

Children on the

streets

in **Mwanza**

Summary of Survey Findings



Introduction

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, ratified by Tanzania, describes a child as under the age of eighteen and entitled to special rights and protection. In Tanzania children comprise over 50% of the total population yet many, including those on the streets, do not receive this protection.

Mwanza, the second largest city in Tanzania, has a visibly increasing population of street children. To find out more about the lives of street children in Mwanza and inform local responses, children and young people on the streets were asked to participate in a survey. This took place in June 2008.

443 children and young people participated in the survey with the majority (88.7%) being full time street children; the remaining 11.3 % return home at night. As the below table reveals, the survey included children and young people of a wide age range with many more males (411) than females (32) participating in the survey:

	0 - 5 yrs	6 - 9 yrs	10 - 12 yrs	13 - 15 yrs	16 - 18 yrs	19 - 22 yrs
Male	0	92	166	104	44	5
Female	2	5	9	12	2	2

Survey Findings

Place of Origin

The majority of children (67.7%) on the streets in Mwanza originate from the Mwanza region. Just under a third (32%) come from neighbouring districts. A small number of children travelled significant distances across Tanzania before arriving on the streets in Mwanza. For many of the children who participated in the survey, Mwanza is the largest city to their place of origin.

Family Form

Children and young people were asked about their family form before moving to the streets. Single parents and grandparents were the family form that the majority of children and young people had lived in prior to being on the streets:

Carers	Males	Females	Percentage
Both parents	76	0	17.5%
Single parent	115	10	28.8%
Guardians	34	0	7.8%
Step-parents	47	7	12.4%
Grandparents	115	7	28.1%
Other relatives	14	8	5%
Others	10	0	2.3%

Reasons for Being on the Streets

A range of pull and push factors were given by children and young people to explain why they were on the streets in Mwanza:

Reason	Percentage
Economic hardship	31%
Domestic violence	23%
Becoming orphaned	12%
Being abandoned	15%
Being an urban immigrant	7%
Seeking relatives	5%
Truancy	3%
Peer Pressure	4%

Educational Background

Children and young people were asked about their educational background. Just over a quarter (26%) had never attended school; 45% had dropped out of school; and just over a fifth (21%) of children continued to attend school whilst they were on the streets. The majority of these children return home at night but there are also a small number of children who continue to attend school whilst living full time on the streets.

Time Spent on the Streets

The following table outlines the length of time children had been on the streets at the time of participation in the survey:

Time	Males	Females	Percentage
Under 6 months	111	11	27.5%
6 months to 1 year	194	11	46.3%
1 - 3 years	70	3	16.5%
More than 3 years	36	7	9.7%

Risks faced by children and young people on the streets

Children face a number of risks and dangers on the streets in Mwanza:

Risk	Males	Females	Percentage
Harrassment by street youth	99	8	24%
Harrassment by police	205	11	48.8%
Sexual abuse	12	4	0.4%
Hunger/starvation	7	2	0.2%
Access to safe sleeping places	83	4	19.6%
Illness and access to treatment	5	3	0.2%

³ Where percentage totals equal more than 100%, children and young people offered more than one response.

Income Earning Activities

Children on the streets undertake various activities to earn money:

Activity	Percentage
Collecting charcoal	18%
Collecting scrap	7%
Begging	41%
Fishing	10%
Washing dishes	12%
Selling food	6%
Pick pocketing	1%
Car washing	2%
Commercial sex work	3%

Support received by Children on the Streets

Only thirteen of the 443 children and young people who reported that they had been assisted or accommodated by any of the child care organizations providing residential care. The rest had received informal support from the general public.

Recommendations from Children and Young People on the Streets

Children and young people were asked about forms of interventions most useful to them:

- Just over half (50.3%) thought educational support would enable them to develop and improve future prospects.
- 22.3% thought the family environment the best place for children and that, where possible, children should be reunited with their families.
- Just under a fifth (18.5%) of children and young people would like to receive vocational training.
- 6.7% of children and young people would like small grants made available to children on the streets to start a small business and receive sustainable income.
- Only 2.2% of children and young people thought existing provision of rehabilitation centres an appropriate form of intervention for children on the streets.

23% of children said domestic violence was the reason they ended up on the streets.

