

Analysis of Selected Non-State Actors' Interventions on the Problem of Street Children in Lusaka District

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this study was to analyze selected Non-State Actors' interventions on the problem of Street Children in the Lusaka district. There are several initiatives used by non-state actors to identify street children, get them from the streets and house them in their centers for rehabilitation. These initiatives include the process of making initial contact with the street children in their dwelling places, offering health care services, education, provision of food, clothing and nutrition programs, offering sports and recreation services and hastening the process of family reunification. Several challenges were found to limit non-state actors' to effectively meet their goals. Some of the main challenges in addressing the problem of street children were financial limitations, lack of coordination, cultural barriers, resistance from the government, stigma and discrimination, outbreak of COVID-19, unclear identities of street children, security risks, inadequate infrastructure, family tracing and limited capacity. Finally, the study findings established the measures for addressing the challenges faced when addressing the problem: sponsorship, building partnerships and networks, and empowerment in addressing the problem of street children. The paper concludes with recommendations by emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts between the government and the non-state actors in implementing the problem of street children programs for improving the effectiveness of non-state actors' interventions on street children in Lusaka.*

KEYWORDS: *Interventions, Monitoring, Evaluation, Lusaka, Non-State Actors, Street Children, Zambia*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Street children are among the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society who lack access to basic needs such as shelter, food, health care, clean and safe drinking water, sanitation and education facilities among others. Mostly, these street children made their way through life impoverished, abandoned, uneducated, malnourished, discriminated against, neglected and vulnerable (UNICEF, 2006:6).

For them to survive, they resorted to stealing, begging and selling drugs. Street children are exposed to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases because of premature sexual activities on the street. Most professionals remained divided on how to quantify and define these children, especially since they seemed to fall into many classes and their numbers were challenging to establish, statistics on street children are rare because of the challenges of surveying an enormously mobile population.

The increase in the number of street children was caused by several factors including the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), whose outcome left many families in poverty in the early 1990s. In Zambia, SAPs led to the privatization of many state-owned firms, the withdrawal of Government subsidies and the introduction of cost-sharing policies among others. SAPs also resulted in a reduction in social spending and non-payment of pensions (MCDSS, 2006). This affected several families, who were pushed into poverty, hence, affecting their capacity to support their children. Other factors included parental mortality, largely due to HIV/AIDS, lack of access to education and limited alternatives to meet their basic needs. The most common reason for being on the streets was economic as children tried to make money themselves or were sent by their parents to help with the household income (UNICEF, 2013; Kanyamuna & Kone, 2022).

Street children are among the vulnerable categories of children, who are unable to meet daily basic needs such as quality health care, food, shelter, education, water and sanitation and are largely exposed to early sexual activity without contraception, high partner change and highly exposed to HIV and STIs (Menon, 2015, Onwanga, 2013; Nestor, 2015; Nosiku, 2008; Kanyamuna, et. al, 2022). Their situation deteriorated at a time when Zambia's development conditions had worsened in the early 1990s (United Nations, 2017).

II. DEFINING NON STATE ACTORS

Non-State Actors have been defined differently by various scholars, commentators and organizations. According to Schmid (2003), non-state actors refers to individuals, groups or organizations that are not part of the government or state structure but can exert influence and power in various ways such as Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, International Organisations and Religious Groups. Several non-state actors work towards the betterment of street children such as Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations, Faith Based Organisations, Social Enterprises and Youth Organisations. These non-state actors often work in collaboration with the government and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive support to street children.

There are many non-state actors' ranging from international, and local organisations to Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) working with street children by providing financial support and technical assistance to raise their capacity working with these children, creating government awareness on streets and promoting cohesion and coordination at the national level to devise more effective and sustainable programs for street children (Volpi, 2002; Kanyamuna, Chawapiwa & Bwanga, 2023; Zulu, et.al, 2023; Bwanga, Kanyamuna & Qutieshat, 2023).

Non-state actors working with street children have been present for several decades with the emergence of such organizations dating back to the mid-20th century. The specific timing and development of these organizations may vary depending on the location and context. One of the earliest organizations working with street children was the Salaam Baalak Trust, founded in 1988 in India. The organization aimed to provide shelter, education and healthcare to street children in Delhi. Another well-known organization was the Consortium for street children which was founded in the United Kingdom in 1992 and works to promote the rights of street children around the world.

