



Situational analysis of street girls in Kampala, Uganda

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August-November 2010

This study is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Retrak and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Cooperative Agreement No. GHO-A-00-09-00006-00

Abstract

Uganda has an estimated 2.5 million orphans, one of the highest numbers in the world, and 25 percent of all households look after at least one child orphaned by either HIV/AIDS or war. 51% of the Ugandan population is under 18; the number of street children is estimated at 10,000 (MGLSD, 2004).

Underlying causes of children's problems in Uganda include armed conflicts, diseases (HIV/AIDS), lack of education, inadequate services and entrenched poverty. Many kids leave home because of neglect and abuse, among others and their needs on the streets are emotional, spiritual and psychological, not necessarily physical as so many people tend to think. Girls are more vulnerable to abuse, especially sexually, while living on the streets. Prostitution has become a way of life in order to survive. Their lives are lives of hopelessness - unless someone gets involved.

Retrak Uganda is already working towards providing a better future for the boys living on the streets, but what about the girls? This study analyses the situation of girls, the services available for them, the gaps in service provision and makes recommendations for Retrak to consider.

Findings

According to the children themselves, girls living on the streets, just like their male counterparts, lack all the basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, medical care).

The children noted that they mostly receive food and clothes from the few organizations that approach them but these items are not in any way a guarantee of a good future. These children need permanent solutions as alternatives to street life.

According to community members and NGO representatives, girls face many challenges including diseases, sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancy, child labour and stigmatization. This affects their health and development. They also noted that the biggest percentage of services provided is food and clothes but the question is "What is the impact of these services in the long run?" Moreover, not many girls access these because they are most times away either doing food vending, in video halls targeting men for some favours after providing sex. They noted that better services like getting them off the streets, education and rehabilitation are very vital.

From the children's responses, there are not many organizations offering services, especially those specific to girls. Of all the organizations that have approached these children to help, Retrak has approached them most and yet works with only boys. The one organisation that helps girls is known to only a very few children. Of the 5 other NGOs interviewed, only 2 work with girls but also on a small scale. So, any interventions geared at working to supplement this work is a positive step in the right direction.

100% of respondents from NGOs and MGLSD noted that accommodation, medical care, food and resettlement packages were the most important needs for girls. Improving service delivery accordingly will go a long way in enhancing their conditions of living.

Conclusion

From this study, it is evident that there are very few organizations providing services to girls living on the street. The girls face the same problems like the boys while on the streets. They sometimes get

handouts from different NGOs but these are not comprehensive to save them from suffering gross sexual abuse, increasing HIV burden and labour exploitation. It is to this effect that Retrak should consider working with this vulnerable group.

Overall, this paper strongly recommends that Retrak provides all services as are being provided to the boys but also including those needs that are peculiar to girls. This includes going an extra mile in providing psychosocial support and shelter to prevent and address sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies.

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List of abbreviations

AIDS.....	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV.....	Human Immuno Virus
KIN.....	Kids In Need
KNRC.....	Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NGO.....	Non Governmental Organizations
NPSPPI.....	National Policy and Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions
OVC	Orphans and other Vulnerable Children
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UYDEL.....	Uganda Youth Development Link

1. Introduction

1.1. Retrak

Retrak is a faith based NGO working with OVC on the street in Africa and committed to providing each child with an individual route back to family and community. Retrak's project in Uganda has been operating since 1994 and the lessons learnt have been successfully transferred to a new project in Ethiopia, which opened in June 2007. Both Retrak projects aim to enable OVC living on the streets to return to a stable and caring family setting. This is achieved through reunification with their own relatives or through placement with local foster care families and with support to build the capacity of these families to meet the needs of their children.

During a 3-year project funded by USAID, through PEPFAR NPI, Retrak's goal was to further strengthen and grow these programs in both countries in order to provide short-term quality care and protection to OVC on the street and to strengthen families to meet the needs of these OVC in the long-term.

As part of this project Retrak wanted to understand more about the street girl population in the towns where it is working, since Retrak has traditionally focused on street boys whose numbers are greater and who are underserved.

