

**CONSEQUENCES OF BEGGING AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS OF  
BEGGARS TO STOP BEGGING LIFE IN CENTRAL TANZANIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined consequences of begging and future aspirations of beggars to stop begging life in Central Tanzania. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 220 respondents composed of 130 beggars, non-beggars; 60 members of the focus group discussions and 30 key informants. Mixed methods and tools of data collection involving quantitative and qualitative approaches were used for data collection. Simple descriptive statistics were used for analyzing the data. The realized consequences of street begging were abusive languages from the public, harassments from municipal officials and police, harassment from fellow beggars, sun burn and cold during the nights, and sexual abuse were reported. Future aspirations of beggars in order to get rid of begging were getting capital to start small businesses, getting care giver for themselves and their children, getting employment and getting accommodation. Counseling approach was recommended to help street beggars so as they may become assertive and hence become assets instead of liabilities to their families and society at large.*

**Keywords:** Street begging, consequences, future aspirations, begging life, beggars

**1.0 Introduction**

Begging in the streets of urban areas is one of the age-long activities and perhaps occupations of the highly vulnerable, poverty-ridden individuals in the society of both developed and developing countries. Although the problem of begging is a worldwide phenomenon, it is more pronounced in developing countries (Jelili, 2013; Namwata *et al.*, 2012). Wikipedia (2010) and Mortimer (2005) defined street begging as asking for money, food, shelter or other things from people they encounter by request without an exchange of service in a public place. Olawale (2007) regarded alms begging as the habit of a beggar soliciting for favour from passers-by for survival and enrichment. Many authors (Namwata *et al.*, 2012; Demewozu, 2005; and Demewozu, 2003) have argued that the beggary problem has a lot to do with the country's socio-economic and historical aspects characterized by low incomes, high unemployment rates, fast rising cost of living, high rates of population growth, inappropriate public policies, continued rural-urban migration and displacement of mass human beings to the city. Thus, the cardinal reasons for most of the different vulnerable categories of beggars to earn a meager living on the streets, churchyards and other collective quarters of the city is poverty precipitated by different factors and events. The beggars, as impoverished underclass, presently find themselves in multifaceted and extreme impoverishments which can generally be characterized by chronic food shortage and insecurity, illiteracy, homelessness or poor housing often on unsuitable land, disease, in sanitary living conditions, death and above all marginalization and exclusion.

According to Lynch (2005), an average of ten people is likely to beg daily. Qudiz, 2005 cited in Gloria and Samuel (2012) noted that an estimated 850 million people are hungry while 2 billion suffer from mineral or protein deficiencies. In view of this, it was projected that by the year 2030, there will be food-related tensions, with the most vulnerable countries being Near and Middle East, the Maghreb, the Nile Valley, West African and sub-Saharan Africa. Wolf (2005) cited in Gloria and Samuel (2012) reported that people, who beg, do so in order to meet subsistence needs and adequate nutritional needs as their major reasons for begging for alms.

Mortimer (2005) asserts that the consequences of begging include sexual harassment of female beggars, being driven from one location to another, exposure to raw weather, fear of being captured for sacrifice are reported by the subject themselves. Eyo, Usoro and Usoro (2007) cited

in Yusuf *et al.* (2012) viewed street begging as a national malady that eats into the fabrics of social, economic, religious, political and educational structures. This results to sexual assault by the prospective male benefactor, misfortune of being knocked down by passing vehicles, depreciation of societal image, disorderliness and stigma against the nation's social and economic systems. More importantly in Tanzania, researches on street begging are very limited and even when available are not comprehensive To date, little is known about consequences of begging and future aspirations of street beggars to stop begging life in Central Tanzania. Hence undertaking a study in this area was inevitable..

## **2.0 Study Area and Methodology**

This paper is an outcome of the research that was conducted in Dodoma and Singida Municipalities in Central Tanzania. From a biophysical perspective, Central Tanzania is a semi-arid area associated not only with low and erratic rainfall but also with poor soils and degraded environments in many areas. On the socio-economic front, large portions of semi-arid areas have minimal infrastructure, which impedes people's access to markets, health and educational facilities and safe water resources. This situation subjects people to poverty and in turn can lead them to adopt alternative strategies for survival including street begging. Although poverty is said to be less acute in the urban areas of Tanzania, it is still a serious problem, especially in urban areas other than Dar es Salaam. The highest incidences of poverty in Tanzania are found in the regions of Rukwa, Kigoma, Dodoma, Mtwara, and Singida. These regions are either remote (Rukwa, Kigoma and Mtwara), semi-arid (Dodoma and Singida), or both (Morris *et al.*, 2001).