Over the years, many other non-state actors' emerged to address the needs of street children, including non-governmental organizations, community-based organisations and faith-based organisations. These organizations often work in partnership with governments and other stakeholders to provide services and support to street children, including shelter, education, healthcare and protection from exploitation and abuse.

III. DEFINING STREET CHILDREN

The concept street children refers to minors who spend a significant amount of time living, working, and surviving on the streets of urban areas. They may come from a variety of backgrounds, including poverty, family dysfunction or social exclusion. Street children may engage in various activities to support themselves such as begging, scavenging or selling goods and they may have limited access to education, healthcare and other basic services children who live in residential institutions such as orphanages or shelters (UNICEF, 2001) or children who live on the streets and are denied family care and protection. Worldwide the average age of such children varies between 10 and 14 years, while in Africa it is below 18 years.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Information for this write-up was collected from both secondary and primary sources including published books, articles and policy documents among others. Interview guides and focus group discussions were also conducted with selected nonstate actors', government officials and academicians specialized in the field.

V. NON-STATE ACTORS' INTERVENTIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF STREET CHILDREN

The study sought to first establish the programs and services offered by non-state actors that are relevant to rehabilitation of street children in Lusaka. However, close monitoring from the government institution was necessary to ensure steady and efficient provision of the programs and services. Non-state actors are responsible for establishing shelters for street children, providing them with a safe and secure environment to live in.

Organizations in Lusaka have established shelters and drop-in centers that provide street children with necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter, health care. The study revealed that Lusaka District had several organizations that were working directly with street children. Non-state actors have also established initiatives aimed at providing social services to street children, such as counseling and rehabilitation services.

Overall, non-state actors in Lusaka have undertaken various initiatives aimed at addressing the problem of street children. These initiatives provide necessities such as education, shelter, health, and social services, and are essential in improving the lives of street children and reducing their vulnerability.

Nonstate actors focused on relationship building and trust with street children. Street children were living on the streets due to many reasons among others broken relationships at home and trauma. One of the ways non-state actors' demonstrated to street children that they were cared for and valued was through

providing basic needs such as providing shelter, education, healthcare, providing clothing, counseling services and vocational training to help street children become self-sufficient. Nonstate actors' endeavored to rescue children living on the street by building relationships and trust with those children. Any attempt that was made to provide long-term beneficial assistance to street children was hopeless without first establishing a foundation of trust and relationship with the child.

The study revealed that non-state actors had consistent street officers who conducted street outreach regularly as children on the streets easily trusted familiar faces. These organizations maintained consistent street outreach staff to ensure continuity of service delivery to the street population. Similarly, the regular presence on the streets was critical to understanding the ever-changing dynamic on the streets and enabling them identify new children on the streets. It was also revealed that non-state actors approached their work from a place of empathy and understanding. In doing this they took time to listen to the experiences and perspectives of street children and worked collaboratively with them to identify their needs and develop solutions.

The study revealed that non-state actors employed family tracing for street children such as identifying and locating the families of children living on the streets, to reunite them with their families whenever possible.

Many families required intensive family counseling and instructions before being reunited with their children. Family counseling occurred within the institution or the family home, based upon the capabilities of the institution and the ability and willingness of the family. Non-state actors' played an important role in preventing children from ending up on the streets again by providing support to families in crisis such as providing access to health care, education and resources to start up a business.

Non-state actors provide drop-in centers as a way to intervene and support vulnerable populations. Drop-in centers offer a safe and welcoming environment for street children to access a range of services including food, clothing, shelter, counseling and health care to the street population. These centers also had open-door policies where street children could go and wash their clothes, eat and go back on the street with no intention of staying at the center. In the Lusaka district, non-state actors' were carrying out a public awareness campaign against giving arms to street children as the money they were given kept them away from their families. The general public should channel the support for street children to the children's care centers and orphanages.