1.2. Problem statement

According to the Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) there are about 10,000 children both boys and girls living on the streets and slums of Kampala and other municipalities (MGLSD, 2004). An official from the Ministry further noted that the exact number of girls living on the streets has not yet been established, but from different reports from the public and NGOs, girls are as many as the boys¹. However they are less visible on the street as girls are easily picked up by people in the community to do food vending or house-keeping and older ones join prostitution to offer themselves for money.

In a bid to understand these girls' plight, Retrak conducted this study on their situation to inform their decision and planning for scaling up interventions for their care and support.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The overall purpose of the study is to understand the situation for girl children on the streets so as to devise appropriate ways and means to help them live a better life.

1.4. Research objectives

- To determine the magnitude of the girl street children situation along the streets of Kampala and its suburbs.
- To establish the number of girl children living on the streets.
- To determine the problems facing girl children living on the streets.
- To determine underlying factors that force children to go to the streets so as to design countermeasures as appropriate.
- To establish the real needs of the girl child living on street so as to be able to estimate resources required.

¹ Conversation with Ministry official, on 2nd September 2010

- To establish the available resources that can be tapped to support girl children on the streets.
- To identify partners who are currently supporting girl children living on the streets from which Retrak can draw lessons to plan and provide better services .

2. Literature Review

Uganda has an estimated 2.5 million orphans, one of the highest numbers in the world, and 25 percent of all households look after at least one child orphaned by either HIV/AIDS or war (MGLSD, 2004).

According to the Ministry of Gender and Labour and Social Development (2004) the number of street children in Kampala and other municipalities is estimated at 10,000. Munene and Nambi (2005), in their study of best practices for street children in major towns in Uganda, counted a total of 3,728 children, of whom 924 were females. Underlying causes of children's problems in Uganda include armed conflicts, diseases (HIV/AIDS), lack of education, inadequate services and entrenched poverty.

According to Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005) there was deep concern at the increasing number of street children, especially in Kampala and other major urban centres, who are victims of, inter alia, drug abuse, sexual exploitation, harassment and victimization by members of the community and was gravely concerned at the fact that society considers such children as dangerous people and a burden for the society.

An article in the New Vision, a Ugandan newspaper (Taber, 2007), notes that hauling water and firewood, eating from garbage bins on the streets and sniffing glue is the life of a street child in Kampala. There is no chance for an education, no escape from the cycle of poverty, no hope and oftentimes no parents. NGOs do a lot of work with orphans and HIV positive children, but there seems to be a much smaller number working with street children to deal with the root cause of the phenomena.

The data from the Ministry indicates that girls on the streets are mostly involved in commercial sex work, food vending and work in bars. At night they find places where they feel safe like cheap rented rooms, verandas of buildings, corridors of the shops and hotels, under stalls in markets and around garbage collection places. Commercial sex work is indulged in despite the high risks. According to a study on commercial sexual exploitation in Uganda (MGLSD & ILO, 2004) sexual encounters can take place in the workplace, homes of colleagues, rented rooms and lodges; other contact points are road sides and streets.

In his article on substance abuse and child prostitution Rogers Kasiryé , the Executive Director of Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), noted that children involved in commercial sex have sought ways of dealing with problems they experience in their work (Kasiryé, 2005). In case of pregnancy, they resort to abortion. UYDEL, because of its work with girls involved in commercial sex work, receive many young girls in need of post-abortion care. Some opt to leave the practice temporarily until they give birth and then resume thereafter. Positive responses appear to be lacking among them due to inadequate knowledge and inaccessibility to services that would be helpful. It is in such cases that Retrak could come in to provide services to these girls.

Kasiryé's study further notes that street and slum children throughout the world are seen to be particularly at risk of HIV/AIDS and STIs because of the special circumstances of their situations. These include the need to perform "survival prostitution", greater freedom to experiment with sex, lack of adequate protection and socialization and the inherent dangers of street life. They represent an especially vulnerable group both in terms of the reasons for their coming to and being on the

streets, and what could happen to them when on the streets and slums. Kasirye (2004), in a conference paper on psychosocial problems of children under rehabilitation from commercial sex, noted that child students living independently in hostels and those in day schools lack constant food, clothing and other basic needs and so engage in sex with multiple partners for survival. Girls say that life on the streets is hard and so those who have stayed longer on streets introduce new girls to all sorts of behaviour and a culture of illicit survival. Sex is the most readily available means of survival. In a conversation with Kasirye, almost every girl living on the streets, and specifically those they have received at UYDEL, acknowledge exchanging of sex for food, clothing, drinks, shelter and money.

