

The Causes and Effects of Street Children on Freetown: Daniel Ernest Max Lavalie-Ministry of Technical and Higher Education: Northwest Region.

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Abstract- This paper attempts to investigate the causes and effect of street children on Freetown. It is descriptive in nature as the paper discusses the causes and effects of street children on Freetown. The issue of street children is becoming alarming especially after the ten year rebel war, Ebola outbreak and now Corona. One hundred streets children and those living in rehabilitating centres were targeted. The questionnaire and interviews were the main data collection instruments. These questionnaires were administered through a research guide. It was found out that the major causes of street children are poverty, child abuse, family disintegration, truancy and orphans. The effects of these children in the streets of Freetown is an embarrassment to the government, parents, communities and the general public from whom these children beg from. It is recommended that severe penalties should be reconsidered for parents who expose their children to risk and vulnerability through full application of the provisions of the child law. Street children should be able to have access to governmental vocational training, without the pre-requisites of legal credentials. Such a project is strongly supported by all NGOs working with street children that believe in the efficacy of the training programmes provided at the governmental level which street children should benefit from.

Index Terms- Poverty, street children, communities, rehabilitation, child abuse and truancy

I. INTRODUCTION

According to statistics Sierra Leone 2015 children aged 10 – 14 years contribute 0.3 per cent, while those aged 15 – 19 years contribute 11.6 per cent of the 7.09 million people. Accordingly, there are two categories of street children in Sierra Leone. The first is referred to children who stay with their parents or adult guardians at home but who go into the street daily to socialize with other children or to earn money for their family or themselves. These children return home in the evening. The next category is those children who have abandoned or leave their homes and are permanently staying or living in the streets to work. These children have not received any parental guidance or parental care. Both categories are said to be equally vulnerable to violations of children's rights and child abuse. A common scene is for a young girl to beg for money with a young sibling on her back. At times, the young girl may claim that the child on her back is her own, which, on occasion it may be. However, more

often than not, the child is a younger brother or sister carried around in an effort to elicit sympathy from people they approach for money. Children may simply approach strangers and ask for money, turning away when they are told no. Other children will walk with a person especially foreigners like whites for several meters stressing their chronic hunger. Some children even tug on the arms of people in an effort to encourage giving.

Another approach occurs at stoplights, where children move from the driver's window to the passenger side of the same car in an effort to find a sympathetic person. This is a normal scene around the cotton tree. Although an occasional personal in the car or in the street gives money to street beggars the vast majority of people do not. Even those citizens who do give money often avoid all physical contact with the street child for fear of contacting some type of skin disease.

Some street children engage in some type of labour to survive. A large number of young boys are 'parking boys' who wait on crowded parking streets for cars to approach. The child (or children) will assist the driver in pulling into a parking place and then will clean and guard the car while the driver is away. Street children hope that the driver will pay them for their efforts. Although some girls participate in this activity, the overwhelming majority of such children are boys.

Other street children sell a variety of small items in the informal sector, including paper from trash containers, peanuts, candy, cigarettes, and other products. In addition, because of desperate economic conditions, some children increasingly steal watches, purses and other items especially in Freetown. Street children represent a large pool of easily exploited workers in various types of labour. Young boys are recruited for manual labour positions such as dishwashers and cleaners, especially in small informal sector eating establishments known as kiosks or cookery selling places. The boys wake up early to clean and work in the kitchen (peel potatoes) and after working through the day and evening they clean again after closing hours. In exchange for this labour, these boys are paid a nominal wage, given food and allowed to sleep on the floor of the kiosk or cookery 'baffa' floor.

Clearly, these boys do not have the opportunity to attend school. Young girls often are recruited as 'house girls' (maids) where they work very long hours doing housework and caring for young children. House girls seldom have an opportunity to attend school and receive very little payment or nothing for their labour. They often receive only a room and food. Moreover, house girls are frequent victims of sexual abuse by men in the home. Sierra Leone laws on child labour are weak and rarely enforced.

