The stories, ethics and politics of research with marginalised girls living and working on the streets of Nairobi

University of Brighton, ChildHope, Pendekezo Letu, ODI
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Overseas Development Institute: David Walker
Structure of talk/discussion

- Introduction to research in Kenya with street connected children
- Methodology including safety and ethical framework
- Ethical dilemmas
- Reflections and discussion about these dilemmas
- Some concluding thoughts
Aims of the Research:

1. To generate new knowledge and evidence on how to improve the lives of street-connected girls in Nairobi.

2. To share best practice on social protection interventions including rehabilitation and reintegration that address the rights of street-connected girls.
Framework for the Research

- Starting from the perspectives of young marginalised girls in Nairobi – recognising children as active participants post UNCRC (e.g. Ennew 1994) whilst recognising their vulnerability (Mizzen and Ofosu-kusi 2013)

- Understanding intergenerational cultural transmissions (Mead 1970) and intergenerational transmission of poverty (Moncrieffe 2009)

- Applying a wellbeing lens to intergenerational transmissions (Sumner et al. 2009) – identifying subjective indicators of wellbeing with girls and their mothers

- Exploring concepts of participatory space/ mobility (Cornwall 2004, Kesby 2007, Murray and Robertson forthcoming)
Objectives of the Research

1. To understand what factors lead to children becoming street-connected.

2. To identify the physical, emotional and social effects on children living and working on the street.

3. To assess social protection interventions that can help street connected girls achieve positive futures.

4. To find out how street-connected children can participate more meaningfully in social protection and child protection policies.
Methodology

- Participatory Action Research/Best interest of the child
- Child-centered using change scape theory
  - Perspectives of street connected girls are central – their understanding, identities, inclusion and ideas
  - Working with peers and siblings, parents and guardians and adults in the community
  - Influencing cultural and policy context for long term sustainability
  - Children are affected by their context but as active participants can inform interventions, they are given a safe space and listened to
  - Takes into account children growing up and changing contexts over time
- Case studies of street-connected girls and their siblings/peers and parents/guardians, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, reference groups with policy makers.
- Safety and ethical frameworks, teams of researchers and Social Workers
Summary of participants

- 213 street connected girls: 90 in Phase 1; 123 in Phase 2 and 3 were spoken to in focus group discussions
- Of these 48 were followed up as detailed case studies across 6 key informal settlement/slum areas – also interviewing parents and siblings/peers. One third were beneficiaries of the Pendekezo Letu programme; one third had dropped out of the programme and school; and one third had no intervention.
- 20 key informants identified by the children across the different areas, including: Local Police Officers; Head-teachers; Village Elders; Chiefs; Probation Officers; Voluntary Children’s Officer; Community Children Protection Structure members; Aid Workers
### Summary of data collected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No of cases studies collected (children)</th>
<th>Focus Group Discussions</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supported by PKL</td>
<td>Dropped out of PKL</td>
<td>Non-Supported at all</td>
<td>FDG B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiandutu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 (Case study children) and 3 (siblings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korogocho</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7 case study children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathare</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 case study children*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandora/Kayole</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 case study children and 2 siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majengo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 case study children and 3 siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32 (24 case study children and 8 siblings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods used for Case Studies and FGD’s:

- Community mapping to identify safe and unsafe areas
- Rivers / road of Life to understand journeys to the street
- Trees to identify root causes, support and children’s solutions to living and working on the street
- Photo narratives to express feelings and emotions about sensitive issues
- Network diagrams to understand support systems and services accessed
- Matrices to assess support and services, and identify gaps
- Mood lines to understand poverty/wellbeing
MATENGO, our farm

73.

KIBERA 68.

12 years was at home but attending school.
13 years move to the street.
16 years lost my dad.
17 years went back to school.
also lost my brother.
Kibera via na aunt
18 years about to finish my course

10 years: home

15 years: home

16 years: home

17 years: home

18 years: home

Mumburu:<br>Entrance gate
Challenges

- Delay in Funding
- Political Situation in Kenya
- Evidence/ Data from Phase 1
- Change in Staff in Kenya
- Time Limitations for Partners
- Dangers in fieldwork areas
- Situations of abuse needing counselling
1. Co-construction with partners/ Funding requirements

2. Team composition, capacity and support

3. Working with marginalised street connected children/ team safety

4. Data analysis of large qualitative data sets – team/ remote

5. Presentation of street connected children as vulnerable and/ or agents of change

6. Impact for children/ scaling up and longer term sustainability of interventions
The aims of the research are: **To assess social protection interventions including rehabilitation and integration of street connected girls into education to help them to achieve positive futures.**

Specific research questions associated with this aim were as follows:

- What are the life histories, pathways onto the streets and education trajectories for girls?

- What are the pathways of street connected girls from the streets and into education? And what causes girls to drop out of school?

- How have the rehabilitation and reintegration interventions of PKL helped vulnerable girls to access education and sustain an educational path that is relevant to their lives? How can PKL interventions be improved, replicated and inform broader policy and practice in Nairobi?

