



ACCESS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY



*“Education helps me to reach my goals.
Education is liberating for my life, for my family and for my community”.*
A primary school child, Kinondoni

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
Methodology of Research	6
Research Findings - What challenges? What efforts?	12
Recommendations	54
Conclusions	56



1. Executive Summary

1.1. Background

Primary school education is one of the building blocks of life. A child's right to primary school education is non negotiable, regardless of the child's wider family economic, cultural or social background. However, for children living in a family immersed in deepest poverty, the likelihood of accessing and completing their primary school education cycle is substantially reduced. This participatory research was carried out from January 2015 to March 2016 in Kinondoni district, Dar es Salaam, to understand the right conditions for children living in extreme poverty to start and finish their primary school cycle.

1.2. Method

People living in extreme poverty have knowledge arising from their unique life experiences. Often overlooked and devalued, their insight can bring meaningful solutions to challenges when taken on board by policy makers. The research was inspired, developed and facilitated by a team including people living in extreme poverty and others from diverse backgrounds. Over fifteen months they interviewed forty six parents, forty children and twenty teachers and local leaders. A holistic approach was used to understand the wider context of families living in extreme poverty. In this way the research team was able to understand how the health, income, wider community relationships, etc, have an impact on a child's primary school education and highlighted the efforts made by the various stakeholders involved. The research team was creative in its approach to collection and analysis of the data ensuring each person, regardless of their background, could contribute with equal value.

This method demonstrated when the right conditions exist, the views of people living in extreme poverty can be clearly articulated and defined to advocate for policy changes which can have positive influence for their society.

1.3. Findings

The primary school education of children from extremely poor families is rooted in a much larger context of their immediate and extended families, and wider community. Internal and external family and community conflicts, the health and work of parents, the safety and distractions of wider environmental factors all impact heavily on children. For the challenges that come often and unexpectedly, families living in extreme poverty have to find solutions as they happen, which can be temporary and misunderstood. Relationships between parents and teachers are often reciprocally condemning and judgemental. Children fear some teachers and feel discriminated because of their background. All this creates an extremely challenging atmosphere for children and teachers.

However, genuine desire for improvement was expressed from all stakeholders. Efforts are made, some significant and obvious while others need more understanding. Education is an unconditional priority for all people living in extreme poverty. Under challenging circumstances teachers remain committed as education actors. Children from extremely poor families see education as their best chance to eventually escape extreme poverty.

1.4. Recommendations

The recommendations call for a collaboration between multiple partners working and taking interconnected commitments to ensure children to successfully start and finish their primary school education. Parents, teachers, local and national government, the wider community, external partners and children themselves each have a role to play in this call for action.



People living in extreme poverty face many challenges in life. One such challenge, on the surface, appears illogical, the primary school education of their children. In the district of Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam, where the research was carried out, primary school education is free and most children live within a reasonable distance of a school.

Primary school education is one of the building blocks of life. A child's right to primary school education is non negotiable, regardless of a child's wider family economic, cultural or social background. However, for children living in a family immersed in deepest poverty, their likelihood of accessing and completing primary school education are substantially reduced. When a parent sees their child denied the basic right of primary school education, they know it is as though you lock them out of a world of opportunities, empowerment, and future personal development.

This participatory research was carried out from January 2015 to March 2016. At the start of the research and for many previous years, the primary school education landscape was quite different from today. For example, 87% of parents reported they paid school contributions in June 2013 (Twaweza Brief No.3 2013). The governments determination to follow the Education for Free policy in January 2016 was welcomed by parents across the country. It addressed the issues of fees and daily contributions at primary schools, which were highlighted by many parents as will be seen in this report. However, this participatory research looked to go further than the question of contributions, making recommendations for primary school education which all stakeholders can endorse and commit to.

It is widely accepted that extreme poverty goes far beyond a person or family's inadequate financial resources, affecting people's cultural, political and social rights, their rights to freedom and dignity. Extreme poverty is commonly family sequential, repeating generation after generation. To break this cycle of extreme poverty, combinations of multiple social, political, economic and cultural factors, coupled with access to fundamental rights, and the capacity to assume these basic responsibilities, must align. Primary school education is one such right in a child's life, and within the context of the wider family, that needs to be in alignment if the journey out of extreme poverty is to be accomplished. A denial of access to primary school education is an affront to a child's dignity.

Access is not only a question of enrolment. Across Tanzania Gross Enrolment Rate to primary school stood at 96.2% in 2013 (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training Education for All Report for Tanzanian Mainland November 2014). School should be a place of learning, enjoyment, development and friendship.

ATD Fourth World works to empower people living in extreme poverty to access their basic rights, be recognised as valued members of society and brings together people from all backgrounds to reject the prejudice and discrimination caused by extreme poverty. Extreme poverty can be all consuming, destructive, humiliating and life threatening. However, when the right conditions exist people living in extreme poverty can discover and unleash hidden potential immersed in years of life experience. Bringing people living in extreme poverty to the forefront of this research would make it unique and participatory.

This research, inspired, developed, facilitated, implemented and accomplished by people living in extreme poverty and others from diverse backgrounds looks to understand and make recommendations as to which conditions will allow children living in extreme poverty to start and finish their primary school education.





3. Methodology of Research

Society in general adds value to a person's knowledge based on their social status. People living in extreme poverty are often ignored or rejected from important political and social discussions at a national, community and even at a family level. As one mother said during the research, *"Poverty undermines the dignity of a person even within the family"*.

An individual's social and educational upbringing, in whatever context, rich or poor, does not exclude them from attaining knowledge born of life experience. By being aware of, observing and learning how to adapt to one's surroundings, knowledge is accumulated.

When searching for the answer to a question, a problem, it is normal to turn to the person best placed to answer the question or resolve the problem. For example, if a car's engine fails a mechanic is called, when a pipe leaks people look for a plumber, when a skirt is torn it is taken to a tailor. Therefore, when attempting to understand the efforts made and challenges faced by families living in extreme poverty to ensure their children access their right to primary school education, the expertise and knowledge of people living in extreme poverty is essential.

Seeking to engage parents and children living in extreme poverty, teachers and local leaders was the place ATD Fourth World knew its research needed to begin. Asking questions to the identified target group gives one element of understanding, it gives information. However, the way that information is then analysed is subjective and open to interpretation.

An academic researcher will bring her or his knowledge and experience, whether she or he has a personal experience of poverty or not, adding value and rigour to the research. However a person with direct experience of poverty, a knowledge born of life experience, will, when the right conditions are met to ensure her or his participation, also add value to a research project. An important question worthy of consideration is, will a person with a direct experience of poverty be better placed to identify and understand the challenges facing the poorest children accessing primary school education?

A research team was set up at the beginning of the project. Its mission to be the engine of the research and a steering committee that would make decisions and drive the project forward. The team was consisted of five people with an experience of extreme poverty, two teachers, one student, a local leader and four ATD Fourth World volunteers. Of the five people living in extreme poverty, all have either children or grandchildren currently attending primary school. Of the two teachers, one is a primary school head teacher, the other a private pre-school teacher. The student was studying at the Public Service College. The four ATD volunteers come from various backgrounds. Three are Tanzanian and one British. A research advisor oversaw the project.

First the research team got to know each other through a series of meetings and discussions. This allowed the team to understand each other's potential, talents, limitations, enthusiasm for the project and the various responsibilities they could each carry. For example, the student was busy studying and could only guarantee to participate in the research during the weekends or school holidays. The two teachers involved in the team needed a similar schedule to participate. Two of the people living in extreme poverty had only learnt to read and write within the last two and four years respectively, which in itself meant special attention would be needed to ensure that their participation was at a level that would give the same contribution as the rest of the team. Through these discussions the team learnt that if people living in extreme poverty stopped their regular activities for several consecutive days they would need support that would enable them to participate and carry out their responsibilities fully, while not having a negative effect on their families. While preparing the agenda for meetings, it was necessary to allow each person time to give her or his contribution to develop the research.

During the first meeting one of the questions discussed was, what is your relationship with primary schools? This allowed each person in the research team to say how she or he is involved with primary schools as a parent, head teacher, etc. The team learnt that one member was responsible for eight children living at her house who go to either pre, primary or secondary schools, and the student was involved in developing a project for girls who drop out of primary school.

The research team then started to think about the method in which the research would be carried out. What training would be required for interviewers? How many people would be needed to conduct an interview? How would the information be recorded? Written, audio or video? What are the best days and times for interviewing people living in extreme poverty? Where should the interviews take place? At the interviewee's home, at the ATD office or a neutral place? All these seemingly small yet important details were discussed in depth within the research team to ensure that the interviewee would feel at ease and confident when being interviewed.

Some criteria were set to identify people to be interviewed. For example they must be responsible for the guidance and care of a child attending primary school, either as their parent, grandparent or guardian; and living in the selected locations. Two locations in Dar es Salaam were identified, Tandale and Tegeta.

It was decided to interview forty-six parents living in extreme poverty, forty primary school aged children coming from impoverished families, and twenty teachers or local leaders were identified.

The unusual number of forty-six parents to be interviewed was developed as part of the methodology of the research. Six families would be interviewed over a series of weeks on different themes that

would encompass many aspects of their lives. The themes were: self; family and friends; home and community; work and income; health; and school. Using this method, which was developed from the Sustainable Livelihoods approach (Sustainable Livelihoods Handbook, Oxfam 2009), the research attempted to unfold as wider picture as possible from the perspective of these six families to answer the research question. The information learned from the other forty parents interviewed would enhance and validate the detailed research carried out with the six families. Interviewing the children, teachers and local leaders would further widen the information and understanding sought. This would bring in new elements for analysis and allow the research team to develop recommendations from multiple angles.

As the research team went further in understanding the project, they saw potential challenges that could beset them in their work. For example, it was emphasised that permission would be needed in each location where the research would be carried out, whether in the community of Tandale, Tegeta or in schools. The relevant permission letters were acquired from local street government offices, the National Office of Statistics and the Kinondoni Primary Education Office.

The research team addressed the question of confidentiality. They discussed the importance of confidentiality, which areas of the work needed to remain confidential and why. Two nominated research team members drew up a policy that all the members read, agreed upon and signed. Each person acted accordingly throughout the research to respect the confidentiality policy. The research team members put in place a procedure to follow in the eventuality that during the research they were told something they found upsetting or disturbing.

The research team recognised it was important for the people being interviewed to understand who were the researchers and why they were coming. A clear presentation of the project was key in helping people to understand that the researchers were not there to solve problems. It was agreed that each researcher would have a photographic identity card they would show when introducing themselves. When carrying out interviews in teams of two or three they carried copies of the permission letters provided by the relevant authorities.

For every interview, each interviewee was visited in advance and told about the project before the interview was carried out during the following days. This allowed people to decide if they were ready to continue, and prepare themselves to be free on the agreed day. These small details became time consuming, but were a necessary step as agreed upon by the research team.

Developing and agreeing upon the questions for the interviews was another task of the research team. As explained, six themes would

underpin the research, so a series of questions had to be designed that would not be over intrusive, while being sufficiently detailed to explore and find the information needed.

A small subcommittee was formed to work on the questions, consisting of two people with an experience of poverty, two ATD volunteers and the student. Over two weeks they discussed, agreed and wrote the lists of questions for the six families, the forty families, the forty children, and the twenty teachers and local leaders. These lists of questions were then validated by the research team.

The next step in the development of the research was to train the team how to interview people. A day was spent going through and developing the presentation of the project, how the researchers would present themselves, and understanding the questions. Training was given on how to use audio recording equipment and cameras. Next the group did a series of role plays using interview techniques. They learnt how to encourage interviewees to develop answers further, how to guide people to stay on the question asked, what to do if an interview was disturbed by other people such as an unexpected guest arriving at the home, etc.