Prostitution constituting street children in Sierra Leone is also a major problem. The majority of girls are from poor families, abandoned, neglected or orphaned children who are exposed to this life style during their problematic young lives. Although good estimates concerning the number of children engaged in prostitution are not available, there is a consensus that the numbers are growing for several reasons. Sierra Leone's deepening poverty is a breeding ground for sexual and other types of exploitation. More girls become involved in prostitution to survive and generate additional income for themselves and their families

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of Street Children

There are two groups of street children. The first group is 'children of the street', which refers to children who are homeless, and streets in urban areas are their source of livelihood, where they sleep and live. The second group is 'children in the street', who work and live in the streets in the daytime but return back home at night where they sleep, although some of them sleep occasionally in the street. Nevertheless, there is no clear distinction between the two groups as they often differ from their common definitions: some children of the street may still have links with their families and some children in the street often sleep on the street.

2.2. Characteristics of Street Children

In order to identify the characteristics of street children, six factors will be employed. These factors will be related to poor and vulnerable conditions that characterize each group and how each group manages to live in such conditions

a. Shelter

Street children usually do not have a permanent place to sleep. Many of them sleep in the streets or on pavements near shops and malls, while others prefer sleeping at bus terminals, under bridges and by cinemas. Meanwhile, some girls prefer spending their nights with security guards due to being vulnerable and subject to abuse if they spent their nights in the streets. So, they try to find a suitable place to sleep according to their surrounding circumstances. Meanwhile, many urban street children live in very poor quality housing known as slums where people do not have access to one or all of these services: drinking water; sanitation and electricity. It could be argued that despite the poor conditions of slums, they provide permanent place to live in, and are more secure than living in the streets like street children. However, slum dwellers need to pay for rent, electricity and water while street children do not need to pay for any of these services which would reduce the finance burden on them

b. Poverty

Street children work as car – parking boys, car washers, guards for the cars, shoe shiners and baggage loaders. Some older girls exchange sex for money; some of them rely on selling goods and begging in traffic for making an income. Others are involved in illegal work like drug dealing. In order to secure their daily basic needs, they set up a system whereby each group has a zone where the undertake their activities to avoid any kind of competition for the available resources. On the other hand, dwellers are involved in the informal sector as a source of

generating income that represents an acceptable alternative to the formal sector. However, the informal sector has some disadvantages that affect the poor, such as absence of social insurance and vulnerability to economic shocks (Baker, 2008).It could be argued that despite street children seeming more vulnerable, they can manage to afford their daily life needs due to being very well organised. For example, they know worshipping places and at times so they can go there at prayer time in order to gain money or food. They are also aware of religious festivals and celebrations, as these days bring them good sources of income. They also use tourist sites and Non-International Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as good source for their survival. However, being chased by police and state authorities hinders their activities

c. Infrastructure Amenities

Some street children use seawater for washing, while others use public bathrooms. Sometimes they use leaking water from public pipes or use public water kiosks to fulfill their needs for drinking water. However, they are harassed either by people or police. Some use public toilets while others use pavements, parks and seaside. Slum dwellers also suffer meeting their needs for water. Interviews conducted with slum dwellers in Freetown show the extent of this suffering. People who have money can pay to install water taps or buy water, while those cannot afford that bring water from public taps and leaking pipes. Some others bring water from nearby houses or where they work. It can be noticed that both groups do suffer to access to drinking and washing water, but street children suffer more because of being chased by the police and not being accepted by society. So, both groups are similar ways to access water, but street children are not accepted doing so, while the slum dwellers can do the same freely. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged and legalized that slum dwellers have the right to civic facilities in some areas.

d. Social Network

As mentioned earlier, street children depend on peer groups as their social network for their protection, support and solidarity. The urban poor general also set up a sort of social network that provides them with means of support, especially economic support and solidarity (Burns2007)

e. Health Care

Apart from being subject to sickness, street children are also exposing to other type of diseases because of the harsh environment where they live. As for treatment, it depends on how much money street children can afford when one of them becomes sick. If they have money they go to the pharmacy to buy medicine, especially if they have knowledge about medicines, but if they do not have money, they wait until their bodies heal naturally. Some of them also receive support from their friends during illness. Whereas, some street children who are living in slums are subject to other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis due to unhealthy environment and overcrowding, but they have no access to health services. However, they have alternatives to finance their need through possibility of savings, access to loans, borrowing and they also may consider selling assets and this money can be used to access to health care services.

