



# FACT FINDING REPORT ON BRUTAL KILLINGS OF CHILDREN NJOMBE - FEBRUARY 2019





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**PREPARED BY:**

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## INTRODUCTION

It came to LHRC's attention that at least 10 children in Njombe Region have been killed in the month of January 2019. It was reported that the victims are found dead with their bodies parts chopped.

Reports of these killings have been circulating in the media and social media, with fears that they could escalate and parents feel their children are not safe. In response to this information, which could have profound implications for human and children's rights, LHRC went on a fact finding mission to ascertain the truth behind the reports.

## RATIONALE

The rationales of the study was to fetch information especially on the circumstances leading to the death of these children and develop an advocacy tool or strategy to engage the communities to see the importance of protecting children rights and the right to life. Also to create awareness on bad cultural practices that were believed to cause the Brutal killings

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the fact-finding mission to Njombe Region were to:

- Ascertain the truth behind the reports/allegations of killings of children;
- Ascertain the circumstances surrounding the killings of children and determine whether they are witchcraft-motivated;
- Determine the number of incidents and children killed and attacked;
- Check on the overall situation of safety and security of children in the region and affected areas; and
- Enquire about measures taken to address the situation so far.
- Assess what LHRC can do to ensure the people are empowered especially on rights of children and their safety



## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes were;

- To know the number of children which have been killed
- To develop an advocacy tool to advocate for child rights and the right to life
- To know what LHRC can do to assist in the matter

## METHODOLOGY

In conducting this fact-finding mission, LHRC employed a qualitative approach and means of data collection. Methods used to accomplish the task were interview- including key informant interview (KII), storytelling and literature/ desk review.

Targeted respondents were:

### 1. Police;

LHRC met with the Regional Police Commander who told the LHRC team that the number of children who had died was 8 and only 5 incidents. The RPC denied the reports in the newspaper. The RPC also stated that there are 4 accused persons arrested who are Joel Nziku (35), Nassoro Alfred Kaduma (39), Alphonse Edward Danda (51) and one David who is 14 years old who confessed to killing children on family conflicts and witch craft grounds.

LHRC also met and worked with the investigative team from Dar es salam that was also investigation as a call from the CDF and the President with which LHRC joined them at Ikando village when they were opening graves on three children who were brutally murdered by their brother.

The team also stated that they have arrested other two suspects and also another body was found with which the parents are not known and they were buried by the council.



*Figure 1; Suspect in the Nziku case in court during their committal proceedings at Njombe Resident Magistrate Court*





*Figure 2; one of the found bodies being taken by the Police car*

## **2. Victims' families;**

LHRC also managed to meet a total of 6 families who are victims of the Brutal killings of children in Njombe District council and Njombe Municipal Council.

### ***i. Family of Meshack Mlyoka***

Meshack Mlyoka was 5 years old and he was found on the road side with his throat cut off. He was rushed at Mbeya referral Hospital where he received treatment and managed to join his family. He was unable to speak as he was still recovering but on 10th February he died due to some health complications that were related to the issue. The reason for his death and the cutting of his throat are witch craft as the police stated that a 14 year old boy confessed to have done the act on beliefs that he feels happy as he has been doing the same to other children because he was given some local medicines by his deceased grandfather who lived in Mufindi.

The suspect said he felt sorry as the child was very young and had to leave him by the road side to get help which he did but later died and was buried in Ngaranga village.





*Figure 4; LHRC team with Mfugale family which has lost a 9 year old son*

### **iii. Gaudency Mario Kiongo family**

Gaudency is 7 years old and lives at Kiando village in Njombe. He left with fellow boys to go grazing at a nearby forest and he did not return to his family. The community searched but did not find him or his body and the matter was reported to the police station who told the family that they can but he has not been found to date. The suspects have been arrested.



