



OSEPER

Research on factors surrounding the family reintegration of street girls in Kinshasa, DRC: the search for long-term and durable solutions in the light of 'multiple stigmatisations'
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Final report



Disclaimer: This research was commissioned by War Child UK and Comic Relief and undertaken by Mathilde Guntzberger on behalf of Family for Every Child. Co-authors include Prof. Florentin Azia and Oasis Kodila. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of War Child, Comic Relief or Family for Every Child.

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ACRONYMS

CBO - Community Based Organisation

COPERF - Collectif des organisations de protection des enfants en rupture familiale/
Network of organisations working for the protection of children without parental care

CSEC - Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

CRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

CPEJD - Centre Professionnel d'Encadrement des Jeunes Désœuvrés/ Professional centre
for destitute children.

DISPE - Direction des Interventions Sociales pour la Protection de l'Enfance/ Department of
social intervention for child protection

DIVAS - Division des Affaires Sociales/ Department for Social Affairs

DRC - Democratic Republic of Congo

ECPAT (End Child Prostitution And Trafficking) - A global network of organisations and
individuals working together to eliminate child prostitution, child pornography and the
trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

FBO - Faith-Based Organisations

FTR - Family Tracing and Reintegration / Reunification

HP - Harmful Practices

IDMRS - Identification, Documentation, Médiation, Réunification et Suivi/ Identification,
Documentation, Mediation, Reunification and Follow-up

IGA - Income Generating Activity

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

ORPER - Œuvre de Re-classement et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue / Work of
Rehabilitation and of Protection of Street Children

OSEPER - Œuvre de Suivi, d'Education et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue/ education
based on Protection of Street Children

RECOPE - Réseaux Communautaires de protection de l'enfant/ Community Child Protection
Networks

REJEER - Réseau des éducateurs des enfants et jeunes de la rue/ Network of the Educators
of Street Children and Youths

WCUK - War Child UK

WORKING DEFINITIONS

Alternative care: Care of children in a family environment, but not with their parents or legal caregivers, including: kinship care, foster care, family-like care, supervised independent living (UN General Assembly, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 26 to 29)

Family reintegration:

The process through which a child is returned back to his/her immediate or extended family (either where s/he lived before or with another family member), and is able to reintegrate into family and community life where s/he receives the necessary care and protection to grow and develop. Within this process reunification is the bringing of child and family members together for the first time after a period of separation while the child was on the streets, often a key step in the process towards reintegration. (RETRAK reintegration SOPs)

“The process of a child without parental care making a move to their biological parent/s and usually their community of origin or, where this is not possible, to another form of family-based care that is intended to be permanent. (Family for Every Child)

Kinship care: Family-based care within the child’s extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or informal in nature. (UN, 2010, Article 29)

Street-connected children:

“Children for whom the street is a central reference point – one which plays a significant role in their everyday lives and identities’ (Dr. Sarah Thomas de Benitez).

Other terminology which has also been used includes: “Street children, children of the streets, children on the streets, children working and/or living on the streets” and more recently “children in street situations”. These aim to reflect the complex and different realities children associated to the streets live in reality. For the purpose of this report, we will mostly use “street-connected girls” and “girls living and working on the street”.

Best interest of the child: The best interest principle is set out in Article 3(1) of the CRC and one of its overarching principles is that “in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration”. Examples: Article 9.1 (child protection) states a child shall not be removed from its family unless it is necessary for the best interests of the child; Article 9.3 (custody) states a child can maintain contact with both parents except if it’s contrary to the child’s best interests; Article 18.1 (parental decision making) states that parents have the primary responsibility for bringing up the child and that the best interests of the child will be their basic concern; Article 20.1 (deprivation of family environment) refers to situations where a child cannot be allowed to remain in a family in its own best interests.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is defined by the ILO Convention 182 as one of the worst forms of child labour and means the sexual abuse of a child in exchange for money or other form of remuneration. This includes child prostitution, pornography, sex tourism and trafficking for sexual purposes. It is accepted that a child cannot consent freely to have sexual intercourse with an adult, including children surviving

on the street. Therefore, in such cases, they should be considered victims and afforded the necessary protection (ECPAT).

Child abuse: According to the World Health Organisation, 'Child abuse' or 'maltreatment' constitutes 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.' (Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO – 1999).

Residential care: Care provided in any non-family-based group setting, such as places of safety for emergency care, transit centres in emergency situations, and all other short and long-term residential care facilities, including group homes (UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 2009)

Survival sex: Also called "transactional sex". The exchange of sex for money, food, access to shelter, education or other services. Many young people involved in the exchange of sex for money (or benefits such as food, shelter, protection etc.) do not perceive themselves as engaging in prostitution but rather as doing "what is necessary for their survival". For purposes of this research, however, "survival sex" and "child prostitution" will be looked at as the same phenomenon and the terms used interchangeably.

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Summary

DRC has had a complex and troubled recent history, marked by entrenched poverty, years of conflict and a failed state struggling to provide basic needs for the most vulnerable groups in society. This has contributed to a weakening of the social fabric and the destruction of traditional community coping mechanisms that families relied upon. This reality is particularly visible in the



social disruption characterised by the growing number of street children in the country's urban centres such as Kinshasa, where 44% of children with street connections are girls, an increasing trend according to the REJEER¹. Girls are often victims of commercial sexual exploitation and violence at the hand of street peers, police officers and older men in the city who take advantage of them in exchange for money, or forms of "protection".

This research looked at the factors affecting the family reintegration of girls in the Tshangu district, an operational zone of the local NGO OSEPER, a partner of War Child for a 3-year project, seeking to address the needs of street-connected girls, including family reintegration. It is based on consultation with 40 key informants (service providers and child protection specialists in Kinshasa) and interviews with 79 families and girls (both living/working on the streets and those who are successfully reintegrated). It also included participatory consultation involving 52 girls formerly or currently living and working on the streets. Finally, a comparative literature review and a consultation process with child protection experts were undertaken at the global level to identify elements of promising practice in the reintegration of street-connected girls.

Globally, there is a growing interest in improving ways of working with girls as shown by both the current development of literature on the theme and by the toolkit on working with girls, (an initiative from the Consortium for Street Children, a UK network of NGOs working with street-connected children). Equally, there is an increasing awareness among agencies and service providers in Kinshasa² of the need to work better with girls, as services specifically addressing their needs are lagging behind those for boys and their reintegration poses bigger challenges than for boys.

¹ REJEER is the network of street children specialized organisations in Kinshasa.

² This growing interest has been expressed during interviews with Chemin Neuf, OSEPER and is reflected in the new World Bank programme for 2010-2015 which emphasizes improving services dedicated to girls connected to the streets.

Summary findings of this research:

- Although poverty, family disintegration and conflict are important pathways to the streets (including accusations of witchcraft) for girls, there was not one single factor that resulted in a girl's decision to leave, but rather a combination of events and a "story".
- Overall, girls' testimonies revealed that they would prefer returning home to their biological family (included extended) rather than any other care arrangement. However, they are aware that this is aspirational and in most cases not feasible in the near future.
- Girls experienced high levels of physical and sexual violence while on the streets, including from peers.
- Girls reported being particularly sensitive to the way they are treated when in residential or alternative care. They feel badly affected and undermined when people or families use language they consider disrespectful, referring to them as witches or street girls.
- When envisaging reintegration, what they value most is "feeling loved", accepted and cared for (over other well-being criteria such as material benefits).
- Reintegration is most likely to fail when the initial cause leading the girl to the street has not been addressed (initial assessment) and when there have been insufficient efforts and time for both the girl and her family to prepare for reunification.

Summary recommendations:

- Strengthen the quality of individual case management through training of OSEPER personnel and other professionals and ensuring that adequate time and resources are given to the reintegration process. Helping a girl throughout the process means supporting her to identify the causes of her original departure to the street, working with both her and her family or caretaker to build trust and understanding, and ensuring a supportive community context for her return.
- Improve M&E systems: put in place "reintegration readiness" and "well-being" indicators measuring readiness before reintegration and well-being after reintegration for both the girl and the family.
- Focus on programme learning: learn from global therapeutic approaches that have worked so as to improve mental health and psychosocial interventions to fit the girl's needs.
- Strengthen prevention work, working with families and communities, focusing on behaviour change approaches, changing social norms at the root of discrimination and harmful practices such as witchcraft.
- Make available a wide range of care options and assess which is best suited on a case by case basis. Consider kinship and fostering as interim care options while identifying durable solutions for girls.
- Find innovative ways to target girls who are less visible or do not access services (girl mothers, older sisters who exploit their younger peers and youth street couples & families).
- Invest in social workforce strengthening including street educators and community child protection mechanisms, through providing thorough and quality training in specialist skills such as psychosocial support, case management, conflict resolution and mediation skills.

I Context and background to the research

In August 2010, War Child UK started a project funded by Comic Relief in partnership with the local NGO OSEPER (Œuvre de Suivi, d'Encadrement et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue) to improve protection for Vulnerable Girls living and working on the Streets of Kinshasa, many of whom are exposed to commercial sexual exploitation as a mean of survival.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Provide better access to psychological, health and legal referral services, and immediate protection needs through the operation of a “night bus” and a 24-hour drop-in centre for girls.
- Increase girls’ capacity to protect themselves. through engaging in literacy and life-skills training, and improving their knowledge of referral services on offer.
- Provide greater protection through sensitising perpetrators of sexual violence about the rights of street girls.

The main activities are providing street children with support including: a mobile “night-bus” offering immediate access to medical and psychosocial support, a 24-hour drop-in centre, counselling, medical support and referral. Where possible, girls are reunified with their families or other suitable caretakers. If this is not a possibility other durable solutions are explored.