The Government of Uganda's Situation Analysis of Orphans in Uganda in 2001-02 led to the MGLSD formulating a National Policy and Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The process involved a nation-wide, year long, consensus building approach to collecting views, opinions and qualitative information about the key populations, and the programmes serving those populations, that the country must focus on. Street children were identified as one of the priority groups of children in Uganda.

Clearly, there is an increasing number of both boys and girls living on the streets in Uganda. The push factors for both are similar and the problems they face while on the streets are enormous. Sexual abuse affects the girls more since they engage in commercial sex work as their main means of survival. This leads to infections and diseases, including HIV/AIDS, as well as unwanted pregnancies and babies, which make their already vulnerable situation worse. As the government highlights, street children should be a priority group for interventions that are able to target their specific situation and needs.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection methods

Document reviews

The methodology included review of literature about the street girls and efforts being made by different organizations to mitigate their plight.

Community mobilization to support the study

The investigator worked with local leaders to identify, mobilize and sensitize participants on the need to establish and study problems being faced by girls living on the streets and identify appropriate measures that stakeholders can take to solve these problems and improve their welfare.

In depth interviews

In depth interviews were conducted with 40 street children, 10 staff of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with children living and/or working on the streets, community leaders, MGLSD staff in the OVC secretariat and at Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre (KNRC).

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were undertaken: one with street girls, one street boys, and one with service providers. Focus group discussions were conducted to provide in-depth discussions on the problems being faced by street children, in particular girls, and the reasons why they are on the streets.

Field visits

Field visits were conducted to observe the kind of life girls are living on the streets and their survival strategies, to document lessons learnt and recommendations to aid future planning in favour of girls on the streets.

3.2. Capacity building of participants for the study

Six Retrak staff were coached on the research methodology, data collection procedures, tool interpretation and utilization and research ethics before actual data collection process. Additionally, they were educated on the basic concepts of the study, terminology, processes, methods especially how to properly apply the techniques being used in the study, and how gathering of data using multiple techniques strengthens the study by providing opportunities for triangulation during the analysis. Protocols for study research, including time deadlines, formats for narrative reporting and field notes, guidelines for collection of documents, and guidelines for field procedures were reviewed too.

Local leaders were mobilized and sensitized on the study to ensure their meaningful participation and enlist political support.

Clear protocols and procedures in advance of field work were established. A pilot study in advance of moving into the field in order to remove obvious barriers and problems was conducted.

3.3. Quality assurance during data collection

The following activities were undertaken to improve the quality of data:

- Filled data collection tools were reviewed before leaving the field to ensure that all questions had been answered appropriately.
- A number of sources of information were used to validate the data collected.
- Key people were identified, letters of introduction were prepared, and rules for confidentiality were established.

3.4. Sampling procedure

Purposive sampling² was used whereby every street girl child met was interviewed. The study focused on girls who were identified as having been on the street for some time and therefore very well known in the slums as street girls and those who were doing petty jobs in the slums but with no permanent residence. In so doing 40 street girls were interviewed. The researchers were guided by selected Retrak peer educators who usually conduct outreaches to fellow children and therefore are very conversant with the slums where the potential respondents could be found. The local council chairperson of the area and the girls also gave directions to where other girls could be found. The girls were found near garbage dumping places in industrial area, Namirembe road near the New Taxi Park, Owino market, Luwum street, Kampala street, Nasser road, William street, and Kisenyi slum to name but a few. Other respondents included 5 members of 5 different NGOs engaged in street-child protection, 5 officials from the OVC secretariat MGLSD and KNRC, and community members.

3.5. Data validation

Literature reviews, key informant interviews, individual interviews, focus group discussions and field visits to observe the street children, were all used in an attempt to validate the information using various sources.

