

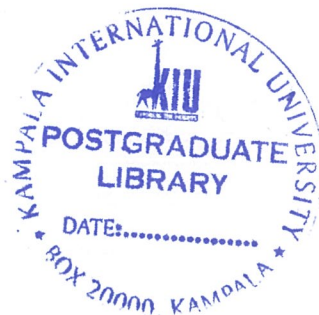
**STREET CHILDREN PANACEA FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE OF SOCIETY IN
UGANDA.**

A CASE STUDY OF LIRA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL.

BY

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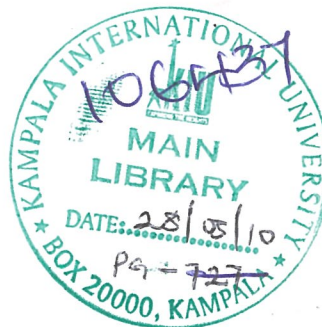
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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE
STUDIES IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION
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DECLARATION

I **MILTON OTTO OLIMA (Rev)**, solemnly declare that this dissertation is original and has to the best of my knowledge never been submitted for any approval in any institution. Any reproduction of this work will only be subject to my permission.

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1.1 Background

This chapter explores the background to the problem with a global perspective and subsequently narrowing down to the research area. The research problem and research question are defined. The objectives (both general and specific) of the research and scope of the research are defined. The research variables are indicated in the conceptual model. Finally operational definitions of terms used in relation to the research topic are stated.

Armed conflict, community negligence, religious pecuniary, leadership in competency, and lack of insight to democratic maturity is not a new phenomenon in the world in general and Uganda in particular. In the past four decades, several armed conflicts, moral decadences, religious ill-commitments, and community negligence have occurred not only in the developing countries including sub-Saharan Africa, but also in the Balkans in Europe in the early 1990s (Bennet *et al*, 1995). The consequences of all these are many, but the early visible ones are deaths, displacements and influx of children onto the streets looking for a means of survival. Other consequences include genocide as was the case in Rwanda in 1994 (Prunier, 1995), the ongoing murders in Darfur in Sudan, which tantamount to genocide (BBC Report, 2004), gross violence including body part mutilation as was the case in Sierra Leone and Uganda (Bennet *et al*, 1995; UN, 2003) and sexual and gender-based violence against women, children and girls involving abduction, rape, child neglect which results into yet another bigger problem of street children who find themselves onto the streets of both major and minor towns, constituting a policy issue to solve their plight. (ISIS/WICCE, 2001).

In addition to the above-mentioned gruesome issues, community negligence and ill-commitment of the church to teach positive moral conduct, the church have resulted to commercializing the religious processes of moral regeneration by focusing on the money first then God later – in essence, who ever have money, accesses Gods blessings! These have impacted negatively onto the former community social-safety-net-system of absorbing neglected children and taking care of them as the true blood child of whichever family without any problem. The root cause of all these are, among others, the armed conflict which forces people out of their habitual residences to other parts of their countries as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or beyond borders as refugees. However, this proposal is focusing on the street children who emerge as a result of both the effects of armed conflicts and community moral decadence and neglect. It is estimated that there are 23,800,000 street children worldwide (www.stcproject.org), a figure higher than that of refugees estimated at 19,980,000 (UMCOR, June 21 2005). Although gender disaggregated data of street children are difficult to come by, statistics of street children (Cohen *et al*, 1998) indicate that 58 per cent of them are girls.

Disruption in the daily activities due to forced migration, HIV/AIDS epidemic and other diseases always impacts negatively on the survival strategies of children. Loss of livelihood is one of the most significant effects of this (Harris, 1999). This is because when people are disrupted from their daily life styles, they are denied of their means of livelihoods such as land, oxen, employment, basic needs and social services. Diseases like HIV/AIDS, Armed conflict is also likely to bring about changes in gender relations

at household levels in the following ways. First, many men/fathers are forcefully conscripted into the army by the warring factions or they may run away from their homes in fear of being conscripted leaving children unattended to. In addition men may go away in search of employment leaving the family with only their mothers. And some men may get killed in the process of fighting or may die of HIV/AIDS. This leaves many women in charge of their households, and it could be the first time women have to make difficult decisions concerning their families and up bringing of their children. Second, because of the socially constructed reproductive roles of women than men, will tend to stay to take care of their families (El Jack, 2003). Women may get overwhelmed as they are confronted with the situation amidst chaos and uncertainties about the future of children.

The precarious living conditions in new and alien environment, such as that of internally displaced camps renders children vulnerable to various situations that can lead to emergence of multitude of an unattended to children that may opt for going to the streets for their survival. Internally displaced camps and the current transient camps as well as the newly established homes after the camp life in Lira have been associated with limited resources, such as food and health care, congestion and conflict over land, unhygienic environment that easily predisposes one to diseases and, such an environment have been associated with sexual and gender based violence and abuse of children. A number of authors have written about the vulnerability of children in situations of armed conflict (Isis/WICCE, 2001; Mulumba, 2005; Gorashi, 2004). Children and women become vulnerable due to several reasons, some of which include, being single heads of households, a breakdown in the social support networks within the community,

diminished incomes, intensified gender roles and the general hopelessness and helplessness, which accompany forced migration into urban centers in an attempt to look for means of livelihood.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Several authors have written about the situations and the plight of street children, many organizations have tried to design interventions to help solve the problems of street children in Lira District, but the situation still seems alarming. (ISIS/WICCE; 2003; Manyire 1998; Egadu, 1995). ISIS/WICCE has documented experiences of children in armed conflict in the districts of Gulu and Luwero but it did not take into consideration the problems street children are facing in other regions and the factors that escalates the influx of these children onto the streets. The plight of street children have been one of the main concerns of development workers in Lira, and so many attempts have been made to try to help them come out of their situations, the most prominent cause of these problems seems to have been the prolonged war in the Northern part of Uganda, and the reduced community commitment in terms of availing social safety-nets to children in problems.

However, these children can play a big role in the development process of this country, they are a future human asset that this country have, when their needs are met, their problems solved, they are given a sense of direction through identification of their needs and the problems they are facing, focusing on their priorities, and designing interventions that solves the root cause of their problems. This research therefore, seeks to identify the

problems that street children in Lira are facing, their priority needs, and the ways they feel their problems can be solved.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to identify the problem of street children, the interventions so far made, and the cause of the influx of children in Lira.

1.4 Specific objectives include:

1. To find out the cause of their influx onto the streets.
2. To identify the problem faced by street children on the streets.
3. To examine the interventions so far made by civil society organizations.
4. To suggest solutions to the problem of street children.

1.5 Research questions.

- What are the causes of the influx of street children on the streets?
- What are the main problems faced by street children on the streets?
- What interventions are so far being made by civil society organizations to help solve the problem of street children?
- What solutions can be made to help mitigate the problem of street children?

1.6 Scope of the study

The study analyzed the problems of street children within the context of community and the previous conflict situation in Northern Uganda, and Lira in particular. Theoretically the study looked at the street children as an important asset for future development, and considers them to be in a situation of vulnerability due to community negligence. The

study was carried out only in Lira municipal council area covering all the divisions within the municipality.

1.7 Significance of the study

Although several documents and reports have been written about street children, these have been mainly for advocacy, lobbying and fundraising purposes and mainly focusing on other regions other than Lira. This study therefore will enrich policy makers with empirical primary information required to guide policy and programs intended to support suffering street children, it will as well add to the pool of academic literature that can be utilized by students focusing on community and child-related problems, and lastly it will open up and create thematic areas that researchers can further explore.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This section is a review of literature concerning study parameters. The first section of the review gives a historical background of conflict in Uganda that has contributed towards the emergence of street children from 1960s to date. The second part looks at the livelihood patterns of children, and the third part looks at the contribution of other stakeholders in solving the problems of street children.

2.1 Causes of influx of children onto the streets.

The problem of street children has been growing steadily in the last two decades. An estimated 10 million children in Africa live without families, mostly in towns as “street children” (UNICEF, 1984:39). One main characteristic of the “children of the street” is that they live alone in streets, without proper or reliable shelter; they have lost contact with their parents and, as such, they do not enjoy parental protection, love and care (Lugalla, J & Mbwambo, J, 1995). Street children share the streets with millions of adults, many of whom regard them as nuisances, if not as dangerous mini-criminals. What most of these children actually do on the streets is, of course, work. Children who live and work on the streets often come from slums and squatter settlements, where poverty and precarious family situations are common, where schools are overcrowded and poor, and where safe places to play simply do not exist. Yet other children come from middle class or well to do families who run away from their homes. The number of street children has increased in places experiencing armed conflict, like Freetown (Sierra

Leone) and Monrovia (Liberia), where parents or caretakers have been killed, the economy disrupted and family and community ties severed. Poverty is also forcing an increasing number of street children on the streets. In some instance it is parents or guardians who send the street children to work on the streets to support their families and others are forced on the streets to find food and shelter which is not forthcoming from their families. Street children face untold hardship and danger on the streets. The lack of food, clean water and adequate health care. Living and 'working' on the streets exacts a terrible toll on street children. They are often prey to every physical and moral danger and as they grow older they often become a danger to others. After such precarious childhoods, most of them are condemned to spend their lives excluded from mainstream society (*Moser, C. 1998*).

UNICEF (1985) correctly observes that yesterday, street children were no more than a footnote. Today, street children are a major issue. Tomorrow, if present trends continue, they could be blight on urban civilization. For Africa, tomorrow is already here. street children are not only a blight on urban civilization; they pose a serious obstacle to overall socio-economic development in Africa. The world and Africa in particular are witnessing rapid and wide ranging socio-economic and political changes. There is rapid urbanization, run away population growth and increasing disparities in wealth. The introduction of structural adjustment programmes and globalization are changing the very fabric of African society. One of the negative consequences of the the changes is the emergence of large numbers of children on the streets. In Tanzania they are known as 'watoto wa mitaani', in Kenya they are known as 'chokorra' and in The Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC) they are called moineaux or 'sparrows'. By whatever name they are called, what stands out is the sad fact that every where, children living and working on the street are ignored, scorned, mistreated and misunderstood by society and by governments. "People don't love us," says Tigiste, a 12-years-old girl, who sells roasted barley and begs for change at stoplights in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa (UNICEF, 1985). The observation made by this young girl illustrates the attitude of most of us. Society tends to view these children as troublemakers, a nuisance or menace that needs to be taken off the streets. Few stop to ponder on the reasons why these children are on the streets, where it is apparent they are not enjoying themselves. (Development Report-UNICEF; 1985).