According to Nestor (2015) non-state actors' offered street feeding programs as a way of enticing street children to leave the streets and go back to their families or go to a center or orphanage. Providing basic needs (like food) for children on the streets was the best way to help the child. These programs are designed to provide meals to children living on the streets who don't have access to meals or a stable source of food. These programs aim to address the issue of hunger and malnutrition among street children and provide them with a basic level of sustenance. The program typically involves the distribution of food either at a central location or through mobile feeding vans that travel to different areas where street children congregate. In addition to providing food, these programs also offer other services such as health check-ups, hygiene education and referrals to other services such as shelter, and education (Moyo, et.al, 2023; Banda, et.al, 2023; Kanyamuna & Sibalwa, 2023; UNICEF, 2001).

Non-state actors work with families and communities to provide support and resources to prevent children from becoming street children such as financial assistance and other forms of support. Non-state actors work with communities to provide education and outreach programs to provide education and outreach programs to raise awareness about the risks and consequences of children living on the streets and help families understand the importance of providing a safe and stable home environment for their children. Knowing the challenges was important as it could help to know how to address them. The street children and key informants from the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, Zambia Police, University of Zambia and Lusaka City Council were asked to provide their perception of some of the challenges that the non-state actors faced in addressing the problem of street children and the majority non-state actors, inadequate resources to conduct outreach programs, shortage of food, lack of space to accommodate many street children, lack of transport, lack of human resources to counsel street children and failure to involve the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services and Zambia Police in their activities.

The non-state actors cited several challenges that they faced such as limited funding for non-state actors as they often relied on donor funding to carry out their work and funding for programs addressing street children in Lusaka was limited. It was difficult for non-state actors to provide comprehensive services to street children, including education, healthcare and shelter. Financial resources are paramount in the progress of any organization. Most organizations in Zambia are donor-funded while others relied on individual well-wishers, who are quite unreliable. There was more financial sustainability in donor-funded organizations, however the consequence of donor aid was to control the beneficiaries. Many organizations involved in child welfare lacked resources and were vulnerable to control by donors and some merely took advantage of donor funding. The lack of support made it difficult for non-state actors to access resources, such as land for building shelters or funding programs. Some non-state actors worked in silos due to competition amongst themselves. This affirms what other authors have observed that limitations in resources are a major contribution to child vulnerability across

the world (Kanyamuna, et.al, 2022; Musau, 2014; Zulu, et.al, 2022; Mtonga, 2011; Kanyamuna, et. Al, 2022; Phiri, et. al, 2022; Siakalima & Kanyamuna, 2022).

In some cases, non-state actors face resistance from the government which may view activities as interfering with state responsibilities or as a threat to their authority. They face resistance from governments in trying to address the problem of street children. The resistance may take various forms, including bureaucratic hurdles, funding restrictions and outright hostility. Street children are viewed as a symptom of larger societal problems such as poverty and homelessness and addressing these issues can be politically challenging. The other reason for the resistance was the perception that non-state actors were encroaching on government responsibilities.

Street children are often stigmatized and discriminated against by society. Street children in Lusaka are often hard to reach due to their transient lifestyles and the stigma attached to their status. The stigma and discrimination faced by street children presented a range of challenges for both children and non-state actors. The lack of access to education for street children due to stigma and discrimination as schools were not willing to admit them and they lacked the necessary documentation of resources to attend school. Also street children are at greater risk of health problems, such as malnutrition, substance abuse and mental health issues. Street children are socially isolated due to status and lack of stable relationships for example feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Due to stigma street children face limited opportunities for employment and vocational training leading to perpetual poverty.

Cultural beliefs and practices may prevent street children in Lusaka from seeking or accepting help from non-state actors, which can further exacerbate their situation. Language barriers between the street children and the non-state actors making communication difficult hence creating a barrier to building trust and developing meaningful relationships. There are different cultural norms and practices. Street children come from different cultural backgrounds with different values, beliefs and practices. Non-state actors should be aware of and respect these cultural differences to establish effective relationships.

These non-state actors indicated that there was a challenge of not working together as a team. This led to duplication of efforts and inefficient use of resources. Each of the non-state actors carried out activities in isolation from other organizations resulting in less impact on the lives of street children. As a result of weak coordination, street children ended up not benefiting from some of the programs that could assist them. Each organization needed to play its role to contribute to addressing this problem as a team.

