



# AJENDA YA MSICHANA FORUM 2019

“Girls Agency in Ending Violence: Turning Vulnerability into leadership”  
“Nguvu ya wasichana, Chachu ya kumaliza ukatili wa kijinsia”



#AjendaYaMsichana19

VENUE:  
TANZANIA PUBLIC SERVICE  
COLLEGE CAMPUS, TABORA MUNICIPALITY  
**4TH OCTOBER 2019**

# MAJOR ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO MAIN EVENT

01.

## MEDIA INFLUENCERS CAMPAIGN

This reached audiences of over 150,000 people through social media platforms (see attached audience report).

02.

## TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

This was held at RISTALEM Hotel in Tabora municipality.

VIOLA  
JULIAS



Mwanaharakati wa haki  
za wanawake na watoto

RAHMA  
MWITA



Mwanaharakati masuala  
ya kijinsia kwa wanawake  
na watoto

**SARA  
BEDAH**



Mwanaharakati wa haki  
za wanawake na watoto

**CONSOLATA  
FARAJA**



Mwanaharakati wa haki  
za wanawake na watoto

**SALHA  
AZIZI**



Balozi wa masuala  
ya Haki ya elimu  
kwa wasichana

**VICTORIA  
MWANZIVA**



Mdau wa masuala  
ya Kijamii



Transformative Leadership  
Training session in Tabora





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01



# INTRODUCTION

Msichana Initiative is a non-governmental organization advocating for girls' right to education in Tanzania by addressing and finding solutions to challenges they face, which ultimately limit their access to quality education. It aims to ensure that a girl child is not subjected to any form of discrimination that may hinder realization of her right to education. The organization works with girls and young women between the age of 10 and 25 primarily focusing on child marriage and teenage pregnancies.

Msichana Initiative held its 3rd Ajenda ya Msichana Forum in Tabora on 4th October 2019. The forum is one of the key programmes of the organization which brings together girls and other stakeholders of girls' rights, to discuss issues, challenges and problems that threaten or outrightly hinder girls' rights; and work together to find solutions. It is this forum that provides a platform for girls to amplify their voices, seek support and join hands to address issues that affect, and or threaten the rights of the girl child.

This year's forum brought together more than 800 participants. These included young girls with disability, teen-mothers, former child brides, girls currently in primary and secondary schools, Msichana Initiative girl leaders, university students and representatives of Baraza la Watoto - Children's Council.

The main speakers at the event were: Guest of honour, Hon Aggrey Mwanri - Tabora Region Commissioner; Women Fund Tanzania's Representative Frank Kisare; Ms. Rebeca Gyumi, the Executive Director of Msichana Initiative; Dr. Honoratha Rutatinisibwa (Regional Medical Officer) who represented Regional Administrative Women and Girls Protection Committee Secretary, Panin Kerika; and Aisha Uledi who represented 14 Msichana Initiative Café team leaders.

The event was moderated by Ms. Sara Bedah Akwisombe and Ms. Rose Shaaban Kapetula .from Msichana Initiative. The theme for this year's forum is "Girls Agency in Ending Violence: Turning Vulnerability into Leadership"

# 02

## FORUM SESSIONS

Forum sessions included key remarks, speeches, group leaders' oaths, keynote speech by the guest of honour, panel and group discussions; and DJ's selection that correlated with the theme of the day.





# INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AND SPEECH

BY MSICHANA INITIATIVE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
– Ms. Rebeca Gyumi



The introductory remarks were done by the Executive Director, Ms. Rebeca Gyumi who drew the curtains ready for the grand day's business. She thanked all the guests for responding to the invitation; and expressed particular gratitude to guest of honour, Mr. Aggrey Mwanri, the Tabora Regional Commissioner and his entourage which included the Regional Administrative Secretary, Regional Police Commissioner and Regional Community Development Officer..