*Figure 5; Gaudency Kiongo in a picture with his family. He has not been found neither his body.*





*Figure 3; LHRC team with the family of Meshack Mlyoka and the Village Chairman of Mjimwema Village*

#### **ii. Family of Goodluck Mfugale**

He was 9 years old and lived in Njombe town. He had a brother who is 7 years and a 10 years old sister. He was playing with his sister when their father left at the evening on 4th January, 2019. Goodluck had a friend named Joshua with whom they decided to go play somewhere else. When on their way they met a guy with the name David who is 14 years old who ruded Goodluck to follow him, despite Joshuas pledges for Goodluck to stop, Goodluck still followed David with whom Joshua had seen at the neighboring. Goodluck disappeared and when the father followed he was told by Glory who is Goodlucks sister that he had left with Joshua with which Joshua pointed out that the deceased left with David despite him begging him not to go with him. Goodluck father did not know who David is but he looked for him and asked but he refused to have seen the deceased, the community gathered and went in the bush and looked for two days but in vain. The family then reported to the Police on 5th January and the Police told then to keep on searching. When David was asked again he agreed to leave with Goodluck but that he left him uphill. On 7th January Goodluck father was called by the Police and went at a bush near his house where Goolduck body was lying while the left palm was missing and the whole stomach.

The family do not know the reason for their son's death but the allegedly David was arrested and he admitted to have been involved in killing Goodlluck on witch craft reasons.



#### ***iv. Nziku family***

In this family 3 children were murdered, Godliver 12, Gasper 07 and Gilliad 05. On 20th January, 2019 at around 19:00 the parents returned home to find out all the three children missing and when they asked they were told by one Antinna Nziku who is also a relative that they were taken by one Joel Nziku who is their brother from their uncle. The family has been in conflict with Joel Nziku. When the father was told that Joel had taken his children he reported right away to the authorities who took the Police and went straight to Joel home and they could not find the children or Joel as it was said that he is not in town.

After sometime they found Joel at a Timber industry where he was asked the whereabouts of the children and he said he does not know and he was arrested. A week passed and Mr. Danford who is the father to the deceased children was called to go see two found bodies in the river and he recognized them to be his daughter and his son Gasper. They organized people to search for the 3 child and after sometime was called by the Police to go at the morgue to see another found body which turned out to be his third Child Gilliad. The post mortem report showed that the children were hit by a sharp object and Joel Nziku confessed to the murdering of these three children and was charged together with other two men Nassoro Alfred Kaduma and Alphonse Edward Danda. The case is at Njombe Resident magistrate court for committal proceedings (Murder Case No. 1 of 2019). Joel Nziku also confessed to have abducted one Gaudency Kiongo whose body has not been found.

The reasons for these murders are Witchcraft and Family feuds.



*Figure 6; LHRC's Gender, Women and Children Program Officer (Ms. Gertude Dyabene) during an interview with the Nziku family.*







*Figure 7; LHRC team with the task force team at Nziku graveyard on an investigation visit*

**v. Rahel Cherio Malekela Family**

Rahel was 8 years old from Matembwe family and was in class 2. On the day of her death which was December 2018, she went to school as usual and when she came back from school she went to play but did not come back and her parents started looking for her. They reported to the village authorities and the community gathered and started searching for her with which at around 10:00 p.m she was found dead in a nearby forest. She was slayed. The family reported to the police and they were arrested as the police believed that they are involved, the mother father and the older son were arrested with which they were released in February after other two suspects were arrested.

The family believes that the reasons of their daughter's death were because of conflicts and witchcraft as some people are selling children for rituals.

The community believed that the parents are involved and that they sold their child for rituals so they can get rich.

**vi. Oliver Ng'aala Family**

Oliver was 5 years and was studying at Kambarage Primary school at nursery level. She went to schools on 7th December, 2019 and did not come back. The parents searched for her and reported to the authorities but they did not find her. On December 2018 they announced in the community radios and several places but did not find her. On the same day at around 10:00 a.m at Paina forest people saw a dead body which was actually Oliver. The body had blood in the mouth and private parts, her clothes were taken off and her neck was broken. The post mortem report stated that she was not



raped but a sharp object was inserted in her private parts.

