One child in Dar es Salaam chose it as a top priority and remarked, *"When my family loves me, they help me reach my goals."* In Pemba, another child highlighted, *"I need strong support from my family, including my mother, father, and siblings, to aid in my personal and social development."* Additionally, the family is seen as a protective factor, as one child noted, *"This support helps me withstand peer pressure within our community."*

#### **8. I Dream of a Future Where MY FAMILY HAS ENOUGH MONEY**

10 out of 31 children selected the item concerning financial support, 6 children in Pemba. However, no child in Pemba selected this as their top priority, and only two children in other locations placed it at the top of their list. 2 children, in Pemba, chose this card as the second top priority. In Pemba, one child noted, *"If my family does not have enough money, they cannot support my academic progress, including buying exercise books, uniforms, and shoes, which are necessary for studying in a conducive environment."*

Although children recognise the importance of financial resources for accessing other rights, such as education and health, most prioritised these rights over the financial means required to achieve them. The need for money is nonetheless linked to academic progress. One child in Pemba explained, “*Money is used to support my academic progress, purchase necessary items like exercise books, and run a family business for additional income.*”

#### **9. I Dream of a Future Where I Can BE FREE TO CHOOSE MY HUSBAND OR WIFE**

7 out of 31 children selected the option related to personal choice in marriage. In Pemba, 4 children (2 boys and 2 girls) expressed a strong desire to choose their own spouse based on love, rather than having their choice dictated by their families. They emphasised that parents should not make this decision on their behalf.

#### **10. I Dream of a Future Where I Can HAVE CHILDREN ONLY WHEN I DECIDE TO DO SO**

Only 6 children out of 31 selected the right to decide whether to become a parent as a priority. One boy in Pemba commented, “*I don’t want anyone to force me to have children; I want to make this decision myself, as some parents pressure their children to have kids, which is not fair.*” Another child added, “*I should have the right to decide how many children I want, without being pressured or influenced by parents or siblings.*”

#### **Supportive People in Achieving Children’s Aspirations**

As outlined in the toolkit description, the second part of the dialogic activity involved asking children to identify which reference figures could assist them in fulfilling their needs and aspirations to create a brighter future. The quantitative consultation had already highlighted the importance of recognising duty-bearers—those who can support them—in fostering a sense of optimism, positivity, and confidence in their future and the realisation of their rights.

It does not come as a surprise that the primary adult figure identified by most children is their parents. The majority believe that parents or caregivers play a crucial role in supporting their journey towards achieving their dreams and aspirations. Notably, only 1 child out of 31 indicated that they rely solely on themselves to pursue their goals.

#### **An Unexpected Outcome**

WeWorld staff initially had some reservations about how the activity would be received by both students and educational personnel. Concerns included the potential for the activity to be time-consuming and uncertainty about whether the educational staff would appreciate its value, given that children are not typically asked for their opinions.

Contrary to these concerns, feedback from the three schools was overwhelmingly positive. In Njombe, the activity was particularly well-received, with teachers recommending its regular implementation. They observed that the activity not only helped students articulate their aspirations more clearly but also motivated them to pursue their studies with greater diligence. The activity demonstrates significant potential for fostering essential life skills in children, such as self-awareness, critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making. The Tanzanian Life Skills Education Framework currently focuses predominantly on HIV prevention. However, this activity highlights the broader value of life skills education, illustrating that engaging children in such reflective practices can contribute to their overall personal development and academic motivation<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The many different interpretations of life skills, and in particular the way in which life skills education has been tied closely to HIV prevention education, has led to a lot of confusion among stakeholders about what life skills are and are not, NATIONAL LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION FRAMEWORK, pg. 8.

The framework also recognises a life skills approach that emphasises the importance of addressing values and attitudes and developing the skills acknowledging at the same time the difficulty to be implemented in class, without a strong tradition of participatory and interactive teaching.

Despite the framework itself emphasises the need to train all teachers in life skills - so that they are able to develop classroom activities that are geared to the development of a variety of life skills relevant and appropriate to the learners in their context – it is unclear whether this type of training occurred. Teachers were quite reticent in implementing and taking ownership of such an activity; however, they highly appreciated children's participation, engagement and encouraged WeWorld to pursue such activities in the future.