Although several local and international NGOs in Kinshasa have strengthened the provision of services for girls, especially family reintegration services, many actors on the ground emphasized the fact that many re-unified girls still returned to the streets despite their efforts (since the beginning of the project 76 girls have been reintegrated, but 20 have ended up on the street again). The prevention of re-separation is a problem seriously affecting all Street Child programmes in Kinshasa but seems to be more complicated to resolve for girls than for boys.

This research aims at uncovering the complex dynamics behind the issue of family reintegration of girls in Kinshasa, what makes girls want to stay in their family environment and what are the interventions that are likely to support their durable reintegration, either in their original family or another family, or through other ways that will be safer for them than the mechanisms they currently resort to for their survival.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project name: Support and Protection for Vulnerable Girls Living and Working on the Street in Kinshasa

Implementer: War Child UK

Partners: OSEPER

Funder: Comic Relief

Duration: 3 years

Locations: Kinshasa, Tshangu district (Ndjili, Masina, Nsele, Maluku and Kimbanseke)

II Objectives and aims of the research

Objectives set for this research were:

- ✓ Understand factors that lead to successful / unsuccessful reintegration of girls in their families and communities, including actual / felt stigmatisation and exclusion.
- ✓ Identify recommendations and potential strategic options leading to more effective reintegration for street girls in Tshangu; and different ways to address the sources of stigmatisation; by comparing the realities and aspirations of both former and actual street girls and their families, with the available support services in Kinshasa and good practices more widely. The aim was to inform future strategic orientations for this programme; and to identify elements that can be used for learning by other interested stakeholders.

Research questions

1. Factors contributing to reintegration success/failure

- Are there pre-existing root causes and factors leading to girls leaving their families for street life (depending on the girls' individual profile or situation)?
- Are there pre-existing root causes and factors leading to failure of family reintegration?
- How do the initial causes for leaving the home link with the success or failure of the reintegration process?

2. Care options

- Does the reintegration process cater for individual case needs, or does it follow a 'one size fits all approach', and how does that help or hinder the process of reintegration?
- What are the perceived / real advantages and risks of different rehabilitation and reintegration approaches (including hosting and day centres, foster families, independent living options, combination of vocational training and Income Generating Activities (IGA) for families)?

3. Inclusion/ marginalisation/ stigmatisation

- Causes leading to permanent exclusion of girls from their communities?
- How to support girls' resilience / capacity to survive in order to promote better safety and protection for girls connected to the streets?
- How can we assess, and try to reduce, the high levels of risk of stigma and marginalisation being experienced by girls who have been reintegrated in their families and neighbourhoods?
- What are the various actors and factors in accusations of witchcraft in the selected communities, and what are the most successful strategies highlighted in studies commissioned on witchcraft and reintegration?

4. Services

- What could be done to improve / adapt services to better cater for the specific needs of girls connected to the streets, particularly their reintegration needs?

III Research methodology

A. Research team composition

Support team

- Consultant team (3)
- OSEPER Project Coordinator (1)

Research enumerators' core team

- Former street connected girls (4)
- OSEPER educators (4)
- REJEER educators (5)
- OSEPER Young street leader (1)

B. Approach

The research was based on the principles of “developmental evaluation”, including participatory and child-friendly research methods in order to enable the meaningful participation and engagement of all actors linked to the project, including project educators, beneficiaries and agencies and services involved in the reintegration of girls in Kinshasa. It has taken on board these approaches through:

- Developing research questions that are **based on War Child’s learning framework**³.
- Embedding the principles of **flexibility in learning**, research tools have been tested and adapted at different stages (Initial validation stage by research team; Post participatory research stage (for questionnaires); and Post pre-test stage).
- **Participatory approach**: the research involved a team of enumerators drawn from the project (OSEPER social workers) and included as researchers girls who have achieved stable, long-term reintegration into their families. The team put an emphasis on facilitating learning throughout the research process by enabling project members to become an active part of the research, formulating questions, and using feedback and validation exercises in order for them to take a full part in the research and to own the findings.
- **Child-friendly approach**: the participation of ex-street connected girls involved adapting ways of working and the research approach, with appropriate training modules, in order to allow girls to take a meaningful part and become active researchers. Training of the enumerator team included child-friendly learning exercises such as role play and simulation exercises, translation. Simple language was used and the training and research timetable was arranged to respect the girls’ own working hours and timetable.
- **Research ethics**: Issues related to violence, exploitation and abuse are obviously challenging areas to research. Clearly a high level of attention to ethical issues is crucial to ensure girls involved in the research are safe, and to avoid causing harm to them. In this research, ethical protocols have been developed to ensure that issues of confidentiality,

³ i.e. the set of learning questions developed during the project (Comic Relief requirement) in the research TORs, section 3.

sensitive questions and consent are clear to researchers. The research also used an “urgent referral form” for suspected cases of abuse or violence; and made it possible for girl respondents in the research process, to be able to “debrief” when needed with the project psychologist, on sensitive issues raised during the research (see annexe F. data protection protocol).

C. Methodology: data collection tools

The research used a combination of data collection methods that allowed for different levels of participation from project stakeholders, from semi-structured interviews to more participative levels such as group work and collective validation of research findings.

1. Review of existing literature and evidence

The table below summarizes the types of literature included in the review. The global review was done with the aim of comparing this project with promising practices from other countries, in the area of street-connected children and family reintegration, in particular girls (see research bibliography in annexe F).

Types of documents	Specific documents
Project-specific literature	WarChild/ OSEPER (partner) Project proposal/ baseline/budget/ logframe Annual reports Services mapping Internal reviews Other research
DRC-specific literature	Child protection relevant country literature Other street connected children research Witchcraft literature
Global literature on reintegration	On street connected children, girls and family reintegration, with emphasis on successful and innovative practices.

2. Participatory research exercises

Participatory research exercises were carried out over 3 half-days with a small number of girls connected to the streets, with the specific objective that they would complement and triangulate findings from other research tools (such as the questionnaires) and would provide better qualitative data by setting a more flexible and “open” environment for girls to speak and exchange experience about family reintegration. A total of 48 girls attending 5 different day or transit centre structures in Kinshasa, or already successfully reintegrated, participated in these exercises (see annexe A participants table). Approximately half of the participants were between 10-14 years and the other half between 15-18 years old. Profiles of participants ranged from girls living and working on the streets occasionally attending day care centres - including girls who had failed to reintegrate, girls attending transit centres (a more stable environment) - including preparing for family reintegration, girls who had successfully reunified, as well as girls accused of witchcraft. All girls had experienced different lengths of time on the streets. Girl participants were selected using purposive sampling considering age, reintegration status, witchcraft accusations, presence at the centre on the day of the research as well as willingness to participate in the research.

After these exercises, a number of key points were highlighted and used to reformulate questions in the semi-structured questionnaires.

Methods used:

- **Problem free listing:** girls were asked to provide a list of advantages and shortcomings for each living place: living at home, living on the streets, at the centre or living independently.
- **Group work:** What creates problems for reunified girls, how to address these difficulties (solutions).
- **Individual projections exercises and drawings:** “where do I see myself living in the future, with whom and why?”

3. Key informant interviews

Service providers and child protection actors in Kinshasa - See annexe B for the list of respondents and annexe D for questionnaires. A total of 40 Key Informants were interviewed (from 10 organizations). Sometimes group interviews were organized. The team selected a mix of service providers directly working with street-connected girls, coordination organizations (e.g. REJEER – the Kinshasa-based network of organisations working with street-connected children), UN agencies, NGOs and government-affiliated bodies (Child Tribunal and Ministry of Social Affairs).

Child protection experts (global level) - See annexe C. for the list of respondents and annexe D. for questionnaires. In consultation with War Child and Family for Every Child, the consultant identified a list of 11 key child protection and family reintegration experts at the global level on the issue of street connected children/girls. The experts included representatives of the Consortium for Street Children, Better Care Network, Family for Every Child, Juconi and other international specialists. These experts were interviewed to explore promising practices and models in different countries and learning at a global level. This report seeks to integrate this learning in the findings section whenever it is relevant to the research questions and findings. The purpose was to compare findings relative to the Kinshasa context with global emerging good practice in the area of reintegration of girls (see below under research findings and recommendation sections).

Religious leaders: Sixty-eight religious leaders were provided with a questionnaire to answer, including revival church leaders, kimbanguists and Christian pastors and priests.

4. Structured interviews with girls and families

Sampling has been done purposively by identifying 79 girls and families, both those associated with the project (from the OSEPER day centre and transit centre) and those from outside the project (centres run by other NGOs), who were available at the time of the study. Street-connected girls outside centres have been identified through snowballing. These sampling methods were thought to be the most appropriate given the context as girls connected to the streets are a particularly hard to reach group and highly mobile. However, it implies that we cannot make any assumptions based on the representativeness of the sample to street-connected girls in Kinshasa in general. The girls were identified taking into account the diversity of profiles and characteristics (age, length of time on the streets, reintegration status etc.) - to make the sample as broadly representative of the main characteristics of such girls as possible.

Groups approached in the study included⁴:

1. 21 girls reunified with their families: the sample consisted of 4 girls who had stayed with their families for more than 18 months; 9 girls for 6-18 months; 3 girls for 3-6 months and 4 girls for 0-3 months.
2. 32⁵ girls living and working on the streets, including 22 who have returned after unsuccessful family reintegration.
3. 26 families (16 of which included successfully reintegrated girls living at home and 10 which had girls who had come home but then returned to the streets)

The data collection was undertaken by 6 teams organized in pairs (with 1 educator and 1 former street connected girl each).