3.6. The research team

The team comprised of 7 Retrak-Uganda staff as follows;

- Josephine Tusingwire as the lead investigator
- Elvis Lubowa
- Chris Rugaba
- Prossie Maraka
- Moses Wangadia
- Immaculate Nanyonga
- Edward Mugisha

3.7. Limitations

Possible bias and misinformation could have affected this study, due to:

- Some girls being motivated to lie because they do not want to reveal their vulnerability to someone they are not very familiar with especially in regard to sexual issues.
- Lack of evidence based records with regard to the actual number of girls living on the street, the problem could have been exaggerated or under reported.

² This method involves using your own judgment or other compelling reason to choose a particular household or person to be included in the sample, eg selecting all the girls that spend at least 7 hours of the day and 12 hours of the night on street or selecting OVC with IGAs in their households

- Exaggeration of problems since Karamojong women living in Kisenyi zone bring girls on the street during the day to beg for money and take them away in the evening. The Karamojong (people from Karamoja, a sub-region, located in north-eastern Uganda) are another category of street beggars who apparently were forced to come to Kampala by circumstances at home. These circumstances include among others armed conflict and poor climate conditions that do not allow them to do anything productive.
- Key informants not having accurate records on street girls, so the information provided may not represent the true picture.
- Most girls lying about their ages and saying they were younger, even when it looked obvious they were older. The researcher was later informed that most people who give handouts prefer the much younger girls and boys.

4. Findings

4.1. Responses from children

A total of 40 street girls were interviewed, the majority were aged between 11-17yrs (table 1).

Table 1: Age of girls interviewed	Number	Percentage
6-7 years	5	13%
7-10 years	3	8%
11-12 year	13	33%
13-17 years	19	48%
Total	40	100%

Places where street girls go for safety at night

26 out of 40 street girls interviewed reported that they spend their night and part of their day time around shops and hotels, mostly targeting opportunities to be called on to help with food vending and running errands by shop and hotel owners. Others said they sleep under dilapidated and abandoned building structures, market stalls and cheap rented accommodation (table 2).

One of the respondents had this to say: "Because of fearing groups of street boys who come to dark and isolated places to force us to play sex and beat us, at night we look for places like shops and hotel verandas where there are night guards for protection. However, some of the night guards are not good too, they take advantage of our being weak and force us into sex, though they don't beat us."

Table 2: Where street girls live ³	Number	Percentage
Around shops and hotels	26	65%
Dilapidated and abandoned toilet structures	20	50%
Incomplete and dilapidated buildings	12	30%
Under market stalls,	11	28%
In the sides of garbage collection containers	7	18%

People with whom street girls stayed before coming to live on streets.

The investigator sought to know the person the respondent used to stay with before coming to live on streets. The majority of girls interviewed (24 out of 40) used to stay with their grandparents before coming to live on the streets (table 3).

One of the girls (16 years old) interviewed said: "When my father and mother died because of HIV/AIDS, I was taken to live with my grandmother in Kiboga district in a village called Kateera. While there I used to eat cassava with sugarless dry tea. One of our relatives requested my grandpa to bring me to Kampala to earn money as a house girl. I worked for two months without pay. Then one day, on my way to the shop to buy sugar, I lost the money. As a result, I was beaten so much that I could not move my arms. So I had to run away in favour of the street life".

³ It should be noted that in response to many questions in the survey a respondent gave more than one response, such as a place where she lives. So, adding columns results in totals that are more than the number of respondents because of double counting. These are shown without a total row at the bottom.

Table 3: With whom girls used to live	Number	Percentage
Grand parent	24	60%
Relatives	8	20%
Father	4	9%
Mother	3	8%
Father and mother	1	3%
Total	40	100%

Reasons that forced the girls to go to the streets

The majority of the girls interviewed had more than one reason for leaving their homes for street life. However nearly all the girls indicated that a lack of food and clothes and physical abuse were part of the reason that they left for the streets (table 4).

One of the respondents (15 years old) said: “We had a big mango tree in our compound. It used to serve as a source food during the fruiting season. When out of season, we could spend some days without food. The only alternative was, under the instruction of my grand mother, to go to work for other people for food. They would give us sweet potatoes, cassava, and pumpkins. Because I was too young to cultivate a big area, they would give me little food that could hardly be enough for both lunch and supper meals. At times I would fail to get any work. As a result we would have a cup of sugarless tea. One day, I got a friend who brought me to Wakiso town in an attempt to get a job but I failed and resorted to...” She sobbed with teary eyes.