Ms. Rebeca took time to enumerated stakeholders who supported Ajenda ya Msichana 2019 financially. They include Women Fund Tanzania, Global Fund for Women, Segal Family Foundation, Planet Wheeler and Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa. Representatives from the Private Sector, CSOs, higher learning institutions, students from Secondary and Primary schools; community development stakeholders, were also accorded a warm welcome. She said that this year's Ajenda ya Msichana Forum was dedicated to the International day of the girl, marked around the globe on 11 October since 2012.

The theme of the Forum 2019 is “Girls Agency in Ending Violence: Turning Vulnerability into leadership,” which she said was developed alongside different gender violence challenges facing girls in society and meant to promote girls’ empowerment and fulfill human rights requirement. She hoped that the theme would motivate girls and lead them to find solutions to gender violence in their society; adding that it was now imperative to determine the type of approaches to be applied in order to enable girls to overcome gender inequality.

The Executive Director said Tanzania is ranked at 10th position globally for its very low median age. Teenagers are 32% (Census 2012). She said however, that Tanzania has already taken some measures in protecting a girl child; citing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 and The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) of 1990 to which Tanzania is bound.

Ms Gyumi explained that Tanzania has a Law of the Child Act, No. 21 of 2009 which provides for reform and consolidation of laws relating to children; to stipulate rights of the child and to promote, protect and maintain the welfare of a child with a view to giving effect to international and regional conventions on the rights of the child; to provide for affiliation, foster care, adoption and custody of the child; to further regulate employment and apprenticeship; to make provisions with respect to a child in conflict with the



law; and to provide for related matters.

She said in 2016 the government of Tanzania amended the Education Act (Cap. 353) (3) which now reads: “Any person who impregnates a primary school or a secondary school girl commits an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term of thirty years.” She said the government of Tanzania has, among others, the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan which aims to end gender violence for women and children and enhance a girl child protection, among them establishing gender desk.

Regardless of these efforts, girls are still victims of gender violence, mainly sexual harassment; according to a study conducted by UNICEF in 2011 In this study almost three quarters of girls and boys interviewed had experienced physical violence before the age of 18 at the hands of an adult or an intimate partner. In the study, 1 out 3 girls has experienced sexual violence before the age of 18 and 72% have experienced physical violence.

Despite the fact that Tanzania is nearly closing gender equality gap in registering grade I and Form II students, less than 1/3 of primary school leavers are the ones who complete secondary school education. In 2016 BEST report indicated that 69,067 girls in secondary schools in 2015 did not complete their studies. It is estimated that about 8,000 girls drop out from schools due to early pregnancy; two out of five get married before age 18; 27% are impregnated before the age of 18 and one out of 4, aged 15-19 is already a mother.

Ms Gyumi added that 43% of HIV new infections affect youth under 24 years of age. Seventy (70%) percent infected are girls and teenage girls are eight times (8) infected compared to boys (THIS 2016/17). She told the host region that Tabora and some other regions, are facing early marriage and pregnancy challenges which have so many development disadvantages to girls. "This Forum aims at showing a girl that it begins with her, once she realizes her full potential, be able to say NO and practice what she says".



Ajenda ya Msichana  
2019 PARTICIPANTS

There is also need for education infrastructure to meet technological development of the 21st century by teaching life skills to our children - reproductive health which will help them to gain full potential, self confidence; and be able to speak out and solve daily challenges. The Forum group discussions were led by 15 team leaders from Msichana Café from Tabora urban; and Uyui and Nzega districts. They shared their experience in the field and demonstrated how to tackle different challenges in the fight against gender violence in their respective districts.

Ms Gyumi reiterated her gratitude to the guest of honor for his time and commitment in ending gender violence in Tabora region.