A person with an experience of poverty explained why it is important to be interviewed by somebody with the same life experience. He said:

- *He (the interviewer) is supposed to understand the situation in which I am living. He will be careful which questions to ask. He will know which questions to ask and which questions not to ask so as not to put me in trouble.*
- *If he (the interviewer) begins to put me in confidence, to show we are the same, I will be more encouraged to show him more about my life and what he wants to know.*
- *I will be sure that all I tell him (the interviewer) will be kept in confidence.*

Other traditional research methods of validating the data were also incorporated into the methodology. These included prearranging the interview day and time to help the response rate, using flexibility during the interview to develop lines of enquiry and returning to check the transcript with the informants.

Interviews of parents began in April 2015, followed by teachers, local leaders and children and were completed by December 2015. Throughout this time each interview was carefully transcribed and checked against the original recording.

In December 2015 the process of analysing the information began after accumulating over 100 interviews, with hundreds of pages of data, recordings and video. The diversity of the team meant creativity was needed to find ways to work together at a pace that respected each person's limits while valuing their contribution.

The analysis aimed to look for the efforts and challenges parents, children, teachers and local leaders make to ensure children start and finish their primary school education. Covering a broad area of the families' lives, the team was able to see the interconnection between health, housing, income, etc, and how all these different aspects have an impact on a child's primary school education.

It would be extremely challenging, in fact impossible, to give all the members of the research team every transcription of every interview for them to read. The team was divided into small groups to analyse the themes of the research (self; family and friends; housing and community; work and income; health; and school), and the interviews of the teachers, local leaders and children. Some interviews were carried out and recorded by video and audio. This allowed people in the small groups with limited literacy skills the possibility to analyse without having to read a long transcript. At other times the small groups worked together by reading aloud, slowly page by page, and allowing each person to comment on and draw out the key information and findings. The team worked in small groups until all the findings were drawn from which the research team made final recommendations. The final report of the research was written in April 2016.

4. Research Findings: What challenges? What efforts?

The research followed six themes covering different aspects of peoples' lives: self; family and friends; housing and community; work and income; health; and school.

The data collected was drawn together and analysed theme by theme.

The findings allowed the research group to make conclusions and recommendations for parents, teachers local and national government and other education stakeholders.





4.1. Myself

The families on whom the research focused were asked questions about themselves. Some of these questions were very precise, such as their tribe, where they originate from, number of children and if they own a mobile phone. Other questions were more open, such as what they are proud of and what they like.

Concerning pride, all the parents said they were proud of their children and that most of them are going to school. They all see their children as bringing hope for a better future and the possibilities to find work. Parents believe their future will be secured through their children. If their children's future is stable, their future will be stable.

Most of the parents said they had very little to be proud about themselves. They have a very short term view on life. One mother said,

“The problem is we don't have a long-term outlook. We only think of the present and not the future. We don't think of how things will be when we wake up the next day, or today I am alive but something could change. We don't know ourselves”.

For this mother having no plans for the future left her and her family in a state of uncertainty; never knowing what can happen tomorrow; never in control of her life.

One father said he was proud to be the owner of his home, a small plot with two traditional rooms. He said, *“I am also proud of the life that God has given us”*. The importance and dedication to God that people have was very evident in many of the families interviewed. This father went on to say that one day he would be proud to be a local leader in his community. He said,

“I wish there could be a possibility one day to be a leader. When I see people being deprived of their rights, I wish I could have enough education to become an outstanding leader and be able to defend them because when I look at people who are mistreated, myself I usually feel hurt”.

Concerning the future, one very poor mother said she dreamed one day to be an actress. She talked about her talent of making people laugh and that she was well known as a comedian.

Fifty percent of the parents interviewed were unable to read and write. Most of them did not finish primary school, some never went to school. The majority of the parents were born or grew up outside of Dar es Salaam in a village. For many

of them helping at home, farming and looking after animals were part of everyday life and among the reasons why they did not go to school.

Each parent interviewed was asked if she or he had ever travelled in Tanzania or to another country. All said they had travelled at some point within Tanzania, from or returning to their village at different times. None had travelled outside Tanzania.

Concerning the ownership of mobile phones, all the fathers interviewed owned a phone but many mothers did not own a phone. Some mothers had owned a phone in the past, or in emergencies borrowed a phone from a neighbour. One mother said that owning a phone had caused misunderstandings and arguments with her husband because he did not trust her and wanted to constantly monitor and check who she was talking to.

One of the interview questions was whether the parents had friends. Sixty-five percent said yes, thirty-five said no.

4.2. Family and friends

4.2.1. Facing conflict

Facing conflict within the family and finding solutions was something all the parents interviewed talked about. Conflicts and disagreements can happen suddenly or build up over time having direct and indirect negative effects and consequences on a child's education.

When a family does not live peacefully, constantly in turmoil, it can bring the children to distraction, even to flee the family and live on the streets. One parent said,

“If the parents are in conflict, when the child is at school she or he thinks constantly about what is happening at home. This makes the child sad and she or he is unable to study”.

Parents worry what can happen if people are unable to reconcile their differences and separate. A mother said, *“If the father takes a new wife, when the child goes to school and the teachers ask the child to bring contributions she or he will worry to go home and ask his step-mother for the contributions”.* Parental separation can also bring arguments as to where the children go to live. This can be for different reasons, one being linked to where the parents want the child to go to school. Sometimes a parent wants the child to live with them for other reasons, but if no school is close by the child's education can be affected.

Some children do not live with their birth parents. This can mean that some children are “favoured” over others. For example, if the man of the house is the father of the younger children he might refuse to support the education of the older children, which are not his by birth. In most families both parents show the same love, care and support for all the children.

Money can bring tension in the lives of families, between husband and wife and between parent and child. One mother said she does not like her husband, the father of the house, to be above and controlling her. Her husband does not allow her to work, which means he controls all the income of the house. For everything she has to buy she must ask her husband. Even when the children ask her for Tzs 50 to buy a sweet at the shop, she has to ask her husband. She said this constant begging her husband for money is humiliating.

The local leaders interviewed also emphasised the importance of the family unit agreeing with parents that disagreement can unsettle children and disrupt their education. They also made the point that when a disagreement cannot be solved and parents separate, single mothers have to face all the challenges of raising and educating their children without a father’s guiding influence.

One parent summed up these concerns well. She said,

“The weakness of the family bonds makes children live in a dangerous situation”.

4.2.2. Putting effort in and finding solutions

Solutions to problems are first sought and often found within the family. However parents also share their concerns with their neighbours and encourage each other with advice and support. One mother talked about phoning home to her family in the village to share news and seek advice. A father interviewed explained how as a child he went to live with his aunt, who raised him and sent him to school. It was discovered among some families interviewed that they were raising children of their relatives. Not only the parents but the wider family are all involved in raising the children and concerned with their primary school education.

In one interview a mother highlighted that seeing her child going to school every day encouraged her to struggle and provide for her family, and that when the child sees his mother struggling every day to find money this was also a motivation for the child to go to school. This cycle of parent / child encouragement is important in the poorest families where other efforts are often not recognised.

4.2.3. Extra activities

Each family member has responsibilities. These included the children being given housework when she or he returns home or before going to school. This is considered an important way for a child to be part of the family and helps them to develop other important life skills. Parents said when returning from school if a child is given housework for a short time before doing his school homework, it can allow her or his mind to be refreshed. One grandfather was proud of the responsibilities he asks his granddaughter to do, *“I am proud of my grandchildren and their studies. I do not know how to read and write, so when I get a letter I call my grandchild and ask her to read the letter, and she reads very well, word for word as in the letter. This is better than bringing it to your neighbours because they can add or reduce what is written in the letter. This makes me proud of my grandchildren”*.

The children interviewed spoke about the activities they do at home. Only a few are not asked to help at home. However the majority were involved in some way with housework: cleaning the house; washing clothes; cooking. This is for both girls and boys. Other duties expected were to help in the business and income generating activities of their parents. One child helped at his parents' shop after school, and on occasional days when a parent was not present he was expected to miss school to work in the shop. For the children interviewed, many helped with small activities in the evening. Some reported selling small food 'bites'; one child helped with keeping animals; one child sold CD's from the front of the family home; another child sold bottled water. Several children said on weekends they help the parents in their small business activities. One child told the interviewer this,

“When I come back home I have no time to study, I go at the market and pick up the maize which has fallen down, I sell the maize by the kilo and the money I spend myself at school or I give to my mother”.

Some parents talked about feeling proud of their children when they come home from school and join them in their activities, like breaking stones. They said this small amount of money they earn can be a source of pride and a help for going to school. A mother said,

“On Saturdays I send the children walking around this place to pick up stones so they might fill a bucket and sell them” (a bucket of stones can be sold for Tzs 300).

Parents gave examples of what they liked to do: spending time with their children to sit and listen to their stories of what happened during the day; to study, to learn to read and

write and to have training for entrepreneurship; to learn artistic skills like decorating linen sheets; to have access to the internet, news stories and understand new technologies.

A few families have a television and watch at home. For those families who have a TV, it was considered to have positive and negative consequences on a child's education. Parents said some TV shows can be educational and bring learning to a child. However, most parents said too much TV was not good for children. For some it is a distraction when they should be doing their homework, or the children would spend time chatting with their friends at school about something they had seen on TV last night rather than studying. One father put this well when he said, *"TV has a huge effect. A child may be asked a question at school and fail to know the answer but she or he can remember what they saw on TV"*.

4.2.4 Future plans

Parents report having different plans for their own, and their children's future. Some parents talked about their dreams of starting small businesses to provide for their families' needs. When asked how attending school is helping prepare children for the future, specifically the activities or work parents would like them to do, they all said that primary education was an important stepping stone in their children's development as it can lead to other opportunities. Most did not have specific ideas of the type of work they would like to see their children doing. All were realistic and talked about a profession that matched the level of education a child might reach, and something that is comparable with their level of life and community needs. One mother gave the example of her son becoming a carpenter. It was important for parents that children should have the freedom to choose themselves. Finishing primary school greatly increases the choices open to them and the possibility of having that freedom.

When the children were asked what they would like to do in the future, they were very ambitious in their answers. The types of work they would like to do included doctor, teacher, soldier, artist, bank clerk, ship captain, farmer, accountant, member of parliament, businessperson, police officer, driver, engineer and president. All the children dreamed of having a profession. All knew who they would like to be. Some children were more specific in their answers.

"I want to be a doctor, to treat the people in my community in a good way", "I want to be a teacher so I can teach those children who do not get taught" and "I want to be a soldier, so I can stop all the bad things to come in my country illegally, like drugs, illegal weapons and people who do this because of corruption".

4.3. Housing and community

4.3.1. Housing

Having a home is essential for a stable life. For people living in extreme poverty, many struggle to attain this essential stability. Living in a rented house can bring insecurity, the chaotic and unstable nature of extremely poor people's lives means it is difficult to pay the rent on time.

People gave different examples of how they prepared themselves to pay the rent. The research discovered that many people participate in small saving scheme with groups of neighbours and friends, whereby they pay a small amount of money each day or week, and after a certain period receive an amount equivalent to what they have saved.

People talked about the importance of preparing themselves to pay the rent, such as communicating with the landlord, which could be on good terms or in negative and humiliating ways. One mother said, *"When you know in advance it will be difficult to pay the rent, you should contact the landlord and ask for an extension of time"*. To give notice to the landlord is important and helps to find an agreement. Other parents talked about quite different and degrading experiences. Some families were told to *"beg"* or *"steal"* to pay the rent from uncompromising landlords. One mother talked about her experience *"begging"* the landlord on *"bended knees"* to wait while she worked to get the money to pay him.