The emergency of COVID-19 brought about many challenges not only to the health sector but to the economic landscape of the country. As a result measures introduced to curb the spread of the pandemic such as the lockdown of borders had debilitating effects on economic activities. Further, there had been a significant loss of income due to the closure of some businesses, and loss of employment especially those employed in the informal sector. Less organizations and people were willing to help the street children due to the impact of a strained resource base.

Street children are fond of lying about their identities by giving false names and residential addresses. One of the respondents stated that when street children lie about their identity it would be difficult for non-state actors to gather accurate information about their background and needs hence making it difficult for non-state actors to provide targeted support leading to misallocation of resources. If street children are lying about their identity, they may not feel comfortable sharing personal information with non-state actors' this may create safety concerns as non-state actors may not be aware of the risks or dangers that street children are facing.

Outreach is done very late at night or very early in the morning which was not safe for outreach officers as they could be attacked by street kids who were criminals, harassment or intimidation when working with street children in certain areas or contexts. Timing for reaching out to street children was difficult for non-state actors to carry out their work effectively for several reasons such as safety concerns as working late at night or early in the morning was dangerous, particularly in areas that were known to be high-risk areas. Non-state actors face risks such as violence, theft or sexual harassment when working during these times, which makes it challenging to carry out their work safely. Street children are not accessible during late hours or early mornings, as they may be sleeping or hiding from potential danger making it difficult for non-state actors to reach out to them and provide support or services.

Non-state actors face resistance from local authorities who may see them as interfering with their jurisdiction. The council views street children as a nuisance or problem that they would rather ignore than address. Local authorities may impose regulatory barriers that make it difficult for non-state actors to operate effectively. For example, they may require permits, licenses or certificates that are costly or time-consuming to obtain. In some cases, local authorities may actively oppose the work of non-state actors' viewing them as a threat to their authority or interests.

Non-state actors face a range of infrastructure challenges that make it difficult to provide essential services to street children including inadequate shelter facilities for street children to sleep. Most facilities are too crowded without proper ventilation which was a health hazard to the children. Most non-state actors had limited access to clean water and sanitation which was vital for maintaining hygiene and preventing the spread

of diseases. Non-state actors may lack adequate healthcare facilities, equipment or trained personnel to provide appropriate care to these children and lack appropriate facilities resources or trained staff to provide educational opportunities to children.

Family tracing involves finding and reconnecting street children with their families or other supportive adults in their lives. However, non-state actors face challenges when conducting family tracing such as limited information for street children who do not have any identification documents or do not remember the names or locations of their family members. Street children may come from families who migrated or were displaced due to conflict or other reasons. Some parents are not cooperative and unwilling to cooperate with non-state actors' especially when conducting family tracing or are not willing to reunite with their children. Caregivers or parents are not willing to help non-state actors and sometimes lie about the reasons for children being on the streets.

Organizations dealing with street children cannot handle them. There were instances where some childcare facilities could not deal with street children, they mixed them with other children and treated them the same way as "ordinary children" or non-street children. "Children from the street needed to be treated differently with special skills so that they are adequately reformed". This resulted in many street children shunning going to these institutions or ending up running away because of the way they were treated. Some children failed to complete some of the programs run by such organizations because they were mishandled and were not prepared to undergo such programs. The negative outcome was that some children who were given start-up capital such as start-up tools sold them, while others opted to go back to the street as some childcare facilities did not follow how they were supposed to take care of children. Some respondents narrated that they did not wish to go to childcare facilities because they felt that they were not understood and were not treated in a manner that they were happy with.

Non-state actors are constantly soliciting for sponsors to fund children's education and training fees. They prefer in-kind donations as opposed to financial donations. The sponsorship programs also include alumni or former street children who were rehabilitated would help get more sponsors nationally and internationally. The program typically involves identifying and connecting sponsors to organizations that take care of street children by meeting their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education and healthcare.

Sponsors may also provide additional support such as mentorship, counseling and skills training to help the children transition from street life to a more stable and secure future. The study revealed that the sponsorship programs for street children were typically run by non-state actors' who worked closely with local communities and government to identify and support street children and their families and to develop programs and initiatives that address the root causes of child poverty and homelessness.