d. Assets

Some of the street children have no assets that help them to overcome difficult living conditions. They do not have any kind of assets; own nothing except the clothes they wear and what they earn from work during the day. It seems that the only asset street children have is been healthy, so they can manage to generate income to cover their daily needs. Girls are different from boys in this regard, as they consider their bodies their assets when they sell sex in return for money and protection

2.3 Factors That Cause the Street Child

It is not an easy task to pinpoint the causes of the emergence of the street child phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is believed to be locally and internationally caused by personal factors such as the quest for autonomy and perceived attractiveness of streetism and ecological factor such as poverty, parental mortality due to HIV, neglect, abuse, urbanisation and parental alcoholism and a combination of personal and ecological factors. According Mahlangu (2002), the street child phenomenon cannot be related to single causal factor. There is a multiplicity of factors that cause the problem of streetism and these risk factors are context specific. Most researchers agree that the leading causes of streetism are extreme poverty, unemployment, family breakdown (divorces), child abuse and neglect, behavioural disorders; sensation seeking and civil war. These factors can be divided into two categories, namely indirect causes (causes that pave way towards streetism but do not directly cause the child to be in the streets and direct and immediate causes (causes that lead the child to reside in the streets, away from home).

It is important to note that the causes or risk factors that are implicated in the initiation of streetism are either personal, contextual or a combination of the two. These risks are among the risks that were noted as resilience risks that will be analysed in chapter four. Furthermore, Mahlangu (2001) affirms that there are many factors that cause the street child phenomenon. Hardship such as unpredictable climatic conditions and unsuitable methods of farming persuade rural communities to migrate to the cities. Therefore, the urban areas cannot satisfy their needs and accommodate their expectations.

The results in frustrations, poverty and unemployment. It are believed that urbanisation is one of the social factors that cause the street child phenomenon. Donald et al.(2006) add that progressive urbanisation in relation to insufficient access to proper housing and health and welfare causes the children to migrate to the streets. It should be noted that urbanisation combines with other contextual factors in causing children to leave their homes. Due to urbanisation, parents are forced to work unusually long hours for a low pay and leave their children without proper supervision, care and adequate support systems. It is confirmed that most parents spend most of their time at work than at home. As a result, the family weakens and the relations deteriorate. In this case, the children become primary victims who no longer have values that are set by the parent. They mostly leave their homes to live in the street and never come back. These families become disintegrated, which results in other family members, especially children, opting for the street as their solution.

It is a fact that streetism is a result of neglect, abandonment, family displacement, political conflicts, natural disasters, illness

and mortality, poor socioeconomic conditions, family discord and child abuse.

In Sierra Leone most breadwinners are faced with high rate of retrenchment from work. This results in many families or parents being unable to meet their children's basic needs. then the families are forced to search for an alternative source of income in order to support their families. That being the case, the inability of parents to meet their children's needs compelled the children to opt for the street lives in order to earn money that would satisfy their basic and other needs. It is also noted that the growth of the population supplants the growth of the economy as a result of the migration from rural to urban areas. This problem has limited the abilities of families to take care of the most vulnerable, namely children. Children then turn to the streets for survival and to have supplementary family income through begging or vending. There is a scarcity of affordable housing for poor families migrating to the city. Because of lack of housing, people have to rent some house or shacks with rental fares.

Family disintegration has been implicated in the initiation of streetism. The structural disruption of the family through the death of one or both parents or divorce might be one of the reasons children migrate to the streets. When a separated or divorced parent enters into a new marriage, his or her children might be abused by a step – parent, which will lead to isolation, trauma and a child's hostility from his or her family. According Alenoma (2012) point out that after the parents' divorce; most children opt for street life as they can no longer cope with their new family situation. They do this as a way of seeking comfort. The presence of step – parents in their homes has increased hatred and the deterioration of the required parental care. These kinds of situations caused many children to run away from their homes and live in the streets.