Children enumerated other reasons including lack of school fees, , shelter, sexual abuse, burning and death of their parents. Table 4 shows the frequency of each reason mentioned.

Table 4: Reasons that forced girls to the streets	Number	Percentage
Lack of food	32	80%
Beating	29	73%
Lack of clothes	28	70%
Death of parents	24	59%
Lack of education	22	56%
Lack of shelter	14	34%
Sexual abuse	12	29%
Burning	9	23%

Problems they are facing while living on streets

The respondents also mentioned multiple problems they are facing while living on streets. Every child indicated that lack of food, clean water for drinking and bathing, education, clothes, and lack of sanitary towels were the main problems being faced. They also mentioned that they are often exploited by different groups of people or individuals who usually pretend to be having good intentions but instead exploit them further. Table 5 below shows the frequency of each problem mentioned.

One respondent (13years old) in a tattered dress and with a big septic wound on her left leg had this to say: “If you are to get food you need money. I don’t have any money. It is not easy to get work where they can give you enough money to buy food, get clean water, and buy clothes for putting on.

At times we go to garbage collection points so as to get bread that had been thrown away. If I fail to get one, I have to spend a day without food. That is why some of my friends have resorted to prostitution in order to get food and clothes.” She said while facing the ground as if she was to blame for her condition.

Another respondent (15 years old) said: “It is very dangerous to fall sick while living on the street. You cannot get someone to buy you medicine or provide a resting place; no clothes with which to cover yourself or clean environment to be in. Recently, my friend who was suffering from malaria begged for treatment, water and to talk to her uncle but nobody knew where to find him”.

Another respondent said: “because of moving from one place to another in search of water to drink and a lot of sunshine, I frequently develop thirst. It is hard for us to get clean and safe water as all water sources in this town are commercialized. The only alternative is drink water from Nakivubo channel⁴.”

One of the respondents (15 years old) said: “The major problem that makes me feel uncomfortable is lack of sanitary pads when I am in menstrual periods. The problem is coupled with lack of water to clean myself. So I have to keep away from people to avoid their abusive words. In fact I have to avoid playing during that period”.

Table 5: Problems faced by girls on the streets	Number	Percentage
Lack of food	40	100%
Lack of clean water	40	100%
Lack of sanitary pads	40	100%
Lack of education	40	100%
Lack of clothes	40	100%
Lack of medical care	39	97%
Lack of shelter	37	93%
Hard work without payment	31	77%
Sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies	29	73%
Police harassment	16	40%

Treatment by the public

The majority of street girls interviewed indicated that the community they were living in had been hostile towards them. They indicated that at one time they had suffered multiple abuse including beating, throwing of dangerous objects to them and abusive words. Table 6 below shows the frequency of responses per maltreatment case:

Table 6: Cases of maltreatment	Number	Percentage
Abusive words without reason	40	100%
Dangerous objects thrown at them	39	98%
Beating	34	85%
No payment for work done	34	85%

⁴ Nakivubo channel is a water-channel that drains water from the city. People throw a lot of dirty things including human waste, used oil to name but a few, in it. It has highly contaminated water.

One girl had this to say: “I have been beaten several times. One woman found me playing with my friend who happens to be her daughter. For no good reason she got a stick with which she hit me three times before I could free my hand from her strong grip. She shouted: You rogue, never play with my daughter again if you want to stay alive”.

Another girl (16 years old) said: “On one unfortunate night I had slept in a kitchen, which I opened at night using a stick. I delayed to wake up because I had sniffed petrol. The owner opened and found me asleep. I was woken up by a slap on the right hand side of my ear. I was accused of being a thief. Then she lit a candle wax and made drip its melted wax on right hand palm”. She displayed the scar on her palm.

Survival on the streets

The investigator sought to know how children living on the street survived. 31 out of 40 respondents said that they survive through begging, 25 said through doing petty jobs like running errands and food vending, 22 survive by taking sniffing petrol to get sleep.

