A Qualitative Study of Risks and Protective Factors for Violence Against Children in Uganda

Research Findings and Lessons from Researching Children with Children as Researchers

Firminus Mugumya
(Makerere University Department of Social Work)
&
Amy Ritterbusch
(UCLA– Luskin School of Public Affairs)
Over-arching objectives

• To contribute to the on-going research strategy on exploring Pathways out of child Adversity

• To complement the national [quantitative] survey on VACS
  • More context sensitive (rural-urban, post conflict)
  • Not just focused on households
  • Focuses on age groups (0-12)

• To generate evidence-base on key drivers of children’s risk and resilience
Methodology

• Participatory Observational Research - **35 field diaries**
• 52 Semi-Structured, Cartographic Interviews
• 31 Auto-photography and Place Perception Interviews
• 4 Focus Groups
• ‘Future Search’ Workshop with 10 children from all subgroups
Study Population

• Street-connected children (aged 5-17 years) in Kampala.
• Sexually exploited children.
• Positive transition cases.
• Child Domestic Workers.
Child Centred Methods – Beginning with immersion activities
Child-Centered Methods

“...seeks to create space for diverse and localized ways of naturally communicating meaning ...” (Bleiker and Kay 2007: 152).

→ Child-centered reflexivity practice
Cognitive and Activity Mapping

Cognitive and Activity Mapping Variables and Instructions:
In the following questions we will ask you to locate a series of places. There are no right or wrong answers with these maps. Everyone’s mental map is 100% accurate, because it is a reflection of how you see your surroundings. Each person has mental maps in their head reflecting one’s experiences, attitudes and values towards place.

** Place a black star next to what happens only at night.
** Place a yellow sun next to what happens only during the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The limits of your mental map</td>
<td></td>
<td>Locate where you live and have lived in the past (yellow).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td>Locate the places that you avoid in your city/area (orange). Why do you avoid them? Are you avoiding someone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places that I avoid</td>
<td></td>
<td>Locate dangerous places for you and your friends in your city/area (dark blue). Where do you feel unsafe? Why? Because of whom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous places</td>
<td></td>
<td>Locate violent places in your city/area (red). Why are the places violent? Can you tell me a story about what happened here? Who was the perpetrator of the violent act? Please mark any others on your mental map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Street Boy Activity Map (Activity Mapping)
Street Girl Activity Map
Semi-Structured, Cognitive and Activity Mapping
Semi-Structured Interviews
Focus Groups with Sexually Exploited Girl Children
Focus Group - Domestic Workers- Boys
Auto-photography: Visualizing Violence and Resilience through the Lens of Children

“... presenting and representing their message in a contextualized way and in a visual and visible form that has the potential to educate and sensitize others about social change” (De Lange & Mitchell, 2012, p. 323).
Place Perception
Future Search
Data Analysis

ESRI ArcMap:
• GIS used as a means to aggregate and display spatial data about individual participants and groups of participants

Participatory Analysis:
• NVIVO11: code and analyze transcribed interview, focus group and visual data, fieldnotes and primary documents collected
Participatory Data Analysis
KEY FINDINGS
TRIGGERS FOR LEAVING HOME

- Poor parenting skills
- Poor living conditions and lack of basic needs.
- Peer pressure
- Child-trafficking

“Life in the village was difficult. I was infected with jiggers and the village was always tormented by rebels who raided homes in the night to demand for different items. We would surrender everything to them in order to save our lives. This is the very reason why I left the village and came this way. When I came, I was told about the ‘street’, so I started begging”. Semi-Structured interviews-Girl.
TRIGGERS FOR LEAVING HOME

Emotional/Psychological and Physical Violence in households

• Children are beaten, tortured, burnt and stabbed

“One time, I broke the water container when I tripped while coming from the well. When I told my step mother she demanded to know what was I doing to break it. She was not satisfied with the response, she instead beat me up. When my father came and asked why the container was licking. She told him what I had told her earlier. He held my hand and put it in the fire as I watched! He said to me that, ‘I have burnt your hand for breaking the container, never break any other container again’...He pushed my hand in the fire for some time. I was eight years old. He locked me in the house. I was not allowed to go anywhere. The hand was rotting away and maggots were visible. Whenever they were eating, they could dismiss me saying that, “You smell, go away!’ After some time, he went to visit a ‘musezi’ (Cannibal) and told her to take me and do what she wanted with me. She came and they made a written agreement. They also asked my step mother to sign...She declined and asked her husband, “Are you selling your daughter to get money?” she called an old woman who first received us on the village. She informed her of dad’s plan, she intervened and asked him to take me to the hospital. She threatened him that if he did not take me to hospital, she would call for his arrest. He said, ‘I don’t have anywhere I am taking the child...she smells a lot...I don’t care if she died...her mother also died!’...later the neigbours took me to Hospital in Masaka but the hand was alresdy disfigured.”