Parents explained their worries about housing. Several families said that the children witness their parents' struggles to find the money for rent, see the arguments they have with the landlords and this stays at the forefront of children's minds. One mother told of her child waking in the night to ask his mother, *"What will we do, we have no money to pay the rent"*. His mother said, *"My child will keep all this in his mind when at school, not knowing when he returns home if his family will have a place in which to sleep that night"*.

The research showed that the majority of parents living in the area of Tandale rented their houses, while some people outside the main city limits of Dar es Salaam were home owners. Home ownership gives a much greater degree of stability to those families, although it does not provide complete security.

When discussing acquiring a plot, one mother talked about poor people in some areas being *"invaders"*, meaning they would find a small piece of land and create a settlement. These small unplanned settlements could remain semi-permanent or become more permanent and last for

several years. Sometimes these settlements were the start of new villages and towns, as has been seen in the old stone quarry of Kunduchi. However, in some cases these settlements are at risk of being destroyed by the government, land erosion, violent weather patterns, etc. Land disputes are common, and sometimes owners or the government try to reclaim the land.

People living in extreme poverty can also be at risk of losing their settlement to stronger invaders. In some cases, when the value of the land increases new settlers try to take the land of the first settlers, who are usually very poor people. The stronger invaders do this by purchasing plots and increasing the size of their plot onto poorer neighbours' plots. Sometimes poor people are simply threatened and chased away from their homes. For those families living in their own home, when validated as the owner it is vital they follow up and get the correct papers to ensure the ownership of their plot is recorded with the local street government office.

Through the research it was learned that people living in extreme poverty live under the threat of their homes being demolished. Sometime this information can be incorrect, however it can also be all too real and people can be left with nothing, only their belongings on the side of the road.

Even when a plot is owned by a poor person and they have papers confirming their right of ownership, it can bring trouble. One mother talked about the problem of inheritance, which can lead to arguments and tensions between siblings when the plot is divided or sold and the money is not shared with agreement between them.

The research highlighted that people living in extreme poverty are very resourceful. Several who have their own plots have built traditional houses, demonstrating they have the knowledge to build these houses. Sometimes it was necessary to take credit to buy the wood or metal sheets for the roof, but over time they could build a house in which to live rent free. It was also learnt through one family living outside of Dar es Salaam that it was possible to get small loans from a bank to buy the materials to build a house. This was possible because the bank accepted the plot as security on repayment of the loan. Having a bank loan was a stressful time until the loan was repaid in the knowledge that the plot could be claimed by the bank. However, once the loan was repaid and the house was built it gave greater stability to this family and was a positive experience.

Not having to find the money for rent each month is one less worry for very poor families. One mother said it made life a little easier for her to send her children to school. Another

parent who has her own home said that although life is hard, it is better than before when the family had to rent a house.

4.3.2. Community

The parents interviewed were very open to talk about how they participate in their community, what they consider to be their position within the community, what challenges they face, and in what way they feel they are a part of building their communities.

Mostly people said within their community people were friendly to each other, greeting each other in passing, participating in events such as funerals and attending meetings. This mother said,

“As neighbours we live well together, if we see a child not going to school, we ask why and bring the child to her or his mother. We have unity to make sure the children in our community go to school. We don’t want the children to be hanging around and playing”.

A father talked about discovering a new area where he went to live. There the community organised itself and was emphasising the importance of education. After each school day, the children would gather at a meeting place to sit and do homework together, helping and encouraging each other to learn.

Parents said seeing their children well behaved is very important to them. It means they will be well seen within society by other parents and children, and a well behaved child will not bring shame on her or his family. It was also important for parents to be respected by their children, which comes from good behaviour. Being greeted in the morning, when children return home from school, participating in housework or running errands when asked were signs of good behaviour which were encouraged by parents.

Some of the families said they have good relationships with their neighbours if connected, for example through religious groups. All the families said it was very important for them to live peacefully, but gossip and scandals could be a cause of conflicts.

4.3.3. Community challenges and worries

A concern for parents is the amount of children staying around out in the streets and not going to school, and what influence this lack of structure has on them. Specifically the bad behaviour they can learn from each other. One father

spoke about the tensions that occur in the community caused by the children. He said that the children can be playing with each other one moment and be fighting the next. Parents are very protective of their children, scolding other children if they see them fighting, which can lead to altercations with those children's parents. Sometimes these disagreements between parents can last for a long time, bringing real and harmful hostility into the community, while the children have gone back to playing with each other.

A lack of cooperation between parents in the community can affect the behaviour of their children. This mother said, *“So we live in a very strange environment that maybe you feel that people don't see you, yet we don't know how will be our future, like what would change or that we should change our perceptions day by day, but we don't live in a good perception. We are the first born. Our children should come and witness the changes. We don't think of that. The way we live makes our children end up living the same way so we find ourselves with nothing. We say that we should change ourselves first and our future generations so that they may find everything changed. But there is no such a thing thus you may find everything follows the stream from the past following our footsteps. That is why these days we complain that children are disobedient. We are the ones showing disobedience and our children see this from us. The children will walk in the same footsteps”.*

4.3.4. Position in society

Parents were asked about their position in the society and the community in which they live. For most it was a very difficult question to answer. Many considered it to mean a position as a local leader, of which none are. Most of them do not consider themselves to have any position in the community, one very poor mother answered,

“To tell the truth about my position in the community, there is nothing I can see. I do not see a position which I can say I am proud of. Every position is a problem. When you run to the neighbours it is a problem. To the relatives it is a problem and to your husband it is a problem. But I just have to deal with it because that is what you are surrounded with”.

One father had a much more positive view on his position, linked deeply to his religion. *“In the society I help in religious matters by teaching people about obeying God and doing good deeds that will please God. So I always tell this to my friends or even visitors that God loves you. You are healthy, so is your family so what is important is to obey God”.*

Although the people interviewed lack material resources and find it difficult to help one another with financial support in their community, they do participate in building and strengthening the communities in which they live. For example, one family lives in an area prone to flooding and although they cannot contribute to the machinery hired by the residents, they join with other people in digging and clearing water channels. Another father was a water seller in his community, through his customers he created a large network of friends. When he became involved in a project of birth registration in his community, he referred his friends to the project and assisted them in the process of registering the births of their children.

4.3.5. Privacy and jealousy

The research flagged up the lack of privacy for people living in extreme poverty and their families. Many of the families interviewed live in shared accommodation, which means they share communal areas for sleeping, cooking, laundry and toilet. Owning their own plot and home can give some, but not complete, privacy.

Several people said that neighbours “*spying*” on each other was annoying and intrusive. People talked about jealousy between neighbours. People would see who was sleeping where, in which room, how many people, etc. People were especially sensitive about being watched when cooking and eating, as the type of food eaten by a family is a sign of their income, or lack of. A father said that jealousy existed between neighbours when one family considered another family was doing better, when they became successful, for example like improving their homes.

4.3.6. Environment

Teachers, parents and children all talked about different challenges concerning the environment where they live. The word environment was used to describe the living (home) environment, the weather, the area and negative factors in that area, such as thieves and gangs.

One mother talked about her fears for her children. She said her eldest daughter offered to help her family by going to sell vegetables. Her mother refused because she was worried that in their community a child can be abused by unscrupulous customers taking the vegetables and refusing to pay.

Some families live in areas where there is no electricity, or they have few items or no furnitures at home, such as a table or chair. These lack of basic resources can make it difficult, or even impossible, for children to do their homework in the evenings.

One of the challenges children can face at home is noise. From their own home, neighbours and the wider community, many children said that noise, especially loud music, makes it difficult for them to concentrate on school homework. One child said, *“Because of the noise it is difficult to study. You say to yourself ‘tomorrow’, but tomorrow never comes”*.

Disturbances at home can come in different ways for children. One child said he is asked by his parents to do his school homework each evening, but when he sees his friends playing outside he cannot concentrate. Another child said that sometimes people in his house cause a disturbance, making it impossible for him study.

Living far from school is a problem experienced by some children. They can arrive late and tired, leaving them *“Unable to understand what the teacher is teaching them”*. Walking to school in the rain brings other problems. For one mother, her worry is the danger her children face in the raining season when the river her children cross is flooded. The only alternative is to go far, walking on a busy road with many cars and motorbikes. These children can also arrive late, with wet clothes and books. In the classroom they can feel cold because they cannot get dry, all of which makes it difficult for children to study. One mother said, *“My child is not learning because the environment makes her to be this way”*.

Another problem with the weather was how it stops children concentrating in school. This mother said,

“When the rain is coming at night and you are sleeping it comes inside the house. There is nothing you can do because the roof is damaged. When the child is at school and sees the big winds and rain starting, she starts to think, ‘Oh my God! What will happen? Where will I sleep because our house is not strong?’ When the child is thinking deeply about all these problems at home she cannot concentrate on her studies”.

Other problems reported about the environment are the spread of infectious diseases and poor sanitation. One father talked about families living in houses with shared toilets. Some children go to the toilet without wearing shoes and can contract infections. If rubbish is not removed vermin and mosquitoes can breed and increase the spread of diseases.

Parents, teachers and children all spoke about the negative effect video clubs can have on children and their primary school education. One teacher said,

“While children stay in video clubs, they see school as a place with no value”.

In the two areas where the research was undertaken, video clubs commonly known as 'mbanda ya video' show films. Some children, individually or with friends, skip school and spend their time watching films. Often these video clubs show films which are over the appropriate age of the children who are viewing them, with strong scenes of violence and pornography. One parent talked about children being tempted to steal money to go and watch films at the video club rather than going to school. Another mother said that children can learn how to steal from watching violent films. Behaviour they then carry out.

A local leader reported that in his area he stopped video clubs from opening between 8am and 2pm, to discourage school children from going there, and when they opened at 2pm the video club owner needed a permit. Those owners that did not agree were taken to the police.

All the children interviewed said video clubs could have a negative effect on their education. Examples of why this happened included: children being given money to buy food and using it instead to watch films; watching films late at night then failing to wake up in time for school; watching films instead of getting their school homework done; going to video clubs instead of studying during examination times means children will might their exams; the films shown in video clubs show violent and pornographic images; children could learn bad behaviour and words; video clubs could encourage children to play truant from school. Children said through watching films in video clubs they could learn how to steal and rob from people. One child reported seeing a child stealing Tzs 500 from a house so he could go to a video club.

Although the children agreed that going to video clubs is bad for their education, most of the children interviewed, when asked if they went to a video club, answered yes.

In the areas where interviews were carried out, parents, teachers and children reported groups of youths who they considered to be the cause of some community problems. Children reported being attacked by youths from these groups and having money or their school equipment and shoes stolen. The children said they need to change their way to school, not passing in between buildings with corners where thieves hide. Some children said that some youth were smoking drugs and trying to tempt them to join in.

One child gave this personal testimony,

"I met with a group of youths coming back from school one day. One of them had a knife. He wanted to rob me. I had to run away. This is our environment. I have to find new ways of going and coming back from school. It is in the short cuts to school that the thieves hide in corners".

These groups of youths are also a huge worry for parents. They said they try to lure children with illegal drugs (marijuana), money, even promises of food, which can lead children into bad, and sometimes criminal, behaviour. Parents expressed their frustrations saying they need support from the government to tackle the problem of gangs. One parent said that being in these gangs can bring feelings of pride for some children, which is a major concern.

Teachers were asked if they take action when they know of children joining bad groups. They explain to children about the consequences and risks of being involved with bad groups and insist they tell their friends to return to school. Teachers said they also contact the parents of any child who joins these groups.