2.2 The problem faced by street children in Uganda

Uganda has experienced a series of civil wars like the Rwenzururu guerilla struggle in the 1980's (Kabwegyere, 1995), armed conflict in the Luwero triangle between 1981 and 1985 (Byanyima, 1992), and more recently, the insurgency in the Northern parts of Uganda started by self proclaimed priestess Alice Lakwena in 1987 and subsequently spearheaded by Joseph Kony (Bennet 1995, IRIN, 2005).

During armed conflict, there is always increased mobilization of soldiers and belligerents. Zuckerman and Greenberg (2004) note how UN peacekeepers in Somalia were allegedly involved in crimes during the missions there from 1993 to 1995. In Italy several high-ranking officers were forced to resign after a magazine published a picture of Italian troops torturing a Somali and raping a young girl (GSC Quarterly, 2002). Although not

on a large scale, we have witnessed on TV screens how American soldiers are treating the prisoners of war in Iraq (BBC, CNN). In addition, the international media has unearthed how the UN peacekeepers in eastern Congo are sexually abusing young boys and girls. Peacekeepers are significant transmitters of HIV/AIDS to prostitutes and the innocent boys and girls caught up in armed conflict. Infected warriors returning home then introduce HIV/AIDS to their spouses and communities (Zuckman and Greenberg 2004).

Lira has experienced a unique kind of conflict right from household level. The Uganda Peoples Army (UPA) insurgency in the North and North East from 1987 caused immense human suffering especially in Lira, Gulu, and Kitgum districts, leaving an estimated 300,000 people displaced majority of whom are children. For a long period of time, Karamojong cattle rustling has caused internal displacement within Lira due to inter clan raids, and from 1994 to date (2005) in the neighboring districts of Katakwi, Amuria, Kabong, and Abim districts where over 98,623 people have been displaced (NIDP Policy, 2004). It can be argued that, whenever there is any conflict, there are always categories of people who suffer; children and women suffer abuse and harassment. Zuckerman and Greenberg (2004) mentioned what happened to women and children in the Somalia where majority of children did not have anywhere to live other than going to streets to look for food amidst flying bullets. (National IDP Policy 2004).

Street children tend to fall between various jurisdictions with neither providing real assistance. The emergence of the problem of street children may itself point to gaps in coverage. Typically, each Ministry may have far more urgent problem on its hands than



street children, and none will be prepared to take overall responsibility. Departments tend to determine and shape their programs in accordance with the policies they are given. These policies are usually aimed at aiding families and are rarely flexible enough to cope with exceptions. The Ministry of housing, for example, has nothing to offer street children. Moreover, relocating families into cigarette packet-sized apartments does not necessarily reduce the incidence of street children, as Western experience shows. From the standpoint of Ministries of Education, street children are dropouts lacking familial background necessary for them to benefit from education (*Purdin S. (2004)*).

For education bureaucrats, street children had better leave the field free for those who can benefit from education. Labour ministries consider them un-trainable because they lack of education and are therefore unemployable. Youth and sport ministries see them as unruly spirits liable to damage precious equipment reserved for middle-class children. Health agencies are more useful because street children will not refuse first aid, as they will other offerings from well intentioned adults. In addition, street children may themselves be a threat to public health. All told, authorities do only the minimum for street children, and then only under pressure. This confirms the observation that too little is being done for street children and it appears that even the little being done. Like the government, the community also stands accused of failing to address the problem of street children. We as individuals and as a society have failed to live up to our responsibilities as parents and as custodians of the young. The community tends to hide its head in the sand hoping that the problem will go away. Unfortunately the problem is not going away, but increasing to alarming proportions (*Ondeko, R. and S. Purdin 2004*).

2.3 Interventions made to solve the problem of street children.

Whenever a given community is suffering, charity organizations, NGOs and the government channel humanitarian assistances to them to solve their pressing needs. Many organizations in Lira have tried and are still trying to help the street children in various magnitudes and capacities. As noted by Scones (2003), NGOs only support materially but cannot stop the problem of street children., at times what they do only encourage other children to come to streets since they look at their fellow age mates enjoying services from the humanitarian organizations.

Karugire (1980) observes that there is imbalance in the service provisioning by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to children on the streets in Uganda; the reason for this is based on how the problems of these children are identified, and the way these organizations package their interventions whereby in most cases they target the wrong category of the children and leave out the real street children, at times they concentrate on provision of items that only attract more children onto the streets other than compelling them back to their original villages. These deep-rooted causes of miss-directing interventions have instead heightened the problem of street children in Uganda. (Karugire 1980).

Of all the agents capable of doing something about the problem of street children the state is perhaps best situated to tackle the issue. However, part of the tragedy of street children is the way African governments have abandoned them to their fate. With each passing day, it is becoming increasingly clear that many African governments of

countries where the problem is most acute have been unable to give it the attention it deserves, and have unintentionally contributed to its continuation. While it is true that most governments have formulated child development policies, set up departments and sometimes ministries dealing with youths and some dealing with women and children, effective action to address the problem is yet to be taken. While one can speak of some kind of political commitment on the part of many African governments, very little is being done to address the problem of street children. (*Oxfam 1995*).

For instance, Tanzania's political commitment to children has been visible for some time now. Major benchmarks of this commitment include the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Others include holding of National Summits for children and establishment of Ministries responsible for children and women's affairs in Mainland and Zanzibar. However, most of the direct actions to help street children are being undertaken by Non-Governmental organizations and religious organizations. African governments appear incapacitated or slow to address the problem of street children. This in part stems from the fact that little is known about street children. Even with a Ministry for women and children, government departments often lack comprehensive and reliable data on street children. A study carried out by UNICEF in 1999 indicated that the literature on street children in Tanzania is relatively small and repetitive (UNICEF, 1999). It is therefore in our view very difficult if not impossible for effective government action without reliable and up-to date data. Data on street children

is by itself not sufficient to find a lasting solution to the problem of street children.
(UNICEF, 1999)

National Child Development Policies and strategies are a necessary requirement. Tanzania has been able to formulate and put in place a Child development Policy that was adopted by the government in 1996. This document is however very generalized and fails to identify street children as a special category requiring special attention.

There is growing need for African countries to formulate and implement dynamic child development policies if we are serious to deal with the problem of street children. *Africa is ignoring the Problem of street children: (Parpart J. et al (ed) (2000)*

The traditional response to street children by most governments in Africa and elsewhere has been repression. Street children arrested for a minor theft or roaming around (uzururaji) are often held in custody until somebody can be found to take responsibility for them. This can take weeks or months. Detention in harsh circumstances is the common lot of street children every where. This tells us more about the real attitude of governments than any examination of national legislation. Today governments are increasingly taking ruthless steps to clear the streets of street children and other unscrupulous characters. They do not offer any viable alternative to the street. Politicians, policy makers, and urban planners seem to be helpless in their efforts to either resolve the problem of and assist street children, and have, to date, failed to prescribe plausible solutions which are realistic, down-to-earth, and concrete (Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1995).

It appears that governments pay lip-service to the idea of improving care for "street children," but they are influenced by the commonly held opinion that since street children will inevitably wind up as criminals, there is little use in spending public funds for their support. This view is similar to that of Lugalla (1985) who argues that street children are considered to be hooligans, vagabonds, and people prone to committing crimes. As a result of this, they have been a target of harassment by law enforcement organizations; there are many cases of street children being beaten by police, detained, and sometimes repatriated to their rural homes. The little that is being done by the government appears too little to make a difference to the plight of street children. (*Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1995*).

CHAPTER THREE.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section explains the research design and methodology. It is presented under the following major sub-headings; research design, study area, study population, sample selection and sample size, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study applied both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods of data collection was employed because they capture and inform better on those aspects such as behavior, vulnerability and body language, which are difficult to quantify. In addition qualitative methods were employed to elicit the silent voices of children, and through verbatim presentation of focus group discussions and case studies. Quantitative methods of data collection were applied in those areas, which need quantification such as bio data and population percentages. Although quantitative methods is easily analyzed by statistical methods such as EPI-INFO, SPSS, STATA-11, more emphasis was given to qualitative data generated through focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observations in order to capture the silent voices of street children.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Lira district specifically the municipality, which is located in northern part of Uganda. The study area was selected because of it being one of the districts that are currently experiencing a great influx of children onto the streets

especially after the war. The population has persistently suffered from various upheavals that might be the main causes of street influx by children.

Lira district is bordered by districts of Apac in the west, Dokolo in the South, Pader in the North, Gulu in the North West and Amuria in the east.

This study was conducted in all the four divisions in Lira municipality of; Ojwina, Railways, Central, and Adyel divisions.

3.3 Study Population

The study population constituted of the street children themselves, the local community, the key informants from the NGOs who have been working in support of street children, and some selected opinion leaders, within the municipality.

3.4 Sample Selection and Sample Size

All the four divisions in Lira municipality were sampled to participate in the study. A purposively sample selection of the street children and the key informants was applied. And a simple random sample selection of respondents from the local community was applied. From each division, lists of tentative/possible number of street children were obtained from the assistant Town clerk in order to ascertain the number to be sampled from each of the divisions. The same process was carried out for the number of the local residents so as to derive an equitable and representative sample selection of respondents from the local community. From each division, a total sample size of street children sampled were 20, totaling to 80 respondents from the street children, the local community sampled were 20 respondents from each division totaling to 80 respondents, and a total of

10 key informants from the selected organizations were sampled as well, constituting a general total of 170 respondents sampled to participate in the study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Research instruments and methods of data collection

Data was collected using the following instruments; semi-structured/ open ended questionnaires, question guides for the Focus Group Discussions, separately designed for each category of the study population, observation checklist and topic guides for the key informants was designed. These instruments were specifically designed and used to collect the kind of information required from a particular category of the respondents. Special consideration was made on the type of sensitive questions to the street children themselves.