# PARTNERS' REMARKS

## A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE WOMEN FUND

- Mr. Frank Kisare



Mr. Frank Kisare from Women Fund Tanzania, gave some short remarks. He thanked Msichana Initiative for ensuring that a girl child is given a forum to showcase her capability, learn and demand her rights. He said Women Fund Tanzania is Tanzania's first and only women's rights fund whose overall goal is to contribute towards women's rights and empowerment; and to building women's and feminist movements through implementing a functional and empowering funding mechanism for women in Tanzania.

**REMARKS BY  
ASST. REGIONAL  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
SECRETARY (EDUCATION)**

– Suzana Nussu



Ms. Nussu provided the region's education statistics. Amongst them, she said under the current Regional Commissioner leadership, registration of kindergarten goes stood at 54,508 in 2018. She said girls were 27,775 and boys 26,733. Registration for Grade 1 has in the year 2019 shot to 96,004 pupils, among them 48,286 are girls.

She said that girls' lead was being experienced in Form 1 where 13,018 out of 24,666 were registered. On Form IV students registered for National Examinations in the year 2019, she said out of 42,172 students registered in Tabora region, 41,689 attended and among them 21,451 were girls. She said the figures indicate that the society has awakened, when it comes to education for girls

# PARTNERS' REMARKS

## REMARKS BY REGIONAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN PROTECTION COMMITTEE'S SECRETARY

– Panin Kerika



Panin congratulated Msichana Initiative and partners for facilitating the Forum by bringing together 800 girls under one roof. He said by achieving that, the organization was helping the government to serve the society better. The Committee's Secretary added that Tabora region has taken some concrete measures to end gender violence in the region among them, training District Executives from all eight districts on women and children protection matters.

He said it is important to address women and children issues from the grass roots and urged parents and guardians to ensure that children are well protected and nurtured at family stage. "When a girl child learns and understands how and when to say NO to whomever is trying to cajole her, she would have known how to avoid unplanned pregnancy," said Panin.

# SPEECH BY A REPRESENTATIVE

**FROM  
MSICHANA CAFÉ'**

– Aisha Uledi



Aisha Uledi, Chairperson of Msichana Café club in Tabora Urban is one of 15 team leaders from Uyui, Nzenga and Tabora Urban who was fortunate to read a speech in a cloud of over 800 participants. She commenced by saying in 2018 Msichana Initiative established Msichana Café clubs with a total number of 300 girls from three districts namely Uyui, Tabora Urban and Nzega. Today they form a union.

Their union as narrated by Aisha was the results of efforts made by Msichana Initiative team to reach young girls in school and out of schools with knowledge on gender violence, early marriage; and teach them how to discuss their matters confidently and stand up for their rights.

One of their achievements, Aisha says, was visiting primary and secondary schools in all three districts and offer training to girls on all key subject matters to help them unleash their full potential. She added that Msichana café was also able to reach the community around the three cafes for the same mission. The team leader visited community areas including dispensaries an even markets; and helped them to come out of cocoons; make appearances and seize opportunities to talk at public gatherings and meetings organized by the government.

# SPEECH BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR

**TABORA REGIONAL COMMISSIONER**  
– Aggrey Mwanri



Hon. Aggrey Mwanri. He began his speech by thanking Msichana Initiative and its partners (he mentioned all of them by their organization name) for choosing Tabora as a host for Ajenda ya Msichana Forum 2019.

“What Msichana Initiative is doing to our region (Tabora) is basically reminding members of community, government leaders and all girls to take a step further in recognizing the right path to a bright future,” said Aggrey Mwanri.

He said families have a greater role to play in raising up a girl child, adding that if a family has not planned for her future, it is more likely that some bad elements in society will take advantage of that and spoil her entire life.



He told the Forum that when parents are raising children, they should emphasize to them the four major areas vital for bringing up responsible children namely, family, engagement in sports, schools and the community where they need to be firmly rooted.

Mr. Mwanri told the Forum that he will continue with his campaign “to lock up” all family members who will attempt to marry off any girl under 18 years of age. He is popularly known as a “no-nonsense” man and his campaign of arrest, throw in remand - sukuma ndani - has been reported as a success in Tabora region. According to him, his campaign bore fruit because most of the men knew he meant what he said and no one wanted to risk.