Summary of questionnaires target groups:

Questionnaire / target group (see annexe E)
Reintegrated girls
Street connected girls / girls returned to the streets
Families (of reintegrated girls / girls who returned to the streets after failed reintegration)
Service providers (Kinshasa)
Child protection actors and experts (Kinshasa)
Religious leaders (Kinshasa)
Global child protection / family reintegration experts

D. Fieldwork approach

Training and validation of data collection tools

The research team organized a workshop over four half days before the start of the research, involving War Child and OSEPER staff and the enumerator team, covering : participatory and child-friendly methodology; data collection tools; data management and quality control, data transcribing and cleaning; team work including debriefing; research logistics and research ethics. Each enumerator was provided with a short research guide to support them during the research. The workshop also included a validation session on data collection tools looking at questionnaire relevance and appropriateness of language.

Piloting and data collection

Piloting of data collection tools (questionnaires only) took place in the OSEPER day care and transit centres with a debriefing session with enumerators afterwards, to exchange views on research tools and other issues. This allowed enumerator teams (including educators and girl enumerators) to really own the questionnaire and to practice their research and communication skills, as well as to build working relations within the pairs.

Transcribing and analysing data

The data collection tools were designed in French, with questions being simultaneously interpreted into the local language (Lingala) during interviews (and transcribed back into French simultaneously by enumerators). The data was then passed to the research team

⁴ This included girls attending OSEPER day time drop in centre (Annuarite) and OSEPER transit centre, girls known by OSEPER staff through the night ambulance, girls attending other day or transit centres (managed by other NGOs in Kinshasa) and girls from locations known to host girls living and working on the streets.

⁵ Girls outside project locations were identified through 'snowballing' - information provided by girls giving advice on areas where other girls could be found (6 girls among group 2)

(consultants) for analysis. The data was then transferred to an excel database, which the research team used to undertake both the Statistical Analysis of quantitative data and a Qualitative Analysis of interviews and participatory exercise transcripts, by identifying recurrent themes and answers related to the research questions (using XLstats and Stata).

Validation of research findings

Two final validation workshops were organised at the end of the research, one for the research team including NGO social workers (enumerators), girl researchers and representatives of War Child and OSEPER (15 people) and the other with representatives of REJEER, the Kinshasa Network of NGOs specialized in support to street children. At this workshop, presentation of research findings as well as discussion over recommendations was facilitated through thematic group work.

Limitations of the research

The sample size being limited by the predominantly qualitative approach to the research, it cannot be deemed representative of the overall street-connected girl population of Kinshasa. However, individuals from the sample were chosen following criteria of representativeness in order to make sure the sample was as close to representative as possible (choosing girls from different social characteristics such as age and ethnicity as well as different types of street connection and family reintegration status).

Collecting information on violence against girls and women is often difficult, owing to the sensitive nature of the topic, and findings from most studies acknowledge that they are likely to be under-representing the scope and severity of the problem. In the analysis of the questionnaires, it has been found, for instance, that there was a possible under-reporting of family abuse and witchcraft among girl respondents. This was apparent because, without explicitly referring to it, the language used by some girl respondents was clear enough for the researchers to conclude that the girls in question had experienced abuse and/or accusations of witchcraft. Analysis of answers to open-ended questions in the questionnaires was a key mechanism to clarify answers and minimize misinterpretation by the researchers.

Caution was taken not to interpret answers literally. For instance, girls' answers to the question "why did you leave your family for the streets?" did not particularly reflect the actual cause for departure (and could result in researchers misinterpreting the data), which was found when looking at answers to open-ended questions in other parts of the questionnaires. For example, this may have been the case for girls answering "economic reasons" or "influence of friends" to the question above but later, in answer to open-ended questions, mentioning they had suffered from abuse or violence in their home. In these cases, influence of friends may well have been the trigger and not the initial cause for departure.

Another limitation faced in the research was the difficulty of accessing girls connected to the streets who were not related to any day care or transit centres, although the research did include 6 of them through snowballing (as explained above). However it is rare that street connected girls are not in any way connected to any services - many of them, for example, attend open centres or night ambulance services.

IV Research findings

A. Street connected girls in Kinshasa

There are an estimated 20,341 children with street connections in Kinshasa, 44% of which are girls (REJEER, 2010). NGOs estimate that 9 girls out of 10 are living from income from prostitution⁶ and that the average age for starting sexual activity on the streets is 12 years old. From our sample, at least 50% of girls were found to be gaining income from commercial sex, or involved in some kind of sexual exploitation or



“survival sex” (e.g. though dependence on ‘street husbands / boyfriends’). Tshangu, one of the poorest and most populous districts in Kinshasa has one of the highest numbers of street-connected girls. The nature of their connection to the street varies depending on the initial cause that provoked their departure to the streets. Some have joined the streets because of family conflict, violence or abuse; others have been forced out of their homes following accusations of witchcraft, a phenomenon that has become increasingly well known and prevalent in Kinshasa and other urban centres since 1980. Street-connected girls and boys come largely from the urban areas in Kinshasa⁷.

Girls surviving on the streets are experiencing multiple deprivations of their rights and high levels of violence including sexual violence. Most are living in conditions recognised as one of the “worst forms of child labour”, which States party to the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) are committed to eliminating⁸. The DRC ratified this convention in June 2001.

Once they have started to “live and work on the street” in prostitution, it is more difficult and complex to envisage sustainable reintegration options for them because of the shame and stigmatization they face linked with prostitution. Jean-Pierre, head of Chemin Neuf which provides residential services to street-connected boys and girls says: “from the moment when these girls have been raped and subjected to prostitution, their prospects for reintegration are almost non-existent (...) and their links to the streets are too important, they often go back to their street friends”.

Street friends, “protectors”, boyfriends and “sister yayas” (big sisters), all play a role in creating and shaping a new “street identity” and bond while at the same time exerting high

⁶ Médecins du Monde (MDM). 2009. La rue c'est la chance? Enquêtes sur l'exploitation et les violences sexuelles des jeunes filles des rues de Kinshasa. Banque Mondiale, 2009. Nous ne sommes pas dangereux, mais en danger. Les enfants des rues à Kinshasa.

⁷ World Bank 2009. *Op. cit.*

⁸ “Children are often engaged in or used by adults for a wide range of activities on the street... Street children are thus extremely vulnerable ...and are involved in or exposed to many of the worst forms of child labour....even though working on the street as such is not defined as a worst form of child labour.” ILO Contribution for the study of children working and/or living on the street by the UNHCHR, 2011. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/Study/ILO.doc>

levels of violence through cruel street initiation rites involving being forced to have sex with older men or being subjected to gang rape by groups of street boys⁹.

Testimonies from girls participating in the research (through consultation exercises) and respondents to interviews revealed that this common pattern of routine violence and sexual exploitation from older peers, as well as men on the streets, is the issue that concerns them most while on the streets. Besides highlighting this, nearly all the girls in the participatory exercises mentioned that they could see “no advantage at all” to life on the streets. Whether this is because acknowledging any advantages to life on the streets would not be socially appropriate is unclear, but former street girls’ testimonies emphasized that “life on the streets” was not the result of a choice but the consequence of a particular situation or predicament that which had forced them out of their homes against their will¹⁰.

Advantages and shortcomings of street life (summary results from group exercises)

Advantages of street life	Shortcomings of street life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most participating girls answered they could see no advantages to street life. ▪ In some isolated cases, support received from older girls was mentioned as a positive aspect of street life but that wasn't the majority of cases. (see shortcomings) ▪ Some others mentioned (from day centre older girls i.e. girls still living and working on the streets) autonomy as a key advantage (e.g. Human and financial autonomy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Violence and forced prostitution & exploitation (led by older girls or ‘yayas’) was widely referred to in all groups ▪ Sexual violence including rape ▪ Physical violence including death ▪ Physical and sexual violence from security forces (police) ▪ Discrimination ▪ Forced begging ▪ Health issues

B. The family reintegration process

The approach adopted by OSEPER¹¹ in this project is to reach girls where they live and work and try to respond to their needs by providing them with support, information on reproductive health and referral to services, including drop-in-centres and transit centres where they can access counselling and medical support as well as family tracing and reintegration services.

From the beginning of the project 76 girls have been reunified with their families, but unfortunately 20 (a little over 25%) have ended up on the street again. When looking at the gender disaggregated data, one notices that, among those who failed to reintegrate, girls form the majority -73% of the total, which clearly indicates that reintegration is more complex for girls (OSEPER project coordinator). Return rates are higher among girls attending the daytime drop-in-centre (DiC) than for girls attending the transit centre. The reason is that girls attending the DiC have a higher degree of connectedness to the streets in comparison to those in residential centres (transit centres providing overnight care and a more stable environment for girls). Girls attending the transit centres are no longer living and working on the streets, they have made the choice of breaking links with the streets and most are getting ready for family reintegration.

⁹ A recent study undertaken by Médecins du Monde in Kinsasha in 2009 showed that out of 64 girls living and working on the streets interviewed, 52 confirmed that they had been gang raped at least once, 28 admitted being survivors of forced prostitution and 15 victims of prostitution “baptism” or initiation rites, often as young as 11 or 12 years old.

¹⁰ This is also a conclusion of a 2009 World Bank report (see bibliography in annexe).

¹¹ Based on REJEER IDMRS guidelines shared by all REJEER members.

In both centres girls are offered family reintegration, and stay connected to the centre for between 15 days and 6 months after reintegration, during which time staff undertake identification, documentation, mediation, reunification and follow-up (IDMRS, Identification, Documentation, Médiation, Réunification et Suivi), a standardised process for family tracing that is used across agencies involved in supporting street-connected children in Kinshasa and by members of REJEER, the national street child network.

