Analysis of the Child's Right to Housing

Implementation for Street Children in Burundi:

Case of Kirundo City

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Abstract
Street children's life is a phenomenon Burundi needs to end up. In Kirundo city, this research surveyed 47 street children. Using semi-structured interviews with street children in February and March 2022, results show they are not rejoicing in their right to the house provided by the CRC, ACRWC, and minimum standards for children in institutions or deprived of a family environment in Burundi. They spend their night on the verandas, under a bridge, or inside being-built houses. They do not take a rest in the daytime but they are begging for food in restaurants, and they dwindle at the bus stop or marketplace. The Chi2 test results show that there is no relationship between that situation to their ages.

Keywords: street children, right to the house, sleeping on the veranda, begging for food, Kirundo city

1. Introduction

The life of an unaccompanied child matters to humanity entirely. For street children, the United Nations system organizations keeping for the child's best interests inserted such rights in the Convention on the child's rights (CRC). Pointing out the situation of an unaccompanied child, article 20 stipulates that when a child is not living in a familiar environment, the State provides special protection and assistance including foster placement in suitable institutions for the care of children [1].

In Africa, article 25 of the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child (ACRWC) States entitle special protection and assistance to an unaccompanied child and alternative family care that includes foster placement or placement in suitable institutions for the care of [2].
Whether such measures are the provision of universal or regional instruments concerning children's rights, many factors cause a child to live on the street as the main solution [3]. These factors are orphanhood, attractive features of growing towns to children, a large number of offspring in the household combined with unplanned pregnancies, domestic violence, parents’ lack of responsibility and behavioral problems, and a child’s rebellious behavior and attitude [4].

Living on the street is a source of trauma and resilience as it was in Haiti [5]. In Indonesia, street children’s lives matter pushed the government to establish shelter houses to provide them with social welfare services as a safe and comfortable place according to the needs and needs of street children [6]. In Malaysia, not taking into account the age of the homeless person, homelessness is the marginality and a cause of social exclusion about economic difficulties such as low income [7].

The objective of this research is to analyze the way street children get cared for, and how Burundi implements children's right to the house. This obligation for Burundi takes a source in article 20 of the ACRWC where it is denoted that countries, in case of financial incapacity of parents, states must assist in food, house, education, health and health services, and clothes.

In Burundi, the government targets to protect children located in foster placement, and for them, it set "minimum standards for children in institutions or deprived of a family environment". Standards 22 states:

‘The accommodation of the children in the institutions is appropriate to their basic needs:

- Dormitories are sufficient and equipped for a determined number of children;
- Dormitories are separated by age and gender;
- Existence of sufficient ventilation in the rooms;
- Existence of anti-mosquito screens or mosquito netting that are not torn [8].

However, no provision is set to protect street children, and measures taken by Burundi are oriented to the discouragement of foster placements as the best solution to helping every child to live in a family and rejoice in their best interest.

The reality is that the street children phenomenon exists and the objective of this research is to analyze the way their right to shelter and housing is implemented in Burundi.

2. Materials and Methods

This work is a result of research conducted by paying a visit to street children, in the evenings from February 21 to March 11, 2022, in Kirundo city, Northern province of Burundi. I conducted the visit at night to find out how those children sleep. I used a cellphone camera to record video and pictures of street children and their living places. The question of the semi-structured interview was written on paper and collected their responses using Kobo collect tool.

Besides, I used the documentary technique to survey through Burundian legislation and politics the way Burundi, judicially and institutionally implements street children’s right to a house. Data analysis was achieved with Microsoft office excel
and IBM SPSS Statistics. We used Microsoft Office Word to type this research and Zotero tool to do references within this study.

3. Results of the study

Figure 1: Chi2 How old street children are and where they sleep

Chi2 How old are you and Where do you spend your daytime Pearson Chi 0.148; Fisher's exact test 0.109, Phi = .155 Cramer's V = .155.

a. 14 cells (81.3%) have a theoretical size of less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is .45.

b. The standardized statistic is .155.

Among 47 street children we met during our research, 23 representing 48.9% sleep on the veranda of houses when their owners’ households sleep inside; 15 equaling 31.9% sleep within non-finished houses often uncovered or unroofed; six making up 12.8% change dormitory time after time while 3 (6.4%) sleep under bridges along the streets.
**Figure 2:** Chi2 about the relation between how old street children are and where they spend their daytime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How old are you?</th>
<th>Under 10 years old</th>
<th>From 11 to 12 years old</th>
<th>From 13 to 14 years old</th>
<th>15 and more years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where do you spend your daytime (do you take a rest during a day)?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>I spend the day begging on bus stop</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pass the daytime begging on market place</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend my daytime begging in restaurant and hotel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a. 14 cells (87.5%) have a theoretical size of less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is .30.
b. The standardized statistic is .832.
Chi2 How old are you and Where do you spend your daytime Pearson Chi 0.137; Fisher’s exact test 0.226. Phi = .137 Cramer’s V = .137.
Among 47 street children, 22 (representing 46.8%) spend the daytime begging for food wandering from one restaurant or hotel to another; 14 (representing 29.8) spend their daytime begging at the bus stop; 11 (representing 23.4) pass their daytime begging in the marketplace. Two out of 47 did not express their views on this question.

