

# Helping Vulnerable Children Return to School: Our Journey at Potential Limitless

*Building Dreams Where There Was None: The Journey of Potential Limitless in Inclusive Education*

## From: Rahimu Mkono, Founder, Potential Limitless

In the town of Moshi, nestled at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the dreams of many children are at risk of fading. Some are street children forced to fend for themselves, others are children with disabilities who remain unseen and unheard in formal education systems. This is where *Potential Limitless* steps in.

I founded this organization with a simple yet powerful belief: **every child deserves a chance to learn, grow, and live a meaningful life—regardless of their physical, economic, or social condition.**

Since we began our journey, we have been working closely with children who are homeless, living with disabilities, or facing extreme poverty, to support their return to school and ensure they have the tools to succeed.

## How We Identify Children Who Need Support

Our process starts with community involvement. We work hand-in-hand with local leaders, social workers, and sometimes even children themselves, to identify those who are out of school. We visit local markets, streets, and neighborhoods where vulnerable children are likely to be found. In many cases, we are informed by concerned members of the community who reach out when they notice a child in distress or out of school.

Additionally, we conduct outreach programs and awareness campaigns, which often bring new cases to our attention. Sometimes, children approach us directly when they hear about our organisation from friends or community members.

## Understanding the Barriers

Once we identify a child, we take time to understand why they are not attending school. We engage in conversations with the child, their guardians (if available), and community members. The reasons vary: some children lack basic school supplies or uniforms; others are kept at home to help with household chores or due to caregiving responsibilities. In some cases, children with disabilities face stigma or schools are not prepared to accommodate them.

This understanding helps us tailor our support to each child's unique needs.

### **Providing Learning Materials**

When it comes to educational support, we provide materials such as exercise books, pens, uniforms, shoes, and sometimes even school bags. We usually deliver these directly to the child, but we also collaborate with schools to ensure the materials are used appropriately and that the child is welcomed back into a learning environment that's safe and inclusive.

### **Reintegrating Children Into School**

Reintegrating a child into school is a delicate process that requires patience and care. First, we liaise with schools to secure placement for the child. Then, we accompany the child to school, introduce them to teachers, and ensure that they feel supported and accepted.

We also monitor the child's progress for several months. This follow-up is critical to prevent dropout and to provide any additional support that may be needed—whether academic, emotional, or social.

For children who have been out of school for a long time, we sometimes arrange for informal or bridge learning sessions to help them catch up before returning to a formal classroom.

### **The Primary School Partnership Initiative**

Our Primary School Partnership Initiative involves working directly with schools to create inclusive and child-friendly environments. We train teachers on how to support children with disabilities or trauma, promote inclusive teaching methods, and encourage schools to adopt zero-discrimination policies.

We also help schools establish child protection mechanisms and promote psychosocial support through peer clubs and mentorship programs.

### **Collaborating With Local Authorities and Communities**

We recognize that long-term change is only possible through collaboration. That's why we actively engage with local government offices, social welfare departments, and community leaders. Our aim is to build awareness, reduce stigma—especially around children with disabilities—and promote education for all.

We also hold community forums and parent meetings to educate families about the importance of education and to break cultural or economic barriers that may prevent school attendance.

### **Voices from the Field**

One parent, Mama Rehema, shared:

*“Before Potential Limitless came into our lives, my daughter had given up on school. She was always sad and isolated because of her disability. Now, she wakes up early, gets ready with excitement, and talks about becoming a nurse. I see hope in her eyes.”*

And from John Jacob, one of our supported children:

*“I used to think school was not for me. But now I love it. I’ve made friends, and I want to become a teacher and help other kids like me.”*

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At Potential Limitless, we are not just giving children school supplies—we are giving them back their futures, their dreams, and their dignity. We are building a society where every child, regardless of their circumstance, can believe in the power of education and their own potential.

For more information on the work of Potential Limitless, please contact:

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