Identification and documentation phase: project and outreach staff identify girls on the streets and girls coming to the centres. Each situation is assessed on an individual basis, including cause for joining the streets. This assessment also addresses practical needs such as reproductive health, education and professional training as well as discussions related to their willingness to return to their families of origin.

Mediation phase: Tracing agents undertake mediation work to prepare both the child and the family for reunification, when this is in line with the wishes of both child and family of origin or extended family members. Mediation work is carried out for a period of up to 6 months, a timeframe considered appropriate by service providers for both parties to be ready to live together again, and to resolve any underlying issues that may have caused conflict or rejection in the past. This time can also be used to identify a more appropriate relative (than biological parents or former caregivers) who will accept to take the child into their home. This work is done on a case-by-case basis.

In cases of reluctance from families, tracing agents are encouraged to work with the new Child Tribunal's social workers, who can visit families to discuss the implications of the legal framework condemning child abandonment and child accusations of witchcraft. Service providers working with the new Tribunal see this cooperation as helpful and effective in convincing parents to take back their child (mostly to avoid official penalties). However, although enforcement of the law is a crucial priority in Congo when it comes to the protection of vulnerable children, doubts remain as to whether reintegration will really function when parents have only agreed to it for fear of legal consequences. It is likely that mediation and conflict resolution work with families will still be needed alongside these types of initiatives.

Reunification and follow-up phase: Tracing agents are then tasked with reunifying the child with her parents and undertaking follow-up. This stage has to be documented and placements officially endorsed by a government body. It also takes into account the material needs of both the family and child and the type of support needed, for example children can be provided with support for school or professional training fees, depending on their needs. Follow-up visits are organised by tracing agents for at least 6 months and as long as a year or more in some cases.

C. Factors contributing to reintegration success/failure

Why do girls leave for the streets?	
Abuse and conflict at home	9
Abuse at home and witchcraft	8
Disease and witchcraft	1
Witchcraft	8
Poverty, Witchcraft, parent travel/death	3
Witchcraft, parent travel/death	1
Poverty	4
Abuse at home and poverty	2
Friends influence	9
Friends influence & abuse at home	2
Family disintegration (death parent, Parents travel/divorce)	3
Others/ on my own will	3
Total sample of girls interviewed	53

From girls' answers to the interviews, it is hard to single out specific reasons that have led girls to leave their families for the streets. In the majority of cases, there is not a single unique reason behind departure but a combination of factors and a series of events that have pushed them to leave. There is a "story", often starting with some sort of crisis evolving towards a deliberate or forced decision to leave home.

In some cases, girls come from complex family backgrounds, have gone through traumatic family events such as the death or separation of parents, violent conflict and abuse at home. In other cases, conflict seems to have started from an insignificant event which led to a girl feeling she had no alternative but to break away: "you see children leaving following a misunderstanding or mistake and then starts the spiral of conflict, exploitation and life on the streets" says one Child Protection Network (RECOPE) member.

In their own words: what girls say about reasons for leaving to the streets?

"I received high threats following an incident where I lost a bottle of water a women sent me to buy on the streets" (Audrey, 14)

"My mum sent me to sell vegetables but I spent all the money I got" (Lucie, 14)

Others may not be able to point to a specific reason behind their departure. Assessing the key pull and push factors as well as the hidden mechanisms that have led these girls to make a choice to leave to seek better protection or to flee from stigmatisation and shame, is the task of social workers and can be a long process. A girl may not know everything that happened in her family, but can still feel uncomfortable with a particular situation e.g. Nicole, 14 years says: "I don't know why my mum has gone travelling and no one in my family would tell me, I won't come back until they tell me why she has gone".

However, among both samples of reintegrated girls, and girls connected to the streets, who provided accounts of their particular situations, some recurrent themes can be identified:

Of the girls interviewed, 40% stated that **conflict, abuse and neglect** in the family forced them on to the streets; while 38% left following accusations of **witchcraft**, which also involves high levels of violence and sometimes torture as part of expiation or purification rites. It appears that these 2 factors are major push factors leading girls to the streets,

It is hard to assess the extent to which "abuse", as mentioned by girls, also includes **sexual abuse**, but since occurrence of sexual abuse is usually under-reported and the methodology

of this research did not focus on disclosing sexual abuse, it may well be an important “hidden” reason behind their statements of “abuse”. Similarly, it is thought that accusations of witchcraft could be under-reported or not explicitly stated, the language used in some interviews led researchers to conclude that the number of girls accused of witchcraft could be higher than explicitly stated.

Interestingly, pull factors such as the **influence of friends** account for 19% of answers although, when looking further at the interviews and the answers to open questions, researchers found that these could in fact have been overrated. Sometimes it appears that when “friends’ influence” was mentioned as a cause for departure to the street, in fact other more concerning factors linked to the girl’s situation could well have played a bigger role in the decision (such as violence in the home or accusations of witchcraft). In these cases, “friends influence” could have been a “trigger” rather than the actual cause of leaving home. In one case a 12 year old girl mentioned the main reason for going to the streets as “friends influence”, when later in the interview, enumerators found out she was actually an orphan from both parents with no one to take care of her in her extended family. In that case, the main reason stated for departure “friends influence” needs to be seen from the perspective of the particular profile and history of the girl.

When looking at the **profiles** of the households of origin of the girls, it is notable that **family breakdown** is a recurrent characteristic among most of the families. In participatory exercises and interviews, girls and service providers have mentioned divorce, separation and death of parents as the main root causes leading girls to leave to the streets. In our sample, most girls were orphaned from at least one parent (63% of girls interviewed) and girls orphaned from both parents account for 34% of street-connected girls. Among street-connected girls, 62% were not living with one or both their biological parents at the time of departure to the streets (but with a grandparent, uncle, aunt, sister etc).

Family disintegration, including when parents separate, can lead to more pressure on one caregiver to provide for the whole family. Furthermore, girls, who as a result of family separation are now being cared for by a new step-father or step-mother, often have to face more complex relationships which can be conflictive or abusive. From discussions with girls, it seems that they are also more exposed to neglect when being cared for by a step-mother or step-father, as step-parents tend to favour their own children when it comes to provision of food, education and affection:

As Laura, (14 years) puts it: “I left because of the unfair treatment I received from my step-mother in comparison with her daughter. She is always defending her daughter, they insult me and my father doesn’t have anything to say to that. I find myself alone and I cannot defend myself”. Among girl respondents, half have a step-mother or a stepfather and 72% of those stated “having bad relationships” with their step-parent. Conflict and rejection therefore appear to be central to the decision of girls to leave for the streets.

In their own words: what girls say about reasons for leaving to the streets?

“There was no one to take care of me after my mother’s death, even my own brothers and sisters. I was threatened with really bad treatment by my mother’s family, by whom I was seen as a witch. This is why I prefer leaving”.

“After his divorce, my father remarried with a woman who was harsh with me, she was abusing

me and nobody was believing me”.

“After both my parents were dead, I was taken care of by my maternal uncle but I was called a witch”

“My mum went on travelling and I was staying at my uncle’s house but I was not used to being with them”

“My mother was beating me harshly, I wanted to get out but she would deprive me of food ”

According to service providers, **poverty** is the common background behind most situations of street connectedness affecting both boys and girls in Kinshasa: “the extreme poverty in which some families live, as well as unemployment of parents is one key factors leading boys and girls to leave for the streets” says one member of the RECOPE.

Although not aiming at carrying out a full-fledged economic household analysis of families of girls connected to the streets, the questionnaires used for this study included some indicators with economic relevance such as:

- Caregivers are home-owners or renters
- Number of households in administrative area where the household lives
- Number of rooms in the house
- Electricity and water provision in the house/plot

However, results from the research (questionnaires answered by caregivers and girls) did not reveal any clear pattern associating the **economic condition** of caregivers with girls leaving their families.

Among the 28 families interviewed, 10 did not have access to water in their neighbourhood, 5 did not have toilets, 8 did not have electricity and 3 lived in a house with less than two rooms. Among girl respondents, 17% explicitly mentioned **poverty** as having played a major part in the decision to leave; however, it was usually mentioned alongside another push factor such as family abuse or accusations of witchcraft, which leads us to think that poverty alone is not the only factor causing girls to leave for the streets. In only 7% of cases was it mentioned without any other motive or major issue affecting the household.

When one looks at the literature about street children in Congo, poverty is often referred to as an important causal factor pushing girls and boys to the streets however, only a few studies have carried out surveys that include an analysis of the economic situation of the households of origin. For instance, a study carried out by the World Bank in 2009 showed that, especially for girls, poverty was not necessarily the top factor for leaving to the streets. It also showed, through a household economy analysis of families of street-connected boys and girls, that caregivers of street-connected boys and girls were **not** more economically vulnerable than the average household in Kinshasa and that street connected boys and girls were not necessarily coming from the most economically vulnerable families¹². When looking at girls specifically, it highlighted the importance of family conflict, which played a bigger role in girls’ decisions to leave home than it did for boys, for whom poverty was of greater importance in their choice to leave for the streets¹³.

¹² World Bank 2009. Op cit.

¹³ Op cit.

It is important to differentiate between the primary cause for leaving to the streets and the secondary causal factor and trigger. In some cases girls are not able to differentiate between them. In one case for example, when asked about the reason for being on the streets, a 12 year old girl answered that it was poverty that pushed her onto the streets, however when looking at the narrative from other questions, the situation appeared quite complex and it was difficult to differentiate between poverty related causal factors and other family related issues: “My grandfather (caregiver) died and my father hasn’t come back from the war. People from my neighbourhood have said I am a witch, my mum is still alive but I do not get on well with my step-father”.

