Resilience of Street Children to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse in Tanzanian Cities: Evidence from Unga Limited Ward in Arusha City

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Abstract: This paper contributes an understanding on the ways street children survive abuse, violence and exploitation in Tanzanian cities using Arusha city as a case study. Specifically, it aims at establishing the forms of violence, abuse and exploitation confronting street children in Arusha city one of the rapidly urbanizing cities in Tanzania. The paper identifies likely perpetrators of abuse and exploitation of street children and coping strategies used by street children in time of abuse, violence and exploitation. A total of 30 street children were sampled for this study. Data were collected using questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Data entry was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Findings shows non-contact sexual abuse which includes threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism and verbal sexual harassment as a common form of abuse to street children. Results reveal that the main perpetrators of abuse to street children are the street children themselves. Further, it is has been realised that the coping strategy for street children in time of abuse is endurance. This implies that children in cities do not report cases of abuse to respective authorities for help. It is recommended that, Government, NGOs and faith based organizations develop programmes with focus in dealing with street children’s psychosocial and behavioral problems to reduce incidences of abuse among street children themselves. Law enforcement organizations and other child protection duty bearers have to develop child friendly procedures to encourage children to report cases of abuse, violence and exploitation happening among themselves and outside actors.

Key Words: Resilience, Street Children, Violence, Exploitation, Abuse

1.0. Introduction

Homelessness is largely an urban phenomenon. Consequently, homeless children who are living on streets are found in every region of the world from developing countries to the most affluent countries (UNICEF, 1989; Raffael et al, 1993). Latin America, India and Africa, for example, are known for their large populations of street children (Scanlon et al, 1998). The HIV/AIDS epidemics, civil wars, falling economies and currencies in some parts of Africa are reported to have caused a surge in the number of street children (UNAIDS, 2006; Evans, 2002). Although the number of street children in the world is difficult to be exactly quantified, Consortium of Street Children (CSC), a United Kingdom based NGO and UNICEF estimated that 100 million children were living and growing up on urban streets around the world in 2002. Even though the above figure is usually commonly cited as an estimate of a number of street children, there are some doubts on whether it represents a clear picture. Similarly, it is debatable whether numbers of street children are growing globally, or whether it is the awareness of street children within societies that has grown (Evans, 2002).

Tanzanian cities have undergone rapid physical and economical changes in recent years that have altered the urban settings as well as lives of million people living on them (Lugalla and Kibassa, 2003). The impact of these changes is touching nearly everybody in cities, particularly the urban poor (Mvungi, 2002). One of the rising social problems linked with these changes is the remarkable increase in unsupervised children either living alone or working on urban streets (Nyoni, 2007). Various reports and authors suggest that the number of urban street children has increased rapidly during the last decade in Tanzania (Lugalla and Mwambo, 1999; Yamamoto, 1996, Nyoni, 2007). This problem is especially acute in big cities like Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Tanga, Mwanza and Mbeya (Nyoni, 2007; CSC, 2012) where the rates of urban population...
growth have been exploding amidst escalating and stern social and economic crisis. The rapid population growth has been associated with an increase in the number of children living alone on urban streets (Nyoni, 2007).

Since there is regular increase on number of street children, the basic question remain how do these children survive in streets and how do they cope with hard situation prevalent in streets? In Tanzanian context, streets are dangerous and unsafe areas commonly associated with violence, exploitation and abuse (Nyoni, 2007). WHO (1993) argue that children living in the streets are vulnerable to social and economic problems which may not be experienced by other children living at home. In general, life on the street exposes children to illness and diseases (Amury and Komba, 2010). Nevertheless, street children are considered by majority as hooligans, vagabonds and prone to commit crimes, as a result of this, they are easy target for harassment by law enforcement organizations (Nyoni, 2007; CSC, 2012). There are many cases of street children being beaten by police, detained and sometimes repatriated to their rural homes (CSC, 2012).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Description of the Study Area

The study was carried out in Unga limited Ward in city of Arusha. Unga limited is a slum area located in Arusha. The name of this area originated from one of the biggest wheat flour industry that is located in the area.

The area was selected for its history of violence. Violence and abuse are common events in Unga limited (Msongo, 2014). Largely, violence’s are organized in a group known as “Mabeto”. This group uses items such as knives, screw drivers, razors and numerous other equipments to commit various crimes such as burglary and theft (Msongo, 2014). Many members of the “Mabeto” group are street children (CSC, 2012).

