

Street Trading, Street-Connected People, in the City of Kigali: Problems and Practical Solutions



Introduction

This poster reports the analysis done by IPAR Rwanda to provide a greater understanding of the incidence and persistence of street-connected children and young people, street trading, begging, on-street prostitution and delinquency on the streets of the City of Kigali and how to meet the welfare needs of those that engage in these activities.

The research was qualitative and included: a review of the literature on street workers in Kigali; a search for systematic reviews of research relevant to making alternative livelihood options available for street workers; key informant interviews; and focus group discussions and structured interviews with an opportunity sample of street vendors, beggars and on-street prostitutes.

The numbers of street-connected people living in the City of Kigali (CoK), (street-connected children and beggars and those earning their livelihood by street trading and on-street prostitution), are unknown and probably unknowable. It is difficult to define street-connected workers because there is no clear boundary between them and other people living on the margins and because they are a shifting and moving population

The methodology used to conduct this study included mixed methods research including key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and structured interviews with street-connected children and young people, beggars, street traders and prostitutes. The sample was opportunistic; we found participants for the FGDs and respondents for the structured interviews by visiting locations where street-connected children and young people and street traders are known to be found. For the prostitutes, we used our contacts from previous research projects and local leaders. Although the findings cannot be generalised to the population with precision the consistency of our findings suggest that they are credible. In total we interviewed nine KIIs, ran 21 FGDs and two groups interviews (a total of 189 participants) and interviewed 666 street-connected men women and children (203 street traders, 270 female prostitutes, 156 street-connected children and young people and 37 adult beggars

Characteristics of street connected people

Their population is difficult to define

There is no sharp dividing line between street connected children and young people or children

Its difficult to differentiate these groups (many engage in more than one of these activities (prostitution, street trading)

They may use earnings from one other to supplement income sources

Underlying common factors

Push factors are much the same across the groups frequently mentioned are;

- Poverty
- Family conflicts/breakdowns/abuse
- No way of making a living in place of origin

Pull factors

Image of CoK as a place where the rich live, a place you can become rich/an expectation of a better life

Understanding the problem

- It is a complex issue and has no easy solutions
- It is a social problem
- It is persistent constantly recreated
- There are no quick fix or easy solutions
- It involves a shifting population
- Those seen as the problem see themselves as 'having problems'
- Life on the street is one of desperation NOT choice
- Research can help stakeholders to develop shared understanding of the problem

Findings

- A majority are migrants looking to make a better life in the city.
- The main drivers' are poverty, abuse and lack of opportunities for employment.
- Generally poorly educated and without financial or social capital few options open to them
- The children and young people try to survive by doing odd jobs
- A majority are struggling to survive, are living in extreme poverty, frequently going hungry and lacking access to medical care.
- Few have even heard of projects or programmes that help street-connected
- Many are homeless although some is hidden homelessness; they do not sleep on the streets but they do not have a home of their own

It should be noted;

- The problem of street-connected people requires a multi agency approach in the proposal of strategies
- Street-connected people need to be continually empowered so that they can improve their daily lives and need more support from the Government and development partners to develop themselves
- While there is no evidence that street-connected men, women and children pose a security threat at this time, but this needs to be taken seriously as it can worsen in the future the main cause of men, women and children migrating to CoK is poverty and lack of employment opportunities in their own communities.
- Deterring the people from migrating to CoK requires that more employment opportunities are offered and created across the country. There is a need to speed up the development of secondary cities.

Recommendations

1. The problem of street-connected men women and children is a problem for Rwanda and not just the CoK. Therefore, this will require a **multi agency approach** in the proposal of strategies
2. Street-connected men, women and children should continue being empowered so that they can improve their daily lives and street workers need more support from the government and development partners to develop themselves;
3. While there is no evidence that street-connected men, women and children pose a security threat at this time, but this needs to be taken seriously as it can worsen in the future the main cause of men, women and children migrating to City of Kigali (COK) is poverty and lack of employment opportunities in their own communities.
4. Deterring people from migrating to CoK requires that more employment opportunities are offered and created across the country especially in rural areas and the poorer districts. There is, therefore, a need to speed up the development of secondary cities.
5. The VUP initiative needs to be adapted to the conditions of City of Kigali such as in areas of public works (road construction , city cleaning, and the like).
6. Local administrative entities need to strengthen the on-going initiative of child care at the lowest administrative entities (Sector, cells, and villages).
7. Consideration should be given to providing drop in centres and informal educational provision for street-connected children and outreach workers to work with them on the streets;
8. More residential centres for street-connected children need to be established and operated based on best international practice
9. Local leaders should be sensitised on how to manage effectively street-children and support people in venturing in different options of job creation and income earning.
10. The selection of beneficiaries of different initiatives such as 'Agaseke' should be done systematically with clear guiding criteria to avoid any potential bias in identifying the beneficiaries.

➤ **Street connected children & young people need:** A holistic supportive approach (don't consider as homogenous group, different solutions for different groups. Recommend Prevention Repressive Rehabilitation

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