- What strategies and policies have been available to them for their own protection and to help them to realise their right to education?
Ethical Dilemmas

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**Phase 1**

Developing the framework

Analysing data to develop subjective indicators of wellbeing

The story so far: using Phase 1 research

Planning the reference group and research uptake
Phase 2
Jan – March 2015

Training researchers - 5 staff/social workers and 10 university students

Co-constructing methodology and piloting methods

Life histories and participatory research girls and families

Enabling environment framework/Reference Group
Phase 3
Mid March – May 2015

Analysis with team of researchers
(4-12\textsuperscript{th} March).

Reference Group - implications for policy and practice

Report and research uptake
Ethical Dilemmas

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Ensuring personal safety for team members and children

Providing clear introduction

Managing expectations

Confidentiality, coding and informed consent

Be friendly, fun, positive body language, speak KiSwahili

Best Interest of the Child & Child Protection

Conclude with message of hope, feedback, next steps

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**Ethical and Safely Framework**
Ethical Dilemmas

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The teams identify visuals and quotes from case studies, FGD’s, key informants - evidence to inform key themes.

Groups reviewed case studies and coding to prioritize key problems/solutions for street-connected girls in different slums in Nairobi.
Key themes and case studies

Key themes arising from objectives 1:
- Child abuse: sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, parental neglect, child labour (also a separate theme), strict/harsh parents, domestic violence (and how this affects the child).
- Parental negligence and irresponsibility: dependency syndrome, don’t want to work, poor parenting, rejection of children from birth (neglect).
- Dysfunctional families: domestic violence, separation of parents, orphaned children.
- Alcoholism and drug abuse (of parents): negative effects on children.
- High prevalence of HIV & other terminal illnesses.
- Female parents (the cultural perception of rejection).
- Discrimination: against children who are orphaned/living on the streets.
- Under discrimination of parents towards children (boys are usually cared for by parents and treated differently), discrimination of stepchildren.
- Economic pressure & influence: negative influence.
- Poverty: Financial, lack of food, shelter & clothes.
- Absentive teachers: children going to the streets because of abuse at school.
- Factors to the street:
  - Prostitution.
  - Child labour: dumpsites, crap metals, drug trafficking.

Follow up and discussion:
- Child headed families (are there many child headed households)?
- Girls involved in trafficking/crime.
- Accessibility of free primary school for children (parent’s cannot afford school fees).

Key themes arising from objectives 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that happen on the street</th>
<th>Result/impact on the child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug addiction</td>
<td>Child prostitution/sexual exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death (from mob violence)</td>
<td>Vulnerability to HIV and STI’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>Early pregnancy and early marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child prostitution/sexual exploitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability to HIV and STI’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Early pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early marriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stigma and sense of belonging:
- Trauma from stigma.
- Withdrawal/isolation due to stigmatisation.
- Helplessness and despair.
- Social exclusion - rejected by community; treated as if they do not have rights.
- Delinquency.

Illiteracy:
- Homelessness.
- Street families.
- Child prostitution/sexual exploitation.
- Vulnerability to HIV and STI’s.
- Early pregnancy.
- Early marriage.
Ethical Dilemmas

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Exemplary Case studies: supported Pendekezo Letu
Exemplary case studies: dropped out of school
Exemplary Case studies: no intervention
Key findings by area

- **Korogocho**: Poverty (lack of food), child labour, school drop-out due to abusive teachers and school fees, dysfunctional families, stigma and discrimination – particularly a sense of belonging.

- **Mathare**: Dysfunctional families and orphans moving from house to house, poverty, child labour, violence from officials and hopelessness & despair.

- **Kayole/Dandora**: Child labour, abuse and prostitution, drug trafficking, dysfunctional families - sexual abuse and negligence, violence from police & city council, violence from peers & gangs on the dumpsite, homelessness.

- **Majengo**: Dysfunctional families, alcoholism and drug abuse, physical abuse, young men living with older women, inadequate access to healthcare.

- **Kibera**: Discrimination from community members and within families, particularly of step children, physical danger from new road.

- **Kiandutu/Withithe**: Physical abuse, sexual abuse, prostitution, child labour (with mothers), dysfunction families including domestic violence and harsh parenting
Marginalized Girls - Poverty / Location / Child Labour

Vulnerability → Increasing Risk

- Poverty
- Low access to services
- Lack of basic needs

- Street families girls working with mothers
- Child labour combined with lack of education
- HIV&AIDS child carers

- Dysfunctional families
- Abuse
- Substance abuse
- Criminal activity
- Prostitution
- Orphans

Community based Interventions → Rehabilitation/ Separate Spaces/ Re-integration into Families and school → Criminal justice/ Family counseling Integration

Unintentional Harm → Intentional Harm

Participation / Provision / Protection
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Action plans
Messages on Ethics/ Praxis

- Safety and ethical framework continually updated and adhered to including social workers on the team supporting the young researchers and the participants in the research.

- Capacity building approach in which team co-constructs conceptual framework can lead to local organisation continuing to use creative methodologies to understand lives of street connected girls and to evaluate impact of intervention.

- Research has led to Pendekezo Letu considering new ways of looking at girls as agents of change as well as understanding vulnerability of street connected girls and their families to design a broader range of strategies for social protection – how present agency/ vulnerability?

- Including key Nairobi wide decision and policy makers in reference group may lead to more lasting change in approaches to working with street connected girls.
References


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