A close-up, artistic photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye and hand. The hand is near the eye, possibly resting or gesturing. The lighting is warm and dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights on the skin. The background is dark and textured.

Discussion of Survey Findings and Recommendations

Age Appropriate Interventions

The wide age range of children on the streets in Mwanza requires a range of age appropriate responses that meet the needs of the child at their stage of life.

Providing Preventative Measures and Family Integration in Areas Outside of Mwanza

As significant numbers of children on the streets originate from areas outside of Mwanza, service design should incorporate programmes of preventative work in areas outside of Mwanza and, for example, family integration work should be designed to incorporate reintegrating children some distance from Mwanza.

Family Form

There are some interesting patterns relating to family form that children and young people come from that are worth further exploration. For example, although the numbers of females taking part in the survey are small, there are indications of some differences relating to gender and family form.

Addressing the Reasons Children Move to the Streets

The reasons given by children and young people for coming to the streets indicate the range of necessary preventative and responsive interventions. For example, capacity building with local communities and families would reduce the number of children on the streets in Mwanza by enabling communities to care for their children and provide support to families to prevent children from moving to the streets. Support should also be offered to individual families to enable them to effectively address issues within the family that act as triggers for the young person from moving to the streets. To address economic hardship, the most common reason for moving to the streets, a range of initiatives are required that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not able to implement in isolation.

Educational Support

As many children have never attended school or dropped out of school, educational support is necessary for children on the streets in Mwanza. This is reinforced by children and young people's recommendations and recognition of the importance of education. Learning from established programmes of formal and informal educational support in East Africa for children on the streets could support development of such work.

Reducing Time Spent on the Streets

The information provided by the survey about length of time children and young people have spent on the streets requires additional information to provide any explanation of why children live on the streets for different lengths of time. It is likely that the implementation of recommendations offered in this paper will reduce the length of time children and young people spend on the streets, particularly if interventions focus upon:

- targeting children and young people who are new to the streets;
- providing family integration;
- and support to gain paid employment, thereby enabling children to move away from the streets.

Reducing Risk

The most commonly reported risks experienced by children on the streets in Mwanza are: harassment from other street children and youth, harassment from the police and finding a safe place to sleep. These risks could be reduced by advocacy and awareness-raising work with street communities, the police and the wider community to:

- promote a more positive attitude towards children on the streets;
- change behaviours towards children on the street;
- work together to improve the welfare of children on the streets in Mwanza.

Formal Support for Children on the Streets in Mwanza

The numbers of children receiving formal support are low. The survey does not provide explanation why this is the case nor what formal support exists for children on the streets in Mwanza. However, the low numbers of children and young people who identify existing provision in Mwanza for children on the streets as appropriate could provide some indication of why so few children have experienced formal support. This is worth further exploration as it may be possible to adapt existing provision so that more children access existing formal support.

Family Integration and Other Responsive Interventions

Recommendations from children and young people on the streets reinforce the importance of family integration work to return children to their homes. However their recommendations also recognise that family integration is not always possible and that responsive interventions should focus upon educational and training support to build the capacity of children to acquire sustainable income from legitimate employment opportunities. Such support would enable those children who are already engaged in legitimate earning activities to strengthen their capacity to earn income and enable other children and young people to cease involvement in riskier and illegal survival strategies.





Concluding Comments

The survey carried out by Adilisha has provided a valuable learning base to start the process of finding out more about children on the streets in Mwanza and to support the design of interventions that can both prevent children from coming to the streets and respond to children once they are on the streets. As well as improving the lives of children and young people, these interventions will enhance whole communities. To improve the circumstances of children in general and children on the streets in Mwanza, NGOs cannot work in isolation. A co-ordinated response is necessary that involves partnership working between national government, civil society and local communities so that all stakeholders are able to support strategies to improve the lives of children and their families.

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Railway Children does not presently work in Mwanza but provided funds to carry out this survey with a view to working with Adilisha to implementing the recommendations stemming from the survey.

Adilisha implemented the survey with support from street children and street youth, Railway Children, FONELISCO, Amani Girls, Mwanza Department of Social Welfare. Emilie Smeaton, Research and Strategy Manager, Railway Children, wrote this summary of survey findings from information provided by Adilisha.



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