3.6 Data Analysis

A simple data analysis procedure was used whereby, at the end of each day, the researcher edited the completed questionnaires for accuracy, completeness and uniformity. For the closed ended questions, the answers were coded in the already existing coding frame. Coded responses were entered into the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package (STATA-11).

Qualitative data gathered through questionnaires and focus group discussions were analyzed thematically along the themes of the major variables and objectives of the study. Broad categories were developed to differentiate and describe the ideas expressed by the

respondents. These broad categories were further broken down to indicate the direction of experiences and perceptions.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

A letter of introduction stating the purpose of the research was obtained from the Head of Department. Permission was sought from the Chief Administration Office of Lira District and Community Based Services Department (Probation) of the District to allow for data collection among the street children. In addition, authority from the municipal council leadership and the division leadership was sought before collecting data. Assurance was given to the respondents about confidentiality of the information to be gathered and the names of the respondents were not disclosed during the presentation of the findings.

To maintain integrity of the information presented in this research report, reference is only made to documented information collected from the field study. Where reference is made to already documented literature (published or unpublished), acknowledgement is made to that effect.

3.8 Limitations.

The study encountered some few limitations, one paramount was inadequate amount of money to facilitate the data collectors and buy stationeries. Another limitation was directly encountered during the actual data collection where some community members were asking to be paid before they can participate in the study. Getting street children to be interviewed was not very easy since they are always scared off by people. And time was not adequate enough to allow reaching out to many targeted study population.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 *PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS*

4.1 Introduction;

This chapter presents the findings of the study, discussion of key emerging issues that were in line with the study objectives, and it's presented according to the themes and objectives of the study.

Table I; showing categories of respondents

Categories	Freq	%ages
Local Community	80	47
Street Children	80	47
Key Informants	10	6
Total	170	100

Source; Raw Data.

This table above indicates the categories of respondents that were reached during the study. It can be noted that street children themselves and the local community members constituted the highest number of sample, and key informants were purposively sampled from the organization that are implementing some programs for supporting these categories of children, and it totaled to 170 respondents interviewed.

4.2 THE CAUSES OF INFLUX O CHILDREN ONTO THE STREETS

For every issue to become a problem that calls for an intervention, there are always inherent causes to it, and it is better to understand these causes before any meaningful interventions are thought of. The same applies to the issue of street children in Uganda, particularly the problem of street children in Lira municipality. This section examines the causes of influx of children onto the streets of Lira municipality.

This study found came up with numerous causes of influx of children onto the streets, they ranged from family disorientation to the structural rigidities and inconsistencies in government policies that fails to support certain categories of suffering children. It was indicated that social catastrophes like HIV/AIDS pandemic, ethnic conflicts, and child trafficking are the main causes of influx of children onto the streets. It was mentioned that the effects of HIV/AIDS is almost the main cause, majority of children interviewed mentioned being an orphan due to HIV/AIDS or have lost the caregiver due to the scourge. It was noted that when they no longer have some one to take care of them the only option is to join their friends onto the streets of Lira and any other town in Uganda in search for food, love, friends, and any sympathizer who can support them. This was testified by almost a half of the children talked to, as emphasized by one of the children;

".....I did not opt to come to the street, but the conditions back home was unbearable, when both of my parents died, I had to go to an uncle of mine, at first things were good, but after wards, he again fell sick of AIDS and died, his wife chased me and my younger brother away one night, we slept under a mango tree, the next day we were both very hungry, we went to the neighboring home, and asked for food, she gave us food and sympathized with us, we spent two days

at her place, but things went out of hands and the only way out was to come to town...at first life was too hard, no one to turn to, but now things are a bit better because me and my younger brother have now friends who can help us with food.....and we may not go back to he village... ”(Child respondent).

This constitutes a good case study that indicates the circumstantial conditions that forces these children onto the streets, it implies that these children are forced onto the street by some hard conditions back in their homes, it signifies that these children do not wish either to be on the street, but they are forced onto the streets to look for means of survival. The only dangerous implication is that when they stay onto the street, they get used to the street life and never hope to get back to their respective homes.

Another social catastrophe indicated was ethnic/tribal conflict. This though not strongly emphasized by the children, it as well contributed to the influx of children onto the street. This was prominently mentioned by children from Karamoja region, they noted that the clan disputes and inter-tribal raids have made them to leave their homes and run away to the neighboring districts like Lira, but still, deeply analyzed, it all coils down into lack of family support and no one to turn to for support.

The study also found out that there is inter-district child trafficking. This was indicated that, young children are lured from the villages to come to town to work in peoples homes as either maids or house boys for a pay, but when what they are promised fails to come by, they refuse to get back to their villages and end up onto the streets. This was mentioned by one of the children who is currently longing to get back home but have

failed, he opted to get to begging on the street to look for money for transport back home, as noted below;

"...I was brought to town by my aunt promising me work in her neighbors house as a house boy, that I will be paid some amount of money, but when I came I worked for one year without receiving any money, when I asked for my pay, the man I was working for only told me that the money he could have paid me is what he has been using to buy food in the house that I also ate so there is no pay for me, I asked him for money for transport to take me back home and he refused either, I had no option other than going to beg for money from the street....." (Child respondent)

This kind of trends was noted as being worse with young girls, one of the street girls mentioned;

".....I had a worse experience in life, when I lost both of my parents my uncle brought me to town to study, unfortunately he left for Sudan and left me in the house alone, one night thieves came and beat me up and stole every thing, when I communicated to him about the ordeal, he instead victimized me that those are my boy friends whom I brought in the house and stole his things and he chased me away from his house, my village is very far in Olilim and I could not go back, I joined my friend whom I did not know was a street girl and that is how I ended up onto the street..." (Response from a street girl).

This is another clear revelation of how communities fail to handle social problems that have made children opt for the streets for survival, it can be argued that if her uncle had accepted the fact that it was thieves other than her boyfriends who stole his properties, this girl would not have joined the bad group and abandoned her studies. Thus some of

these social short-comings to children needs to be handled with precision as a pretext of guidance rather than magnifying the issue that leads to loss of sense of direction to children.

The study as well found out that other than only social catastrophes, political catastrophes has and is playing a great role in causing influx of children onto the streets. One of the main longstanding effects of the twenty years long Lords Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in the North is the influx of children onto the streets. It was mentioned that this war disrupted the social safety-nets structures in the region, created total lack of hope to the community. And as has been documented by development workers, whenever there is armed conflict, the category of people who suffers most are women and children, this did not leave out Lira, this war disorganized the organized social family settings and disoriented children from their settled families, people were locked up in camps, children did not have any clear future, education systems was disrupted and every one was left to fend for him or herself, this gave room for children to opt for the streets for survival since their parents could not have control over them, their parents did not have any hope either, that is why even after the war cooled down, some children who lost their parents while in the camp did not know where to turn to, did not know any of their uncles who can show them their former homesteads, had to remain on the streets in town.

Poverty was another cause of influx of children onto the streets. Although poverty is quite a big concept to talk about, some of its inherent attributes have caused the influx of children onto the streets. This was mentioned that, lack of capacity of parents to afford to

meet the costs of education due to poverty, have made many children to remain out of school, they join bad peers who lead them onto the streets. This was strongly noted by almost all the organizations and even children themselves, it was clearly stated by children that it is failure to continue with their studies that have made them opted for joining the streets.

Corruption and wastage of resources was also mentioned as one of the reasons making these children come to the streets, although it quite back seated. This was mentioned in focus group discussions held that, resources meant to support the suffering families, to resources meant to support programs directed to uplift the welfare of children has always been squandered by leaders, district officials have time and again been arrested to account for the money meant for children's programs that have been swindled. This leaves the community without any funded programs that supports the plight of children in general, thus the direct beneficiaries are left without any hope other than joining their peers on the streets.

It was also found out from the local community that, child abuse including violence, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect, sexual harassment, domestic violence against women, incest, child starvation, and truancy are all contributing greatly towards influx of children onto the streets. These were noted that they have created conditions that children can not bare at their various homes where they lived, it was mentioned that these children finds it difficult to continue living in a family where they are not given food to eat, in a family where every time there is fight, beating and insults, worse to girls is living in a

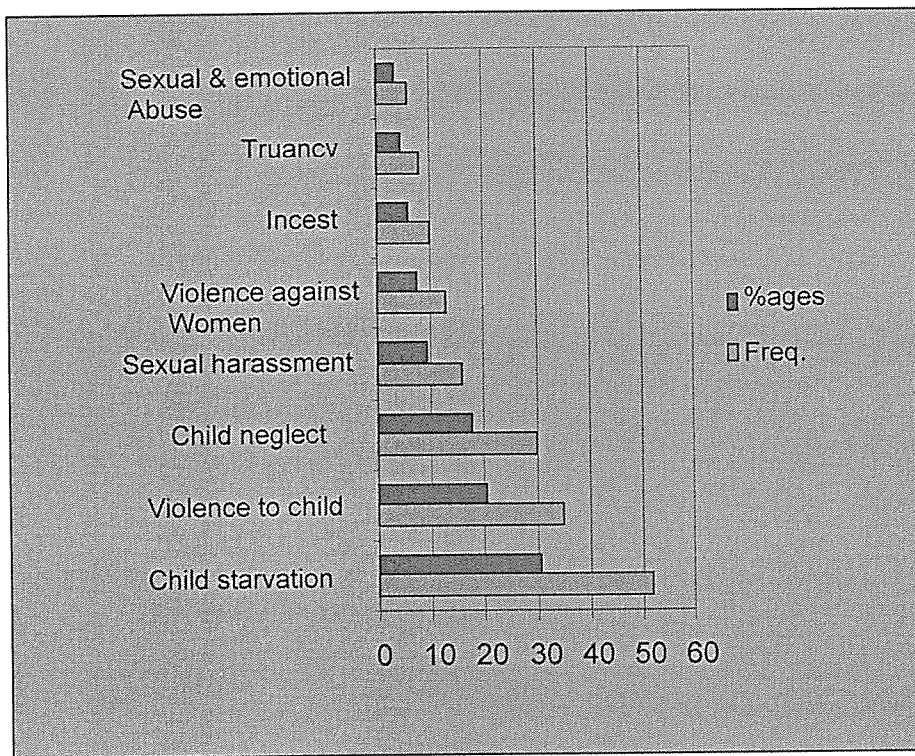
family where they are sexually assaulted and their own relatives force them into sex. Respondents were asked to rank these internal family attributes that leads to influx of children onto the streets, the results are as presented on the table bellow;

Table II; showing attributes of child abuse that have led to influx of children to the streets.