On the other side, caregivers and religious leaders had a slightly different viewpoint on the causes for which girls choose to leave their families for the streets, putting more emphasis on poverty (identified by religious leaders as the top cause explaining children’s departure to the streets) and the influence of friends as pull and push factors rather than abuse from caregivers. Interestingly, witchcraft was mentioned in only 15% of cases by parents, but could very well have been underreported given the fact that accusations of witchcraft usually originate from families themselves.

In their own words: what families say about girls’ reasons for leaving to the streets?

“She left because she said she didn’t have enough money to buy clothes” (mother of Rebecca, 11)
“My daughter can’t bear to be hungry, so she steals to eat but one day she left after she had been beaten after stealing again” (mother of Yollande, 14)

Eventually, **the choice to leave the home is made on the basis of a combination of factors and a mix of events coming into play**, ranging from family breakdown (as a result of a parent’s death, conflict over inheritance, divorce, separation or economic migration), to poverty or accusations of witchcraft.

In three cases for example, it was the combination of one biological parent’s absence, or economic migration, combined with the bad relationships with other family members which led the girl to leave the house and also jeopardized her future reintegration prospects: “It’s the same reason as before, my mum is still gone travelling” said Candy (16 years old), “when I am not travelling she comes back home”, said the father of Lauriane (15 years old).

In summary, street-connected girls usually come from families where at least one parent is missing or absent and girls with both parents alive and living together, are the exception rather than the rule. They often come from economically deprived households, although poverty alone cannot account for the increased phenomenon of street connected girls in Kinshasa. From girls’ own accounts, departure for the streets is less likely to happen within a loving and functioning family environment, and the family’s material condition is less a concern compared to feeling welcomed, loved and wanted in the home. All these will therefore need to be taken into account when considering reintegration prospects.

Why does reintegration fail?

The interviews included a sample of 32 girls living and working on the streets, among whom 24 had already tried family reintegration but had since returned to the streets. It also included 26 families/caregivers, including 10 cases in which girls had returned to the streets after having been reunified.

According to girl respondents who had failed to reintegrate, family reunification happened either through their own initiative (nearly 50% of the cases in our sample) or with the help of a local NGO (nearly 50%). Only 3 girls had been reunified through the mediation of another adult from the community or a family member.

Across all categories interviewed one of the key reasons why reintegration fails is that the initial cause for departure and/or family separation has not been properly addressed before reintegration, and therefore girls return to an environment in which they still feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or discriminated against. These girls declared that the failure of reintegration was for the same reason that had motivated their decision to leave originally - either conflict or abuse at home by the same family member had not stopped; or accusations of witchcraft and peoples' discriminatory attitudes had not changed. This is also mentioned by service providers as one of the main reasons for reintegration failing, showing that reintegration service providers need to invest more time and resources in addressing the initial cause for departure, before attempting to promote reunification.

Most girls interviewed, who had returned to the streets, had done so either within a month (46%) or between 1 - 6 months (30%) following the attempt to return home. According to OSEPER, most failures occur within one year of the reintegration being first attempted. This really highlights the need for programmes to invest more in carrying out assessments looking at the feasibility of reintegration, as well as family preparation before reintegration can happen. As the Child Tribunal Manager put it "if a child finds the same situation when coming back home, the reintegration is most likely to fail".

In their own words: why did you return to the streets?

"My aunts have kept using the same bad language towards me" (Agnès, 14)

"This time, I left because of the unfair treatment I received from my mother-in-law in comparison with her daughter. She is always defending her daughter, they insult me and my father doesn't say anything. I find myself alone and I cannot defend myself" (Laura, 14)

"Everyone is showing that they don't trust me" (Marie, 16)

Similarly, when girls mentioned "friends' influence" as the initial reason or trigger for leaving their families, they also, in most cases, then mentioned it as a reason for the failure of the reintegration, which shows that those influences and relationships did not cease after family reintegration. In other cases, girls mentioned that it was still the same reason that influenced their decision to leave home again, but their wish to leave was reinforced by the influence of a street boyfriend or street friends. The issue of breaking all links with street friends will be a critical one when envisaging sustainable reintegration and mitigating risks of reintegration failure.

Caregivers however, have a very different viewpoint on the causes of reintegration failure, with factors such as friends' influence and economic reasons playing, in their opinion, a much bigger role in both the initial decision to leave to the streets and the later failure of reintegration. They tend to put more emphasis on lack of discipline and disobedience as key behavioural issues affecting reintegration failure. When asked if the girl had any concern or grievance against them, most caregivers were unable to say what could have caused the girl to want to leave. Caregivers tend to see a strong need for a change in behaviour and attitude on the side of the girls, and in some cases a sense of hopelessness, not really understanding

what happened to the girl and not knowing what to do. When blame is apportioned, it tends to be exclusively focused on the girl rather than the caregiver.

Some of the interviews with caregivers, who were hosting reintegrated girls, revealed reasons to be concerned that the reintegration was still very fragile, including concerns over unresolved issues and conflicts that could endanger the reintegration, as shown by the quotes below:

In their own words: how caregivers see the reintegration of girls

“Her parents are divorced and the mum is not able to care for her, she is travelling in Congo. Her reintegration is not a total success because she still has conflict issues with her family, she has a child from the streets and is not able to care for him. She should go back to the centre and live independently” (Aunty of Florence 18).

“Her step-father doesn’t like her and would rather care for his own sons at home. The situation hasn’t changed now” (mother of Mireille, 18).

“She can’t stand blame or advice or being forbidden to go out for useless purposes” (father of Mamy, 18)

“She is used to living on the streets and prostitution (...) when she came back home the first time, she wanted to eat three times a day, she was stealing and was rude (...), the centre had failed to change her attitude. It is important that she is delivered from bad spirits, we have to show to our children God’s words” (caregiver of Mireille, 16).

When asked about what they could do to make reintegration work for the girl, caregivers gave really mixed answers, only a few focusing on better communication in the family, and most emphasizing the need for the girl to get busy and attend school:

In their own words: what caregivers think they can do to facilitate the reintegration of girls

“I want her to learn something and become independent” (Step-mother of Solange, 18)

“We want her to go to school, be busy during the day and improve her attitude” (grandmother of Sylvie, 13)

“Apart from supporting her to go to school, we have thought about getting her a sewing machine so that she is busy during the rest of the day and is not tempted by stealing again” (mother-in-law of Audrey, 14)

“I want to provide her with regular food otherwise her brothers will get the same ideas as her. I just gave birth recently but I think we need to be able to talk again” (mother of Florence, 14)

“I want to improve communication between us, to gain her trust back, my goal is to seek her well-being while teaching her good manners such as respect for people’s things” (mother of Natacha.)

Although no clear pattern linking reintegration failure to age or activity on the street emerged from the research, discussions with service providers have highlighted the following factors as contributing to making reintegration more difficult:

- **Length of time on the streets and strength of connection to the streets**

The older the girl gets and the more time she has spent on the street, the more difficult it takes to heal broken family relationships and ensure sustained reintegration¹⁴. Girls, who have been more than a year, and sometimes up to 6 years, on the streets, may have formed

¹⁴ World Bank 2009 *op.cit.*

strong friendship and boyfriend relationships, may have children themselves and therefore the streets “become their family”. One in five of the girls interviewed on the streets, mentioned being “cared for” by a street boyfriend. “These relationships and attachments created while on the streets are key”, commented Mauro, OSEPER programme coordinator. It is therefore important to envisage different life options for these girls, on a case by case basis. Sound individual case management is likely to be key to assess the best interest of the girls, taking into account their own choices as well as their prospects for positive reintegration (see recommendations section).

- Nature of the girl’s work on the streets (stigmatization linked to prostitution)

The reintegration of girls who have been victims of sexual exploitation or engaged in survival sex is more challenging due to issues of acceptability back in their communities of origin. Jean-Pierre, head of Chemin Neuf an NGO which provides residential services to street-connected boys and girls says: “from the moment when these girls have been raped and subjected to prostitution, their prospects for reintegration are almost nonexistent (...) and their links to the streets are too important, they often go back to their street friends”.

- Differential benefits and services received in day/residential centres (in comparison with family)

This is a common difficulty for the reintegration of both boys and girls: the more a child stays in a residential environment with access to food, services and play facilities, the more family reintegration is difficult given the differential in benefits: “here children are eating three meals a day, they play football and can watch TV at times, but when they go back home they need to readjust to the realities that most families live in Congo” commented Mauro. This is a dilemma shared by most service providers who emphasized that these options can only be seen as temporary and more resources need to be invested to support families.

- “Felt” or real donor and management pressure to achieve reintegration targets resulting in rushed reintegration

Social workers involved in programmes addressing the needs of street-connected girls and in family reintegration operate in a resource-limited environment with a high pressure to achieve targets within a limited timeframe. These realities are strongly felt by girls who have given feedback during participatory exchanges and exercises. They have commented on the pressure existing at the level of the day care and transit centres to reintegrate them back to their families as quickly as possible. This issue will need to be addressed in the second stage of the programme so that more emphasis is given to feasibility assessments of family reunification so as not to jeopardize the reintegration prospects of girls.

Economic Support

Family reintegration services in Kinshasa usually include some form of material support, depending on the NGO involved, type of approach taken and funding available. However, providing economic support to families is often thought to be costly, and if not well thought through and budgeted for, can end up being unsustainable in the long run. NGOs specialized in providing support to street-connected children often feel they don’t have the necessary financial expertise to run these programmes, although acknowledging they are needed.

For example, programmes can deliver skills training that is not in line with market realities; or girls receiving skills training find that, once reintegrated, there is no local market corresponding to the new skills they have been taught. Another frustration cited in interviews

is that economic support initiatives are often not well targeted so that benefits are not felt or received by reunified girls: “Most NGOs provide economic support to families in Kinshasa such as income generating activities but the children complain that they do not see any benefits of these programmes” says Lucie Mandeke, OSEPER psychologist. For girls who have been working on the streets, it is difficult to go back to family life and to renounce the income they were earning in the past; particularly as girls living from earnings from prostitution have been used to a higher income than their male peers from the streets¹⁵.