A local street government leader said all the ten-house cell leaders in an area should know every child and their age. Therefore if a child is not attending school the local leaders can pass this information on to the street government and school head teacher. However, a ten-house cell leader reported that because of the constant moving of people in her area it was extremely difficult to know all the children.

The children were asked about the challenges they faced when they go to and return from school. For those who go by bus all said the same thing. Bus conductors will not allow them on buses during busy times because they pay half fare. This means many children are forced to walk, or spend a long time waiting for a bus until a conductor allows them to board. When the children are allowed on the bus, they said that some passengers do not think about them and they are squashed and hurt on occasion. Other children reported being afraid of crossing the road, especially busy main roads where vehicles are travelling at high speed.

For those children who live far from school, they may have to pass many of these environmental “*distractions*” putting them at greater risk of missing or dropping out of school. One teacher spoke about teenage pregnancy as one of the reasons for failing to finish primary school. The same worry was emphasised by the girls who were interviewed among the group of children. Young males they pass going and returning from school try to “*attract*” female students to start relationships with them.

4.3.7. To live somewhere else

The families interviewed were asked, if they had the opportunity to live in another place where would they choose to live. Although people wanted a better life and safer environment, they did not consider living in another place

would be any different from where they live now. They know their income is not enough to live in a wealthy area, but they also rejected this idea because they had the impression in wealthy areas there is no community life. All the people who were asked this question said they would continue living where they are now because they have their network of friends who can provide support to each other, and if they moved to another place they would be strangers. Having this network around them gives security.

4.4 Work and income

It was widely recognised by teachers that the low income of families living in poverty has a detrimental effect on the education of their children. One teacher gave a clear example of this,

“If a parent has nothing, no money, parents can take their children to work with them, such as breaking stones”.

Low income and unstable work was reported by all the parents interviewed. The insecurity of work, not knowing how much can be earned in a given day, is a constant worry for families living in extreme poverty. People said some days they only have money to buy food. One mother said, *“I don’t even have the money to buy my child a pen for school”.*

Common among many extremely poor families is having to make choices with the little income they have. Some families with more than one child in school have to make the choice between which child goes to school and which child stays at home. This can be on a permanent basis or day by day. One mother told us,

“I have to tell my children I have no money, so stay at home. If I find some money today you can go to school tomorrow”.

Other choices forced upon people include eating less often than most people consider to be healthy. Many people talked about eating only one meal a day. Often a meal is substituted by drinking tea or porridge. Parents said they know the importance of giving a child breakfast in the morning, but budget restraints mean they fail to achieve this sometimes. Parents said that if a child comes from a home with more wealth and has a breakfast, it is more likely the child will study well in school.

One father talked about the different choice he would make for his child's education if he had more money. *“I would not take my child to the local school. I would prefer to take him to private school. If I spent a whole year working I would not*

have enough money for a private international school. The government schools are not good enough. Private schools are where you send your children if have enough money”.

Among the parents interviewed, ten people are working as stone breakers around the area of Tegeta (at Boko and Kunduchi). Some stone breakers work for an informal employer, who pays them for each bucket of stones they break. Some days workers are not paid, or receive very little money. One mother told us,

“Some days I am not paid. What can I do. The stones cannot give you money”.

All parents questioned said their work is necessary for them to live, not because their job would be their first choice. People said a job is what you do to earn money, for example carrying out small daily activities or running a small businesses. These small daily activities include selling fruits and vegetables, cleaning fish, breaking stones, etc. Almost all these activities rely on customers, and the amount earned in a day varies. Many other factors can also mean loss of income, such as sickness in the family. One mother said, *“When my child is sick I stay at home. These days I earn no money”.* A mother was asked if she enjoyed her work, she said, *“How does that happiness come my friend? The business is tough. You move here and there until the legs burn like there is fire inside them, but you must love it. If you refuse it what will you eat while that is your work”.*

Parents talked about their dreams of which work they would like to do such as owning a small shop, selling clothes, or being a doctor or a lawyer. Many parents interviewed said they wanted to have their own business. They went on to say that to have your own stable business can provide *“freedom”* and *“independence”*. It cannot be emphasised how important having independence and freedom is to each family. They see this being made possible through work and being self-employment. Being self-employment was preferred by most of the families, so long as it was stable and the income was enough to provide for their needs.

A few people interviewed were employed workers. One father is employed as a watchman. He reported that the company receives a large amount of money, but he is paid a fraction of this. He has no contract, no holiday allowance and no health care insurance. The hours he works are long and not within the Tanzanian labour laws. He knows if he reports his employer he will be sacked. Although he is exploited, having a fixed monthly income, although very low, gives his family more security than his previous work of selling water.

Because of the low income earned, asking for credit at shops is common among people living in extreme poverty. One father said he is given credit at the shop because the shop owner knows he receives a regular monthly income, even though it is very low. When the father receives his salary he repays the debt at the shop, but before the middle of the month he has to ask for credit again and the cycle continues.

The low and unstable income of people living in extreme poverty forces them into situations of shame, such as taking credit at local shops so their family can eat. When credit cannot be repaid parents feel humiliated and send their children back to the shop to ask for more credit. One mother said the shop owner asked her child, *“Why are you coming? Where is your parent?”*. This same mother said, *“If you have no money, you have already been embarrassed”*.

The type of work people do can also bring shame. One father reported that his disability does not allow him to do a job which entails hard physical labour. If he was healthy he could work with his friends carrying cement and earn more money for his family. A mother told the interviewers she walks around selling vegetables early in the morning, calling *“Vegetables, Vegetables”*. Some people become annoyed saying, *“Why is she waking us up with her work”*.

Parents were asked if extreme poverty affects a child's education. Overwhelmingly the answer was, *“Yes”*. Many people related extreme poverty to a lack of income. However, people also spoke about their rights being denied or the humiliation of being poor. A father said, *“When a child goes to school if his uniform is not in good condition it is humiliating for the child”*. A mother said,

“When you are poor people do not respect you. You are not invited to family meetings because you are poor, and if invited your words are not listened to. Poverty undermines the dignity of a person even within the family”.

For one mother having a low income gives her a constant worry about the future life of her family. *“I think all the time my child will not finish primary school. I think about going back to the village to start another life because life here is too hard. Having one leg in and one leg out makes me never know what I will do next”*.

4.5. Health

4.5.1. Being healthy

Good health is vital for life. People were asked what good health means to them. One father summed this up by

saying, *“In my opinion health is for the body to be fine always. Because when you are not healthy in your body you cannot work because the body has no energy. Therefore health is something very precious because it enables you to do a lot. In case you are not healthy it becomes a problem. Being healthy is very beneficial to the body”*. Being healthy was also linked to the environment in which families live. One father said it was important to have a chair or a bed at home where you could rest while feeling sick. He only had a mat on which to lie on the floor. About health this mother said, *“I can say there is body’s health and environmental health. Both are about health. Health is about eating nutritious foods or somebody could tell you that health is about keeping the environment clean”*. One mother said for her family, to have good health is

“Good nutrition, and to sleep without thinking and without aches”.

4.5.2. When children are sick

There are times when children become sick at school. This might be through an accident or a recurring medical condition, such as asthma. Parents said that if such an incident happens they should be called to the school.

One important point spoken about by a mother of four children is that some children go to school feeling sick. She gave the example of her daughter who was sick. She was given medication at the hospital, and then continued going to school because of her determination to learn. However, it was difficult for her to follow lessons because she was still feeling sick and the medication had strong side effects. The same point was made about children who have problems with their eyes. If they are unable to see the board in the class this can restrict their learning.

Children reported that when they are sick they stay at home and therefore miss school lessons. When children stay at home because of sickness for a prolonged time their education is seriously affected. When children return to school after being sick, teachers tell them to borrow the exercise books from other children to copy the work and catch up. Very poor children reported that other children would refuse their request. Teachers should think, when possible, how they can help children who are sick for a long time to continue to study at home.

4.5.3. When a parent is sick

The good health of adults is vital in ensuring children continue going to school. This is especially important if the main money earner for the family becomes sick. If the income stops children are not sent to school. If the adult in the house is sick who is responsible for preparing the children to go to school, this can also have a negative impact on the child's education. *“When somebody in my family is sick the money I have is used for the treatment of the patient to send her or him to hospital, so then my child does not get the money for the bus fare to go to school”.*

4.5.4. The cost of health

The parents interviewed had a lot to say about the link between money and health. One area highlighted is that when a member of the family is sick money is needed to pay for the hospital treatment, medical consultation fees, medication, etc. This is money that sometimes cannot be found. One mother said it is quite normal for people living in extreme poverty to live with sickness because they have no money for treatment. Many parents reported giving a child Panadol, a pain relief medication. It is their only option when they have no money to take the child to hospital.

When families living in extreme poverty have no money to go to hospital, and if they sense what the sickness is by recognising symptoms, they regularly turn to traditional medicine. This can be in part due to the lower costs, but also because of a lack of trust in some modern medications. In one family, the mother has a large knowledge of traditional medicines and where she can source these locally.

The actions taken concerning sickness were closely related to the money available. If the family had a small amount of money, they would only take half the recommended amount of medication. If the symptoms of sickness look familiar, to avoid paying for medical tests, parents would go directly to the pharmacy to buy the medication for whatever they think the sickness is, saving the money needed for the test.

The families interviewed said it is common when a member of the family is seriously sick with high medical costs to sell items from their home to cover the costs. The cost of health care usually fell upon each individual family. No families interviewed reported that their neighbours would help to pay, and many said their relatives were unable to help with healthcare costs. No families interviewed reported having healthcare insurance. Only one father reported that he tried to save a small amount of money each day for medical emergencies.

4.5.5. Prayers

Repeatedly, all the families interviewed said when in poor health they “pray to God”. Praying to God was the first course of action. Only if a parent or child became more seriously sick would they take medication or be sent to hospital. The families interviewed, whether Muslim or Christian, would pray to God when healthy to stay in good health, and would pray to God when in poor health to get better.

4.5.6. Going to hospital

The distance to health care centres varied between the families interviewed. Those living in the area of Tandale would go to the local hospital, and sometimes be transferred to the district hospital. People living outside the Dar es Salaam centre would use local clinics, but for more serious sickness they would be transferred to the district hospital.

Parents talked about their experience of going to hospital where being poor limits and reduces the quality of health care. One mother said,

“If I had money I would not be served badly”.

Every person interviewed reported corruption and mistreatment of people living in extreme poverty in hospitals. Parents reported feelings of hopelessness at hospital. It was commonly said, when people are sick they go to hospital with the hope of being cared for and to feel better, but people do not get the service they expected. People try to see a doctor, but with no money they are turned away. People lose hope and just give up and many return home without seeing a doctor or being treated.

In Tanzania, medical treatment for children under five years of age is free. However, parents reported on many occasions that they were asked to pay for the treatment, the staff almost always said the hospital does not have medications but it can be bought at private pharmacies. Whether going to the hospital or private pharmacies, often the pharmacies did not have the prescribed medication. Then pain relief medication was usually given as an alternative.

Mistreatment at hospitals could be verbal and physical, and always humiliating. One mother reported being chased away from a hospital like an “animal”. Another said she was treated like a “witch”. A third mother said, “When I saw that the benches were full I lined up in a queue with my son. I will never forget the abuse my son and I got”. Another day at the hospital the same mother said, “Recently I have been told that a single medical test costs Tzs 40,000 and another one

Tzs 15,000 shillings. I just kept quiet without asking the doctor anything, but he began scolding me. I remained silent. I asked him to write the tests on a paper so that I may find that money and come to pay it". She went on to say about the hospital, "Nowadays they want people with insurance not us people from the low class".

Not every experience at hospital was bad. Parents reported receiving good treatment from staff. Parents said they knew the nurses who really "care" for the patients and help them. One father said at hospital you could sometimes find a "good Samaritan" to help you; a doctor or nurse who really cared for the patients.