Attributes of child abuse.	Freq.	%ages	Rankings
Child starvation	52	30.6	1
Violence to child	35	20.5	2
Child neglect	30	17.7	3
Sexual harassment	16	9.5	4
Violence against women	13	7.6	5
Incest	10	5.8	
Truancy	8	4.7	
Sexual & emotional abuse	6	3.6	
Total	170	100	

Source; Responses.

Graph I; showing attributes of child abuse.



Source; Responses.

From the table above, it can be noted that, the main cause of influx of children onto the streets from attributes of child abuse is child starvation, which was ranked first, followed by violent acts to children ranked second, child neglect was ranked third, sexual harassment was ranked fourth, and violence against women was ranked fifth by respondents. This signifies that children are supposed to be fed well much as the quality of food can be compromised; they need to have some form of a meal in a day. Intentional starvation of children makes them run away from home to seek food onto the streets. This is in conformity to one of the main challenges that street children face as lack of something to feed on. This can be argued that, for these children to be removed from the

streets, an intervention designed to provide for them food must first be taken into consideration then other problems can be tackled concurrently.

It was mentioned that, violence to children, child neglect and sexual harassment are equally contributive factors towards their influx onto the streets. It was argued that, all these factors leave children without any form of protection; they then start developing sense of independence while at a tender age thus falling prey to all forms of abuse and exploitation hence losing sense of direction other than being guided by elderly people. It was also noted that violence against women within their respective families has forced these children to abandon their homes and turn to the streets in search for solace. This was argued that, whenever parents keep fighting all the time, children become remorse about the situation their mothers or female caregivers are undergoing, this in turn have forced many children to leave their homes and slowly start living with friends, their fate thus is dependant on the kind of friends they are living with. This was inherently singled out by of the children interviewed that;

“.....I was staying with both of my parents but life at home was not in the way I feel it should be, my father could fight my mother all the time, she cries all the time and I would feel so sorry about the life she is leading, an what forced me out of home was to come on the street, work hard, get some money and remove my mother from such a life she is going through...I feel very sorry even up to today.....that is why whenever I get some little money I send it to my mother.....about two thousand, three thousand like that.....”(Street child response).

This gives a significant analysis that, some of these children do have a sense of direction but they are muddled up by the way they are trying to help a given situation, in essence, it give an impetus to the topic of this research that they are a very resourceful tool for future development, considering the attitude and the mind set that this child have, implies that he des not treasure violence, instead he came to the street in an attempt to solve a problem of violence at their home.

The study findings also revealed that, incest, truancy and emotional abuse of these children have led them onto the streets. It was noted that some children stubbornly leave school and join the streets without any clear reason, their parents and or caregivers would be in position to provide for their wellbeing and education, but they still leave school and join the streets. It was also indicated that children who lived with their relatives especially girls have been seduced into incest and made them abandon their homesteads, as revealed by one of the child respondent;

“.....I was completely tired of what my uncle have been doing on me, many times he kept coming to my bed at night and forced me to do what I have never thought about in life, I had no one to report to but the only option was to leave his home and stay any where that I feel secure even if am suffering....”(girl-street child response).

This is one of the unique and bold responses towards the ordeals that forced them onto the streets. This can be significantly inferred that all these children do wish to be on the streets, but they lack any other comfortable place where they can live to their expectations, thus the local community should not victimize them that it is their wish to

be on the streets, rather we must all accept and bare responsibilities of letting these children be on the streets as a result of some of our uncommendable behaviors.

The study findings also revealed that family breakdown due to divorce; separation and death of caregivers have contributed greatly towards the influx of children onto the streets. It was indicated that families that are not stable ends up breaking away, leaving children with a tough decision o make; either to follow their fathers or to follow their mother, in this disarray of decision making, they end up choosing a wrong direction not to follow neither. This was revealed from a focus group discussion that, these children have ended up either staying with their relatives or try to live in church premises. This is equally the road to the streets in that, whenever things fail to work out as they hoped, the only way out is to join their friends on the streets.

Another aspect discovered from he study findings leading to influx of children onto the streets was alcohol and drug abuse of a family member. This was argued that, once a family member is seriously engaged in substance abuse of any kind, it disrupts the family peace. This was argued that it gives room for child neglect and other abuses, parents and caregivers do have time to attend to the needs of their children, no savings to cater for children's education, no time to look for food for these children, all the little money worked for is spent on drinking.

The study findings also revealed that, some of these children came to the street simply because of the unbecoming behaviors of their mothers. It was noted that children whose

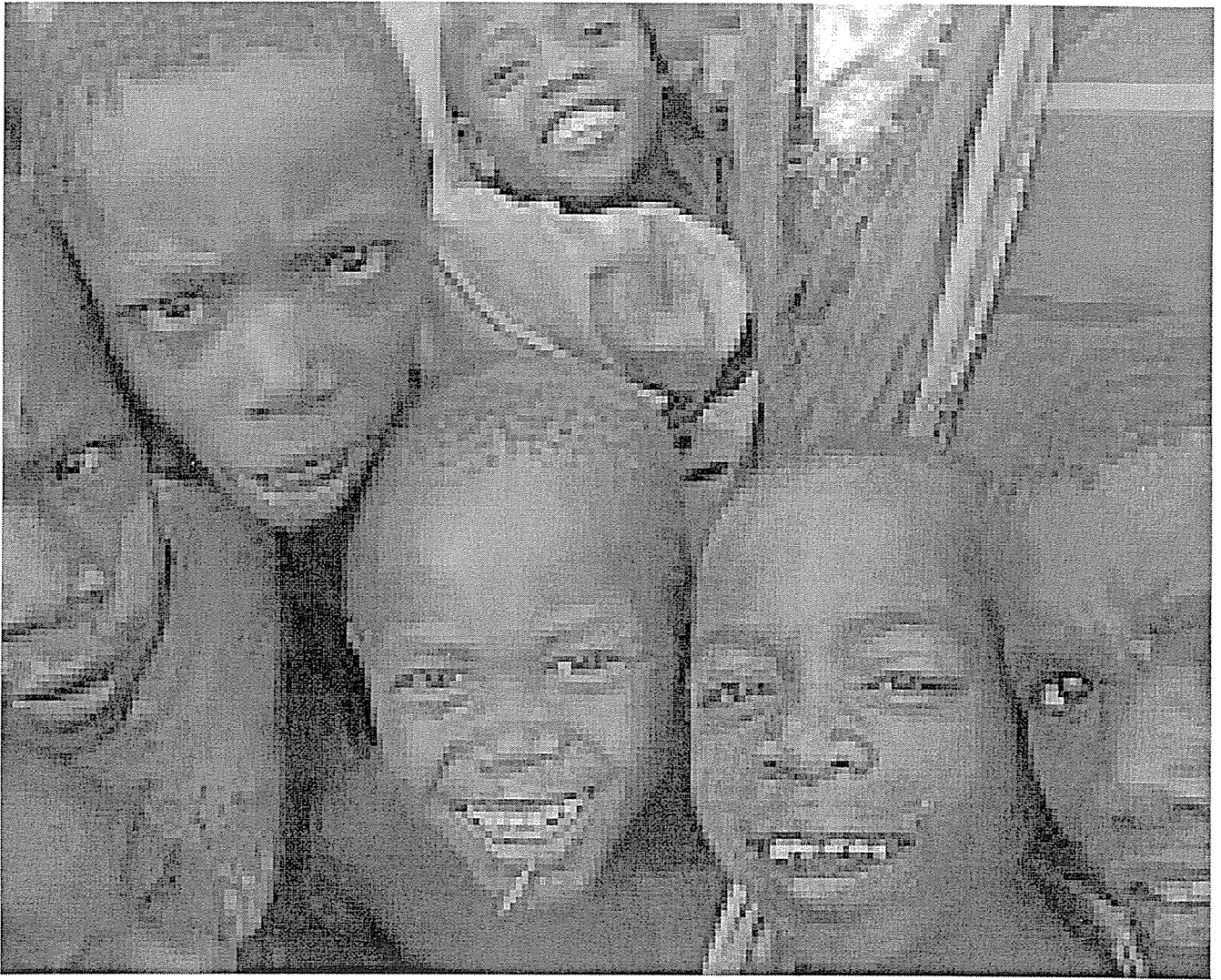
mother are prostitutes ran away when they discovered what their mother does for a living. This is a tragedy with significant psychological consequences. Sometimes a mother spoils her child with presents or money in order to be "forgiven" by them, but these just created additional problems. It was mentioned that some of them abandoned school and joined the streets because of stigma and shame that their fellow friends inflicted on them as a result of the behaviors of their mothers. They indicated that the whole community became aware of the way their mothers earn a living and turned them into laughing stalk, which was unbearable and had them to look for where people do not mind about what you or your family does. This was coupled with the children whose parents are drug addicts, they mentioned that staying in a family where one of the parents smokes opium made the life so complex after the parent have intoxicated him or herself, they mistreat them and refuse to give them food to eat, at times they are chased away from home at night, subjecting their life into very risks.