Among the girls interviewed, quite a few mentioned being afraid of the future, not knowing what to do now that they are back in their families with no prospects of getting a job, even after having completed professional training at the OSEPER centre. OSEPER has made partnerships with other NGOs providing skills training in areas where the girls live, but this is a constant challenge as the work opportunities on offer near the girl’s home may not be up to the standard required or that she has come to expect in her choice of activity.

Factors influencing successful family reintegration:

- Affection and acceptance in the family where girls are reintegrated

Out of 21 reunified girls interviewed, 18 mentioned being “happy” in their current living arrangement. When asked what successful reintegration meant for them, most highlighted the key importance of ‘acceptance’ a feeling of happiness in the family and the high quality of the relationship with caregivers and their relatives¹⁶. Only a minority invoked school or professional training as reasons for being content in their current life, which shows that building lasting and emotionally fulfilling family relationships play a central role in the girls’ lives, more than material conditions or even concerns about their future.

In their own words: what makes reintegrated girls stay?

“My mum’s affection”

“ The atmosphere in my family, the fact that there is unity amongst us”

“Despite our economic problems, we are happy together “

“Everything, this is my natural environment “

“I am where I should be and my rights are accepted”

“One is better at home. I feel understood now”

“I really like family life”

“I have good relationships with my mum”

“I feel comfortable with my uncle and his new wife who accept me”

” I am busy with my professional training”

- Family readiness and appropriate care arrangements

Parents’ attitudes towards girls once reunified are key to ensure they feel comfortable and welcomed. When asked about what the project should do to facilitate reintegration, reintegrated girls recommended that “NGOs should give more advice to parents on how to live with a child who has been living on the streets”¹⁷.

¹⁵ World Bank 2009 *op.cit.*

¹⁶ This was also one of the findings of the World Bank Report that girls tend to value more highly good relationships with their biological families than boys.

¹⁷ See Safe Families Safe Children Coalition work in that area : <http://www.retrak.org/newsDetail.aspx?uid=150>

In most cases, stability in the reintegration means that either, there has been a change of attitude and behaviour within the family of origin, or the girl has been reintegrated in a household where she feels adequately nurtured, loved and understood. Out of 21 girls successfully reintegrated, 80% said that they had bad relationships with their former caregivers before reintegration; whereas, 90% said that they now have good relationship with their current caregivers - most of them either having changed caregiver or feeling that their caregiver had changed their attitude towards them.

This shows the importance of conducting a proper assessment before reintegration to identify the feasibility of reunification and the most appropriate care arrangement according to the wishes and needs of the girl. Most importantly, the level of skills and competencies invested in staff responsible for undertaking the mediation and reintegration will be crucial, in order to facilitate behaviour change and to restore those links that have been broken within families. Some families will indeed manage to effectively change, allowing girls to come back and feel safe again, and reintegration staff can play a decisive role in facilitating that process.

In the girls' own words: what changes happen to facilitate reintegration?

“My step-mother was harsh with me but now my father sent her out and we are alone”

““My relationship with my mum was good but my father, a soldier, used to beat me a lot. But now my father stopped beating me and we live well all together”.

In most cases, even in contexts where girls had been accused of witchcraft or abused by other family members, there is still one adult in the family whom girls trust, often the biological mother, and sometimes the father, sister or grandmother. In these cases and when it's possible, emphasis on reintegration with that family member is likely to be the safest and most successful option.

However, not all situations will allow the girl to go and permanently live with the adult caregiver of her choice. In two interviews, girls mentioned living with their sister as the most appropriate arrangement, however in one case the sister's in-laws were not ready to accept the girl, and in the other she was being sexually abused by her sister's boyfriend. This reveals that even when full-time reintegration within an extended family may be the preferred option for girls and accepted by the caregiver, it may still not be the easiest or safest option for girls. The conditions for reintegration to succeed also depend on the wider environment surrounding the girls and their caregivers, and the community. Here, allowing the girl to maintain these relationships through regular contact and communication is crucial, so that she is able to keep positive links with adults who play a vital role in her emotional development.

D. Stigmatization and marginalization

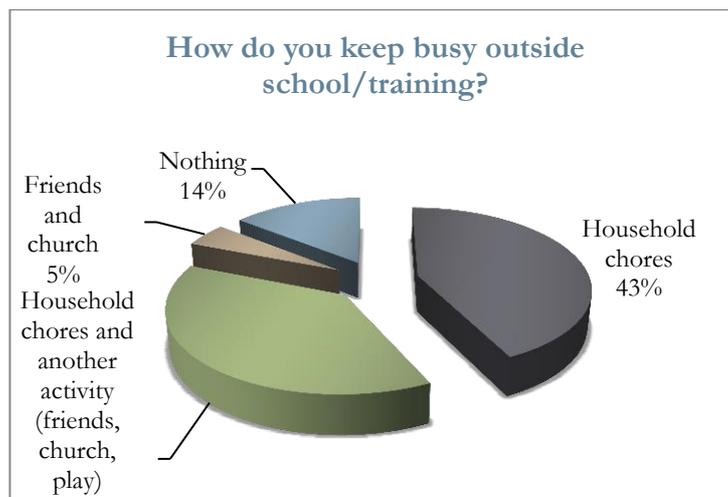
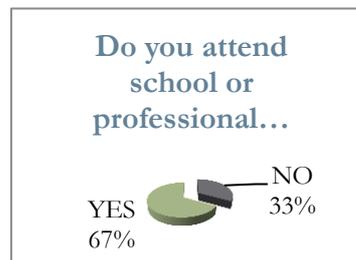
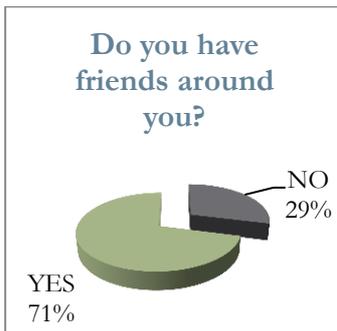
Social reintegration of girls

An important factor affecting the stability of reintegration is the degree to which social reintegration is effective i.e. how girls are enabled to develop other positive links with the communities into which they are being reintegrated; to regain self-esteem, and to build connections with peers or adults outside the home, in their local community. Most girls have spent time on the streets, after having been rejected by their families



and communities, and need to regain a sense of “social safety” and integration before reintegration can be deemed successful and effective. The degree to which social integration was determined to have happened among our sample of reunified girls was captured through 3 proxy indicators:

1. School or professional training attendance
2. Friends in their surroundings
3. Activity outside school.



(Source: the three graphs above are based on questionnaire 1 (annexe D). Sample of 21 girls successfully reintegrated).

If the majority of girls in the research did have friends around their home and did attend school or professional training, there were still about a third of girls who were not attending any training or schooling (33%) and who lacked friends (29%), which in the long run could compromise their prospects for the future as it shows that their social reintegration is still incomplete. 43% of the girls interviewed mentioned a focus on household tasks as their extra-curricular activity and 38% mentioned keeping busy through a combination of activities. Although school and professional training were found to be a good pathway for getting friends, this was not the only way girls built friendships, as some girls did not attend any form of education but still said they had friends.

Within the category of girls who said that they did not have friends around their home, all the girls mentioned that they are keeping busy through household tasks. However, addressing the needs of those (around 30%) who neither have friends, nor attend any activity outside school, or may not go to school anymore, is likely be critical in order to ensure sustainable reintegration. The research did not ask the same question of the street-connected girls and so cannot conclusively prove the correlation between lack of school attendance, activities outside school and friendships with reintegration failure. However this group seems to be at particular risk of returning to the streets when their social reintegration needs remain unmet. This could be done by ensuring they receive support outside home, that they have a sense of purpose through education and that they feel welcome and comfortable in their environment. Monitoring these aspects will therefore be an important feature of post-reintegration visits.

One important issue contributing to girls being, or feeling, ostracised in their place of reintegration and which came out of the participatory consultations with reintegrated girls concerns the issue of verbal discrimination and violence within their own homes. This discussion generated quite high emotional feelings in the group discussions. One girl said “my mum and I do not get on well. After reunification, she continued to call me names in public and neighbours could hear. She tells me that I should give no advice to my little brothers since I was living on the streets, I am so ashamed when she does that”.

Girls accused of witchcraft

The phenomenon of girls and boys accused of witchcraft in urban areas such as Kinshasa has been publicised by international media and human rights agencies in the last decade. Although witchcraft has always existed in African society, most specialists assert that it is only in the last 20 years that accusations have targeted children in Congo.

Combined with this phenomenon, Congo is in any case a particularly difficult place for parents to bring up their children. It is characterised as a “fragile state” where the majority of households have been affected one way or another by conflict and also by the recent economic and food crises.

All these factors have contributed to weaken the social fabric, and the ability of families to cope and care for their children. Premature death, divorce and separation are increasingly common, so it is rare that a child lives with both biological parents and many children are provided for by relatives of the extended family who can often feel additional pressure and stress in caring for additional children.

Congolese society has witnessed, as many parts of Africa, a huge urban expansion and the multiplication of “revivalist churches” in its cities. In Congolese cities, these churches have

been the cornerstone of what is called the phenomenon of “child witches”, effectively used as scapegoats by families and church leaders, often to justify problems happening within their families, even death, disease or unemployment. In some cases, these churches are led by self-proclaimed pastors who offer various purification and “deliverance” rites in exchange for financial reward. In some cases, children end up being treated brutally, locked away, deprived of food, physically abused, tortured and insulted as a way of exorcising them.