Arusha city has a population of 416,442 people in which 199,524 are males and 216,918 are females; Unga limited Ward has a population of 17,342 people in which 8,497 are males and 8,845 are females (URT, 2013). The ward has average household size of 3.6 and a sex ratio of 96 (ibid).

2.2 Study Design, Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

This study opted to use case study design basing on the nature of the study objectives. The design used allows data to be collected at one point in time and produce data for explanation and determination of relationship between variables. Street children formed a sampling frame for this study.

A sample of 30 respondents was sampled to represent the entire population within an area. This sample size was considered suitable as the sample size of least 30 respondents selected at random is sensibly large in social science research studies to guarantee normal distribution of the sample mean (Maas and Joop, 2005 cited in Chingonikaya and Mzingula, 2014). Street children were first purposively chosen to constitute a sampling frame of 65 then a desired sample of 30 respondents was randomly selected from it.

2.3 Data Collection

In this study, both primary and secondary data were collected in which quantitative and qualitative methods were used in collecting qualitative and quantitative data respectively. In collecting primary data, a structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while qualitative data were collected by using semi-structured interviews and direct observations. Secondary data in this study was collected depositories of children protection records as well as relevant published documents.

2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were posted to SPSS for analysis. Data from open-handed questions and focus group discussion were analyzed through content analysis to determine associations, frequencies and trends.

3.0 Results and discussion

3.1 Forms of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse

This study reveals that forms of violence, exploitation and abuse that confronts street children in Unga limited are similar and consistent with reported incidences such as that of CSC(2012) and Nyoni (2007). Interview conducted to street children
themselves showed that violence and abuse range from incidences of beaten up or physically hurt, rape, encouraging children to behave in sexually explicit ways, physical sexual contact, non-contact sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The noted different incidences of violence, exploitation and abuse by this study conform to that of earlier studies which observed that violence, exploitation and abuse to children usually takes a variety of forms.

In all these forms, the study noted that incidences of non-contact sexual abuse, physical sexual contact and children being physically hurt or beaten up are commonly are common compared to other forms. It was established by this study the incidences constitute 90%, 80% and 80% respectively (Table 1). This finding is consistent with what was revealed by observation method. Observation made in the study area indicates that street children are victims of verbal sexual harassment and/or threatened sexual violence. It is common to find a young person (usually more than 18 years) also living in street threatening to sexually abuse a fellow street child (less than 18 years). In some cases adults working in the streets with children were observed doing sexual verbal harassment to children.

Incidences of encouraging children to behave in sexually explicit ways were noted to be rare in the study area. During the focus group discussion, participants mentioned that majority of the street children in the area are boys and thus cases of rape to underage girls are minimal.

Table 1: Forms of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse happening to Street Children (n=30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incidence of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-contact sexual abuse (threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism, verbal sexual harassment)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaten up or physically hurt (hit, slapped or punched with bare hands, hit with a belt/stick or other hard object)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sexual contact (unwilling touching of child’s private areas/genitals)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Exploitation (contexts and relationship)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where children receive ‘something’ as a result of performing and/or others performing on them, sexual activities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape (Forced sexual intercourse)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging children to behave in sexually explicit ways</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Frequency sum to greater than 30 and percentage sum is greater than 100 because a respondent can report multiple forms of violence, exploitation and abuse

3.2 Perpetrators of Abuse and Exploitation of Street Children

According to findings of this study, children living in streets are commonly abused by their strong peers and adults working with them. CSC (2014) also noted that many street children perpetuate abuse on their weaker peers. This study reveals that most cases of abuse, violence and exploitation to street children are initiated by another street child or adult. Findings indicates that 87% of street children were once abused or exploited by older boys living with them in the streets, while 67% experienced incidences of abuse, violence or exploitation from an adult living with them in the streets. Consistence with some of literatures (CSC, 2012; Msongo, 2014) this study noted 40% of the street children were harassed and abused by law enforcement organizations particularly policemen. It was learnt that, street children are frequently involved in commission of crimes and thus becomes target of law enforcement organizations such as policemen, city guards and even Ward executive officers.

On the other hand, the study noted that other perpetrators of abuse are adult’s unknown and known to street children. In this vein, 30 percent of the street children said they were once confronted by an adult not familiar to them and 20 percent were abused and exploited by adults familiar to them.