According to West (2003), the migration of the children to the street revolves around family, parents or other community members. They even discard these children. The family backgrounds of the majority of the street children are characterised by violence, abuse, neglect and rejection. These children are exploited and rejected from their families and this make their lives difficult. These conditions resulted in children becoming aggressive, delinquent, anxious, having low self – concept, depressed and running away from their homes to live and work in the streets. These children often feel that they are worthless and not wanted when being physically and emotionally abused by family members. Many children are born out of wedlock in Sierra Leone. Most of the children who are referred to as illegitimate and born under poverty are at risk of being abused, neglected and abandoned. This results in children running away from their homes to seek survival in the streets. These children view this as unjust and as rejection by their families; therefore, they feel that the street is the solution to their problems.

According to Mahlangu (2002) argues that being alcoholic disables parents to supply for and satisfy their child's basic needs of food, education, clothes and others. Alcoholic parents have a tendency to shout at and fight each other after drinking. They (alcoholic parents) become impatient with their children and this result in them beating up their children for no reason. In cases where alcoholism is linked to overcrowding, lack of food, poor conditions of living, lack of physical and emotional comfort and

the weakened bond between the parents and their kids breaks up completely. Therefore, children give up on their parents and migrate to the streets. Individual factors such as stress and personality functioning contribute towards the problem of street children

Many children experience rejection, conflict, violence, failure and stigmatization at school. Other children can be bullied by either their teachers or other children at school. They mostly become psychologically withdrawn from their educators, school activities such as extra – curricular and co – curricular activities and other. This leads to a situation they will seek friends who will satisfy their needs or comfort them rather than criticizing them. These children are faced with enormous school pressure, such as the volume of school work and anxiety about good performance. Most parents have a lack of interest in progress of their children at school, whereby the failure of children causes conflict at home. For these reasons, they decide to migrate to the street to search for friendship. Alenoma (2012) summaries other causes of the street child phenomenon as recognised by adult and /or the guardian of children who took street life as the solution to their problems. Those causes are as follows: they need to raise pocket money for school for the next day or to support their families financially to avoid idleness at home of guardian too old to work and provide for the household. The above causes of streetism beset several communities in the developing and developed world. They severely impact the development trajectories of children by reducing their abilities to cope resiliently.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter represents the research design and methodology that was used in the research. It provided the process and rationale used by the researcher in choosing the design, the target population, sample size, sample selection, data collection procedures and data analysis methods.

3.2 Research design

The study used descriptive research design. The design was used to gather systematic factual information for descriptive purposes and enhanced the researcher understanding of the phenomenon being studied through observation. Descriptive design permitted the researcher not only to collect the facts for the description but also to understand the operations of the street children in their real life situation observation.

3.3 Target population

The targeted population is the group which the research generalizes the results. In this study, target population comprised 100 street children out of which 20 from Don Bosco, SOS village and Children Rehabilitating Centre Lakka respectively and 40 were targeted from the Freetown city center..

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

This section discussed sample size and sampling procedure.

3.4.1 Sampling procedure

This study used stratified sampling method to group the street children. The categories comprised children in the streets and children in rehabilitation centre, Simple random sampling procedure was used to select 100 respondents from all streets in the Freetown municipality. Three rehabilitation centres namely Don Bosco, SOS Village and Children Rehabilitating Centre

Lakka were purposively sampled because of their experience and wealth of information on dealing with street children. Sixty respondents were selected from the three homes using simple random sampling

3.4.2 Sample Size

The sample size for this study is 100 streets children were targeted from the major areas in Freetown such as bus terminal and PZ. 60 were selected from the three rehabilitating centres which makes the total of 100 children. This sample is enough to represent the views of streets children in Freetown

3.5. Method of Data Collection

To collect data, the researcher used interview schedules and questionnaire. Each category of respondents had their own instrument designed on the objectives of this study. Through interviews, the researcher was able to obtain background information of the respondents as well as their experiences, opinions and knowledge on the subject of inquiry.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

The data in this research was collected using both primary and secondary tools. The primary data collection method included questionnaires which contained both closed and open ended questions, while the secondary data was obtained through internet, library and articles research.

