Making the invisible visible: An enumeration of children on the streets in Malawi
CPC webinar
28th July 2015
Who was involved

- Department of Social Welfare
- Blantyre City Council
- Malawi Judiciary

Led by Maggie Crewes, Charles Gwengwe, David Whitford and Joanna Wakia

With funding from Human Dignity Foundation

- Children of the Nations
- Every Child
- Federation for Disability Organisations of Malawi (FEDOMA)
- God Cares Malawi
- Lilongwe Christian Centre
- Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA)
- Onesimus
- Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM)
- Step Kids Awareness (STEKA)
- Student Volunteers
- The Samaritan Trust
- Theatre for a Change
- Tikondane Youth Care
- Youthcare Ministries
Background - globally

- A global lack of reliable evidence to inform policy and practice
- The often cited estimate of 100 million street children has “no basis in fact, and we are no closer today to knowing how many children worldwide are working and/or living in the streets” (UNOHCHR 2012)
- In the past, large “guesstimates” may have brought support but also led to large, repressive responses (Thomas de Benítez 2011)
- Children on the streets are often villainised and their circumstance not understood
Complexity of street enumerations

• Clear definitions of which children to include
• Suitable method for hard-to-reach groups
• Access to and trust with children
• Adequate resources
Background – in Malawi

• No recent surveys to establish the number of children living and working on the streets.
• Some qualitative studies have been undertaken recently looking at the experiences of children on the streets (EveryChild Malawi, 2012; Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2012; God Cares Orphan Care, 2012).
• Government has recently developed the National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets
Goal & Definition

• To provide an estimate of the number of children living and working on the streets of Blantyre and Lilongwe, in order to inform the government strategy on street children and direct work with children

• For the purposes of this survey street children were considered to be those:
  – Reporting or observed to be sleeping or working on the streets
  – Between the ages of 7 and 15 years (in line with the Malawian children’s act and to meet ethical guidelines)
Capture/recapture Methodology

• Suitable for populations where a complete census is difficult due to their mobile, hidden or hard to reach nature.
• Provides an estimation of the total population, with a measure of accuracy.
• Requires two counts which are then matched to establish the overlap. Then estimate total population by inflating the first count by the undercount
  – In this example, 1 in 10 children were missed... \( \frac{364}{3636} = 0.1 \)
  – So inflate the first count by 10%... \( \frac{(3636+364)}{3636} = 1.1 \)

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Initial Count (N)} & \text{Non-matched (NM)} & \\
5000 & 364 & \\
\hline
\text{Matched (M)} & & \\
3636 & & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

\[
N^*(M + NM)/M = 5000*(3636+364)/3636 = 5500
\]
Data collection

• Data collection: 24-29 November 2014 in Lilongwe and 1-6 December 2014 in Blantyre
• Involving 50 experienced and trained enumerators
• In 16 locations in Lilongwe and 14 in Blantyre identified by participants as being places where children are known to sleep, work or congregate.
• Two days of training, followed by count 1 for two days and then count 2 for two days
Impact on enumerators

• Those involved in interviewing children told us that they were surprised by...
  – how welcoming the children were
  – how many positive attributes they had

• They also felt...
  – They can make a difference,
  – More confident that children will respond if they go with the right attitude and approach,
  – Motivated to do more and engage further with the children
Data processing

• Once the data was collected...
  – Quality checks were undertaken and anomalies corrected where possible
  – Duplicates were removed (12 in each city)
  – Eligibility was determined by:
    • Only including children in the agreed age range (7-15yrs)
    • Only including children who reported or were observed to be **sleeping** or **working** on the streets
  – Matching two counts for each city
Limitations

• Pilot – a lot of learning along the way
• Coverage
  – effort to include girls, helped having an NGO known to these children and those around them
  – cover all areas where children are known to congregate, but possible not all locations were included
• Seasonality – only one point in the year
Key Results - Totals

We estimate the number of children who reported or were observed to be living or working on the street in

Lilongwe to be 2,389
Blantyre to be 1,776
Key Results – Age & Sex

1 in 5 are girls, over 50% between 10-13 years

Compared to the general population of the same age (7-15yrs) and location...

Lilongwe: General population

Street population

...fewer younger children

...fewer girls
Key Results – Home & School

Home within city

Live with parents

On the streets most days

At school most days
## Comparison to other studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>EveryChild – Lilongwe</th>
<th>MHRC – 21 districts</th>
<th>God Cares - Mzuzu</th>
<th>This study – Lilongwe &amp; Blantyre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>93 male: 7 female</td>
<td>88 male: 12 female</td>
<td>80 male: 20 female</td>
<td>80 male: 20 female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>76% 7-14 years</td>
<td>Average 14 years</td>
<td>Average 12 years</td>
<td>Over 50% 10-13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sleep at home</strong></td>
<td>37% living with one or both parents and 35% with other relatives</td>
<td>83% sleeping at home, of these 50% with their parents or other relatives</td>
<td>54% living with one or both parents and 39% with other relatives</td>
<td>Over 60% living with parents, and another 13-16% with relatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Results - Living on the streets

In both cities, roughly 10% of children live on the streets. That’s about 200 children.
Key Results – Working on the streets

In both cities,

Most children work on the streets and return home to sleep

Roughly, 65% live with their parents,

And 15% with other relatives.
Key results – Living vs Working

Children who live on the streets are more likely to:
• be male (M:F 80:10)
• have no contact with family (30% Lilongwe, >50% in Blantyre)
• never attend school (70%)

Children who work on the streets are more likely to:
• be female (M:F 70:20)
• see family every day (>75%)
• attend school every day (>40%)
Key results – Gender differences

• 1 in 5 children on the streets are girls
• Girls are less likely to sleep on the streets but more likely to be living with relatives
• Girls are more likely to stay in contact with parents
• In Blantyre only, girls are more likely to remain in school
• In both locations, boys are further behind in their education
• Both boys and girls are reported to be involved in sex work, but more girls found to be involved in Lilongwe (due to NGO’s access to their location)
Implications for policy and practice

- Focus on strengthening families in the informal urban settlements
- Greater community-level awareness raising events on child labour, child protection and parenting skills, gender norms
- More street outreach activities
- Coordination of transition centres, focusing on children living on the streets, and linked to reintegration and alternative care
- Specific initiatives to target children in commercial sex work, both boys and girls
Recommendations

• Interventions need to:
  – Focus on child labour and family strengthening in urban settings
  – Improve outreach and avoid unnecessary family separation and criminalisation
  – Ensure services are individualised
  – Build capacity for reintegration and alternative care with local follow-up support
  – Increase specific support for children involved in sex work and those affected by disability
Recommendations

• Stakeholders in Malawi need to:
  – Ensure national coordination and monitoring of all activities which benefit children on the streets
  – Advocate for and pursue alignment of national policy and legislation
Recommendation

• Further research should:
  – Continue the discussion of enumeration results and methodologies
  – Look at the impact of enumeration studies on policy and practice
  – Use enumeration results to enable other analysis, such as the cost of children on the streets, for instance the impact of lost years of education