Despite the adoption of a new constitution in 2005 that prohibits accusations of witchcraft against children, the individuals responsible for these accusations are not held to account and law enforcement officials have singularly failed to intervene in cases of abuse in homes and by these churches, thereby promoting impunity and denying the child justice and the prospect of reintegration with their family.

Accusations of witchcraft are a key push factor leading both boys and girls to the streets in Kinshasa and reintegration prospects then become particularly complex: “Children accused of witchcraft are often extremely scared about coming back home because of the high level of violence they have suffered” says the OSEPER project psychologist.

Around a quarter of girl respondents in this study explicitly mentioned witchcraft allegations in their interviews but there may well be more. Indeed, analysis of the language used by other respondents showed that they also could have been the victims of witchcraft accusations although they don’t explicitly refer to it in their interview or as a cause for leaving home. For example, some girls spoke about “malevolent accusations” or “torture and libelling” which are words often used and associated with witchcraft.

Although accusations of witchcraft are most notorious for being promoted within “revivalist churches”, there is no emerging pattern linking religion and the profile of parents¹⁸ with accusations of witchcraft in this study. When looking at the belief in witchcraft, it is interesting to see that among 68 religious leaders who responded to our questionnaire, 58 believe in its existence, from all churches. This leads us to think that the causes behind witchcraft accusations are not spiritual per se, but that their origin lies deeper in the continuing weakening of the Congolese family unit, which in turn is greatly affected by the socio-economical conditions families have to cope with.

There is a clear pattern associating family breakdown and departure for the streets in the experience of almost all the girls interviewed in this study. Family breakdown can result in conflict (e.g. A parent’s death can result in relatives fighting for inheritance), as well as the other way round (e.g. Conflict generates divorce and separation) and in all cases, boys and girls end up becoming more vulnerable or feeling they are no longer loved or wanted in their homes (especially in cases of a new step-parent coming in) and can even end up being accused of witchcraft.

Within research results, it is difficult to differentiate between conflict and witchcraft as a cause for departure to the streets as frequently they are linked. Accusations of witchcraft do not come out of the blue but are the result of conflict and family breakdown. In most cases, these arise after an unfortunate event such as a parent’s death, temporary emigration or sudden disease that the child is accused of, usually by extended family members. It can also

¹⁸ This was also found by a Save the Children 2006 study (see bibliography).

happen in the context of divorce, separation and remarriage which may imply complex or conflicting relationships with a new step-mother or a step-father.

In a few cases accusations are the result of the family not understanding a health condition or disease affecting the child (e.g. anaemia, meningitis, epilepsy or bed-wetting), but, even then, accusations are often linked to the death of absence of one parent or both.

In summary, witchcraft accusations are less likely to happen when a girl or a boy lives with both biological parents and, are often the result of a combination of factors. Actors involved in programmes addressing witchcraft in Kinshasa emphasize that it is mostly used as an excuse by relatives, often extended family members, who feel unable to care for an additional child, do not have the same caring relationship as biological parents or have a relationship of conflict with a child.

In their own words...

“Both my parents are away. Each time I fell ill, I was accused of being a witch. I have anaemia but according to the pastor this was linked to witchcraft. I am now living at my aunt who is clever and understands my health condition.” (Solange, 15)

“We have understood what anaemia is and thus we are able to save our girl’s life.” (Aunt of Solange)

Care options

Returning home

Living in a family is considered the most culturally appropriate environment for children in Congo to grow up, where the understanding of family is not strictly limited to the “two-parent family” model or nuclear family but also extends to include other kin and relatives who can have care-giving roles, making the experience of “family” quite different for children from other cultural contexts such as in the West. Family care being the norm in Congo, other alternative care models such as independent living and even family-based care such as fostering are not commonly thought to be good solutions for children.

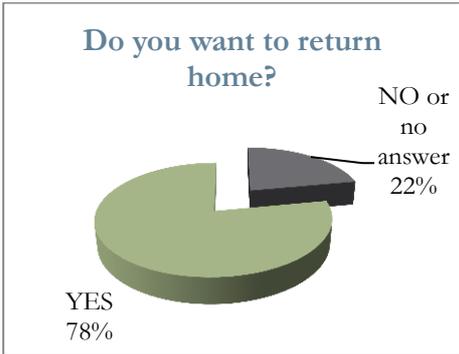
Return to biological families including extended families is considered the most appropriate option for girls and boys connected to the street in Kinshasa and is reflected in the practice of most NGOs specialized in supporting the reintegration of street-connected children. Supporting children to return to their families (either restricted or extended) is also one of the priorities of REJEER, the Kinshasa-based network of NGOs working with street-connected children.

However, service providers working directly with street-connected girls recognised that family reintegration is posing huge challenges, especially for adolescent girls in their late teens and those who have been exposed to commercial sexual exploitation or accused of witchcraft. Among the various factors highlighted and contributing to make it more complex for girls, they highlight: their high mobility (travelling from Kinshasa to neighbouring large towns), the big differential in earnings between the streets and home (for those who have been engaged in commercial sex), and the multiple layers of stigma attached to having had a child out of wedlock or having engaged in commercial sex for survival¹⁹, both being considered culturally and morally inappropriate, especially for girls.

¹⁹ World Bank 2009.

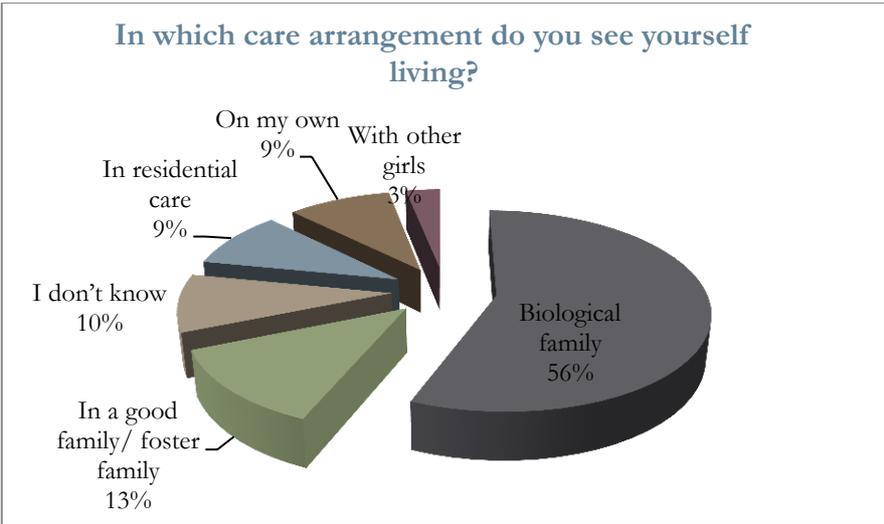
Since conflict and abuse features quite highly in girls' decisions to leave their caregivers, most do not keep relationships with their biological families. This contrasts with the fact that 78% of the girls interviewed (from the sample of girls attending the day or night centres and living/working on the streets) affirmed their wish to return eventually. Even among the 22 girls who had experienced failed reintegration, 16 said that they would be ready to return again, which shows a definite trend among girls, for whom family return and family life is still seen as the best option.

However, when asked about a date for their return to the family home, most girls did not envisage it in the near future, because the conditions for return were not yet in place.



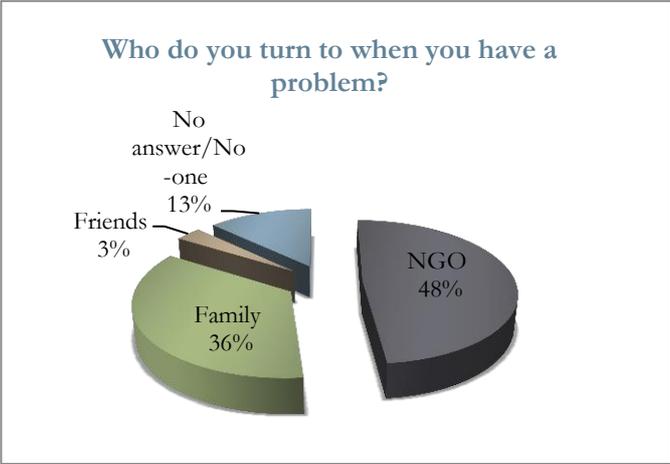
Sample of 32 girls living and working on the streets (annexe D. questionnaire 2)

Among the girls who indicated their preference for returning to their biological family (sometimes a brother, an aunt, a grand-parent or one of the parents), it was not necessarily the same family member with whom they were living before. This shows that there is usually someone, within the larger biological family, with whom the girl has kept good relations and with whom she can see herself living.



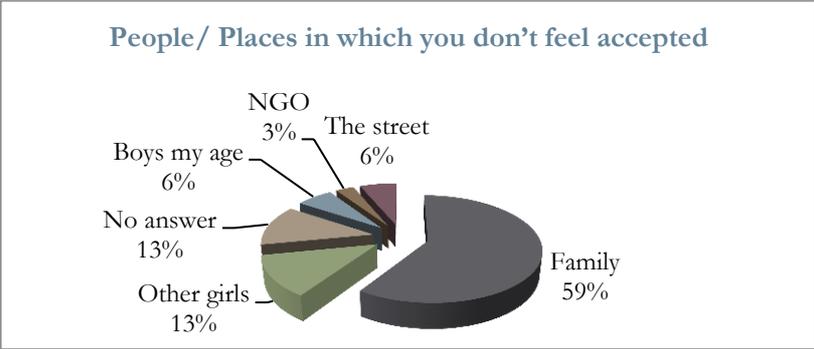
Sample of 32 girls living and working on the streets (annexe D. questionnaire 2)

When asked about who they turn to in case of problems, “family” feature in second position (after NGOs), with 38% of girls answering they would resort to family help.