In regard to the above, these municipalities were selected purposely for the research because they are the largest urban areas in Central Tanzania and hence attract street begging as livelihood strategies. This may be indicating the fact that: the more urban a town or city the higher the potential beggars attracted to or generated by it, all things being equal. The planning implication of this is that as more urban centres spring up while the existing ones grow bigger there needs to be adequate urban development management strategies capable of accommodating the negative implications of street begging. However, begging is a culture more accommodated in the central part of the country as compared to other parties of the country.

A cross-sectional research design was employed in this study. The population of study comprised all street beggars in Dodoma and Singida municipalities in Central Tanzania. The researchers concentrated on public places like bus stops, restaurants, banks, shops, railway stations, markets places and religious places such as mosques and churches to locate the beggars. Though finding beggars in urban areas of Central Tanzania is very easy, getting their consent for giving interviews was quite a hard task. Also, they were hardly found fixed to a certain locality for considerable length of time. Some frequently kept on shifting from their place of residence. In this scenario, developing a sample frame found to be a difficult task to researchers. Therefore, the researchers chose to employ a convenience sampling method. Berg (2001) noted that convenience sample is sometimes referred to as an accidental or availability sample. This category of sample relies on available subjects – those who are close at hand or easily accessible. The researchers interacted with street beggars, with whom they came across in the field or public spaces and who expressed their willingness to provide information.

On the basis of the above situation, the researchers managed to administer questionnaires to 130 street beggars in which 80 were selected from Dodoma Municipality and 50 were selected from Singida Municipality. In order to supplement data collected from the beggars met by researchers, data were also collected from purposive selected 60 members of the focus group discussions and 30 key informants. In total, data for this study were collected from a total sample size of 220 respondents. The researchers further used observation and documentary review techniques in order to supplement information collected from other data collection instruments.

The quality of data was maintained through careful design; translation, and retranslation, and pretest of the questionnaire, proper training of the enumerators and close supervision of the data collecting procedures; proper categorization and coding of the data were also done. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately so that they could complement and supplement each other. The quantitative data was entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 in which simple descriptive statistics were carried out. Qualitative data from observations, FGDs and interviews with key informants were analyzed through thematic

analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed by arranging them in the general categories identified in the discussion guide. Various opinions were assessed and summarized so that the degree of consensus or differences were expressed by the groups and synthesized by the themes or patterns that emerged.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Extent of the Consequences of Street Begging among Street Beggars

This study established the extent of the consequences of street begging among beggars as shown in Table 1. This was confirmed by 69.2% of beggars in both Singida and Dodoma Municipalities. About 76% from Dodoma Municipality indicated to have faced with problems in begging activities as opposed to 58% from Singida Municipality.

**Table 1: Extent of the Consequences of Street Begging among Street Beggars**

Have ever faced consequences of begging?	Municipality		Total
	Dodoma	Singida	
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Yes	76.3(61)	58 (29)	69.2(90)
No	23.7(19)	42 (21)	30.8(40)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (80)</b>	<b>100(50)</b>	<b>100(130)</b>

#### 3.2 Types of Consequences of Street Begging among Street Beggars

Table 2 presents types of consequences of street begging. The study revealed that in terms of the consequences of begging, the most significant was abusive languages from the public which accounted for 48.5% from all sampled beggars in which 61.3% and 28% were from Dodoma and Singida respectively. One beggar remarked that they normally experience aggressive and abusive responses from the passers-by, even though this situation may not discourage them from begging activities. Such languages include go away from here (*ondoka hapa*) and go away from here you lazy (*ondoka hapa wewe mvivu*) just to let us go away from passers-by.