The family believes the reason for the death of their daughter is conflicts and or witchcraft as believed in the communities.



*Figure 8; LHRCS Ally Seif Ramadhani during an interview with the parents of Oliver*

#### **vii. Others**

Other two bodies were found on 16/11/2018 and no family claimed the body and the child was buried by the Council and another body was found in February 2019 with which it was cut half and no family has claimed the same too.



*Figure 9; one of the bodies that was found in the river*



### 3. Victims;

There were no victims as the only living victim died on 9th February, 2019.

### 4. Local government authorities;

LHRC team interviewed Local Government authorities in Njombe

#### *i. Njombe District Social welfare*

They stated that they are providing psychological support to the victim's family so that they can cope and following up to the justice to see that Justice has been done. Also for the children who are members of the victim's family and when witnesses to the murders were are given psychological support as they are affected. Many victims family want to move from their houses and areas they lived as they fear for their lives and children lives.

#### *ii. Njombe District Administrative secretary*

The DAS admitted that so far he has received a total of 8 murders and not anymore. He pointed out reasons being witch craft but mostly conflicts within families and business conflicts which a person thinks that taking revenge is through killing the innocent children. He stated that the community need be educated on bad cultural practices, witchcraft beliefs and also access to justice wherever there is a conflict.

He further pointed out that because children are not safe and that the government had given an order for every parent to take children to school and back an order which has been positively received and is helping protect the children.

#### *iii. Njombe Mji Ward Executive Officer*

The officer reported that in her ward only one child who has not been able to be identified was found and was buried by the council. They announced but no family claimed the body which was of a 2 to 3 year old child, a girl. She pointed out that in her opinion the order from the District commissioner is paying off and that now the children are safe though awareness to communities is still needed and also cooperation when they see new faces in their communities.

#### *iv. Ikando Village Chairman*

The Village chairman stated in his village two cases which involved 4 children has been reported and that the Police have done all their best to help and have arrested the suspect. He further pointed out that the community is deeply affected and that are scared to do their daily activities.

He further stated that the reasons he believes for the murders are family conflicts and grudges and with craft. He also said that children are not safe at all as the whereabouts of Gaudency is still unknown.



#### **v. Matembwe Village Executive Officer**

He stated that the children are not safe and in his village only one child was found dead with which the villages members voted a secret vote and pointed out that the parents of the child are responsible for the child death as they want to be rich so they have given their child to rituals. He wished the Police could be close by to Protect villagers.

### **5. Teachers; and Students**

LHRC also interviewed Primary school teachers and students to see if the children are safe and if they know what happened to their fellow children and why they are being brought to school by their parents.

#### **i. Ikando Primary School**

##### **Teachers**

The teachers stated that the situation has affected the children and they cannot go to school alone and play alone. They do not have confidence as children and when they see a car they ran away (this was proved when LHRC car was close all children ran away and even feared to greet). Children talk even in their classes about the killings including also that all the 4 children were studying in the same school. They further stated that even the school is no safe for the children although teachers talk to them not to fear. The issue of parents taking their children to school is a good idea but the parents are tired and also it is a burden to the teachers as they have to wait for all children to start classes. Performance has decreased since the killings. The Police were not cooperative until when the issue became a Public interest issue but the reason for the killing is witchcraft.

##### **Pupils**

The children stated that they know that their fellows are being murders and killed by unknown people. They are kidnapped by unknown people and that they are scared as their friends have been killed and they are scared also.



*Figure 11; LHRC team with the pupils of Ikando Primary School*



## ***ii. Kambarage Primary School***

### **Teachers**

The teachers stated that the school, children and the teachers are not safe at all and that the issue has deeply affected children as they are scared. They said that they have tried to talk to children and to parents to bring their children to school as many parents think of stopping their children from going to school. To teachers it is a burden now and they stated the reasons that may cause these issues are distance from school and home, witch craft, security and no friendly environment where most of the places in Njombe are heavy forests and where children even the young ones have to go through them to get to school. They pointed out that not only death are issues but many children are raped when they talk to then they find that they are raped by unknown people in the forests.