Domestic Workers Focus Group Discussions Boys and Girls
TRIGGERS OF ESCAPE FROM REHABILITATION CENTRES/OR AND RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES

- Torture
- Failure to adapt [instant withdraw from drugs a challenge to addicts]
- Over-crowding and poor nutrition
- Un-met expectations
Conditions on the street not any better
(Poor Health, Hygiene and Sanitation)

• Lack of proper shelter children are forced to stay and sleep in dirty and open places.
• Lack of access to water, soap, bathing and toilet facilities exposes children to jiggers, diarrhea, cholera, and tetanus after cuts of broken bottles and sharp objects.
• When children fall sick there is limited access to medication most especially when the treatment prescribed is not available in the health facilities, and they have to buy it.
VIOLENT PLACES FOR STREET-CONNECTED BOYS & GIRLS

- Katwe- Kinyoro and Kikaramoja
- Kevina
- Kisenyi
- Kivulu
- Dancerz club in Salama
- Clock tower area
- Nakivubbo channel
- Kisekka

In Kisekka, they rape girls, they even burn the children while they are sleeping in the sacks...they burnt a child while he was sleeping...Those big guys burnt him with the petrol they sniff...They ran away. What they do is they tie the sack like the KCCA guys, they pour a little of their petrol on you and light up. So whoever wakes up first has to rush and get some water to put out the fire and then untie the sack”.

Semi-Structured interviews, Cognitive and Activity mapping\Boy R8
Substance abuse

**Drug abuse:** aviation fuel, Marijuana, Cocaine, mairungi, cigarettes, kabanga (mixed marijuana and tobacco), shisha and alcohol in order to:

- Get rid of stress or negative thoughts
- Endure the cold nights
- Endure hunger
- Resist sleep and work for longer hours
Sexual violence on the street

• Boys are sodomized on the streets,
• Street girls are gang-raped when found walking at night.
• Armed personnel sexually abuse girls.

“There is an Afande from who raped me ... I was with my friends at Dancer’s Club and policemen raided the place. My friends ran away and one police man held my hand saying he was taking me to the police station. Instead, he took me to his house and raped me” (15-year-old sexually exploited girl, Place Perception Interview, May 20, 2016).
Forms of physical violence on the street.

- Slapping
- Beating
- Burning
- Stabbing and cutting

“At night, when we are sleeping in the sacks, sometimes police or KCCA guys come and beat us. There’s even a child that they pulled on the pavement until flesh came off his butt…”

(12-year-old street-connected boy, Life history interview with social cartography,
Consequences of Violence

- Rupturing of sexual & reproductive organs, unplanned pregnancies, STDs and HIV AIDS
- Death through poisoning by food vendors and drug abuse.
- Mental illness, lung infections.
- Police/ military/Askari
- Thugs (bayaye)/Kifesi
- Step parents, step mother or step fathers
- Mechanics
- Peers
- Employers of child domestic workers
- City Authority personnel (KCCA)
- Community members - Taxi drivers, Taxi conductors and other business people.
RESILIENCE – OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

• NGOs/churches - provide places for rest, entertainment, food, shelter, counselling and guidance.

• Vocational skills and recreational activities e.g. football, music and dance.

• IGA e.g. selling scrap, plastics, and polythene; food vending

• Medical support from Health facilities (KCCA, Baylor Health Centre – Mulago).
Positively transited children & challenges faced

Some children made up their minds to leave the street and begin their own business or get jobs after rehabilitation.

However, they still face challenges e.g. insufficient money for rent/accommodation and/or capital to start/boost their own businesses.
• Strengthen community-based child protection structures
• Step-up sensitization on good parenting practices, back this with relevant legislation, enforce this legislation.
• Prosecute perpetrators of violence against children
• Provide more gender sensitive education and skills for the youth
• Rehabilitate, reconcile, resettle children into family care, and follow-up
• Ban recruitment of children as domestic workers and enforce tough laws on offenders
• Domestic workers should be treated with dignity