It was also found out that some of these children were actually chased away from home or rejected by their families because of their delinquency. In these cases, these children are considered a source of public shame for the family in one way or another. One solution that their families devised was to separate them from their families for a few years. On the other hand, imprisonment, especially if put with adult prisoners, is ALWAYS catastrophic. The kinds of shame that the child undergoes mentioned included: shame due to theft, due to drug addiction, a shame to return home after being in prison, shame due to prostitution known in the neighborhood. It can be argued that, it's a matter of conscience to publicly denounce child prostitution; but it is always catastrophic for the

child concerned; on the other hand, it should be wise one to denounce and judge the perpetrators of the crime as well, otherwise it instead worsens the situation.

One of the unique aspects about the cause of influx of these children onto the streets found out was that, child headed house holds tend to move to the streets with his or her siblings as a result of lack of something to eat. It was mentioned that a rural child discovers that he or she is one with too many mouths to feed leaves the home and turns to the streets. It was mentioned that in periods of drought and famine, many children who realize that they are just one more mouth to feed jump into a truck coming to town with all the young siblings with a hope of finding a better situation, instead they find the worse situation and they all end up begging on the streets and street life starts. It was indicated that these are the children who become child workers in a bid to earn a living or support the other siblings. It was argued that, even if they are working voluntarily, there is a tendency for children who work too far from home to gradually stop going home and no longer need to.

Photo I; showing children squeezed inside a truck heading to town;



“Although their faces look jolly, but behind their faces and inside their hearts they are in problems”

4.3 THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF STREET CHILDREN

4.3.1 Definition of Street Children;

The term 'street children' is hotly debated. Some say it is negative; that it labels and stigmatizes children. Others say it gives them an identity and a sense of belonging. It can include a very wide range of children who: are homeless; work on the streets but sleep at home; either do or do not have family contact; work in open-air markets; live on the streets with their families; live in day or night shelters; spend a lot of time in institutions (e.g. prison); are sex workers. The term 'street children' is used because it is short and widely understood. However, we must acknowledge the problems and wherever possible we should ask the children what they think themselves. In reality, street children defy such convenient generalizations because each child is unique. The **UNICEF** definition of street children makes a distinction between children *on* and children *of* the street. Children *on* the street are those whose family support base has become increasingly weakened (who) must share in the responsibility for the families' survival by working in the city streets and market places. For these children, the home ceases to be the centre for play, culture and daily life. Nevertheless while the street becomes their daytime activity, most of these children return home mostly at nights. While their family relationships may be deteriorating, they are still definitely in place, and these children continue to view life from the point of view of their families.

Children *of* the streets on the other hand are a much smaller number of children who daily struggle for survival without support, alone. While often called abandoned, they too

might also have abandoned their families, tired of insecurity, rejection and aged up with violence (tired of violence in the family); (Their) ties with home have now been broken; de facto (they) are without families.

Clearly, the experience of street children differs throughout the world. For instance, there are the average age of a child in the streets in the Western World is higher than the age of street children in the Developing World.

However there are also many similarities. A child who for whatever reason, ends up being forced from home or runs away, usually ends up in the streets of a town or city. Once there, they soon become part of the mosaic of street life. They usually join a group of children in similar circumstances and become embroiled in a life of petty crime, substance abuse, begging, occasional work, violence and sex. They also experience freedom and a life without rules, except the rules of their gang. Sometimes an adult meets them, as they enter the town or city, who then exploits them for their Labour or bodies. They often end up sick, injured, HIV+, pregnant or even dead.

It has been proven again and again that the longer a child is on the streets, the harder it is for them to leave the streets. Also if a long-term street child does leave the streets, the longer they have been in the streets, the stronger the pull to return back to the streets.

It can be noted that the problems of street children can be looked at from two perspectives; the first perspective is from the problems that they the street children themselves face; and the second perspective is from the problems that the community

faces as a result of the existence of street children. In this section, this study has disaggregated these problems into these two perspectives.

4.3.2 Problems that street children face.

The study findings indicated that the street children in Lira municipality are facing a lot of problems. It was found out that they suffer from community rebuke to individual health problems. The main prominent problem identified was hunger due to lack of proper food to survive on. It was indicated that these children survive on residues and remains of food from restaurants and hotels that are disposed in the Town Council garbage skips all over town. This was clearly indicated by both key informants and street children themselves. It was noted that this problem has been heightened by the current swerve of famine cutting across the region; this is even making it difficult for street children to get something to eat. Formerly there were some good Samaritans who could give them something to eat but it has reached a difficult situation where those who used to do that are as well getting difficulties in finding something to feed on. As noted by one of the key informants;

“...its not easy to single out the main problem that street children face without putting them in the overall context of the society, these children are endowed with millions of problems that a growing child should not go through, but to me their main challenge is finding something to eat.....this means if the overall community is getting difficulties in finding something to eat then, they street children will also get it much rougher to find something to eat. Much as they are

sympathized on, there is nothing that the community can do at this time of famine.....” (Key Informant response).

This excerpt indicates that street children have numerous problems which is not easy to single it out, but the main striking challenge is getting something to survive on so that they live to the next day. Children themselves were very bold to mention that they face the main challenge of getting something to eat or to live on until the next day. Uniquely, they were able to point it out clearly that they have a strong solidarity among themselves especially when it comes to food and eating; they mentioned that, their strong solidarity helps them at least get something to eat on a daily basis; as mentioned by one of the street children;

“.....yes we have a big problem of hunger, you can wake up in the morning very weak, having spent the previous day without eating something good. Some people used to help us here by collecting us and taking us to go and eat especially some few kind hearted NGOs, some NGOs instead come and chase us away from the street, but when we ask them to take us and keep us in some place and provide for us food, clothes, education and a good place to sleep in, they become very arrogant and aggressive to us, hailing abusive words on us...” (Child response).

This gives a clear indication that, the plight of these children is not easy to single out, from this excerpt, its clear that much as they suffer from hunger, some key practitioners who could have helped them come out of their problems are instead inflicting more pain into their hearts by using abusive words, and chasing them away from the streets without giving an alternative to what they are going through. But due to Gods grace, these children have also devised a means of living by solidarity and learning how to share the

little that their friends have among themselves, that is why they still live until the next sunrise.

Another problem identified was lack of a safe place to spend a night in. it was noted that, where these children spend their night is full of high risks in all aspects, they sleep in the corridors of buildings, sleep in wreckages of spoilt vehicles, they sleep under parked vehicles that are in running conditions due to the heat that the engines emits at night when packed, some of them go and sleep under the verandahs of trans-night bars, and they do not have anything to cover themselves at night. These areas where they sleep subjects them to high risks of falling prey to not only people who can harm them, but also being attacked by severe malaria and any other form of sickness. It was mentioned that in many occasions, some of their colleagues have been attacked by drunken people and beaten seriously, some of them have fallen sick and die at night, as mentioned by one of the child respondents;

“.....much as we long to sleep comfortably, we do not have any body to provide it to us, that is why we find our sleeping places under the verandah, under parked vehicles for warmth and in bars,.....this has put our lives in danger, some of our friends have been attacked and seriously injured, other even die from malaria because when you fall sick you find that there is no where to get treatment from and more so you sleep in the cold, very many of us have so far died.....”(Response from a street child).

This even gives a much clearer risks that these children undergo. This in essence, gives an impetus to exposure to very many avenues to death.

The study findings also indicated that, these children are being seriously exploited by unscrupulous people in very many ways; the young girls are being sexually exploited by men, young boys are being subjected to child Labour exploitation by business men and small scale industrialists by subjecting them to hard Labour under the pretext of helping them and providing some food to eat. It was noted that these small scale industrialists always make these children work in their factories during day time without protective gears while handling chemicals, as mentioned by one of the key informants;

“.....its of great pity that some business men here have turned these children into robots who makes them money, others use them to risk their lives to go and steal, others make them work in their factories holding chemicals and heavy machines without giving them protective gears, and in the end they chase them away without pay.....if they are lucky they end up being given some small food to eat,.....there was a very sorry picture in the news paper last year which showed these street children working in one of the soap factories owned by an Indian here in Lira, these children were cleaning the containers for chemicals using their bare hands.....these are some of the true pictures of what these children go through.....” (KII Interview).

These and some more tragedies that these children go through are yet even to be discovered, it can only be argued that, some of these business men who exploit these children could be breeding them to be serious robbers and killers that will at one point come back and terrorize them, this practice in the long run will give room for future gang of murderous in the town. It was also indicated that some women have started training young-street-girls into prostitution, there are hidden brothels behind the shops in town

which are operated during day time, these women get the young girls and keep them inside their rooms during day time for men to sexually use them, then during night hours these girls are sent onto the streets to sell themselves, as noted by one of the participants;

“.....it has come to our notice that there are some brothels in the offing within town here, the owners get street girls and hide them there during day time and collect money from men who wants sex, then at night they are sent onto the streets to sell themselves, the money collected are controlled by these old women....” (KII response)

It was also found out that, these children suffer a lot from substance abuse in the form of drinking crude waragi, smoking opium, sniffing petrol, smoking cigarettes, and chewing “mairungi”. This kind of behavior is making these children prone to other forms of abuse like exploitation which is talked about since they would be lured into it when they are sub-conscious. At this point it can be argued that, the people who could have lent a helping hand in support of these children, they are the ones who are very busy destroying their lives by taking advantage of their sub-conscience and luring them into exploitative tasks. As noted by one of the key informants;

“.....these children have some weird forms of behavior, they are so bent to substance abuse, they drink a lot, some of them smoke opium, others keep sniffing petrol and when they get drunk that is when they start engaging in various forms of illicit behaviors, and it is what makes them get prone to various forms of abuse....” (KII interview response).