Non-state actors partnered with other organizations, clubs, projects or groups, and foundations that have expertise in working with street children. This has helped to share resources, knowledge and expertise in addressing the needs of these children for example non-state actors can partner with a local church or community center, or chain stores to provide shelter and food for street children. Non-state actors can leverage partnerships to access resources such as funding, equipment and supplies. Non-state actors collaborate with government agencies to improve service delivery to street children. For example collaborating with social welfare and child development departments or juvenile justice agencies to provide access to education, health care and legal representation. Non-state actors may prefer in-kind donations and financial donations and the partnership also involves former street children who have been rehabilitated and working in society. The partners are also in the form of proposal writing to other donor communities who work with street children worldwide. Partnerships with community-based organizations that work with street children are a valuable source of support to non-state actors. These organizations can help to identify street children provide shelter and care and offer educational and vocational training.

Non-state actors can empower street children by involving them in the decision-making process and providing them with opportunities for self-expression. Programs such as music, art or other creative outlets. Non-state actors provide ongoing support to street children to ensure that they can successfully transition from the streets to a stable home or community such as providing education, job training and ongoing counselling services.

Non-state actors put in place measures to address the problem of street children. Non-state actors' we're working with communities to enlighten people on child rights, the effects of neglecting children and the penalties infringing these rights. Non-state actors conducted family planning seminars to emphasize the need to use contraceptives for controlling childbirths and the consequences of having so many children when resources could not allow it. Sensitizing communities to stop sending their children on the street to beg.

Begging for street children was identified as one of the main sources of resources especially money, which enabled them to get food and other basic needs. Most of the street children who participated in this research said that they used begging as a way of earning money to help them buy food.

Table 1. Non-State Actors' working with street children

S/N	NAME OF ORGANISATION	LOCATION
1.	Barefeet Theatre	Olympia
2.	Jesus Cares Ministries	Chamba Valley
3.	Vision of Hope	Chamba Valley
4.	Mthunzi Children's Home	Kasupe
5.	City of Hope	Makeni
6.	Kavumbu Home for Girls	Makeni
7.	Action for Children Zambia	Makeni
8.	Chisomo Full proof Mission	Rhodes Park
9.	St. Lawrence Home of Hope	Kamwala South
10.	Fountain of Hope	Kamwala
11.	Generation Alive	Woodlands
12.	Foot Print	Chilenje
13.	Lukundo	Chilenje
14.	Nsansa Village Community Development Mission	Avondale

Source: (Compiled by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services 2023)

VI. CONCLUSION

It has been noted that non-state actors' played a crucial role in providing support and services to street children in Lusaka. These organizations provide essential services such as shelter, healthcare, education, and vocational training, which are critical to improving the lives of street children. Non-state actors also worked towards addressing the root causes of street children in Lusaka, including poverty, abuse, neglect, and family breakdown. They do this by providing support to families to prevent child abandonment, providing parenting skills, and advocating for policies that protect the rights of children.

However, it is important to note that non-state actors often operate with limited resources and face significant challenges in providing support to street children in Lusaka. The government has a crucial role to play in supporting and collaborating with non-state actors to ensure that the needs of street children are met effectively.

In conclusion, the involvement of non-state actors' is essential in addressing the issue of street children in Lusaka. These organizations provide critical support and services to street children and work towards addressing the root causes of the problem. However, effective collaboration between non-state actors and the government is needed to ensure that the needs of street children are met sustainably.

Recommendations

- Strengthen collaboration and coordination by working closely with government agencies, other NGOs, and local communities to ensure that efforts are coordinated, resources are shared, and duplication is avoided.
- Non-state actors' should focus on addressing the root causes of street children, such as poverty, abuse, and neglect. This could involve providing support to families to prevent child abandonment, providing parenting skills, family planning, and advocating for policies that protect the rights of children.
- Non-state actors should provide a range of services that meet the diverse needs of street children, including shelter, healthcare, education, and vocational training.
- Involve street children in decision-making processes, including designing and implementing programs and policies that affect them. This can help ensure that their needs and perspectives are considered and can also promote their sense of agency and empowerment.
- Non-state actors should regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of their programs and interventions to ensure they are effective and achieve their intended outcomes. This can also help identify areas for improvement and inform future programming.
- Non-state actors should raise awareness about the issue of street children and advocate for policies and practices that protect their rights and promote their well-being. This could involve conducting public education campaigns, engaging with the media, and working with policymakers and other stakeholders.

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