**Table 2: Consequences of Street Begging among Street Beggars**

Consequences of begging	Municipality		Total
	Dodoma	Singida	
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Abusive languages from members of the public	61.3 (49)	28 (14)	48.5 (63)
Harassments from municipal officials and police	3.8 (3)	12 (6)	7 (9)
Harassment from fellow beggars	7.5 (6)	12 (6)	9.2(12)
Sun burn	1.3 (1)	2 (1)	1.5 (2)
Cold during the nights	0	2 (1)	0.8 (1)
Diseases such as Malaria	0	4 (2)	1.5 (2)
Sexual abuse such as rape cases	2.6 (2)	0	1.5 (2)

Harassment from fellow beggars was mentioned by 9.2% of all sampled beggars where it accounted for 7.5% and 12 % in Dodoma and Singida Municipalities respectively. It was observed that some beggars especially the blind and crippled have permanent locations to sit when begging. It was further reported that t in some instances there clashes between and among beggars in the study areas. This was confirmed by one Indian trader in Dodoma who was quoted saying that: *“I always mediate clashes between that old man outside there when other beggars come and try to sit on that veranda. The old man has dominated that place; he does not allow anyone to beg from there. What I usually do is to give alms to the intruding beggar to leave the place. It happens constantly”*.

Harassment from from municipal officials and police was mentioned by 7% of all sampled beggars where it accounted for 3.8% and 12 % in Dodoma and Singida Municipalities respectively. These findings are supported by a handful studies (Adedibu and Jelili, 2011; Okoli, 2009; Ojo, 2005) who report that some governments in Africa have made efforts to tackle the problem of begging by forceful evacuation of the beggars from the urban area than they re-appear. This is because the forceful evacuation only shifts or re-distributes the begging activity among urban areas, but never addresses the reasons why they decide to resort to begging and most importantly, what to be done to get them leave the street. On the other hand, Gloria and Samuel (2012) argued that in countries where begging has been banned, beggars risk

imprisonment for a year, for first offenders or two years for a second or subsequent offence. Many are also victims of police torture and brutality, particularly those who are tagged as rough sleeps.

Sexual abuse was mentioned only by 2.6% of street beggars from Dodoma municipality. According to Gloria and Samuel (2012), the dangers of sexual abuse are that some of them have been identified as victims of HIV/AIDS. The chances of contracting AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases are much higher for this set of people. The implication is that those in this begging business are at risk. Since woman and young girls are the most vulnerable, chances are that they end up with unplanned pregnancies, as seen in the case of most female beggars in Nigeria.

Harsh weather conditions including sun burn and colds during nights (Table 2) have been causing illness to most street beggars in both Dodoma and Singida Municipalities. Some beggars remarked that there is no doubt that the unhealthy urban environment in which these beggars live is a major cause of health problems among them. Illness beggars had suffered while begging on the streets include malaria, diarrhea, coughing and other respiratory diseases. Adaramaja and Adegbite (2005) as cited by Gloria and Samuel (2012) were of the view that, obviously, adverse weather conditions are unfavorable and associated with airborne diseases, including flu, cough, only to mention a few. Unhealthy lifestyles or behaviour might have direct or indirect consequences in the health and well being of individual causing restlessness, accidents, and untimely deaths among others.

### **3.3 Plans of Street Beggars to Stop Begging Life**

Even though beggars had feelings that begging life was very bad and immoral conduct but many of them still had the view to continue with begging life due to lack of aspiration for self. The results in Table 3 show that of all sampled street beggars, 88.5% would like to stop begging life in the future while 11.5% would like to continue with begging life.

**Table 3: Plans to Stop Begging Life among Street Beggars**

<b>Plans to stop begging life</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Total</b>
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	<b>Dodoma (n=80)</b>	<b>Singida (n=50)</b>	<b>(n=130)</b>
	<b>%(N)</b>	<b>% (N)</b>	<b>% (N)</b>
Yes	91.2 (73)	84 (42)	88.5 (115)
No	8.8 (7)	16 (8)	11.5 (15)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (80)</b>	<b>100 (50)</b>	<b>100 (130)</b>

FGDs revealed that most of the beggars still preferred to continue with begging life in order to meet all of their basic needs since they were jobless and begging was the only option to resort into. One beggar was quoted saying that: *“First it is justice to note that, begging is hard, heavy and difficulty job. It is hard job because I have to stay on the sun for the whole day, it is heavy because income is very low, sometimes within one hour I get only one hundred shilling, and it is difficult because some people abuse me and humiliate me because of being beggar. However, because I am a blind person I didn’t go to school and employment for blind people is almost unavailable, and I do not have capital and there are no plans from the government to assist blind people like me, I do not have alternative, I have to beg. I will only stop begging when I get enough capital to invest in shop business”*.

