

Suggested Topics for Research on Children

Below are some suggestions for research topics, though research projects are not restricted to these areas.

Poverty and Children's Access to Basic Needs

The aspect of poverty and how it deprives children's access to basic needs.

- Adequate food, nutrition and health
- Adequate shelter and amenities such as safe water and sanitation
- Positive care and attention

Access to Education

Addressing children's access to education in its holistic sense includes re-thinking of issues that impinge directly on the schooling environment. Measures need to be taken to improve the learning environment by being sensitive to the situation of children from poor homes.

- Poor quality teaching
- Problematic student/teacher relationships
- Factors affecting absenteeism and dropouts
- Out of school children – those not able to access primary/ secondary/ technical schools

Coping Strategies of Specially Vulnerable Children

The absence of appropriate policies addressing the circumstances of vulnerable children.

- Limitations faced by especially vulnerable children when handling problems such as ill-health
- Street children
- Orphans
- Children subjected to physical and sexual abuse
- Child headed households
- Children in difficult labour conditions
- Foster children (those not living with their biological parents or parent)

- Disabled children

Children's Social and Democratic Rights

How children actively participate in social activities and democratic rights affecting them.

- Leisure facilities, associations – clubs, etc
- Participation in decisions that affect their development

Low Prioritization of Children in Society

Why children are not participating in decision making processes at national, local government, *mtaa* level. Why are they given low priority in decision making process on issues that affect them?

- Perception of children by the state
- Children's position in the society
- Adult perception of children
- Institutional view of children e.g. schools, churches

The Role and Responsibility of the State Towards Children

To what extent has the state moved towards realising its commitments as stipulated in its policies, legislation and ratification of international conventions affecting children.

- The role of the state with regard to children,
- Influence of other players towards state's role on children
- Role of children on school committees
- Perception of children by service providers

Schools as a Major Interface Between Family and State

The dynamics of teachers, pupils and parents at primary and secondary schools.

- What do children want from their teachers?
- Role of individual teachers / schools as institutions in supporting vulnerable children
- Experiences with active teaching/learning methodologies demonstrated in schools

Policy and Legal Frameworks Affecting Children

Policy and legal frameworks at local, national and international level that affect the realization of children's rights.

- Child rights and globalization
- How national and sectoral policies affect children's rights
- Children and judicial processes

Cultural Aspects Affecting Children

Are there cultural assumptions that unfairly treat children or make them more vulnerable? Does the community view children as participants or just users of services?

- Culturally sanctioned health risks and the degree of lack of awareness or community irresponsibility in addressing them.
- Gender discrimination affecting the girl child
- Stigma about disabilities and HIV/AIDS
- Culture of silence about abuse of children's rights
- Culture of children being 'seen and not heard'
- Does the community recognize children's contribution?
- Do children have a valued role within the community?

Access to Public Services

Children's access to public services.

- Transport (urban and rural)
- Facilities for the disabled
- Health facilities

Relationships – Children's Role in Society

Children's position in the society, including relationships at home, at school, and within the community.

- Relationships at home, school, church, mosque
- With peers
- Within the community
- Differences between mosques and churches in attitudes towards children, childhood, parenting

- Do faith based organization influence lives of children? In what ways?

Family: Separating the Myth from Reality

Many changes have taken place in family life in Tanzania since the turn of the 21st century. These changes have had positive as well as negative impacts on the way the family structure operates. In the earlier days every member of the community had a duty to take care and protect children regardless of whom the child belonged to. This collective responsibility is slowly dieing out, the extended family set up is breaking down.

- What is the current role of the community in bringing up children?
- Changes in family set up that lead to increases in street children
- Experiences of children living away from home

Vulnerability and Social Protection

Most Vulnerable Children are defined as children below the age of 18 years who are experiencing inadequate care and protection and are at risks of serious psychological, emotional or physical harm.

- HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria: access to health services, stigma, the use of indigenous healers and traditional medicines
- Water, education, health, shelter and sanitation
- The emergence of beggars and street children
- Rural-urban migration
- Changing attitudes on the role of extended family, family size, mutual assistance
- Governance in education structures
- Child poverty and disparities

Why Involve Children in Research?

There are a number of positive gains that could be realized by involving children in research. These include:

1. The Right to be Heard

Article 12 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) states that children must have the opportunity to express their views about issues that affect their wellbeing, and these views should be respected.

2 Improved Research Design:

Children can take part in the research project by ensuring that the questions are relevant and meaningful to them, assisting with gathering information from fellow

children and interpreting and communicating results. Their involvement improves the quality and relevance of the research, since it becomes easier to enter the child's world (easier to gain rapport, less threatening, use of same language style) and therefore obtain a more realistic picture of their environment.

3. Better Results for Children:

When children and young people are involved in research that affects them it will be easy for them to identify their needs better than adults. This will assist adult researchers to understand the issues affecting them. This should lead to the development or improvement of interventions or programmes that are sensitive to their needs and subsequently produce better results.

4. Empowerment

The process of participating in a research project can be a positive learning experience for children. Participation can increase children and young people's self esteem, citizenship and social inclusion, and also their wider personal development. It teaches them the ability to listen to others, to learn, discuss, and negotiate.

5. Innovation

Engaging young people and children in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of a research project can offer an opportunity for new thinking and for influencing change, as well as to contribute new ideas.

REPOA's library has a comprehensive collection of material on children's issues, including material on:

- Children's rights
- Child labour
- Child abuse and neglect
- Policy documents
- Doing research with children, including participatory tools for working with children, and ethics

The library is open Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 to 13:00 and 14:00 to 17:00.

Please contact [REPOA](#) if you would like further information about submitting a concept note for a research project.