3.5.2. Interviews

Face – to – face interviews were also appropriate in generating information pertaining to the study. The researcher asked the respondents questions on issues relating to street life and specially the driving forces behind their situation.

3.6. Validity

The study has objective questions included in the questionnaires. All tools including the interview guide and questionnaires were pretested to identify and change any ambiguous, awkward or offensive questions. Experts opinions was sought on the representativeness and suitability of the questions and gave suggestions of connections to be made to the structure of the research tools. This helped improve the content validity of the data that was collected

3.7. Reliability

Reliability on the other hand refers to a measure of the degree to which research instruments yield consistent result. The pre – testing aimed at determining the reliability of the research tools including the wording, structure and sequence of the questions. This pre – testing involved 10 respondents from the target population. The respondents were conveniently selected since statistical conditions were not necessary in the pilot study. The purpose was to refine the research tools so that respondents in the major study would have no problem in answering the questions.

3.8 Data Analysis

The collected data was categorized and then analysed. Data analysis tool that was used was dependent on the type of data, that is; was the data qualitative or quantitative. To analyse quantitative data frequency tables were used. The qualitative data took an exploratory conceptual content analysis process, this was more ideal as the information gathered from open ended questions which were large and did not consume time. The data was presented using frequency tables through the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS)

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in this research can be defined as ensuring that the researcher conforms to the standards of conduct of the authorities in the area of research. Examples of ethical issues that may arise are voluntary participation of respondents, deception to participants, anonymity and confidentiality of information given, analysis and reporting, harm or damage to participants and any other professional code of ethics expected. To ensure that the research is done in an ethical manner according to the expectations of all authorities, a letter from the University was obtained. The researcher informed the respondents that the instruments being administered was for research purpose only and the responses from the respondents would be kept secret and confidential. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to collect data from the street children. Also, due to sensitivity of some information collected, the researcher held moral obligation to treat the information with utmost propriety. Further, since the respondents were reluctant to disclose some information, the researcher reassured respondents' confidentiality of the information given.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATIONS

4.1. Introduction

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the researcher administered a structured questionnaire as the main data collection method. The questionnaire provided rich information derived from descriptions and explanations of events that occurred within a specific subject's environment. The researcher examined the interview data against the approaches and strategies referred to in the literature review.

4.2. Response rate

The data collected for this study was from the street children who interact more with the public on a daily basis as highlighted in Chapter 3. A total of 100 questionnaires were completed and useful for analysis out of 120 questionnaires that were issued. This represented a response rate of 83.33% and a non-response rate of 16.67% as shown in table 4.1. The non-response rate was attributed to refusal to respond by respondents because of their busy schedules at work. On the other hand, there was also refusal to respond as the participants were not cooperative in filling in the questionnaires at the expected time regardless of being given ample time to complete the questionnaires.

Table 4.1. Response rate

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Responded	100	83.33
Did not respond	20	16.27
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 4.2. Gender of children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
Female	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table above shows that 70 per cent of the respondents contacted for this study were males and 30 per cent females. Meaning majority of the respondents were males.

The table below shows that 15 per cent of the children contacted were in the age bracket between 10 – 12 years, 30 per cent between 12 – 14 years, 40 per cent between 14 – 16 years, 10 per cent between 16 – 18 years and 5 per cent between 18 – 20 years. Meaning majority of the street children contacted were in the age bracket between 14 – 16 years.

Table 4.3. Age bracket of street children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10 - 12 years	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
12 - 14 years	30	30.0	30.0	45.0
14 - 16 years	40	40.0	40.0	85.0
16 - 18 years	10	10.0	10.0	95.0
18 - 20 years	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

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Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 10 per cent of the street children contacted for this study were illiterates, 70 per cent had a primary education and 20 per cent had a secondary education. Meaning majority of the street children contacted for this study went to school.

Table 4.4. Educational background of street children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Illiterate	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
Primary	70	70.0	70.0	80.0
Secondary	20	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below reveals that 10 per cent of the street children’s parents were both parents living together, 20 per cent indicated single parent (mother), 20 per cent indicated single parent (father), 20 per cent indicated destitute parents and 30 per cent indicated both parents are dead. Meaning of the street children contacted for this study had lost both parents.