The children themselves have a different view from the other community members regarding substance abuse, it was indicated that by indulging themselves into that kind of behavior, it makes them forget about the difficulties and other problems that they are facing; like it makes them dare and brave the cold nights that they spend without any blankets and beddings; as mentioned by one of the children;

“.....if we do not do that we can not sleep, it is what makes us brave the coldness at night, we become fearless and just lead a happy life without any thoughts, actually it makes us forget about the problems that we are facing.....”

(Street Child response)

This though is quite inappropriate in children's life, but it seems to be the conditions they are subjected to that is making them indulge themselves into substance abuse.

The study findings also indicated that, these children are faced with so many forms of violence, both from among their fellow street peers and from the local community who do not have sympathy and empathy about the kind of life they are facing. Fighting among themselves is very common, insults from the community, verbal abuse, and beating from those who do not appreciate that these street children can contribute positively towards development of the nation once they are helped away from their current plight, in essence there are community members who look at the street children from a negative perspective only other than viewing their problems as a starting point for change in their lives.

Another problem identified during the study was the community attitude of rejection and non-sociability. It was indicated that some community members do not wish in any way to associate themselves with street children; they portray an attitude of rejection considering these children as social outcasts. One of the opinion leaders pointed it out right that these children do not deserve to be called children, that they should be considered non living things; as he noted; *"...I do not imagine that these children do not have relatives who can take care of them, its not even not imaginable that these children do not have a belonging, so since they do not have a belonging, then they are out casts if they can not stay in their homes....."*. This implies that some community members do not have the passion for these children.

It was as well noted that filth is another major problem of these children. It was noted that all street children complain constantly about filth. They have a hard time finding a place to wash clothes, not only washing but bathing, and even hardship in getting detergents like soap; this is the main reason that the children are invariably infested with lice and scabies. Just a piece of soap, a source of clean water and a safe place where their clothes would not be stolen, would already be of great importance for them. But all these are inaccessible and unaffordable to them, as noted by one of the children;

".....much as we live on the streets, we also need some form of cleanliness but there is no where we can get clean water, a piece of soap and even where we can hang our only one piece of cloth.....that is why some of us have lice and jiggers..." (Street child response).

It was also noted that these children suffer a lot from diseases due to the filth that is mentioned above. Some of them are having chronic STIs that they acquired due to indulgence in an unprotected sex. Diseases is one the disturbing problems that street children face. It was noted that they do not have any where to turn to when they fall sick, they battle it out under Gods mercy. It was mentioned that some Non Governmental organizations used to help some of them with treatment but these days it's no longer there. This when looked at critically, it stems from the kind of food that they eat, the substance abuse behaviors that they indulge themselves in reduces their body immunity.

The study found out that these children suffers a lot from loneliness. This is the greatest of the street children's problems. They no longer have their parents or any other adult to talk to, no adult is available to talk with, and every effort to reach out to other people is rejected with scorn or indifference. We all need love, especially children. Just a smile can be enough, but these children are only greeted with a face of reject, hatred and dislike; as noted by one of them;

".....what even makes us stay and live our own life is the way people treat us, we are isolated that is why we form our own groups.....people do not want to talk to us in a good way.....and when every body looks at you as a fool, what would you do? You just isolate yourself from them in order to avoid annoyance....."
(Child response).

It can be argued that loneliness and the absence of love often makes the street child vulnerable to all sorts of deviant behavior, such as theft, drug addiction and prostitution. As a result, they are dealt with as delinquents, instead of being recognized as the victims

of circumstance due to certain things that the community can change in order to help these children change their lives. Street children are on the front line when it comes to disturbed adults looking for victims. These unbalanced people, of whom they are far more than we might imagine, might be nymphomaniacs, child murders, angry shopkeepers, bad policemen and death squadrons, all these have their targets on the street children.

The study findings also revealed that illiteracy is one of the main problems that these children suffer from. This was revealed by one of the staff from an organization that has been working closely in support of these children, she stated that; almost always, street children's first priority is to learn how to read and write. Street children are very aware that education is the key to everything else but they do not have access to it due to the costs involved in accessing education in Uganda. It was also noted that some organizations used to try to support education for these children but their support is not sustainable since project cycles for most organizations ends with the dwindling of funds from donors, leaving those who have started studies without any support, thus running back to the streets. It was further noted that this problem of illiteracy is escalated into bleak prospects. It was mentioned that later these street children ends up having to find some form of a stable income generating activity and start a family, but they know that if no one helps them now, their chances in succeeding at this is completely not there. Another aspect mentioned which is coupled with this is lack of professional training, A street child sincerely wants to have real vocational training but there are few organizations that can offer that to them. Until such training is obtained to divert their

attention away from bad behaviors, however, all that these children will think of is engaging in larceny.

4.3.3 Problems faced by the community from street children.

To analyze and understand the problems of street children, it is quite imperative to understand the problems that the community faces as a result of the presence of these children on the street. The study as well looked at the inherent issues that the community have in regard to the influx of street children in Lira. The study found out that the presence of street children have escalated numerous crimes ranging from minor crimes to bigger crimes depending on the age of the culprit. It was mentioned that these children have started engaging in organized crimes within the municipality. Some of them have been implicated in murder cases, others have been imprisoned due to theft, and others have been identified as serial burglars and muggers by the community. It was mentioned that there are some elderly gang of thieves who uses these children to spy for them places that can either be robbed or broken into in order to steal properties therein. This was revealed by one of the children who confided to the data collector, as mentioned below;

“.....there are our elderly friends who give us some tasks; although they are not very good tasks.....we only perform it as a means of survival.....these people uses to go and spy for them what is in peoples houses so that they go and steal them at night,they tell us to go and pretend as if we have gone to beg for food then we see through the window what is inside peoples houses....” (Child response).

This kind of information given is not really appealing, it can significantly be interpreted in two ways, that these children are constantly lured by elderly people to carry out illicit

survival methods; then it can also be interpreted that much as these children are victimized by law enforcement authorities as being involved in criminal acts, instead they should look forward into finding out such kind of significant causes of these behaviors.

The study findings also revealed that the presence of these children on the streets is setting bad precedence for other children who are growing. They tend to lure other children onto the streets by telling them that there are free things on the streets. It was noted that this is one of the pull factors for other children onto the streets. It was noted that, most children interviewed mentioned influence from other street children as the main reason for them to join the streets; they noted that they were told that there are free things when living on the streets. This is the most anguishing aspect that the community is mad about, organizations trying to help these children are as well unhappy about this negative aspect of street children, as mentioned by one of the staff from an NGO trying to help these children;

“.....if these children were not influencing their other peers from the villages to come and join the streets, we would not be having this explosion of the issue of street children, because those who have been there earlier by now would have out grown the streets, but the most annoying is their habit of bringing in their other friends from the villages. You find their number keeps growing all the time.....”
(KII response)

This disgrace about influencing other children was also echoed during a focus group discussion with the community members who emphasized it with much more deeper concern, as mentioned by one of the participants;

".....we would be very sympathetic with these street children but now we can not, they keep influencing other children to join them onto the streets and it is making it very difficult for us to have full control over these other children we have at home, especially we who live in the outskirts of the town, you find in one way or the other our children also become street children during day time, and luckily for us, they still come and sleep at home...but assuming the parents or the guardian die they all end up onto the streets simply because they shall have had all the ways or tested what the street looks like with their friends there....."(FGD response).

This response signifies the greater concern and lack of sympathy from the community members as a result of what the street children are doing in an effect of their presence on the streets is acting as another pull factor for influx of other innocent children onto the streets. This implies that the problem of street children requires a comprehensive approach in handling reduction of their influx onto the streets. This also indicates a strong reason for community ostracism and lack of empathy to the street children.

Another important aspect mentioned during the study is creation of crime-laden environment and community fear to move at night. It was indicated that these children operate and lead their lives as if they are in a lawless society; they conduct their activities without sensitivity to state and district regulations to child-conduct. Their presence onto the streets makes people fear to move in areas where they are, even those who would wish to help them fear approaching them. It was mentioned that they move in groups of different age categories with at least a ring leader, they have devised their own rules which are totally in contrary to the one society and the local community would adore, as

a result of this, they end up engaging in violent conduct like beating any innocent person moving at night alone. It was as well mentioned that these lawlessness conduct have heightened the spread of diseases both among the street children themselves and the overall community as a whole, this was noted with concern particularly the children who commit rape to innocent young girls and women, they have acquired and infected others with STIs. This was revealed by a staff in an NGO who offer health support to these children, as noted below;

“.....there is a growing danger among these children in which most people do not take it seriously, most of these children have STIs in one way or the other, according to our record of treatment that we offer, most of them who come here come for treatment for malaria but we end up carrying out all the other tests before we provide treatment but what we found out is alarming, you can not believe that almost a half of their number from our record are either having syphilis, gonorrhea, or HIV.....” (KII response).

This is quite alarming, this signifies that the lives of other young and old people whom they might inflict rape on are in danger, and they do not have time to think of protective sex, and if the trend continues, this will have to call for a specific STI intervention focusing on street children.

Although far fetched, it was also noted from the study the presence of these children is contributing negatively to the national economic growth since street children comprise of the most energetic youth who could have otherwise been engaged in a productive activity that can lead to economic growth, but they are all a wasted lot. This can be argued that, it

a result of this, they end up engaging in violent conduct like beating any innocent person moving at night alone. It was as well mentioned that these lawlessness conduct have heightened the spread of diseases both among the street children themselves and the overall community as a whole, this was noted with concern particularly the children who commit rape to innocent young girls and women, they have acquired and infected others with STIs. This was revealed by a staff in an NGO who offer health support to these children, as noted below;

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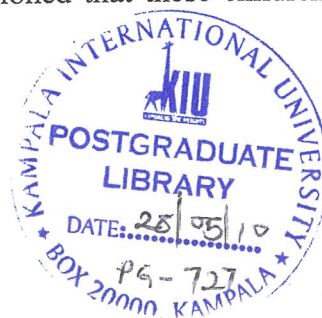
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is the negligence of the community and the nationally devised strategies to convert these children into a productive human capacity, these children can never be condemned per se that they are a wasted lot, instead they must be looked at as a pool of unguided human resource that can contribute positively towards the national development, they have undeveloped skills, they have misguided human intelligence which only requires a well packaged approach to convert these gifts they have into a productive process other than victimizing and considering them as community rejects.