"There are so many challenges. Sometimes when you go there the nurses treat you very well and make you feel satisfied so you cannot say they are bad every day. Days are different and it depends on oneself. Some people have a helping heart. That is why you can find someone saying that when I find that woman on duty I get a very good service. She is not like the others. For example, there is one nurse, when I find her on duty I don't even get tired of staying in the line because I know when it reaches to my turn I will get a good service. So we need to give thanks to those with kind hearts which are ready to help instead of keeping on blaming them".

During one interview a mother explained that if a child becomes sick at school they can be taken to the hospital and treated for free, with the understanding that their sickness began in school and was registered in a book at school. She said about this, *"If they come home (from school) sick I just give them Panadol because if I take them to the hospital I have to wait in a queue. At school they have their own registration book. However, I feel like it's a disturbance to go and ask for it from the teachers. Personally I have never done that. I just give them Panadol and malaria medications".*

At health care facilities parents said that "good leadership" and "regular inspections" carried out by the government were important and would bring improvements. Hospitals having medications would also be a huge step in providing a better health care service. Finally one mother summed up well what would be the biggest improvement for her when going to hospital, *"What should be improved in health service is avoiding any disturbance when you go there".*

4.6. School

Parents were asked, *"What does good education mean for you?"* Good education was considered as something accessible and welcoming. Parents are realistic and emphasised the importance of school being a relaxing

environment that is conducive to learning. The dream of parents is for their children to go further, achieving a better level of education than themselves and realising this can open up possibilities in the future that were not attainable for them. A mother said,

“Good education for my son is to live at home in a good environment and he is welcomed nicely at school. The teachers teach him well and he understands. That is good education”.

4.6.1. The efforts of parents, children and teachers

The relationship between parents and teachers can at times become fraught, confrontational, and in some cases break down completely to the detriment of a child’s education. However, the research offered many positives to be focused on and the desire for improved relationships and for cooperation to exist between parents and teachers.

Parents talked about the efforts they make to prepare and follow up their children’s education. They spoke about the necessity of preparing a child for school, including buying a uniform, bag, shoes, pens, etc, and once the child starts school parents should be in contact with their child’s teacher.

When children come back from school, parents said they prepare them a meal, make sure the children change their clothes and check their school work. These are some of the ways that parents use to motivate their children to do their best in school.

At home parents said how important it is to check a child’s exercise books. However, for some parents who are unable to read and write this can be difficult. Parents who are unable to read and write talked about the techniques they use to encourage their children in their studies, such as asking other members of the household to assist a child. One mother said that an elder brother, who has finished secondary school education, was able to help his younger brother. Another mother said that although she could not read and write she was able to recognise the teachers’ marks or crosses in the exercise books and therefore, understand if her child was doing well in lessons or not.

The importance of being close to children was emphasised by parents. One father said he takes time to ask his son if he has any problems, and if he sees his child is facing a challenge he follows this up according to what the child has said.

A parent said, *“When the child comes back from school, check the exercise book, see where they did well or*

something wrong. Tell the child, 'Here you did bad, but here you did very well. Put your efforts my child, and tomorrow you will be at the top'. You must give encouragement to the child. It is not good when you see a little mistakes to shout and reprimand the child, don't say, 'I give you money and you did badly'. That makes the child feel down. You must encourage your child. Encourage the efforts the child makes".

One father found his own way of encouraging his child in his studies, he said, *"I take the time to copy the questions in his school book on a separate paper, then I ask him to answer the questions again. In this way it is good practice but I can also check he has not been copying from another child's book"*.

Many parents emphasised the fact that not making time to be close to your child can affect and damage their education. One parent said. *"You need to be shoulder to shoulder with your child"*. Another parent said children need the *"Good habit of going to school"*, especially early on to get a good foundation in their primary school education.

The children also spoke about the efforts they make at school. All the children said studying hard and trying their best was important. They said that making an effort now will help them and their family in the future. Children also said that it was important to listen to the teachers, to have a schedule at home that allows them to study and to encourage their friends to study hard so that they can succeed in school.

When children return home from school different people are involved in helping them with their homework including parents, grandparents, elder siblings and neighbours. Some children said they had a neighbour who was a teacher and they would go to ask them for help after school. Helping each other was common practice among the children. One child said, *"My friend who is top of the class helps me. We sit together at home and he helps me"*.

Regarding the importance of school children said,

*"Education is important because I can reach my dreams";
"Education is important for my life. When I am older I will be able to help my parents. Education gives direction for our future", "If you miss education it can be a big reason for the cause of poverty"; and "Education helps me to reach my goals. Education is liberating for my life, for my family and for my community"*.

However, for some children from very poor families they put in the effort but feel it comes to nothing. One child who has had a very difficult primary school experience, said, *"I can*

see education is important, but also it is not important. Between those who go to school and those who do not go to school I see no difference. Their lives are the same. Myself, I decided to stop going to school because we were moving often and I had no transfer papers so I could not study, so there was no point to keep going back to school. When we came back in Dar I was registered to Memkwa class with children much younger than me. I was in the same class as my young sister but I was a big child. Because I was the biggest in the class I felt stupid. I knew how to read and write and they kept me in this class. This is why I stopped going to school”.

The efforts that teachers make towards improving children’s education includes using the teaching materials provided, following the syllabus and using other tactics they have developed and gained over the years to teach children.

One teacher said,

“Teachers using good techniques can motivate children to be creative and study hard and in this way the children can encourage each other to go further in their studies. If children are happy with their teachers and cooperating, this will improve their learning desire and subsequently their level”.

Another teacher said that if children can see what they can achieve is the same as the teacher, they may see him as an equal. This teacher tried to make sure that no class barriers existed between himself and the children.

Teachers said it is important to arrive early at school and welcome the children in a good way. This inspires the children to arrive on time and follow the good example set by the teachers. Teachers also encourage children to ask questions in class. A teacher said, *“Education is important because children are the next generation of our country”.*

One teacher said, *“The government, the school committee, teachers and parents each have a responsibility to make sure children access primary school education. For the government to provide infrastructure and equipment, for the teachers to use these facilities to provide education, for the school committee to find other stakeholder in the community to support the school, and for the parents to provide a uniform, exercise books and pens”.*

If the school environment is attractive, it can encourage children to come to school.

A head teacher said,

“A school is a place where a child should enjoy to get education. Private schools have full facilities and equipment, which means these children succeed. Whereas government schools lack the funds to buy what is needed to educate children. It becomes impossible to lead a school with a lack of funds”,

4.6.2. Cooperation

Parents and teachers said unequivocally that good cooperation between both parties will be a major factor in their children graduating from primary school. There is a willingness to engage with teachers as parents know it will benefit a child’s education and can alleviate some of their worries. One mother talked about worrying about her child every day,

“Until your child returns home is when you have peace”.

Knowing a child’s routine is important. To know what time she or he leaves to go to school and returns home can reduce parents’ worries. If a child is kept late at school, or regularly sent home early, parents become uncertain of the school routine. Another mother was worried her child was not going to school because the child’s exercise books were not marked. She said, *“I cooperate with them (the teachers) on academic issues. I once talked to the teachers about the issue of my child coming back home without the exercise books being marked, I made a follow up until the books started to get marked”.*

Parents said that if teachers know the wider family and home environment of the children it can help them to better understanding the poorest children’s educational needs and challenges. A mother talked about her daughter being sent home from school because she did not have money to pay for mock examination fees. She went to the school and spoke with the teacher and asked that her daughter be allowed to return to school and study until she had the money to pay, which the teacher accepted. This mother already knew the teacher as she had visited the school before and was regularly following her child’s progress. Without these good lines of communication being open to her, this agreement with the teacher might not have been possible.

One mother said of her experience that when her child is absent from school she is called by the teacher to find out why her child did not come. She said that this showed good cooperation from the school’s point of view and she encouraged this approach.

Having information on a child's educational progress is important to parents living in extreme poverty, especially if a child is failing in school. If a child has difficulty in understanding how to read and write it should be evident from an early age. When a problem has been identified parents should be informed so that a solution can be found with teachers. Talking with teachers is a chance for a parent to explain about their child's issue. For example if a child has certain needs such as not hearing well or having bad eyesight. With many classrooms overcrowded, it can be difficult for teachers to identify each child's individual needs, which, was stressed by many parents.

Following the theme of what all the parents said, local leaders emphasised the importance of parents following up on their children's education. Good communication between parents and teachers can highlight potential problems and solutions can then be found. One local leader noted,

"Parents try their level best to make a follow up and communicate with teachers and the street government".

Another leader gave an example of cooperating with a parent who had come to him for support. This parent's child was playing truant with other children, so the local leader and parent went to the place they suspected the children would be, found them there, and brought them back to school. In another case the same leader saw another child regularly not attending school. He contacted the child's parent who was unaware of this situation and found a solution to this problem.

Many parents said cooperating with their child's teachers is important but for varying reasons they do not do this. A father said, *"The good idea is to be with the teacher at all times to support the development of your child's education"*. However, although this father said it was a *"good idea"* he said he rarely went to the school.

Very few parents talked about going to their child's school to follow up on any issues raised. They said they are usually called by teachers to come to school when fees needed paying. Most parents said being called to go to school is usually an issue involving money, and because of their low level of income all too often they do not have the money to pay the contributions they are being asked for.

Teachers said that cooperation with parents does exist, but it was said to be *"very insufficient"*. Teachers said they believe that if the cooperation between parents and teachers improved, the education levels of the pupils would improve. Teachers make sure all parents are informed about school meetings.

One teacher said specifically that in his school 75% of parents cooperate with teachers, while 25% of parents do not. He went on to say, *“For the 25% for those who are not coming when you ask them to come, if you try to follow you will realise they are people living in poverty”*. Another teacher said, *“Sometimes the life of the parents makes it difficult for them to have good cooperation with their children’s school”*. This was confirmed by a teacher who said only 35% of parents came to school meetings. When asked his opinion why, he said parents did not come because of the *“hardness of life”*.

The teachers knew that realistically many parents do small business activities for their income, and that if parents stop their activities they lose their income. This makes it difficult for parents to follow up on their child’s progress. Therefore, the cooperation with teachers is not as good as they would like it to be.

Other teachers spoke about how they try to get messages to parents. Children are asked to tell their parents to come to school or a letter is sent home, but some parents fail to come to school. If this situation happens teachers will ask the street government to help find their parents.

Participating in parent teacher meetings can be a first step towards creating and reinforcing good relationships between parents and teachers. Parents said that it was important to attend these meetings to get information and meet the teachers. It was also an opportunity for parents to question teachers or the head teacher on certain issues. A mother said, *“When you are there you contribute something, which makes it worthy to attend”*. A local leader said, *“The school committee is the link between the school and the parents. The committee members should be available for parents. However, this is not always the case as the committee members have their other activities to attend to”*.

However, parents felt frustrated that they were either not listened to or the changes they were asking for were not implemented. One father said,

“I think that automatically there are no changes because what is spoken there, is spoken while you’re there. But once you are out there is nobody to implement the changes”.

A mother of five young children, two who attend primary school, gave her reaction to being asked if she attends the parent teacher meetings. *“I did attend but I am telling the truth! I attended only twice. Thereafter I haven’t attended again. Honestly, when we were called for the first time every parent got confused”*.

These examples show that parents want to attend and contribute in the meetings but when their views are not listened to and decisions are taken to the contrary, they lose hope that meaningful participation is possible.

Parents talked about the humiliation they face when going to school. It was reported that teachers would accuse parents of not caring for their children. Because of the poor environment in which the families live, teachers see this as one of the causes of children's low performance in school.