Table 4.5. Street children's parents marital status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Both parents living together	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
Single parent (mother)	20	20.0	20.0	30.0
Single parent (father)	20	20.0	20.0	50.0
Destitute parents	20	20.0	20.0	70.0
Both parents are dead	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 8 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated employed (private), 20 per cent indicated employed (self), 12 per cent indicated employed (public) and 60 per cent indicated unemployed. Meaning majority of the street children parents are unemployed.

Table 4.6. Occupation of parents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Employed (private)	8	8.0	8.0	8.0
Employed (self)	20	20.0	20.0	28.0
Employed (public)	12	12.0	12.0	40.0
Unemployed	60	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6. Occupation of parents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Employed (private)	8	8.0	8.0	8.0
Employed (self)	20	20.0	20.0	28.0
Employed (public)	12	12.0	12.0	40.0
Unemployed	60	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 40 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated poverty, 20 per cent indicated child abuse, 30 per cent indicated family disintegration, 6 per cent indicated truancy and 4 per cent indicated orphans. Meaning poverty is the main cause of making children to get in the street.

Table 4.7. Why did you get to the streets?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poverty	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
Child abuse	20	20.0	20.0	60.0
Family disintegration	30	30.0	30.0	90.0
Truancy	6	6.0	6.0	96.0
Orphans	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 15 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated pickpockets, 30 per cent indicated beggars, 20 per cent indicated car washers, 10 per cent indicated thieves and 25 per cent indicated commercial sex workers for girls. Meaning majority of the street children are beggars.

Table 4.8. Characteristics of street children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pickpockets	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
Beggars	30	30.0	30.0	45.0
Car washers	20	20.0	20.0	65.0
Thieves	10	10.0	10.0	75.0
Commercial sex workers for the girls	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 15 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated bus terminals, 20 per cent indicated pavements, 40 per cent indicated in front of shops, 15 per cent indicated car parks and 15 per cent indicated kiosks or food selling places. Meaning majority of the street children contacted were sleeping in front of shops in the city center.

Table 4.9. Current sleeping places

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bus terminals	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
Pavements	20	20.0	20.0	35.0
In front of shops	40	40.0	40.0	75.0
Car parks	15	15.0	15.0	90.0
Kiosks or food selling places	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 70 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated that they have been approached and 30 per cent indicated that they have not been approached. Meaning majority of the streets children has been approached.

Table 4.10. Have you ever been approached on your living conditions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
No	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 40 per cent of the street children indicated government as one of the bodies that have approached them and 60 per cent indicated Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Meaning the Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs).has approached these children more often.

Table 4.11. If yes by whom?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Government	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
Non- Governmental Organizations	60	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 25 per cent of the street children indicated food and non- food items given to them, 35 per cent indicated that they were sensitized and 40 per cent indicated that some of them were encouraged to be taken to rehabilitation center.

Table 4.12. What was the outcome of the approach?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Food and non- food items given to us	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
Sensitization	35	35.0	35.0	60.0
Took us to rehabilitation centers	40	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.12. What was the outcome of the approach?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Food and non- food items given to us	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
Sensitization	35	35.0	35.0	60.0
Took us to rehabilitation centers	40	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 30 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated embarrassment to our parents, 25 per cent indicated embarrassment to the government, 20 per cent indicated embarrassment to our communities and 25 per cent indicated discomfort to the public. Meaning the street children living in the street are embarrassment to their parents.

Table 4.13. How do you perceive your presence in the street?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Embarrassment to our parents	30	30.0	30.0	30.0
Embarrassment to the government	25	25.0	25.0	55.0
Embarrassment to our communities	20	20.0	20.0	75.0
Discomfort to the public	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 10 per cent of the children contacted for this study indicated positively and 90 per cent indicated negative. Meaning living in the streets had negative impacts on them.