### **3.4 Future Aspirations of Street Beggars to Stop Begging Activities**

The findings in Table 4 reveal that most street beggars had future aspirations to stop begging activities though their aspirations vary across the study municipalities.

**Table 4: Future Aspirations of Street Beggars to Stop Begging Activities**

<b>Future Aspirations to Stop Begging Activities</b>	<b>Municipality</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>Dodoma (n=73)</b>	<b>Singida (n=42)</b>	<b>(n=115)</b>
	<b>%(N)</b>	<b>% (N)</b>	<b>% (N)</b>
If I get job	1.4 (1)	4.8 (2)	2.6 (3)
If I get someone to take care of me	13.7 (10)	54.8 (23)	28.7 (33)
If I get someone to take care of my child	Nil	9.5 (4)	3.5 (4)
If I get capital for doing business	82.2 (60)	23.8 (10)	60.9 (70)
If I get where to live or to be accommodated	2.7 (2)	7.1 (3)	4.3 (5)



In this respect, with the exception of the very old and those with incurable diseases and disabilities who were incapable of working, most of all sampled beggars would like to work even if the income from working might not be as good as that from begging. As such, there were those who thought of going back to their homes to involve themselves in some other activities if they had capital to start small businesses (60.9%), those who wished to have care givers accounted for (28.7%), getting a care giver for their children (3.5), getting places to live or get accommodation (4.3%) and getting employment (2.6%). FGDs revealed that at individual level, street beggars problems were multiple, diffused and ambiguous. However, many of beggars were not certainly without vision and had dreams of good and prosperous life. They believed that their present situation was temporal and could be improved if they were given the opportunity to release themselves from the drudgery of begging life. Likewise, members of the FGDs were of the view that in order to get rid of begging life, sustainable efforts of beggars themselves, the general public, government and other stakeholders need to be merged to curb begging behavior. As it was expressed by one FGD member in Dodoma “I heard of TASAF<sup>1</sup> helping the poorest families, who are those if not beggars? I would urge TASAF to begin with beggars and other poorer will be next”

Demewozu (2003) and Demewozu (2005) argued that despite their future aspirations, the beggars are bestowed with all sorts of multidimensional impoverishment. To these ends, destitute beggars, being extremely poor and socio-economically disadvantaged groups, they seem to be relatively deprived of participation and interaction from the different spheres of the larger society heavily restricted to and limited by their own habitat or the social milieu, in which they are surviving by themselves. In their findings, Gloria and Samuel (2012) were of the view that the most important economic psychosocial needs of the respondents as money, learning a trade, healthcare, and accommodation. These factors remain important predictors of good living and are germane to human existence and are necessary for beggars who were observed to have suffered abuse neglect and abandonment in the society.

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<sup>1</sup> TASAF refers to Tanzania Social Action Fund

#### **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were reached. The results showed that more than half of the street beggars indicated to have faced with consequences of begging. The realized consequences of street begging were abusive languages from the public, harassments from municipal officials and police, harassment from fellow beggars, sun burn and cold during the nights and sexual abuse. The study further revealed the most important livelihood needs of beggars were getting capital to start small businesses, getting care giver, getting employment and getting accommodation. The most effective approach to solving the issue to street begging is through counseling. It is a process of helping beggars to engage in better choices in order to have future plans and aspirations to get rid off begging life. Counseling can also help beggars to be assertive and in the process become assets instead of liabilities to their families and society at large. In this case, counselors can apply their skills in vocational, educational-social counseling will enable beggars to explore alternative ways off utilizing their acquired skills. This in turn will make them realize the consequences of street begging. Likewise, the local and central governments must support beggars by integrated methods, based not only on prohibition, but also on a range of job offers and on counseling street beggars to find ways of getting out of their difficult situation.

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