### Conclusions from the Qualitative Research

The "Dream Fruits" activity underscores several critical insights into children's priorities and concerns. Education is overwhelmingly valued as a fundamental element for achieving success and personal growth. This reflects a widespread recognition of its role in shaping future opportunities. Health is also highly prioritised, with many children linking good health directly to their ability to pursue education and other goals, particularly for children with special needs.

The emphasis on equality and having their opinions heard highlights a desire for fairness and inclusion in decision-making processes. Children are keenly aware of the need for equal treatment and opportunities, and they seek recognition and respect for their views.

Access to clean water and nutritious food remains a significant concern, indicating a heightened awareness of basic needs and their impact on well-being and education.

Safety, encompassing protection from conflict and natural disasters, is recognised as crucial for ensuring a stable environment conducive to learning and personal development. While familial support is seen as a valuable protective factor, financial resources, although recognised as important, are less frequently prioritised compared to educational and health needs. This suggests that children place a higher value on the direct benefits of education and health rather than the financial means to access them.

Additionally, a desire for personal autonomy in decisions, such as marriage and parenthood, reflects an emerging need for self-determination and control over significant life choices. Overall, these findings suggest a comprehensive view of children's aspirations, where fundamental rights and personal agency are seen as integral to their future well-being and success.

### Recommendations and Policy Implications

Building on the findings from our mixed-method research, we formulated a series of overarching recommendations to foster a more promising future for children and adolescents in Tanzania. These include:

- **Increasing awareness of children's rights is crucial for empowering them through knowledge.** When children understand their rights and recognise themselves as rights holders, they are better equipped to advocate for themselves and access the protection and opportunities they need.
- **Enabling children to recognise themselves as rights holders involves a change in perspective among adults**—specifically, the duty-bearers in children's lives. This requires adults to recognise agency to children, adopting a receptive and active listening role.
- **Meaningfully involving children in decision-making processes not only respects their rights but also recognises their capacity to contribute meaningfully to their lives and communities.** This active participation helps to build their confidence and develop substantial life skills. By fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding, children's involvement in decisions that affect them is vital for their development into engaged and responsible adults.
- **Addressing the specific needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups is equally important to ensure that all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal**

**opportunities to succeed.** Tailoring interventions to combat various forms of discrimination is key to creating a more just society, where every child can envision and work towards a brighter future.

Building on these overarching recommendations, we developed more specific policy implications.

#### **For the Government of Tanzania:**

- **Operationalise the National Strategy for Inclusive Education (NSIE) and Goal 1 of the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty II (NSGRP II):** To fulfil the objectives of these strategies, it is essential to ensure that all children, regardless of gender, have equitable access to quality education at every level, from Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes to primary and secondary education. This involves not only the expansion of educational opportunities but also the removal of barriers that may prevent children from attending and thriving in school. By achieving these goals, children can continue their education, unlock their full potential, and work towards realising their aspirations, thereby contributing to a more equitable and prosperous future.
- **Allocate the Necessary Budget to Education:** Adequate funding is critical to improving school infrastructure, providing appropriate learning materials, and training teachers to meet the diverse needs of all students. By committing the necessary budget, the government can ensure that education is truly inclusive and that every child has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their circumstances. This means ensuring that all children, including those with special needs, have access to quality basic education, as stipulated in the NSIE and NSGRP II.
- **Guarantee Children's Right to Healthy Development:** Children have expressed serious concerns about their right to health, particularly the need for protection from diseases and access to nutritious food and clean water. To address these concerns, it is imperative to implement policies and programmes that prioritise children's health and well-being. This includes improving healthcare services, ensuring the availability of safe and nutritious food, and providing clean water and WASH services to all communities.
- **Acknowledge and Implement the Joining Forces<sup>6</sup> Call to Action on Child Participation:** In May 2024, Joining Forces officially launched a global Call to Action on children's participation, advocating for children to have a seat at the table and actively participate in all matters and decisions that affect their lives as rights holders. This approach requires providing them with inclusive and accessible spaces within the chambers of power, ensuring their involvement throughout the entire decision-making process rather than simply seeking their views before or after decisions are made. Such forums should be accessible, child-friendly, and designed to encourage meaningful participation, with feedback mechanisms that allow children to see the impact of their contributions.
- **Adopt Intergenerational Budgeting:** Implementing intergenerational budgeting involves using an economic analysis and planning tools to assess the impact of public and budgetary policies on different generations, particularly focusing on children and young people. This approach helps to identify and address existing inequalities, ensuring that public resources are allocated equitably across all age groups. By prioritising the needs of younger generations, intergenerational budgeting ensures that the investments made today support not only the current population but also the long-term well-being and development of future generations. This method promotes fairness and sustainability in public spending, leading to more balanced and just outcomes for society as a whole.