“

I will not stop here. If any man tries to marry a teenager, I will round up everyone in that family and take them to police custody; whether one is a school teacher who knew about the marriage and chose not to speak about it; a chairperson of a school board or even headteacher - throw in,” he thundered.

”



# RELIGIOUS LEADERS

## CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF TANZANIA SECRETARY

- Reverend Elias Mbagata



Reverend Elias Mbagata is a Christian Council of Tanzania Secretary in Tabora Urban district. He is well known for his firm expressions on women and children protection advocacy.

Speaking at Ajenda ya Msichana 2019 Forum, Rev. Elias said the Marriage Act of 1971 Act violates girls' fundamental rights to equality, dignity and access to education and contravenes Tanzania's law of the Child Act of 2016.

He said the best marriage is where the girl concedes the union physically, mentally and psychologically; adding that at the age of 14,15,16 or 17 that person would not understand what she is about to experience in her life.

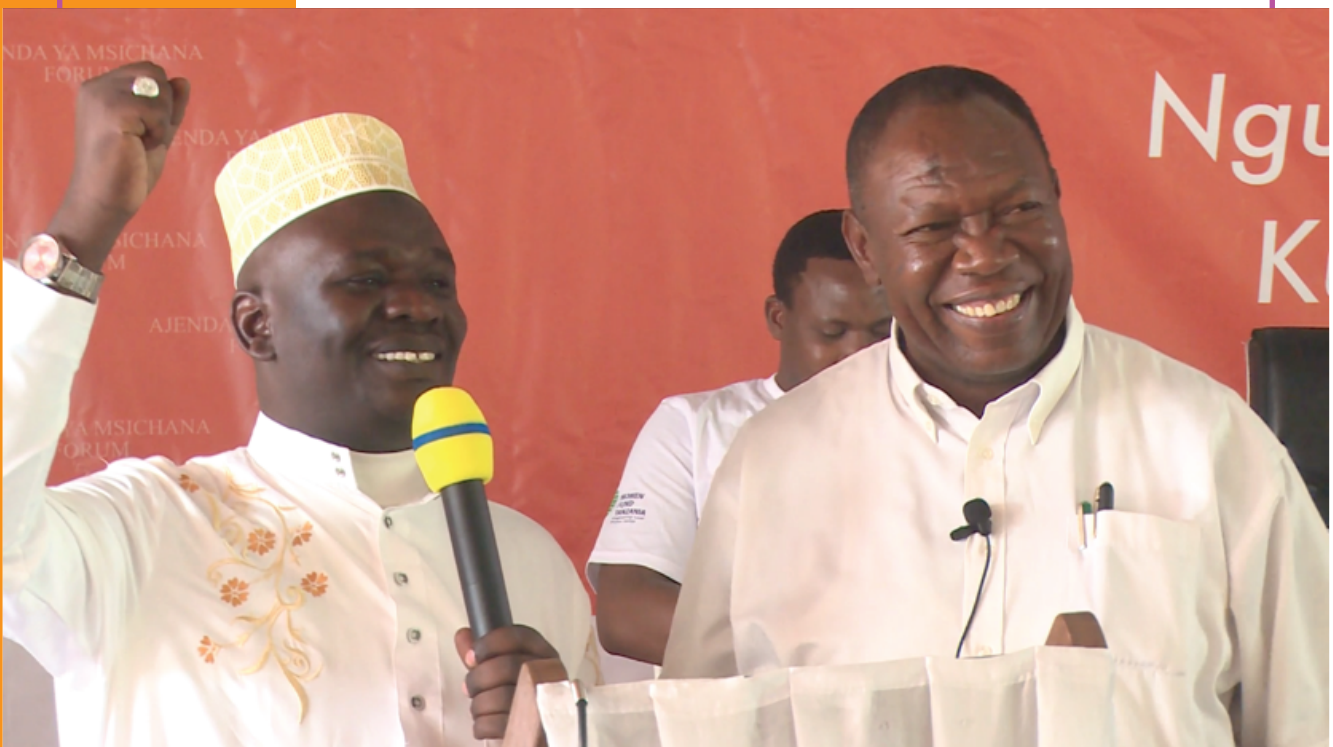
Rev. Mbagata said in 2017 he twice refused to allow young girls to tie not with adults; he instead asked the parents of both girls and boys to take their children back to school.