**Discussion**

*Street children sleep on the veranda of houses*
Among 47 street children we met during our research, 23 representing 48.9% sleep on the veranda of houses when their owners’ households sleep inside; 15 equaling 31.9% sleep within non-finished houses often uncovered or unroofed; six making up 12.8% change dormitory time after time while 3 (6.4%) sleep under bridges along the streets. Street children are this way while Burundi has already thought of
the idea of a policy of the minimum standards for children in institutions or deprived of a family environment. On page 8 of this instrument, it is highlighted that:

“All children and youth should live in an environment that is supportive, protective, or encourages the development of their potential. Children who lack adequate parental care or who are deprived of parental care are particularly at risk of not having such a supportive environment. Where, even with appropriate assistance, the child’s family is unable to provide for the child’s care, abandons the child, or entrusts the child to a third party, the State is obliged to protect the rights of the child and to provide adequate alternative care, with or through competent local authorities and duly empowered civil society organizations. It is the responsibility of the State through the competent authorities to oversee the safety, well-being, and development of any child in alternative care and to ensure regular review of the adequacy of the alternative care system in place[8].

Such a way street children sleep does not meet this minimum principle that the government of Burundi itself took as a guideline while street children are from the category of children deprived of the familial environment.

Burundi plans to set policies to end up with street children and the begging phenomenon. Thus, the Burundian government gave an ultimatum to street children, beggars, and other vagrants to go back to their families, and three days after it is finished, the authorities took action in which they arrested 90 out of about 7000 street children [9].

3 street children who answered our interview told they sleep under bridges along the street. These children, regarding their right to housing, are living a life that UNICEF expressed is not to be held referring to 1 483 children sleeping along the streets of Paris in France [10]. This situation in France was caused by the main idea to maintain familial unity while in Burundi, street children leave their families esteeming it is better to live on the street than in a family. Sleeping under bridges or along the streets while motorized cars are driven all night long is nothing more than slumbering still stand [11]. The night of street children at Kirundo looks like the one in Casablanca in Morocco. About twenty children squat on a street corner, sitting on the ground, looking as if they were defying the cold. Children like no other. Children who have lost some of their innocence and who scare the passengers. Children that the women, usually touched by the little ones’ faces, run away from like the plague. They are the children of the street.

They are between 10 and 17 years old, with dark and scarred faces, wounds, clothes that have seen better days, rags in hand, and bottles barely concealed under their clothes. As they approach one of them, the smell of thinner and glue, products they never part with, is suffocating. Yet their appearance and aggressiveness are masks that hide a great vulnerability. All these children have found themselves on the street, almost despite themselves. They have not been able to find another shelter

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1 This passage is found in the hardcopy of this document entitled “Minima des standards pour les enfants en institutions ou privés d’un environnement familial au Burundi” available at the office of the Department in charge of children’s rights. This part is not inserted in electronic copy available online and cited at [8] even though it would be the same document.
to take them in, nor sensitive souls to protect them. Abandoned children, orphans, runaways, beaten, abused, and even assaulted, all have fled a dark reality and a broken family, towards a life that no child should have to endure [12].

Chi2 How old are you and Where do you spend your daytime Pearson Chi 0.148; Fisher's exact test 0.109. Phi = .155 Cramer's V = .155. a.14 cells (81.3%) have a theoretical size of less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is .45. and the standardized statistic is .155. These results reveal that there is no relationship between the age of children and where they sleep after choosing to live on the street.

The places in which street children sleep is very dangerous to their life. They are not respectful of the recommendation of the National Sleep Foundation (American society) which suggests a sleep time of:

- For teens ages 14 to 17: between 8 and 10 hours of sleep per night
- For preteens aged 8 to 13: between 9 and 11 hours of sleep per night [13].

Among 47 street children, 22 (representing 46.8%) spend the daytime begging for food wandering from one restaurant or hotel to another; 14 (representing 29.8) spend their daytime begging at the bus stop; 11 (representing 23.4) pass their daytime begging in the marketplace. Two out of 47 did not express their views on this question.

With a.14 cells (87.5%) have a theoretical size of less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is .30, and the standardized statistic is .832, Chi2 analyzing the relationship that may exist between the age of street children and the places in which they spend their daytime, Pearson Chi 0.137; Fisher's exact test 0.226, Phi = .137 Cramer's V = .137. These results mean that there is no relationship between the two variables.

The fact that Burundi did not provide a special home for the street children is an obstacle to their possibility to sleep during the daytime. However, the nap plays a great role in the child's development. It helps the child to have a regular biological rhythm, assimilate the knowledge acquired during the waking phases, and promotes growth. Indeed, during the nap, the child's body and brain rest. After this period of calm, they are ready to go back to work and are particularly efficient [14].

**Conclusion**

International instruments in regards to children's rights converge that every child needs a house and this is his right. This research intended to analyze the way street children in Kirundo city rejoice in their right to the house. From meeting them at the bus stop at the first stamp in Kirundo to visiting them for evenings of over a fortnight in February and March 2022 and chatting with them (semi-structured interview) I got the results of this research. There is no house to accustom street children in Kirundo city. Thus, 47 street children I met spend their night under bridges, on the veranda, or inside being-built houses. Independently to their ages, they do not have a resting place a day for they pass their daytime begging for food at the bus stop or begging at the marketplace.
References


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