### **Pupils**

The pupils explained that they are scared, and that they would like to be protected, so that the assailant won't find them.

## ***iii. Sabasaba Primary School***

### **Teachers**

The teachers stated that the children are safe in school but the government should look on this issue and assist on issues of security and how to help parents to stop taking children to school as that increases burden to both parents and teachers.

### **Pupils**

The pupils knew about what is happening and said their parents talk to them, they believe they are not safe and are scared even to go outside or anywhere alone. Even the older children are scared and if their parents do not take them to school they do not think they can go alone.

## ***6. Community members.***

LHRC team interviewed community members in Ikando village, Court grounds and Matembwe Village.

When the suspect from killing the three children from one family were taken to court many people gathered to see them with which the Police had to add extra security to protect the accused person. Many people claimed that the cause of all this is witch craft and that they wished the accused persons to be charged in accordance with the laws but some said they wish they were killed like they had killed the children. They state that the Police are not cooperative and that their children are not safe.

The other village stated that the Police neglected the unfound child and so they are not cooperative. They need to be educated o laws and human rights and how best they can protect their children and the world has changed now. They pointed out that this new job of taking their children to school is affecting them economically and they needed a



new idea to protect their children.



*Figure 12; LHRC team during a discussion with the members of Matembwe Village*



*Figure 13; People waiting to see the suspects of the killings when they were brought to court.*



## KEY ACHIEVEMENT

The intervention made by LHRC helped in ascertaining the truth and the circumstances behind the reports/allegations of killings of children. Also the intervention managed to assess what LHRC can do to ensure the people are empowered especially on rights of children and their safety.

## KEY FINDINGS

- The number of children who have been killed is 9 in 7 incidents
- The body parts are not chopped as reported but only one child body parts were missing which may be a result of some animal as the body was in the forest for many days
- Witchcraft, family conflicts, Grudges, business conflicts are the reasons for the children killings
- Most of the suspects in the killings have been arrested
- The communities are scared and worried about the killings
- Children are not safe and they do not feel safe, they are not confident and they speak about killings most times. LHRC proved this by going through school backgrounds and children were running away
- Children who are witnesses are not given any protection and their safety is of paramount priority
- Children from the victim's family are psychologically affected with the killings of their siblings
- Some bodies have not been recognized and it is possible there are children who have been killed but have not yet been found
- The Police and government authorities are very cooperative on the issue and receiving any help they can get
- Human rights awareness and legal education has not been provided in Njombe, we could not even find a human right based organization
- Communities in Njombe believe in witchcraft and rituals thus in order to get rich they have to engage in witch craft
- Villages and communities have no local security mechanisms thus depend entirely on the Police
- Parents are tired of taking children to school and back and thus need help from the government
- Parents talk to their children about their safety and the ongoing killings thus children are scared to meet new people or when they see a car around especially with tinted windows
- Women and children rights in Njombe are not respected and women do not have Human and women rights education



- The Task force from Dar es salaam has done a good job and managed to arrest several suspects in the killings
- Most believe that the killings are related and probably it is one person who is executing the plans
- Most wish the suspect could be brought at the communities so that they can kill them just as they believe they killed their children and pit them in the verge of fear
- Children school performance has decreased since the killings began
- The communities are not cooperative in reporting to the Police and they do not trust the Police on these issues thus they might see a dead body and fear to be incriminated by the Police
- Njombe has so many witch doctors and the government in reviewing their practicing certificates
- There is a possibility children from other town are killed and then dumped at Njombe thus why 2 bodies have not been recognized nor parents have been searching
- Teachers do not receive children who come without their parents and do not permit them to leave without their parents t[either
- There are other issues affecting children in Njombe including rape and physical assaults and other violence's but go unreported
- Distances to school and also environment barriers affect children safety when going to and back from school