Table 7: Means of survival	Frequency	Percentage
Begging	31	77%
Food vending and running other errands	25	63%
Taking drugs to get sleep	22	57%
Prostitution	14	35%
God’s protection	8	20%

Organizations that have helped the children living on streets

16 out of 40 respondents indicated that street children, boys in particular are being supported by Retrak, followed by Food for the Poor, Watoto church and Sada’s home. Meanwhile Bambejja was reported to be the only organization serving girls but only on a very small scale. Table 8 below shows organizations supporting street children in general.

Table 8: Helping organisation	Frequency	Percentage
Retrak	16	40%
Food for the Poor	5	13%
Watoto Church	4	10%
Sada’s home	4	10%
Sisters (Aruma)	3	8%
KIN	2	5%
Pastor Kayanja	2	5%
Off to Mission	1	3%
Father Comboni	1	3%
Kasubi	1	3%
Bambejja	1	3%
Total	40	100%

The results show that local government is not known as a major service provider. This could be attributed to local government’s failure to design interventions that specifically target these vulnerable children to uplift their standards of living.

The children however expressed knowledge of other NGOs that work with both girls and boys but clearly said that those NGOs have not approached them which is the reason they could not include them among those mentioned during the interviews.

Services provided to the children by the different groups

The investigator wanted to know the services currently provided by the service providers mentioned. According to the respondents, the organizations have supported the street children in the following ways:

Table 9: Services for girls on the streets	Frequency	Percentage
Food	31	78%
Clothes	21	53%
Shelter	7	18%
Water	7	18%
Education	5	13%
Health care	3	8%

The statistics above indicate that most children benefit from food and clothes provision. The results indicated that very few organizations have supported street children, girls in particular to access health care services, education, shelter and clean water.

The study also sought to establish the regularity of service provision. The results indicate that the services mentioned are not regularly provided, including food which is a daily necessity

Table 10: Frequency of the service provision	Frequency	Percentage
Twice a day	4	9%
Once a day	4	10%
Twice a week	11	27%
Once a month	9	23%
Twice a year	1	3%
Yearly	10	25%
Two years ago	1	3%

4.2. Responses from government and non government bodies

Problems faced by girls living on the streets

The investigator sought to establish the problems being faced by girls living on the streets from the perspective of a total of 10 stakeholders. The stakeholders included project managers of 5 street children NGOs, 2 staff from the OVC secretariat in the MGLSD and 3 from KNRC.

The majority of the key informants said that most girls living on the streets get diseases as a result of poor living conditions; are defiled and get pregnant; experience difficulty in giving birth because of being too young; struggle to look after their children on the streets; suffer from child labour; are stigmatized as prostitutes; and lack the basic necessities of adequate food and shelter. Below is the frequency table for the problems highlighted.

Table 11: Problems faced by girls on the streets	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of food	10	100%
Lack of shelter	10	100%
Child labour	10	100%
Disease	9	90%
Defiled	8	80%
Pregnancy and difficulty in delivering	7	70%
Looking after their children on the streets	7	70%
Stigmatization	7	70%

Service providers targeting girls

The results from key informants' interviews indicated that the majority of NGOs were not targeting girls as the most vulnerable group of children living on the streets. Of the 5 NGOs in the study, only 2 work with both boys and girls.

The manager of one organisation said: "We work with both sexes but our main challenge is that we are a very small organization and almost all girls, unlike boys who have alternatives organizations that work with them, come to us yet we do not have enough space to keep them. In fact you [Retrak] know that we turned down one of the girls you brought to us at one time because the girls' section was full."

He further noted that of the girls who come to their centre on several occasions, the number reduces faster than the number of boys as the days go by. This has been attributed to the lucrative prostitution industry and high demand for barmaids and house girls in the city.

Another respondent said that street girls "are more expensive to care for because of their needs as females. For instance on their budget you would need to add items like sanitary pads and more clothes, whereas a boy can survive with even one or two clothes for some time".

Of the five NGOs, only two work with both boys and girls. There are many girls out there who need support but whom they cannot take on because they are limited by resources. One respondent, in order to justify this noted that even psychosocial support for girls (eg counselling for them to overcome their past) takes longer and their issues are usually more sensitive than for boys which calls for special counsellors and social workers which ultimately implies more staff and hence more cost.