Table 2: Who Commonly Abuses Street Children (n=30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse to Street Children</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fellow Street Child (Older than the abused child)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An adult living in the Street with Street Children 20 67
Policemen 12 40
Someone I don’t know (An adult not living in the street) 09 30
Someone I know (An adult not living in the street) 06 20

NB: Frequency sum to greater than 30 and percentage sum is greater than 100 because a respondent can report more than one perpetrator of violence, exploitation and abuse

3.3 Coping Strategies Used by Street Children to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse

To explore resilience and coping strategies, children were asked what they usually do when confronted with an incidence of abuse, exploitation or violence. Results indicated that majority of the street children are not taking any measure in response to incidences of abuse and violence happening to them. Moreover, it was clearly shown that 70% of the street children merely endure to abuse, violence and exploitation cases (Table 3). A big portion of the children endure to cases of abuse, violence and exploitation and did not report cases to the respective authorities. Children prefer not to report the incidences believing reporting makes no difference (Gwanyemba, 2013). In line with this, it was revealed that only 30% of children have once reported incidence of abuse to police (Table 3). The following excerpts affirm the findings:

‘I don’t see the point of reporting to police or anybody else as they won’t help me solve anything’ (Boy, 13 years)

‘I don’t usually report people who abuse me or react as in most cases they are older than me and if I report they will punish me. I just endure’ (Boy, 15 years)

Results were further confirmed by Officer Commanding Station and members of the Child Protection Team who affirmed that few cases are reported to respective authorities. Only 16 cases of abuse, exploitation and violence have been reported by street children within a period of 12 months (an average of one case per month). Two cases out of the 16 named above have been already heard and determined by the court and perpetrators convicted

Fighting back using weapons is another strategy used by children living in the street to defend themselves against abuse, violence and exploitation. It was revealed that children use knives, razor blades, bicycles’ spoke and stones to defend themselves from being abused or exploited. This was evidenced by 50 percent of the surveyed children. One child was quoted saying:

‘I can’t tolerate being abused. I will fight back using any means available. If possible I will use stones or a knife’ (Boy 14 years)

The quotation implies that some children in some incidences are capable of defending themselves from abuse and violence to an extent of going against the laws of the country. This justifies the earlier assertion that street children are often the victims of the law enforcement organs particularly the police. Street children are living in small groups for protection against abuse from member of other group or individual. If one is attacked they usually combine forces to fight back or protect themselves from more danger.

Children, who are not in groups, usually have an older man or boy (big guy) for protection. However, it was evidenced by this study that the big guys while protecting the children are also the main perpetrators of abuse to children they are supposed to protect. This means that children are trying to stop incidences of abuse to them by allowing the similar cases of abuse to them. Amury (2004) noted that younger boys in the streets in Mbeya City were engaged in sex for protection while others were raped by older men or older boys in the streets. Csete and Whitman (2001) also coincide with this finding as they argue that many street children are involved in substance abuse as a means of coping incidences of abuse and violence. Street children are also implicated in marijuana smoking and substance abuse to endure dangerous jobs, unfairness and elongated days without food (Kamala et al, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action/ Strategy to get rid of Violence, Exploitation and Abuse</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enduring/ Tolerate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecently fought back using weapons such as knives, razor blades and stones when abuse or</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Non-contact sexual abuse in forms of threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism, verbal sexual harassment, is the most common form of abuse to street children. Major perpetrators of abuse to street children are the street children themselves. Children do not consider law enforcement organs, child protection teams and other children duty bearers as responsible entities that are able to defend them against abuse, exploitation and violence. Many of them prefer enduring the incidences rather than reporting to respective authorities. Children do not trust the structures and the duty bearers and probably not aware of the services offered by them.

4.2 Recommendations

To ensure diminishing incidences of abuse, violence and exploitation among street children in cities particularly Arusha, this study recommends various measures to be undertaken;

- The Government, NGOs and FBOs have to intervene by developing programmes with special focus in dealing with street children’s psycho-social and behavioral problems to reduce incidences of abuse among street children themselves.
- Law enforcement organs and other child protection duty bearers have to develop child friendly procedures to encourage children to use their services. This will enable children to report incidences of cases of abuse, violence and exploitation.

References