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- LHRC should establish programs in Njombe on issues of women, children and Human Rights as it is needed for awareness on human rights issues
- LHRC was asked to visit Njombe not only when there are problems but every time even for legal education and human rights awareness.
- LHRC to advise the government to reduce time to leave school at least to 15:00 as children leave late and face challenges in the forests especially during this time
- LHRC to assist in following up for the already filed cases in court as they are Public interests cases
- LHRC to advise the government on different government declarations that are contradictions and affecting the communities for example the declaration on free education and on parents taking children to school
- LHRC to empower women and parents in Njombe as they sad they do not know their rights and would like to be empowered even in protecting their children and reporting issues of sexual violence's.
- The communities to be empowered on laws governing witch doctors and the witch doctors to be empowered on what they are not supposed to do legally and also LHRC to advise the government to revoke certificates of witch doctors who are doing illegal activities and provide regulations on how to control them.





- LHRC to advise the government on security issues and how the villages and communities can protect themselves from especially new people who turn out to be assailants.
- LHRC to follow w up on the welfare of the children who are witnesses in different cases especially Antiva who is a witness on the Nziku case.

## WAY FORWARD

- The reasons' of the killings are community related and thus the communities in Njombe have no human rights awareness, women and children rights and are clinging to their cultural practices which are bad and affects children and women mostly, LHRC should establish programs in Njombe on issues of women, children and Human Rights as it is needed for awareness on human rights issues.
- LHRC should make a follow up on all the cases to see the Justice has been done, and also provide support to children who are witnesses in court on the killings and also whom are members of the families that are victims. This can be done through working with Social Welfare offices

## CONCLUSION

- The issue of Brutal killings of children in Njombe is of public interest thus the Legal and human rights Centre has to advise the government and make follow ups to ensure that justice is served, this issues has gone to other regions like Simiyu where children are being murders and their body parts chopped. Most believe it is on witchcraft purposes but there are other reasons that cause the killings. Children are not safe and we should all ensure they are protected and that killings stop. Generally Children are not safe in regard with these killing



## FACT SHEET

### FACT FINDING MISSION ON THE ABDUCTED AND KILLED CHILDREN – NJOMBE REGION

Mission Conducted between 9th February to 19th February 2019

Total identified incidents are 7 which have caused a loss of 8 lives and 1 missed

S/N	NAME	SEX	AGE	DATE	RESIDENCE	NATURE OF THE EVENT	SUGGESTED MOTIVE
1	Oliver Ng'aala	F	5 years	7/12/2018	Ichugamela Village & Kambarage Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broken neck</li> <li>Severely Injured with suspected sharp tool which caused bleeding in her mouth and private parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hostility among the Family members</li> </ul>
2	Gaudence Mario Kyambo	M	7 Years	6/01/2019	Ikando Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lost</li> <li>Missed to date</li> </ul>	Witchcraft beliefs
3	Godliver Nziku	M	12 Years	20/01/2019	Ikando Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beaten by a sharp object</li> <li>Thrown in water</li> <li>Thrown in the forests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avenges</li> <li>Witchcraft beliefs</li> </ul>
4	Gasper Nziku	M	7 Years				
5	Giliad Nziku	M	5 Years				
6	Rachel Malekela	F	8 Years	1/02/2019	Matembwe Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chopped neck</li> <li>Blocked mouth with some wood dust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hostility in the neighborhood</li> </ul>
7	Goodlucky Mfugale	M	10 Years	06/01/2019	JOS stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thrown in the forest</li> <li>Whole belly missing</li> <li>Left palm missing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unrevealed</li> </ul>
8	Meshack Mlyoka	M	5 Years		Ngalanga Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut off- throat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Witchcraft beliefs</li> </ul>
9	Unknown Child						Unrevealed





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