That was not without cost, he remembers; “I was humiliated, harassed by concerned families, but I stood firm regardless of the fact that I lost some worshipers” he narrated and remembers that in one incident, dowry that had already been accepted, had to be refunded and both kids got back to school.

He congratulated Msichana Initiative’s efforts to stand up firm for girls’ rights and urged media houses to give priority to gender violence stories as opposed to political news.

## SHEIKH OF TABORA MOSQUE

– Ibrahim Mavumbi



Sheikh Ibrahim Mavumbi, had a brief and straightforward message. He said, girls’ rights must be respected by parents and for those who tend to ignore them must change now. “If you have been blessed by Allah to have children, treat them equally regardless of their gender. All children deserve better education and not to be married off while they are still young. Marriage can wait, please let us not destroy these children’s

# PANEL DISCUSSIONS



There was one panel discussion during Ajenda ya Msichana 2019 Forum, which amplified two questions:

## 01.

Why do we need girl power and how can a girl unleash her potential to end gender violence?

## 02.

What approaches should be used to empower girls against gender violence; where are remarkable examples to emulate?

- Responding to a question posed by Lineth on What approaches should be used to empower girls against gender violence; where are remarkable examples to emulate; the acting REO said, the key solution is education. "If a girl is educated, that education will act as a shield to her life. That is the reason since 2016 the government of Tanzania has been offering free primary and secondary education.

Ms. Gaudensia added that they have also introduced counseling to girls at schools



- At regional level officials have been enthused to set aside budgets for construction of girls' dormitories. Walking long distances to and from school makes a girl vulnerable and renders her a victim of human predators - with wild seductions of free ride, free food and even rape.

- Replying to the same question Khadija said 'determination and focus' in everything that a girl does will help to minimize chances of anyone taking away her rights. She added that so far what has been ending girls' dream is misguided desire to "have everything" at an early age.

- On his part Rev. Elias Mbagata said gender equality commences at family level. "Traditional culture has also played a huge role in causing gender violence in the society," he said. The Rev said in some homes a girl child is treated with lesser attention - just of secondary level; while a boy is given all the attention of a superclass.

He said "this must stop. Treat all children equally." He commended Msichana Initiative for empowering girls to be able to stand for their rights; but "at the end of the day, it begins with you (girl) to protect yourself."

- Ms. Gaudensia also blamed some family members who 'put too much load on a girl when she comes back from school'; by so doing, she says, girl's time to study is taken away.

- Doris Audax from Msichana Cafe enumerates what she called "key challenges facing girls." These, she said, were internal force which comprised self care; self confidence and knowing what exactly what one wants to achieve in life and how to go about it; external force(s) bad laws and unmannered man.

# CLOSING REMARKS

## PARTNERSHIP & RESOURCE MOBILISATION OFFICER AT MSICHANA INITIATIVE ORGANIZATION

- Ms. Karen Paul



The closing remarks were delivered by Ms. Karen Paul, (?) from Msichana Initiative. She thanked all the invited guests, including girls from different schools and places, for attending the event and raising their voices to demand protection of girls and their rights; especially the right to education. She expressed gratitude to all Msichana Initiative partners for supporting the Ajenda ya Msichana Forum and added, “We will notify you which is our next host region for Ajenda ya Msichana 2020.”





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