#### **For the Ministry of Education:**

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<sup>6</sup> As part of ChildFund Alliance, WeWorld supports the Joining Forces Call to Action on child participation. In 2017, ChildFund Alliance joined forces with the other five largest child-focused agencies: Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, and World Vision International

- **Continue Efforts at the School and Community Levels:** Prevent and address the causes of school dropouts among children with disabilities, who face an increased risk of child labour if their right to education is not secured. In this regard, a review of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour (2009) is necessary.
- **Integrate Life Skills into the Tanzanian Curriculum:** Although the Tanzanian Life Skills Education Framework emphasises the need for all teachers to be trained in life skills to facilitate such activities in their classrooms, the framework is not consistently applied in practice. Therefore, it is essential to further embed life skills into the curriculum and enhance teachers' capacity to deliver these activities.
- **Review the Child Development Policy of 2008:** This policy, which focuses on the protection of children with disabilities, street children, and those affected by natural disasters, should be updated to include children's voices, particularly in the context of preventing climate crises. Children have expressed fears about the consequences of natural disasters and the impact of climate change on the future development of their country.
- **Integrate Dialogue and Participation into the Education System<sup>7</sup>:** Engage with children to ensure they have opportunities to express their opinions, as their voices matter and should be considered in decision-making. This should be linked with reforms in the education system, which currently does not sufficiently encourage children's self-expression. For instance, a focus on the importance of dialogue, active listening, and participatory practices should be incorporated in curriculum modules at all educational levels. As emerged from the qualitative research we conducted, educators should be trained to facilitate discussions that empower children to express their thoughts, needs, and concerns in a safe and supportive environment.

### Closing Remarks

This research was itself a significant exercise in child participation. Through the consultation and group discussions, we not only identified children's fears, priorities, needs, and aspirations but also empowered them to express their own opinions, recognising themselves as holders of specific rights and demands. Environments where rights are effectively recognised and upheld by duty-bearers significantly enhance children's self-perception as rights-holders. This recognition fosters trust in institutions and society, contributing to improved psychological well-being, enhanced sense of security, and increased confidence. Educating both children and adults on the importance of dialogue not only enhances decision-making but also strengthens the bonds that hold communities together. Acknowledging and valuing children's voices is not merely a matter of rights; it is a crucial investment in their personal development and the broader progress of society. Neglecting this equals missing a vital opportunity to build a world where every child is empowered to contribute to and shape their own future.

In closing, we build upon the concept of the future and the right to the future. It is WeWorld hope that the findings presented will stimulate a broader dialogue on recognising this right and advocate for its formal acknowledgment. Recognising the right to the future as a fundamental human right is crucial, not only because it is implicitly enshrined in existing laws, as discussed in this paper, but also due to its symbolic significance in emphasising the necessity for a sustainable and equitable future for all generations. Acknowledging this right could prompt national governments and international organisations to implement long-term measures, policies, and interventions that respect and enhance the capacities of young people and children. Such recognition would empower them to aspire, ensure their voices are heard, and support their participation in decision-making processes, thereby addressing global challenges more effectively.

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<sup>7</sup> Makulilo V. (2022), Children and Youth Participation in Decision- Making in Tanzania: A Need for Vibrant Councils at Local Levels, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362290022\\_Children\\_and\\_Youth\\_Participation\\_in\\_Decision-Making\\_in\\_Tanzania\\_A\\_Need\\_for\\_Vibrant\\_Councils\\_at\\_Local\\_Levels](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362290022_Children_and_Youth_Participation_in_Decision-Making_in_Tanzania_A_Need_for_Vibrant_Councils_at_Local_Levels)



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