This is one mother's experience of interacting with teachers. *"It is so embarrassing going to talk to the teachers because of the words they tell you. A teacher once told me, 'That is the responsibility of having a child'. Another told me 'That is a result of raising a child as a single parent'. That is why it is useless going to talk to them"*.

It was not only teachers who were critical of parents, a street government leader said that he saw some people "pretending" to be poor in order not to pay school contributions.

The majority of teachers said that there is a clear link between poverty and children failing their education. However, two teachers were unequivocal and scathing in their views about parents. *"We ask parents to contribute 10,000 per month for porridge and the parents tell us it is difficult for them to pay this money, but you see them going to the saloon for a haircut, or going to drink alcohol at the bar. They cannot contribute for their children but they can do something for themselves"*. Another teacher said, *"There are people living in poverty who have gone to school. There are others from a poor background, people from the villages. Our parents took us to school and we are now teachers"*.

Two teachers gave personal testimonies about the humiliation caused by poverty and the effect it has on children at school.

"The school has a policy for children to have a proper uniform. The school has a schedule every Monday and Thursday of parade. Those children with a uniform in bad condition are asked to come to the front of the parade. Each time those children go in front when they are called, this makes these children feel humiliated, so they will never step forward. They will step back because of their condition. I have one example of a child. Each time I called him he never came forward. One day in a harsh way I said, 'you come here'. When he came I realised the back of his uniform was damaged. He was scared to come to me and it was a shame for him to stand in front of his friends because they were laughing at him. So we teachers decided to make

a contribution and buy a uniform because we realised he never stepped forward, he always stepped back”.

This example was given by a Memkwa teacher.

“If a child from a poor family has been around on the streets for some months, it is difficult for him or her to come back into the structure and routine of primary school. Also, it is not unusually for these children to miss some items of uniform and other children laugh on them. This humiliation the child feels can quickly stop her or him coming to school”.

4.6.3. Disabled children

Concerning disabled children, only one parent interviewed had a daughter who was disabled. However, several other parents have relatives or neighbours who live with disabled children.

It was reported that some families feel a sense of shame that a disabled child is part of their family. Parents interviewed said this shame can include “*hiding*” the child at home or sending her or him to live with relatives in the village. Disabled children can be discriminated against by their peers. To feel they are not part of their community has a negative effect on them.

Parents living in poverty have concerns regarding the education of children with disabilities. One father said that for those parents who find a place in school for their child with disabilities they struggle to pay for school equipment or transport costs. One mother said she had seen a local bus stopping a disabled child from entering and thus preventing him from going to school.

Children have different disabilities including mobility problems. Some children are able to use a specially adapted bicycle to move around, which can make it possible for them to go to school independently. However, these bicycles can be expensive and for very poor families beyond their financial means.

For children with more severe learning disabilities they usually need special education facilities, different teaching methods and curriculum, which are rare to find in most primary schools. Regardless of the nature of the disability, all disabled children need special attention when in school. This can include teachers getting extra training, additional support for teachers in the classroom, facilities and equipment adapted to each child’s individual special needs.

Through all the concerns and comments discussed with parents, overall people said disability should not be a reason

why children should not go to school. Children with disabilities should be able to access their right to education to fulfil their potential like any other child. However, for extremely poor families they will experience far greater challenges to ensure their disabled children can access school.

4.6.4 Tuition/extra lessons

As the government pursued the Education for Free policy in January 2016, many of the frustrations regarding extra tuition and various contributions have been lifted, especially for very poor families. This policy was enthusiastically welcomed by families across the country. However, all stakeholders will need time to adjust to this new system. This will create an opportunity for teachers, children and parents to build a new relationship based on trust and focused on children succeeding in primary school education. At the time of the interviews this policy was not being enforced and contributions, including extra tuition fees, were one of the most talked about points regarding education.

Extra tuition was one of the most talked about points during this research, especially the money parents were requested to pay in previous years. Children, parents and teachers highlighted the positive and negative effects and consequences of extra tuition.

A few parents talked about the positive effects of extra tuition. One parent gave the example that extra tuition is helpful for enabling children to continue studying while schools are closed. She said, *“For those children who do not attend extra tuition during school holidays, when they go back to school it looks like they are starting again”*. Another parent said, *“Extra lessons helps the children to remember what they study. When the teacher teaches children in the extra tuition lessons it helps the children to improve more, the extra tuition has a big contribution to help children to continue with education”*. A third parent said that extra tuition is helpful to keep children out of environmental dangers. *“Extra tuition is helpful. It can stop children joining bad groups. It keeps the children busy until time to go home from school. It helps children to stay with other children who want to focus and study, and not to be in bad groups”*.

However, the overall majority of parents were clear that extra tuition does not help their children and they see no difference at the time of examinations. They cannot understand why the lessons taught during extra tuition cannot be taught during normal class times. Parents constantly repeated that the cost of extra tuition was crippling for their family, especially when they had several children attending school.

Concerning the extra tuition lessons that teachers provide, few teachers were ready to speak about this. One teacher said, *"I cannot say anything about extra tuition. This is decided between the school committee and parents"*. Another teacher confirmed that the extra tuition was *"agreed"* between the parents and the school committee. A street government leader, who is on a school committee, said that in order to improve the level of education the children were given *"extra hours"* (extra tuition) with the agreement of the parents.

Significantly the views of the children were perhaps the most revealing about extra tuition. They valued the extra learning time they received, but because some children were excluded from extra tuition they saw how this practice was discriminating for children living in extreme poverty.

Children reported that if they only attended regular class time, lessons taught in extra tuition time, which were then included as examination questions, meant those children who did not attend extra tuition classes could fail exams. One child said,

"Extra tuition really helps, but some children can pay and some cannot pay, so for those who cannot pay they are not allowed to enter the extra tuition time, so in the exam they can fail".

Children were asked what they feel about those children who cannot enter the extra tuition class. The same child continued, *"I feel bad because some children who can't come in the extra tuition are our friends. I only have enough money to pay for myself. I cannot pay for my friends. So after the extra tuition class we try to find time to explain exactly what we learnt in the extra tuition time, and to emphasise to my friend try to concentrate on what I have told you"*.

What came across strongly from the children was that the practice of extra tuition lessons discriminates against the poorest children. One child said, *"When children who did not go in the extra tuition class fail the exams the teachers say bad words on them. They say, 'Look, those are the ones who did not pay'. so those children feel very bad and in pain"*. Another child said, *"A child feels very bad to see her friends fail in the exams because they missed the extra tuition class, but in the normal class they are very good in their studies. They failed because the situation of their parents means they could not pay. I suggestion for the teachers not to discriminate any child who has no money today, because tomorrow they will get"*

Concerning the impact on those children who are not permitted to enter the extra tuition class another child went on to say, *“We feel very bad because we all want to succeed, and why others they fail”*. This child’s words summed up really well what they believe should happen to stop this discriminatory practice.

“We feel very bad because we have the same aim to succeed. We see it is not right for some to fail. We beg the teachers, they have to do the right thing for all, even for those who are not able to pay”.

4.6.5 Porridge

The same conclusion was made about the practice of providing porridge to children in schools. It discriminates against the poorest children. One father said, *“Some parents are able to give their children the money to buy porridge, whilst the poorest children do not have the money. This discriminates against the poorest children”*. Only in a few schools is porridge given free of charge. For extremely poor families, paying for porridge everyday becomes a heavy expense.

4.6.6 Everything in education is about money

A recent survey released by Twaweza in February 2016 showed that 80% of people agreed with the following statement. *“Many teachers do not like the profession but are there for financial gain only”*. This is a worrying statistic, and one shared by parents in this research. Over and over parents talked about teachers being *“motivated by money”*.

As seen in the section about ‘Work and Income’, the income of families living in extreme poverty is very low and unstable, and so to pay for government provided education which is promoted as ‘free’ creates huge tension between families and education providers. *“The expression of free education right now. There is no free service. This saying is only said by men and is what men say only, but they do not practice”*, said one father.

As already highlighted, tensions between many poor parents and teachers exist and cooperation is almost non-existent. Many of the root causes of this appear to start with money. During this research project, the researchers heard many examples of the ways teachers try to extract money from children and their parents. One mother said,

“If I have money I let them go to school but if I don’t have they just stay at home. Today this one goes and the other stays at home. The coming day this one goes and the other one stays at home”.

This was quite common among very poor families. Another mother said, *“Right now they (the teachers) are asking me to pay money for exams but I had already paid. They don’t trust me”*.

One parent said at her child’s school the teachers stop at no lengths in their determination to search for money from the children. She said, *“The teachers make serious inspections looking for money. They look in their pockets and when they find nothing the students are searched in their socks”*. Another parent said that her child goes to school some days without the money for contributions. The teacher allows her child into the class, but as punishment tells her to face the wall at the back of the classroom and not look at the board on which the lessons are written, forbidding her child to learn. This parent’s view is that in such circumstances it is better for her child to return home rather than be humiliated by refusing her the opportunity to learn.

One father told about his frustrations with trying to cooperate with the school where his son attends. He said some parents are given the time to talk and are listened to, but some are ignored. He explained to the teachers about the difficult life his family had and asked about the possibility of reducing the contributions being asked. But the teachers were not ready to listen. One teacher told him, *“If you don’t have money keep your child at home”*. He said, *“When a teacher tells you to keep your child at home, you have nothing to say to him.”*

Parents said repeatedly that while teachers concentrate on finding ways to get money (extra tuition, porridge, etc) from the children, the children will continue to fail their primary school education.

For all the various contributions asked for, what agitates the parents most is not knowing what the contributions are used for or their belief that the teachers are keeping the money. Parents were frustrated at paying for a desk every school year while their children continue to sit on the floor. They were also annoyed that they have to pay for water while the toilets remain in an unsanitary state. Parents were irritated that they had to pay extra tuition fees fearing that their children might fail to graduate from primary school if they did not pay. One parent was very clear, he said, *“If contributions must be paid they should be specific and parents should know exactly what the money was used for”*.

Teachers were also given the opportunity to respond to the question about school contributions. It was said by teachers that the money the government provides to schools is not enough, so parents are asked to make contributions.

Several teachers said that the contributions parents are asked to pay are difficult for some families to find, and this has a negative effect on a child's education. One teacher said,

"Because the government does not give enough support (to schools) to pay the water, electricity and watchman, teachers tell the parents to contribute. If a parent does not have the money he tells the child to stay home and they miss their studies".

Another teacher said, *"It would be good if the government could allow the parents to contribute financially, especially in the preparation of exams because the contribution from the government is not enough".*

However, some teachers said it is not the parents who should be paying for children's education and the resources needed at schools, but the government.

Although parents were frustrated by teachers' attempts to increase their income, almost all parents were quick to say teachers' salaries must be increased. One father said, *"In the education sector if teachers' allowances were good to enable them to meet their demands, I think that their (the children's) education can increase because the teachers will be very concerned of their work because the money they will be given is good".* Another parent said,

"The government does not care about teachers. They often work in schools far away from where they are living, they get no help with transport and have to rent houses near the school which can be expensive".

Parents were asked, if you could speak with the Minister of Education what would you tell her? All said they would ask for the cessation of all contributions, whether yearly, monthly, weekly or daily. They said a permanent halt to contributions will stop children from being afraid of go to school because of the fear of being punished or sent home.

4.6.7. Decline in education

Although the research's focus was not on the quality of education, parents were asked their views on why some children leave primary school not knowing how to read and write, and the challenges that contribute to the decline of educational performance in general. The answers provide interesting insight into some of the challenges the poorest children face in accessing and completing primary school education.