Table 4.14. How has living in the streets impacted on your life?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Positively	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
Negatively	90	90.0	90.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 20 per cent of the street children contacted for this study indicated no education/ future as one of the negative impacts of them living in the streets, 30 indicated hardships,20 per cent indicated sickness, 15 per cent indicated drug addicts and 15 per cent indicated commercial sex worker for girls. Meaning hardship is a major negative impact on them living in the streets.

Table 4.15. If negative how?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No education/future	20	20.0	20.0	20.0
Hardship	30	30.0	30.0	50.0
Sickness	20	20.0	20.0	70.0

Drug addicts	15	15.0	15.0	85.0
Commercial sex worker (girls)	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source; Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 20 per cent of the streets children contacted for this study indicated education as one of supports they need, 30 per cent indicated food, 30 per cent indicated shelter and 20 per cent indicated care and love. Meaning majority of the streets children indicated that among all the supports they needed food and shelter most.

Table 4.16. What type of support do you need?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education	20	20.0	20.0	20.0
Food	30	30.0	30.0	50.0
Shelter	30	30.0	30.0	80.0
Care and love	20	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 64 per cent of the children indicated that they were aware of strategies by the government for their safety, 25 per cent indicated the government has no strategies and 11 per cent indicated they had no idea. Meaning government has strategies for the safety of the streets children.

Table 4.17. Do you know of any strategy by the government for your safety?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	64	64.0	64.0	64.0
No	25	25.0	25.0	89.0
No idea	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

The table below shows that 5 per cent of the streets children indicated the organization, 25 per cent indicated preventive methods,10 per cent indicated making a difference, 20 per cent indicated gender methods and 40 per cent indicated family – based method. Meaning the family – based method is best applied by the government.

Table 4.18. If yes what are the strategies?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The organizations	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
Preventive methods	25	25.0	25.0	30.0
Making a difference	10	10.0	10.0	40.0
Gender methods	20	20.0	20.0	60.0
Family - based	40	40.0	40.0	100.0

Table 4.18. If yes what are the strategies?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
The organizations	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
Preventive methods	25	25.0	25.0	30.0
Making a difference	10	10.0	10.0	40.0
Gender methods	20	20.0	20.0	60.0
Family - based	40	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2021

V. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the major causes of street children are as the result of poverty, child abuse, family disintegration, truancy and orphans. As these causes are not address by the authorities, children are found in the streets of Freetown begging, selling small items in trays, selling in front of shops in the city center, sleeping in car parks, bus terminals and in kiosks and food selling places commonly called 'cookery baffa'.The effects of their presence in the streets is embarrassing the government, parents, communities and the general public from whom these children beg on a daily bases.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, the following are recommended for actions:

Parents

- Careful measures should be taken with regard to children allowing separation or divorce because any of the two should not be allowed except making sure that one of the parents or institutional care would protect children.

Government

- Severe penalties should be reconsidered for parents who expose their children to risk and vulnerability through full application of the provisions of child law.
- Severe penalties should be reconsidered for parents who abuse or exploit their children.
- Street children should be able to have access to government vocational training, without the pre-requisite of legal credentials. Such a project is strongly supported by all NGOs working with street children that believe in the efficacy of vocational training programmes provided at the government level, which street children should benefit from.
- Children should be protected while working. Legal support to working children and constant monitoring of cases of violations by employers is a vital preventive measure against the emergence and development of the problem of street children. NGOs should participate in the process in cooperation of the Ministry of Gender and Children' Affairs and Ministry of Labour

International Organizations

- Constant monitoring of the application of the United Nations Convention to the Rights of the Child has to be carried out to ensure safety measures for children at risk, including street children.

- Supporting the activities of NGOs that provide residential care to street children, especially children in need of full residence

- Widening the scope of health insurance policies to include all members of the family including street and working children.

Advocacy and Awareness Rising

- Although the media supported programmes targeting the issue on television and in the papers, a guided strategy for effective advocacy and training awareness on issues related to street children has to be implemented, in cooperation with media professionals and government agencies involved.

Community

- The need to change attitudes of local communities and the way people general perceive the problem of street children, as well as the prevalence of the problem through various poor communities and marginalized area surrounding major cities, contribute to the emergence and development of the problem

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