Services that would best address girls' needs

The investigator sought to establish the services that would best address the needs of girls living on the streets. All key informants mentioned shelter, medical care services, education, food, and resettlement packages as the key services required to address girl's needs.

Respondents from all the five organizations had the same view that the girls need a comprehensive package in all the core programme areas as stipulated in the National OVC policy.

Table 12: Services that best address girls' needs	Frequency	Percentage
Shelter	10	100%
Medical care services	10	100%
Education including health education	10	100%
Resettlement Packages	10	100%
Food	10	100%
Psychosocial support	9	90%
Material support to child mothers	7	70%
Clothes	6	60%
Rehabilitation	6	60%

4.3. Discussion

The results indicate that the majority of girls living on the streets are there, at least in part, due to poor economic conditions back home since most of them lived with their grandparents having lost their bread winners. Inability to provide adequate food, education, clothes and good shelter to the children compels them to run away from their homes to other areas in hope of a better life.

The majority of the girls spend their nights in insecure places. This increases their vulnerability to sexual abuse which has been seen by NGOs to contribute to increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other STIs among the children living on the streets since they cannot negotiate for safer sex.

As with all children living on the streets, lack of food was highlighted as a major problem. It was noted that while NGOs are providing food to these children, its provision was not regular (3 meals a day). The study also revealed a lack of clean water for bathing and drinking. The situation worsens for girls who are in their menstrual periods and do not have sanitary pads, as they need water to clean themselves as often as possible. This condition stigmatizes them and as result they avoid playing with their peers. They also lack medication when they fall sick and lack education. Generally, it is the lack of these basic needs that calls for an intervention. As highlighted by all the service providers, shelter is also essential. Getting the girls out of the risky environment should indeed be an immediate action.

Both the children and NGOs interviewed agreed that there are few organisations serving girls compared to the boys. The NGOs cited the problem of funding as the reason for not serving girls or serving fewer girls than the boys. They also find boys programmes less costly and more convenient to run. But all concur that there are girls on the streets that need support.

5. Conclusion

It is evident that there are very few organizations providing comprehensive and explicit services to girls who live and/or work on the streets and who are suffering from sexual abuse, increasing HIV burden, labour exploitation and inaccessibility to quality health services and all the other basic necessities. Getting them out of the insecure environment on the streets would be the first major step towards helping. This could be by establishing a drop in centre for the required services including shelter, education, psychosocial counselling, career guidance and food provision among others.

Whereas some organizations are providing a helping hand to girls living on the streets, most of their needs have not been met because as they reported, they have limited budgets. Hence the need for Retrak to intervene and fill the gaps identified.

Whereas boys living on the streets can be given work in exchange for money, girls' opportunities are limited and if not helped they can easily be lured into child prostitution, which exposes them to HIV/AIDs infection and unwanted pregnancies.

It is to this effect that Retrak should consider working with this vulnerable group by providing services identified.

6. Recommendations

The overall recommendation is:

- Retrak should begin working with street girls in Uganda. Organizations offering services to girls living on the streets are few and according to the girls if the services are established they would be ready to access them. However it is vital that service providers understand them and accept them as they are because the reason they do not come out even when people come promising them good things, is because most of them are fake and instead want to exploit them further. They said they have confidence in Retrak because they have seen it offer genuine services to the boys.
- Since the needs of girls are similar to those of boys, Retrak should consider providing girls with the same services they are currently offering to the boys, including a drop-in centre, from where they can then be reintegrated back into their communities either with biological families, in foster care families or in a Retrak-run cluster foster care setting (see budget in appendix 3).

In addition, providing services to girls would require Retrak to:

- *Establish new facilities separate from the boys.* This is because a key aim of the programmes would be preventing sexual abuse girls faced while on the streets. Having boys and girls together could influence them to indulge in relationships and behaviour which the programme would be aiming to help them break away from. Separate programmes would instead allow a greater focus on rebuilding their lives and healthy relationships in the future.
- *Help street girls to deal with their sexuality and reproductive health issues.* Risky sexual behaviour is one of the major challenges faced by girls on the streets, putting them at high risk of HIV infection and of bearing children without being able to care for them.
- *Equip the girls with life skills.* Programmes should aim to build assertiveness, creative and analytical skills, relationship building, problem solving, self appraisal and awareness, and communication skills so as to cope with stressors.
- *Provide safe shelter.* Overnight shelter will be key due to the high likelihood of any girl on the streets being sexually abused and becoming infected.
- *Provide care for babies.* Extra facilities for babies and small children will be needed, such as accommodation, feeding, clothing, and medical care among others, for those girls who might get into Retrak while pregnant or get pregnant and have their babies while under Retrak's care.
- *Build the capacity of staff.* Staff training or recruitment of new staff should focus on skills in handling girls issues, especially those traumatized by sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancies and babies. Once girls have tasted freedom and independence of the streets, and earned a quick income from sex and through any other means, it is hard for them to adapt to another lifestyle easily. This means more intensive psychosocial support would be required for a longer rehabilitation period.
- *Provide skills training.* For those who may not be able to join mainstream education, they need knowledge and skills that will enable them to earn income and survive in less harmful ways, so training in life and vocational skills for income-generation is important. Retrak's

Tudabujja Halfway Home still has a big part of unutilized land which can set aside for this purpose.

7. References

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Research questions and sub-questions for children

1. If you are living on the street which place do you stay for at least three hours every day.
2. Where do your parents stay?
3. Before you came to the street, with whom were you staying?
4. Tell me the reasons that forced you to come and live on the streets?
5. What are the main problems that you face on the street?
6. How do you get the following? a) water b) food, c) shelter, d) medical care whenever you fall sick.
7. If you do get food, who gives it to you?
8. Describe the kind of food you normally get.
9. How often do you eat the food you have just described?
10. Describe the place you consider as a shelter that you stay in.
11. How do you get water for drinking?
12. Describe the water source?
13. How often do you fall sick?
14. How do you get treatment whenever you fall sick?
15. Mention people or organizations that have come to help you and where they normally find you?
16. Mention ways in which these organizations or people have supported you.
17. How often have they supported you?
18. Mention the services they have been offering to you.
19. Which ones do you feel are most important for you?
20. Would you say the services address girls' needs?
21. Which services would best address the girl child needs living on the street?
22. How do you survive in absence of food?

Appendix 2: Research questions for Non government organizations and MGLSD

1. Is your organization/office involved directly or indirectly with street children ?
2. Which kind of children needs disagregated per sex, do you attend to?
3. On average can you mention the number of children you have reached since you started providing services?
4. Can you estimate the number of children disagregated by sex currently living on the street?
5. What challenges did you face as you rendered services to girl children?
6. Which sex of street children do you feel has more challenges than the other?
7. Why is it so?
8. How have you tried to solve some of those challenges?
9. If you answered no to question 8 above, can you mention some of the challenges peculiar to girls?
10. If you answered no to question 8 above, can you mention some of the challenges peculiar to boys?
11. Which steps/measures have you taken towards alievating some of the problems of street children, specifically girls you mentioned question 2?
12. As NGO which factors can make you hestate to include girl children living on the street in your programme
13. Any recommendations for service providers in favor of supporting girl children

Appendix 3: Budget

Proposed budget for key programme elements

Proposed programmes	Cost		Target Girls
	UGS	GBP	
Drop-in centre	54,321,560	14,682	24
Resettlement	26,892,200	7,268	14
Foster care	17,087,600	4,618	4
Cluster foster care	48,889,560	13,213	6
Total	48,889,560	13,213	24

Comparison with current boys' programmes

Proposed programmes	Target Girls	Running costs per girl		2010 Boys	Running costs per boy		Comparison (girls:boys)	Reasons for cost difference
		UGS	GBP		UGS	GBP		
Drop-in centre	24	1,257,083	340	1300	31,538	9	3986%	Rent of property, extra toiletries such a sanitary towels, care of babies, more complex health issues, fewer girls as no open door
Resettlement	14	1,225,986	331	84	571,429	154	215%	Fewer girls so likely to be only one girl per trip
Foster care	4	1,839,800	497	10	1,030,000	278	179%	extra toiletries, more complex health issues
Cluster foster care	6	4,279,333	1,157	20	2,500,000	676	171%	Rent of property, cost of extra toiletries such a sanitary towels, care of babies, more complex health issues
Total	24			1400				