4.4 INTERVENTIONS DIRECTED BY CSOs TOWARDS SUPPORTING STREET CHILDREN.

It is quite clear that whenever there is a problem identified, development partners are always keen to give a helping hand. These organizations always devise means and methods of tackling the problem, some of them design interventions geared towards provision of tangible relief items, and others design interventions that provide social healings of the mind. In regard to the plight of street children, it was indicated that there are some few organizations that have been trying to advance some form of support to the street children.

The study findings indicated that different organizations are applying different strategies in an attempt to support the street children. The most common and prominent among all the organizations mentioned was rehabilitation, reintegration and reunification of these children back into their families/communities. It was mentioned that these children are



identified from the streets, their family background is traced, provision of some rehabilitation processes carried out then they are handed over to one of the family members or relatives. It was noted that this process is not easy either. It was noted that most of these children come back to the street after a short while, the argument here was that, unless the cause of their influx into the streets is tackled from among the community, it would not be easy to remove these children from the streets. It was argued by one staff from an organization reached that, one of the main causes of influx of these children onto the streets is domestic violence therefore, unless domestic violence among families is tackled these children will still continue coming onto the streets. But nevertheless, the attempt by these organizations to carry out some form of rehabilitation should only be extended up to their families. It was mentioned that this rehabilitation process is carried out in an established center by the organization.

Looking at the rehabilitation services offered by these organizations, children noted that these organizations always carry out group counseling among themselves, they offer them some food items, they organize prayers for them, they are given some medical attention, and they are provided with games and sports activities, but these services provided are inadequate. The services offered during rehabilitation are as indicated below;

Table III; showing services offered during rehabilitation;

Services	Cum. Freq.	%ages
Counseling	44	55
Provision of food items	52	65
Games and sports	37	46
Spiritual healing	27	34
Medical attention	31	39
Cumulative Totals	191	239

Source; Raw data.

(Note; the calculation of percentages is based on each cumulative frequencies per the total number of children sampled-80).

From the table above, it can be deduced that the two prominent service packages provided to these children are food items mentioned by 65% of child respondents and counseling mentioned by 55% of the child respondents. These children noted that amidst these two common services, there are also some games and sports activities organized for them once in a while, some organizations come and take them for medical check-up and treatment, and on Sundays, they are collected and taken to church where after prayers they are given food to eat, as mentioned by one of the street children;

“.....yes its true that some NGOs are giving us some support, but these support are inadequate, they take us and provide these services but they do not tell us when they are coming back again, instead they make surprise visits to us.....”(child respondent).

This can be argued that, much as these organizations are providing some form of services to these children, it seems their interventions are not well programmed and seems not to be sustainable. The only best way to handle rehabilitation and reintegration of these children could be best carried out in a fully fledged and established center with several facilities, but this establishment is not existent in the district, and to worsen the matter, the National Orphans and other Vulnerable Children's Policy does not require institutional establishment of centers for keeping children, rather it emphasizes integration and support of these categories of children while within the community.

The study findings as well indicated that some organizations have developed interventions along the line of education. These interventions are divided into two folds; the formal education; and the vocational skills development strategies. Under the formal education strategies, these children are selected from the street and taken back to school, then the organization covers their school fees and other requirements, then under vocational strategies, there are organizations that have established vocational training centers like CEASOP, whereby they collect children and provide free vocational trainings on various skills, they provide accommodation and meals for them. But this approach is not going without challenges, it was noted that some children only join the center with a different motive; they stay there for a few weeks then get back to the street implying that they only join the center to access good feeding as opposed to the one they get from the streets.

The study findings indicated that the district have established a program for supporting street children through meeting the medical costs of those who go to the main Lira regional referral Hospital for treatment of acute severe illness. This was passed by the division council meeting and approved by the district council. Although it was noted that these children are first scrutinized. This is being implemented in collaboration with Child restoration outreach Center; one of the NGOs supporting street children in the municipality, this scrutiny is meant to avoid meeting medical costs of all children in the district. This was mentioned by one of the councilors in Ojwina division, as noted;

“...we have started a program jointly with one of the NGOs operational here in the municipality, we have agreed to meet medical treatment costs of these children through our local revenue collection here...this will go in books as contribution of the district in support of the health problems that these street children are facing....” (KII response).

This signifies that the district is working in collaboration with other CSOs operational in the municipality to help support health issues that the street children are facing. This can be deduced that, the task of supporting street children is not left in the hands of CSOs alone but all the stakeholders are directly involved which signifies the magnitude of the problem to the community and the government.

It was also found out that, these street children are always in conflict with the law and they equally need legal support. It was indicated that there is a very un-noticed legal support advanced to these children. Almost all the organizations reached working in support of the plight of street children, none of them had any intervention towards legal

support of these children, and instead they are perceived as problem causers other than victims of circumstances. This implies that much as these children are problematic as perceived by the community, any problem inflicted onto them would go without justice; instead they will be treated as the sole cause of the problem.

It was also noted that, there are good socio-economic strategies laid down by organizations in an attempt to help these children, but it is in books, none of the organizations is implementing it. Income generating activities are top priority in most strategies in organizations planned for street children but, considering the lifestyle of these children, it is quite hard for these strategies to be implemented. The table bellow shows the top most planned activities for these children extracted from strategic plans of all the organizations visited;

Table IV; showing planned strategies to be implemented in support of street children.

Planned Income generating activities.	Planned Time frame (Average)	Target (Average number of beneficiaries)
		150
Poultry	3 yrs and above	100
Animal raising	2 yrs and above	50
Bee keeping	1 yr and above	80
Crops farming	1 yr and above	100
Small-Scale Businesses.	6 mths and above	80
Carpentry	2 yrs and above	50
Brick making and baking	1 yr and above	50
Tailoring	1 yr and above	660
Total	-- -- --	

Source; Strategic plans of CSOs visited.

It can be noted from the table above that, all the organizations visited have a well laid down strategy for socio-economic support for street children, only that they are facing a great challenge of mobilizing these children for stable cause, assembling them in one place for an engagement in an income generating activity. This was strongly emphasized by one of the staff from Initiative for Restoration of Hope (IRHO) that they even have received funds from donors to implement their planned Income Generating Activity for

street children, but they have tried to mobilize them into groups in vain, as mentioned; *“...these children are too much used to the street, we tried to form groups among them so that we train them on what to begin doing in vain, they attend the meeting only once and absent themselves...”*. This simply shows the difficulty in organizing these children into an active participation in socio-economic activity.

It was also noted that MARIE STOPES offer health education programs to the street children. It was mentioned that they collect these children during day time at their office premise and conduct the program, particularly on methods of transmission of STI, means and methods of prevention of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, and general counseling and testing of these children. It was noted that these children are more willing to attend these free education on health issues, and after counseling sessions, majority of them willfully accept to carry out testing on STIs. One of the methods used by MARIE STOPES is conducting film shows on reproductive health issues and sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) in all the divisions targeting the general youth, of which the street children are inclusive.

The study findings also revealed that, the district and active CSOs operational in the district are constantly organizing community dialogue processes to enlighten the community about issues regarding children. It was indicated that they are approaching the problem of street children from the perspective of community responsibilities. The district through the established child protection committees, are ensuring that child neglect and all other forms of child abuse is reduced and stopped, simply because they

are identified as the key causes of child influx onto the streets, thus the communities must be held responsible for the problems affecting children. It was noted that, stringent measures are being put in place to punish parents and care givers who do not take care of children, the district local council has already taken the lead of initiating and passing by-laws to help rectify the scourge. It was noted that all the CSOs functional in the district have been mapped and what they are doing and how they are doing in line with child protection issues, and they are all registered as members of child protection working groups.

It was as well found out that, many CSOs are engaged advocacy for children's rights, resource allocation for children's welfare activities. This was echoed by members of local council interviewed, it was indicated that organizations have established an advocacy forum headed by district NGO forum where all key actors present their advocacy strategies for mobilizing resources geared towards bringing change in the lives of children, improving status and giving guidance to street children, establishing community safety nets systems that can bar children from looking for livelihood from the streets but rather getting support from the community members themselves. This drive have yielded some positive results although at yet a slow pace, but there is commitment exhibited from all the key players in ensuring that children are delineated from coming to the streets.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the summary of findings, conclusion arrived at, and recommendations derived from the study.

5.2 SUMMARY.

It can be noted that, this study focused on the street children looking at the causes of their influx onto the streets, the problems of street children, and the interventions that have been directed towards trying to solve the problems of street children. It was found out that the causes of influx of these children onto the streets are many and are looked at from different perspectives.

It is indicated that there are numerous causes of influx of children onto the streets, they ranged from family disorientation to the structural rigidities and inconsistencies in government policies that fails to support certain categories of suffering children. It was indicated that social catastrophes like HIV/AIDS pandemic, ethnic conflicts, and child trafficking are the main causes of influx of children onto the streets. It was mentioned that the effects of HIV/AIDS is almost the main cause, majority of children interviewed mentioned being an orphan due to HIV/AIDS or have lost the caregiver due to the scourge. It was noted that when they no longer have some one to take care of them the only option is to join their friends onto the streets of Lira and any other town in Uganda in search for food, love, friends, and any sympathizer who can support them.

Another social catastrophe indicated was ethnic/tribal conflict. This though not strongly emphasized by the children, it as well contributed to the influx of children onto the street. This was prominently mentioned by children from Karamoja region, they noted that the clan disputes and inter-tribal raids have made them to leave their homes and run away to

the neighboring districts like Lira, but still, deeply analyzed, it all coils down into lack of family support and no one to turn to for support.