Throughout this report, a number of areas have been identified as major factors that explain why children do not finish their primary school education, including the environments where they live or pass to go to school, health issues, lack of financial resources, etc. However some parents were also frank in saying that children can be “disobedient” and/or “lazy” when it comes to attending school. One father said, “A child’s upbringing regarding his love of education” can have a major effect on his completing primary school or not. He went on to say,

“You find your child finishes standard seven and does not know how to write or read, so I start blaming the teachers that they do not teach, while it is your own child’s personality”.

Children playing truant was sighted as one of the main reasons why children fail to graduate from primary school. Playing truant was not only put down to children being lazy or disobedient. There are many complex reasons for this including family poverty, environmental factors, taking adult responsibilities, etc. Individual children can play truant. However, friends also lead each other astray. Children will encourage each other to miss school and go to the beach or hang around the streets until school has finished and they return home.

It was difficult for some parents to understand why their children played truant. Some parents even talked about punishing their children for missing school. What is clear is that a reason always exists and with children from very poor families those reasons can be complex and at times misunderstood. One mother was quite clear on this when she said,

“The teachers punish the students who have failed to pay the contributions until some of them refuse to go back to school”.

For parents it is obvious that a child who is not in school has no possibility of studying and graduating from primary education.

Teachers had very clear views on the decline in education. Only one teacher denied there was a decline in education. Reasons for the decline were the system of education including the curriculum, lack of teaching materials such as text books, not enough desks, and overcrowding in classrooms resulting in children sitting on the floor. Local leaders and school committee members were also very concerned about the number of children without desks. All the children interviewed spoke about how frustrated they were with not having enough text books and desks. Parents

also recognised the problem of overcrowding in classrooms and the need for more primary schools, desks and other equipment to overcome this situation.

Teachers regularly reported teaching over 100 or more children in a class. One teacher said, "*Children have no possibility to understand lessons compared to when there are 45 in a class*". Another teacher said while children sit on the floor and do not have enough text books, education will never be improved. One head teacher reported having enough teachers at his school for the numbers of classrooms he had, but in some classes there were 200 children. A third teacher said,

"With this big number of students I do what I can".

One solution that schools use to overcome the problem of crowded classrooms is to ask children to come to school in the morning, from 8am to 12pm, and other children to come in the afternoon from 12pm to 4pm. However, one teacher said this brought the challenge of teaching many subjects in a four hour session.

Teachers living far from the school that they teach at face the challenge of long journeys in the morning and evening. They have almost no preparation time for lessons before the children arrive in the morning.

One teacher was quite critical about the current education system stating that it was one of the causes for children leaving school without knowing how to read and write. He said that in the past there was a greater emphasis on the basics of numeracy and literacy, but now the lessons go too quickly into subjects the children cannot understand what the teacher is talking about. One national curriculum was recommended by many teachers as well as a standardisation of all text books currently being used in teaching.

Some teachers were critical of the teaching style of other teachers, such as not teaching the curriculum and teaching lessons they "*liked*" from text books. This can cause a problem at the time of examinations if children have not been taught the correct syllabus. Teachers also reported that several books on one subject were available, which could also confuse the children if they were all taught from different books. One teacher said that he had seen children using social media and internet search engines to find answers for work set in class, rather than looking for answers in text books. Another teacher said, "*There is no*

discussion between those who create the current curriculum and teachers". An example of this was given by a teacher who said that now the subject of ICT has been introduced in some schools, but they do not have computers and the teachers are not given training in how to teach the subject.

Another reason reported for the decline in education by teachers is the system of exams that do not push children to think critically. Teachers said the multiple choice questions in exams means some children can pass by luck. The system means that children by "*probability*" can succeed in subjects which they have very little knowledge of.

One teacher said that some students have a high level of understanding, and some have a lower level of understanding, so some teachers look at the class for those with higher abilities and put their efforts into teaching these children while leaving some of the other children behind.

Teachers said that the decline in education was also their responsibility. The low salary of teachers was sighted again as not being enough, which "*makes teachers to be there physically but mentally they are out*" as one teacher said. One of the challenges reported by a head teacher was the staff members. "*Teachers have different backgrounds. You tell teachers 'don't do that'. But the background of people makes them do what they want*".

If a child does not go to school for three months, her or his name is removed from the register. Memkwa is a class dedicated to children who have been absent from school for many months or years. The children in the class can be of varying ages. A Memkwa teacher reported that she gets no budget for the equipment she needs for her students. Because of the children's different age, years studied and level of ability, she has to pass around and borrow books from other teachers.

To address the decline in education parents spoke about the importance of inspections, whether they be internally at school, or by government school inspectors. Parents would like to see the Minister of Education having a hands on approach to school inspections. Parents said many good policies and words were spoken about primary school education but they were not followed through or were simply abused.

4.6.8. Friendship

All the children interviewed said that they had friends at school. They gave many examples of the ways they cooperated with each other. These included sitting together in groups and studying together, correcting each other's

mistakes, helping each other when the teacher says something which others have not understood, helping each other to catch up on work if they miss classes for any reason, supporting each other in going to see the teacher together, encouraging and accompanying each other on the journey to and from school, and chatting and having fun times.

Sharing their problems and giving advice to each other was also an important part of the support they gave to one another. One child gave the example that when she sees her parents arguing she discusses it with her friends. Another child explained how her parents punished her at home. When she told her friends about this they gave her suggestions of good behaviour she could follow.

Another child summed up the way in which the children support each other with their studies.

“I have many friends. We like to study together. When I have a problem with a subject I go to ask my friends to help. What I know I can share with others. We discuss, share and find answers together”.

Having friends at school is a huge support and an important part of social development for children. However, those friendships also come with challenges at times including: annoying each other, misunderstandings, quarrelling, fighting, stealing from each other, learning bad behaviour and encouraging each other to skip classes, telling a friend's parents of each other's secrets or bad behaviour. All these things can break up friendships. Some children are not ready and even refuse to help others with their studies. One example given was that older children do not like help from younger children when the younger ones understand the school work and they do not. Also some children said they were given the wrong information from other children to make them fail in class work or exams.

Another child talked about bullying at school, saying that groups of bullies exist in their school. He said there is a group of bad children at school that beat him and steal his money, but when he tells the teachers they are afraid of these children so they do nothing about the situation.

4.6.9. Safety/punishments

One of the questions asked during the research project was whether parents consider school a safe place for their children. The views of parents on this issue were quite mixed, but extremely important. Several of the parents raised concern about the school environment, specifically the toilets not being in a clean condition and their worries about diseases and infections being contracted by children.

One parent said that the toilets should be cleaned by the children but inspected by the teachers to ensure cleanliness. Parents also talked about safety with schools being a place that gives education and good “*morals*” to children, which benefits them in their family and wider community. Also parents talked about the trust they have in teachers. They said it is the teachers who are the first people to provide security to children at school.

Children from one school have a very good relationship with the head teacher. They said if a teacher is harsh and they do not understand the lesson, they know they can go to the head teacher and confide in him, as the head will speak to the teacher concerned. Being able to trust their head teacher it was a big reassurance to the children.

The biggest worry children have when studying is the reactions of some teachers. Almost all the children interviewed said that some teachers could be very harsh, which made the children very reluctant to approach them. Children said that they were “*afraid*” to approach some teachers and ask for help if they did not understand a question. One child said he starts to “*shake*” when he sees a particular teacher. Children said they worry when they see teachers carrying sticks in the class. One child said he knows the answers to questions but forgets when he sees the teacher carrying a stick.

These reactions were because of the fear of being physically punished. Children repeatedly said, if you make a mistake the teachers physically punish you. The children said that being physically punished does not stop them from making mistakes. It only makes them afraid. Children who fear teachers said they were unable to learn well in their lessons.

Children’s fear of teachers also extended to the problem of going to school without the money for porridge, extra tuition or other fees. The children said that if they do not have the money they are sent home. The following day they ask their parents for the money and are told it is not available. The children said they go back to school that day knowing they will be physically punished by the teacher who sent them home the previous day.

For those children who come to school without contributions, they reported that teachers would search their pockets for money. Those children who say they do not have money are separated into a group, while those who have money are allowed to enter into the class. Those who are separated are searched. If children are searched and found to have money they are physically punished. The children said that the action of searching them in front of their class mates is humiliating.

The harshness of some teachers, reported by children, was also commented on by teachers. If a child is shouted at in class by a teacher for not understanding, that child will never want to come back again to ask questions. This can lead to a child not understanding and eventually dropping out of school.





5. Recommendations

5.1. The national government should provide schools with the necessary teachers, facilities and equipment to welcome and educate all children, including disabled children, with a standardised primary education curriculum. Teachers should receive ongoing training and a level of salary in line with the cost of living.

5.2. Where, and whenever possible, children should live within a reasonable walking distance of their primary school. Children should not be disturbed when getting on buses when going to and returning from school.

5.3. The street government, in cooperation with parents and the wider community, should take the necessary steps to provide a safer environment for children. These steps should include a plan of action to prevent children from joining groups and gangs who are a bad influence and encourage children to stay away from school; and prohibiting the owners of video and game shops from allowing children entry to the establishments during school days.

5.4. All school aged children should be registered in and attending school. To ensure this parents, ten-house cell leaders and the street government should work closely and in cooperation with the local primary schools.

5.5. Each neighbourhood should have a space where parents and children can get advice and support on educational services.

5.6. Parents should be responsible for providing their child's uniform, bag, shoes and pens. They should motivate their children to study and listen to their concerns. Parents should be encouraged to give children housework within their capacity, which does not conflict with their primary school education.

5.7. All education stakeholders should conform to the Education for Free policy regarding financial contributions.

5.8. Schools should promote friendship among children and encourage them to reach their potential.

5.9. Every child should have access to a school nurse, facilities and equipment. The nurse should collaborate with parents and offer support, advice and treatment to children.

5.10. Physical punishment and use of harsh words towards children must be stopped in schools. Parents and teachers should agree which non-physical discipline is acceptable.

5.11. Clear and adapted lines of communication must exist between parents and teachers. They can communicate through meetings, telephone calls, letters, visits, etc.

5.12. To create trust and improve relationships, all education stakeholders should develop mutual recognition about each others situation.

5.13. Each school should have a community outreach worker whose responsibility it is to create links between the school and the children's parents and ensure effective communication exists especially with families living in extreme poverty.

5.14. School meetings should be prepared by the head teacher and parent representatives. The meetings should provide a space for parents and teachers to share their experiences and the challenges they face while focusing on the well-being of the children's education. It is vital that parents' views are listened to.

5.15. There should be a clear complaints procedure for parents to follow. Parents should also be reassured that there will be no negative consequences for them if they do decide to make a complaint.



6. Conclusions

Throughout this research project, parents, teachers and children said, *“Education is the key to life”*. For children coming from families living in extreme poverty, to obtain this “key” certain conditions must be met. Schools are considered to be the principle providers of primary school education. However for the research recommendations to be implemented it is not only the responsibility of schools and teachers; but also children and their friends; parents and other family members; neighbours; the wider community; local and national government. This conclusion looks at what was learned through this research project and gives background to the recommendations.

The research has shown how it was important to work in partnership with people living in extreme poverty. Their participation added value because of the unique skills they bring from their life experience, specifically on a subject that impacts their lives and their wider community.

To ensure people with an experience of extreme poverty were able to fully participate as genuine researchers the right conditions had to be met including: flexibility of working times; ensuring people with limited literacy skills could participate at the same level: providing support for a participation without a negative effect on their families: listening carefully and developing their ideas which were not always immediately understandable.

At each step in the research it was often necessary to experiment with the best way to continue. For example, on the first morning working on the recommendations, it was a challenge for people with an experience of extreme poverty to make recommendations from the research findings and not from their life experience. It took time and further explanation until the group found a way of understanding the work and proceeding. During the following days the work continued more coherently and with greater insight.