It was indicated that inter-district child trafficking is as well contributing to the influx of children onto the streets of Lira, these children are ferried from wherever they are and promised lots of things which are not there and they end up onto the streets.

Another driving factor mentioned was political catastrophes as playing a great role in causing influx of children onto the streets. One of the main longstanding effects of the twenty years long Lords Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in the North is the influx of children onto the streets. This war disrupted the social safety-nets structures in the region, created total lack of hope to the community, leaving children with no hope other than joining the streets.

Poverty is another major cause of influx of children onto the streets. Although poverty is quite a big concept to talk about, some of its inherent attributes have caused the influx of children onto the streets. This is mainly due to lack of capacity of parents to afford to meet the costs of education due to poverty, leaving many children to remain out of school, they join bad peers who lead them onto the streets.

Local community members mentioned with great concern that child abuse including violence, sexual or emotional abuse and neglect, sexual harassment, domestic violence against women, incest, child starvation, and truancy are all contributing greatly towards influx of children onto the streets. It is noted that these behaviors have created conditions that children can not bare at their various homes where they lived thus abandoning their homes and joining the streets. This is even made worse by incest among young girls who lived with their relatives in different villages, when they can not stand these conducts of their close relatives; they end up onto the streets.

Another aspect noted leading to influx of children onto the streets is alcohol and drug abuse of a family member. Once a family member is seriously engaged in substance abuse of any kind, it disrupts the family peace which gives room for child neglect and

other abuses subjecting a child to very harsh conditions since parents do not have time to attend to their needs.

On the aspect of problems of street children, it is noted that they suffer from community rebuke to individual health problems. The main prominent problem identified was hunger due to lack of proper food to survive on. It was indicated that these children survive on residues and remains of food from restaurants and hotels that are disposed in the Town Council garbage skips all over town. This was clearly indicated by both key informants and street children themselves. It was noted that this problem has been heightened by the current swerve of famine cutting across the region.

Another striking problem is lack of a safe place to spend a night in. it was noted that, where these children spend their night is full of high risks in all aspects, they sleep in the corridors of buildings, sleep in wreckages of spoilt vehicles, they sleep under parked vehicles. Other problems noted are; serious exploitation by people who do not have any kind heart for these children, they are subjected to numerous forms of violence both among themselves and from other people, they are faced with serious attitudes of rejection and by the community leading to stigmatization and non-sociability, they suffer a lot from various forms of diseases due to living in filthy areas and bad sexual behaviors among themselves which have made most of them contract STIs, since almost all of them have left school it implies that they suffer from illiteracy.

It is noted that the presence of street children have escalated numerous crimes ranging from minor crimes to bigger crimes depending on the age of the culprit. It was mentioned that these children have started engaging in organized crimes within the municipality. Some of them have been implicated in murder cases, others have been imprisoned due to theft, and others have been identified as serial burglars and muggers by the community. the presence of these children on the streets is setting bad precedence for other children who are growing.

In regard to interventions directed to supporting these children, the most common and prominent among all the organizations mentioned is rehabilitation, reintegration and reunification of these children back into their families/communities. Some organizations have developed interventions along the line of education. These interventions are divided into two folds; the formal education; and the vocational skills development strategies. Under the formal education strategies, these children are selected from the street and taken back to school, then the organization covers their school fees and other requirements, then under vocational strategies, there are organizations that have established vocational training centers for these children where they are trained on skills development strategies. The district have also established a program for supporting street children through meeting the medical costs of those who go to the main Lira regional referral Hospital for treatment of acute severe illness.

5.3 CONCLUSION.

Basing on the study findings, conclusion can be arrived at that, there are numerous causes of influx of children onto the streets. These causes are not mostly extraneous to the interest of these children. They are driven onto the streets as the only alternative to life. It can further be concluded that, the family set up of these children are quite problematic, most families where they lived could not support them in terms of providing for their needs, most families where they left are in chaos with lots of violent behaviors subjected to either the children or the female counterparts/caregiver. Its further deduced that many street children are orphans due to HIV/AIDS, they have lost heir parents and caregivers due to the AIDS epidemic. The prolonged LRA war in the north has even made the influx of children onto the streets more than doubled.

Certainly it can further be concluded that he problem of street children are numerous and most important is the problems that they the street children are facing. The problem the community is facing due their presence onto the streets is quite blamed onto the negligence of the community members to provide for the needs of these children through strong community safety-nets systems. Much as there are some organizations trying to

work round the clock to support these children, their support seems not sustainable since the number and influx of these children are out-growing the available resources. The problems of street children if not handled with a multi dimensional approach, it will burst into a very serious national issue that is quite beyond the level at which it is at present.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS.

Inline with the study findings, summary, and the conclusion arrived at, the following recommendations can be arrived at;

- The street children should be organized in groups and counseled about the problems they are facing, and the community should be made aware that these children are on the streets not because of their desire, but due to lack of alternative sources of livelihood.
- The district and community volunteers should establish some vocational training centers for these children so that they are trained on various vocational skills that would help them generate some income for their livelihood.
- There must be a serious campaign against domestic violence among the community so that the causes of influx of children onto the streets as a result of domestic violence are reduced.
- The government should devise an all encompassing policy for dealing with street children and it should be widely disseminated to all the key actors trying to solve the problems of street children. This will guide interventions designed to support street children by giving priority areas of focus with preferences on to interventions that minimize keeping these children on the streets.
- All the organizations dealing with street children must have a collaborative linkage among themselves with establishment of a clear referral system among themselves for these children to access services provided by all the organizations.

5.5 SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

These are some suggested areas for further researches;

- Analysis of problems of street children for policy establishment and interventions.
- Role of decentralized service delivery in solving problems of street children.
- Community social welfare systems and service delivery to children.

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Appendix I.

QUESTIONNAIRE

“Street Children a Panacea for a Healthy future of society”

In the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Masters Degree of Conflict Resolution and Peace Building, I am conducting research to find out the causes of influx of street children onto the streets, problems they face, the interventions implemented by organizations in an attempt to help solve this problems of street children, in Lira Municipality. It is for this purpose that I am requesting you to participate in this study. Every thing you say will be for academic purposes only, so please I request for your kind cooperation.

Background Information.

1. Respondent's code No.

--	--	--

2. Age

--

3. Sex

--

1. Male

2. Female

Causes of Influx of children onto the streets;

4- What can you tell me about children?

.....

.....

5- How do children in this community conduct themselves?

.....

.....

6- a)- Are you aware of children living, surviving, and spending their lives on the street?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b) - If yes, what categories of age group are the ones common onto the streets?

.....

7- Where do these children come from?

.....

8- Do these children have a community belonging?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9- If yes, why do you think they live on the streets?

.....

.....

10- What is the role of parents and caregivers in taking care of children?

.....

.....

11- a) Have you ever heard of child abuse?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b) - If yes, what are the forms of child abuse that you know?

.....

.....

12- What are the reasons for children coming to streets?

.....
.....
13- What reasons do the community members have for letting their children go onto the streets?

.....
.....
14- As a child, what are the needs of children?

.....
.....
15- What reasons do children have to leave their homes and join the streets?.....

.....
Problems street children face;

16- a) - Have you ever had a problem at childhood?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b) - If yes, what were the problems?

.....
.....
17- As a community member, what problems do you see children facing in this community?

18- Looking at street children, what problems do you think they face?

.....

.....

19- What problems do children face in their respective families that can make them run away from home?

.....

.....

20 - What do you think are the main key problems that street children face?

.....

.....

21- What problems do the community members face as a result of the presence of street children?

.....

.....

22- What role is community members playing in making children join the streets?

.....

.....

23- What issues are there that chases children away from homes to join the streets?

.....

.....

Interventions implemented by CSOs.

24- a)- Are there some organizations trying to give support to street children here?

Yes ☐ No ☐

b)- If yes, which organizations are those?

.....
.....

25- What kind of activities/services do these organizations provide to these children?

.....
.....

26- Where do they get these children?

.....
.....

27- Are these children satisfied with the services these organizations provide?

Yes ☐ No ☐

28- In your organizations, what kind of planned and implemented interventions are there for these children?

.....
.....

29- What challenges are these organizations facing in attempt to support street children?

.....
.....

30- How can the problem of street children be solved?

.....
.....

31- What solutions can be given to the problems faced by street children in Lira?

.....
.....

32- What general comment, remark and suggestion can you make in line with this study?

.....
.....

Thanks a lot for participating in this study, once more, I would like to assure you that everything you mentioned here will be treated with utmost confidentiality, and for academic purpose only.

Appendix II

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE.

In the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Masters Degree of Conflict Resolution and Peace Building, I am conducting research to find out the causes of influx of street children onto the streets, problems they face, the interventions implemented by organizations in an attempt to help solve this problems of street children, in Lira Municipality. It is for this purpose that I am requesting you to participate in this study. Every thing you say will be for academic purposes only, so please I request for your kind cooperation.

- 1- What do you know about children?
- 2- In your families, how do children conduct themselves?
- 3- How do parents and caregivers generally treat all the children in their respective families?
- 4- Are you aware of the issues and problems regarding street children in this community?
- 5- Are there street children in this community?
- 6- What are the causes of the influx of street children on the streets?
- 7- What are the problems of street children in this community?
 - a)- the ones they face b)- faced by the community.

- Are you aware of the issues and problems regarding street children in this community?
- Are there street children in this community?
- What are the causes of the influx of street children on the streets?
- What are the problems of street children in this community?
 - a)- the ones they face b)- faced by the community.
- What interventions are so far being made by civil society organizations to help solve the problem of street children?
- What solutions can be made to help mitigate the problem of street children?
- Any general comments, remarks, and suggestions that can contribute to this study?

Thanks a lot for participating in this study, once more, everything you have mentioned here will be treated with confidentiality and for academic purpose only.



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