One of the key benefits of people living in extreme poverty being researchers was their connection to the respondents during the interviews. A researcher with an experience of extreme poverty was interviewing a single mother raising four children, who spoke very openly about all the challenges she had faced since her husband left. The researcher was able to find just the right level of empathy and understanding for her situation, while remaining professional enough to carry out his duties as a researcher.

The research team broadened their understanding of extreme poverty to including being a denial of basic rights, discrimination and humiliation, not only a lack of money.

Extreme poverty creates instability and uncertainty in life. *“What worries me is that when it comes a new day, how am*

I going to provide for my family?" When problems occur for families living in extreme poverty they come suddenly and they have no resources to contend with these difficulties. *"When a problem happens I have no time to solve the problem. I have to solve it as it happens"*. Living day to day, people living in extreme poverty are unable to develop resources which they can turn to in times of emergencies. Instead they develop short-term strategies to find solutions to recurring problems.

The constant lack of money and uncertainty brings worries and tensions in the lives of very poor families. Money is needed for basic necessities such as shelter; food and water; health and education. However, life is not only about having basic essential and survival. Money is needed to be part of a wider family and community, and to enjoy cultural and social activities. When parents have to make difficult decisions about how to spend the little money they have, sometimes they are said to be irresponsible. If guests come to visit, it is normal to offer them something, even if it is just a cup of tea. That might mean the money being kept to buy a child's pen for school is used to buy sugar for the guests' tea. When children go to school without a pen they are told their parents are *"lazy"* without an understanding of the situation at home. *"Your parents are lazy, have they not hands and feet to work"*.

The research found the existence of unsubstantiated prejudices towards people living in extreme poverty. One interviewee said some poor people are *"pretending"* to be poor in order not to pay contributions. Another interviewee said parents, *"(...) cannot contribute for their children but they can do something for themselves"*. Very poor families are often accused, blamed and held responsible for their life circumstances. They are judged for their decisions without knowing the reasons and the challenges that drive their choices.

One of the biggest worries for people living in extreme poverty is to have a stable home. The instability of not having a stable home comes from many sources, such as being asked to leave or rent increase, land being reclaimed by the government or invaded by other people, and most often paying the rent. These worries are witnessed and taken on by their children. As one mother said, *"My child will keep all this in his mind when at school, not knowing when he returns home if his family will have a place in which to sleep that night"*. Finding ways to alleviate these worries such as having regular work and income; participating in small savings schemes; and owning a small plot, are some of the families' main strategies for solving problems.

Among the parents interviewed 50% were unable to read and write or had very limited literacy skills. Most had never

gone to primary school or only went for a short time. The research did not focus on understanding the reasons for this, however, the few parents that explained further said it was because as children they assumed responsibilities at home to support their family.

Very poor people care for the well-being of, and have an interest in, their community. They are ready and willing to defend the rights of others. *“When I see people being deprived of their rights, I wish I could have enough education to become an outstanding leader and be able to defend them because when I look at people who are mistreated, myself I usually feel hurt”*. Another parent said, *“We have unity to make sure the children in our community go to school. We don’t want the children to be hanging around and playing”* It is not only actions that show people have an interest in their community but the willingness to know what is going on and what can be improved. For example, at health care facilities people said there is a need for *“good leadership”* and *“regular inspections”*.

Partnership with local leaders was reported as being the best way to ensure all children are enrolled in school. Also parents said how important it was that schools have good leadership and be regularly inspected by the government. This shows that people living in extreme poverty do show an interest in their community and beyond.

Many parents said they cooperate with others in their community. They said although at times life in their communities can be unsettled and challenging, they would prefer not to move anywhere else because of the knowledge of the environment where they live and the network of people they have around them. However, extreme poverty can create and break friendships in an instant. When people see their neighbours suffering they have empathy and want to help. They know they might be in the same position tomorrow. With so few resources themselves, sometimes only words and companionship can be offered. These words and seemingly simple gestures are significant and bind poor communities together.

These small gestures that bind communities together are the same at a family level. It is not always what is said, but what is left unsaid, that ensures that the love and resilience needed for very poor families to survive is present. However, when the pressure of constantly finding solutions becomes too great, and words are said which are later regretted, little by little that resilience is eroded and love is lost in the chaos. These moments can break families, and the impact on everybody, especially children, can be unrepairable.

Extreme poverty and privacy are opposites. It is very hard to have a private life when living in extreme poverty, with eyes

constantly watching and seeing a person's every movement, purchase, meeting, etc. This constant exposure brings misinterpretation, and can lie at the root of conflicts. Very poor people said that they felt humiliated because of extreme poverty, directly by words (being asked to steal money to pay the rent) or actions (children being searched in front of their classmates). To have no privacy means a person's life is played out in public, reaffirming that humiliation.

There is a common conception among many people, which was said by some people in the research, that very poor people do not value or make education a priority. This conception conflicts greatly with the research, as parents make huge sacrifices to encourage their children to go to school. One of the single most obvious examples of this was in previous years when children were regularly sent home or physically punished because they did not bring daily contributions to school. Parents would encourage and send their children to school the next day to the same fate. When parents send their children back to school knowing they will again be punished it shows how much they value education.

Like their parents, children also know the importance of education. It is an extremely bright child who says, *"Education helps me to reach my goals. Education is liberating for my life, for my family and for my community"*. It was very interesting to learn through the research how children were extremely ambitious, which goes hand in hand with their affirmation of the importance of education. The research team discovered that children have ambitions to be teachers, doctors, police officers, etc. All professions that contribute to building a stronger and more united community and nation.

Parents place a great deal of hope in their children's future being different from their own. They know how they struggle every day to provide for their family, and desperately want a different future for their children and grandchildren. If their children's futures can be secure, they see their own futures as more stable.

Teachers and parents both expressed the importance of cooperation and good relationships. Both sides are making efforts, both have the desire to improve, both have to overcome challenges to succeed. Parents living in extreme poverty said communication with school only exists when there is a problem. It is very rare for a parent to go or be called to school for something positive. When a relationship starts with a negative experience, it can be difficult to move forward. Many parents talked about going to school and not being listened to, *"We must stay silent"*. When parents are only talked at, and not listened to, it is rare they will feel inspired to go to the school again.

Parents said how important it is that a teacher should know each child individually. This can have many benefits, including contact with the child's parents, giving feedback to parents on a child's development at school, and understanding if a child has specific needs or health problems.

These days it is often thought that most people have a mobile phone. However, the research showed that this is not the case. Most fathers have a phone, but many mothers do not. As a telephone is one of the main communication tools today, and mothers are usually the main person in the family in contact with the school, this raises an important question about the best way for teachers to be in contact with very poor parents.

The health of the family is heavily linked with the family's income and has an impact on primary school education. Even in this era of the Education for Free policy in Tanzania, if a child or parent is sick additional expenses need to be found. When sickness occurs in the family, many children living in extreme poverty may stay at home to care for a sick parent or younger siblings, or they might help the parents to find extra income. Some children try to go to school while feeling sick, which affects their studies. Having access to treatment and understanding the importance of basic hygiene and nutrition is as important to a child's development as access to education.

People living in extreme poverty regularly quoted turning to God for guidance and compassion. In times of complete hopelessness, people said God can offer them hope and give them resilience to cope. When people feel completely powerless they take God as their witness who they believe will lead them. Whether in private or public, the prayers offered to God by poor people are very important.

Children from very poor families face hazards lurking in every corner of the community. This can be from the spread of diseases in shared toilets and washing facilities, and safe passage from and to school including crossing roads and rivers, to the threat of gangs and thieves, etc. Often children have to fend for themselves to overcome many of these challenges. It is why so many children join with their friends for the journey to and from school. It is not only for friendship and games, but for safety too. Friendship is one of the safety nets that children create and rely on from each other.

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms children's right to protection from all physical or mental violence; article 28 sets out the obligation on states "*to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention*"; article 37 states that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Committee on the

Rights of the Child has consistently interpreted these articles as requiring law reform to prohibit all corporal punishment of children, in schools and in all other settings. Promoting the prohibition and elimination of all form of corporal punishment of children are supported by UNESCO and UNICEF. (Towards non-violent schools: prohibiting all corporal punishment. Global report 2015.).

Children become worried when they see teachers carrying sticks, begin to “shake” and are afraid to approach teachers and ask questions. The children said that being physically punished does not stop them from making mistakes in the class, it only creates fear. The views of the children interviewed are consistent with the international institutions and the Tanzanian national government as a signed member to the Conventions of the Rights of the Child regarding physical punishment in schools.

In the past when parents were asked to give contributions for primary school education, which was supported to be a free service, it caused discrimination, created tensions and led to the breakdown in relationships between educational stakeholders. The Education for Free policy pursued by the government ensuring parents are not asked for financial contributions is a step in the right direction. In countries where a similar policy of Education for Free has been introduced, a large and sudden rise in the number of children being registered was experienced and many unprepared schools were overwhelmed. For example, in Sierra Leone in 2010 the subsidised amount schools received was insufficient and payments were delayed, which led to school fees being reinstated. Following this example the new policy introduced here needs to be monitored to minimise its impact and to make sure it does not have a negative effect on primary school education, especially for very poor children.

Parents were ready to highlight many of the challenges faced by teachers, such as lacking equipment in schools and some children being disobedient. *“I start blaming the teachers that they do not teach, while it is your own child's personality”*. Parents also consider teachers' salaries low, reducing their motivation, which has a negative impact on the quality of education.

It is important that parents and teachers agree that there is a decline in the education system and what the main reasons for this are. It is necessary to identify the challenges and discuss them. However they should not be the starting point. Looking for positives through the mist of frustration caused by the negatives can take more time but has greater value if a shared goal is agreed upon.

Teachers are committed to improving the quality of education even if facing many challenges. They make the effort to come

to school on time, prepare lessons, welcome children in a good way, be creative in teaching with limited resources, and show commitment to go further in supporting very poor children. Parents are supporting these efforts by motivating and encouraging their children to learn, providing them with security and stability through difficult circumstances, collaborating with teachers, and instilling hope and belief in their children that they can succeed. These efforts from both sides are the foundation on which to consolidate a dialogue between parents and teachers.



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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	2
2. Introduction.....	4
3. Methodology of Research.....	6
4. Research Findings: What challenges? What efforts?.....	12
4.1. Myself.....	14
4.2. Family and friends	
4.2.1. Facing conflict.....	15
4.2.2. Putting effort and finding solutions.....	16
4.2.3. Extra activities.....	17
4.2.4. Future plans.....	18
4.3. Housing and community	
4.3.1. Housing.....	19
4.3.2. Community.....	21
4.3.3. Community challenges and worries.....	21
4.3.4. Position in society.....	22
4.3.5. Privacy and jealousy.....	23
4.3.6. Environment.....	23
4.3.7. To live somewhere else.....	26
4.4. Work and income.....	27
4.5. Health	
4.5.1. Being healthy.....	29
4.5.2. When children are sick.....	30
4.5.3. When a parent is sick.....	31
4.5.4. The cost of health.....	31
4.5.5. Prayers.....	32
4.5.6. Going to hospital.....	32
4.6. School	
4.6.1. The efforts of parents, children and teachers.....	34
4.6.2. Cooperation.....	37
4.6.3. Disabled children.....	41
4.6.4. Tuition/extra lessons.....	42
4.6.5. Porridge.....	44
4.6.6. Everything in education is about money.....	44
4.6.7. Decline in education.....	46
4.6.8. Friendship.....	49
4.6.9. Safety/Punishments.....	50
5. Recommendations.....	54
6. Conclusions.....	56

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