Sample of 32 girls living and working on the streets (annexe D. questionnaire 2)

In these answers, girls emphasized the emotional ties and importance that the biological family represent for them. But as much as they want to live in a secure family environment, they are well aware of the potential dangers, threats and discrimination they could face upon return home. Moreover, when asked about the places where they feel most discriminated against, families come at the top of the ranking (see graph below).



Sample of 32 girls living and working on the streets (annexe D. questionnaire 2)

In their own words: girls who envisage returning

“..I am not accepted, even my sisters and brothers are not accepted by my family.” (Sylvie 18)

“I don’t know when I’ll return, it all depends on them. If only they would stop insulting me and calling me a witch.” (Solange, 16)

“Not now. As soon as my mum returns from travelling.” (Janine, 16)

“I don’t know, I am used to the streets now, I don’t really see, I wouldn’t know” (Lauriane, 14)

Advantages and shortcomings of living with family (from group exercises)

Advantages of returning / living back home	Shortcomings of returning/ living back home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better living conditions than the streets (access to schooling, better clothing and sleeping conditions) ▪ Social life (community, religious events) ▪ Emotional support (parents’ advice, feeling happy in a united family) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emotional and psychological violence from step-parents, pastors ▪ Name calling and verbal violence ▪ Being accused of witchcraft ▪ Parental conflict ▪ Boredom and lack of occupation ▪ Lack of material support

Short-term residential care

Interestingly, only a tiny minority of girls interviewed (2 out of 32 girls) mentioned residential centres as a favourite place to be or live, however the NGOs (accessed usually through day care or residential centres and sometimes through mobile services) were placed at the top of options they would resort to, in case they needed help (48%). These results show that the aspirational wishes of girls remain to reunify with their families, but in their current practical reality, NGOs still play a big role in offering safety and protection as well as care. “There is currently a lot of demand within non-residential centres from girls to stay there for the night as it offers a safe place from the streets” says OSEPER project manager.

That said, discussions with girls and service providers at the time of the research emphasized that there is still a lot of room for adapting residential services to the specific needs of girls in Kinshasa. “We have started to work with both boys and girls but after some time we realized we needed to provide other residential care structures specially for girls, to respond to their needs” says Chemin Neuf Project Manager. This reflects an increased emphasis, among service providers, on the difficulty of running mixed centres and the need to improve the quality and response of solutions for girls²⁰. OSEPER and Chemin Neuf have now created girls-only transit centres where girls feel greater security than in mixed settings. “Residential centres for girls offer more protection than (open) day-care centres, where street violence and inter-personal violence among youth is felt more strongly and staff are less able to manage these conflicts” says one street leader.

One other important concern raised during the research (when girls are being prepared for family reintegration) is that staff and social workers under pressure must respect better timings for reunification. The issue of “blaming language” and attitudes to pressurize girls to return home was raised several times during the interviews and the group work, revealing that there is an urgent need to introduce a psychotherapeutic approach sensitive to the need of girls as a key component of future programme design and of staff recruitment and training (see recommendations below). Staff currently do not have sufficient qualifications and skills to address the stress and trauma of the girls who have experienced high levels of violence at home and sexual violence and exploitation while on the streets. It is important to give time and consideration for each girl to come to terms with her past abuse, violence and possibly trauma, and for her to regain self-esteem and a sense of future, to get ready to reintegrate into mainstream society.

Short-term residential centres (such as transit centres), when run according to minimum standards and best practice, can offer good potential for starting the rehabilitation process and Family Tracing and Reintegration (FTR) for girls. FTR is not easily done from open / day care centre environments as girls attending still retain “a foot on the streets” and street connections with peers and boyfriends remain strong. “Most girls attending the DiC (day care) are not ready for reintegration, they still keep really strong ties with the streets” commented an OSEPER project manager.

However, other intermediate solutions (see below and recommendations) could be tested to avoid protracted stays in short-term residential centres (e.g. transit centres), which is a risk, especially when family reintegration is difficult.

²⁰ MDM, World Bank.

Advantages and shortcomings of centre based care (from group exercises)

Advantages of centre-based care	Shortcomings of centre-based care
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Access to services (health, education, life skills);▪ Practical needs met (regular meals, washing facilities and shelter)▪ A sense of future and direction through skills training support▪ Help with family reintegration▪ Protection from street boys▪ Respect for confidentiality and services for girl mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Violence among girls▪ Discriminatory attitudes and verbal abuse by staff▪ Violence from old street peers coming to the centres (sister yayas)

Long-term residential care

“In Kinshasa, longer-term residential facilities (from 6 months to 2 years) are provided when family reintegration initiatives have failed and it is impossible to reunify a child due to lack of safety or high stigmatisation levels and a high level of threats of violence and unresolved family conflict at home” says OSEPER project manager. This often is the case for older girls, or girls who have been working and living on the streets for a long time. Given the emphasis of the girls on family life, this research has not explored any further long-term centre based care as a possible option for girls. It has not found any negative correlation between the activity on the streets (e.g. survival sex or prostitution) and the desire to return home and has found only a minority of girls explicitly envisaging residential centres as a possible care option.

That said, it is desirable that any centre offering long-term care for girls takes care not to further weaken the ties between girls and their families and looks to strengthen existing positive links, even if full reintegration is not possible. A World Bank 2009 study shows that former street connected children living in institutions in Kinshasa tend to be less in contact with their caregivers than children living and/or working on the streets²¹. It is crucial that these institutions put in place systems to enable girls to be in regular contact with their families, especially with those members who have kept good relationships with the child.

Alternative care

In all situations, each case needs to be assessed on an individual basis, according to the girl's age, strength of connection and time on the street, cause of departure and willingness of family to take them back. In some cases, limited conflict resolution work and mediation will be enough to solve the problems that are the root cause of departure for the streets; in others, longer psychosocial support and case management work will be required before any kind of reintegration can be envisaged. In cases where longer preparation work is needed before family reintegration is appropriate, other family-based care options could be considered such as foster care or temporary care by an extended family member or close family friend (kinship carer) who agrees to do so while a longer term solution is worked out.

Foster families: This is not an option that has a particularly good cultural resonance or history in Congo²²: “When you have this discussion with social workers”, said one member of the research team, “they find it such an extreme solution, people are just not ready for it”. However, organisations involved in reintegrating street-connected children are increasingly

²¹ World Bank 2009. Op cit.

²² World Bank 2009. Op cit.

looking at this model given the current difficulties experienced in reintegrating children back in their families and the issue of children staying in short-term residential centres longer than expected. For girls, for whom other care options such as independent living are not culturally accepted, this approach is considered worthwhile to be piloted: “It would progressively allow girls to get used to family life again while avoiding aid dependency created by centre life” says UNICEF Child Protection Manager Florent Boto²³.

In Kinshasa, temporary foster care is being tested by UNICEF and 3 local partners (Chemin Neuf, CPEJD, ORPER)²⁴ although learning is still limited as its programme has only just started. However, issues such as the sound recruitment of foster parents, appropriate material and financial support for foster parents, as well as adequate preparation for foster families including children of foster parents, would be critical for the placements to succeed. Review of these programmes will need to take into account the extent to which they are suitable to the particular needs of girls. In some cases girls in foster families have reported feeling discriminated against by the children of the household and not feeling comfortable in their new living environment²⁵.

In an interview with researchers, the OSEPER programme coordinator mentioned how difficult it is, in a resource-constrained environment such as Congo, to find good foster families with genuine motives and capacity to receive vulnerable girls: “We want to start piloting it by exploring possibilities in a new parish and building good relationships with parish families in order to recruit foster parents that we would know well and train well” says brother Mauro. Strong family support and follow-up would be needed so that this option could be adapted to the needs of girls formerly connected to the streets; emphasis should be given to identify families that provide a secure and protective place for girls who are trying to come to terms with the violence experienced at home and while on the streets. Good monitoring systems should also be in place to make sure girls are protected from abuse and exploitation and able to report safely any concerns they might have when in foster care.

Group homes and independent living: this is a less controversial option for boys, but for girls there is still a lot of scepticism within the government, social work and NGO communities in Kinshasa about the feasibility and sustainability of group homes and independent living options. The main reason for this scepticism is that this option is not considered culturally acceptable and it is thought to be risky for girls to be “on their own”. It is thought this would compromise girls’ chances of social reintegration and prospects for marriage. Even though this was considered within the Comic Relief funded project at first, OSEPER and War Child decided to remove this component in order to avoid any risks that it would be culturally appropriate in the Congolese context²⁶

As part of this research, girls interviewed and consulted through participatory exercises did not mention this option as a feasible one, but when asked directly why, they all referred to

²³ There is also emerging global consensus supported by international studies finding that alternative care options such as foster care are more cost effective than centre-based care (See EveryChild 2011 in bibliography).

²⁴ Chemin Neuf: a French catholic organization working in Funa district. Provides IDMRS, psychosocial and socio-economic reintegration services to street boys and girls. ORPER: A Congolese organisation. Working in Mont Amba district, Provides IDMRS, psychosocial and socio-economic reintegration services to street boys and girls. CPEJD: A Congolese organisation. Works in Tshangu district. Provides IDMRS, psychosocial and socio-economic reintegration services to street boys and girls.

²⁵ Interview with ORPER programme director, Kinshasa

²⁶ War Child project proposal and annual report year 2.

lack of safety and discrimination in the community as a key reason not to live independently. Experiences from girls who have tried it either spontaneously or supported through an NGO have shown that there is a risk of either stigmatization as former sex workers or of actual sexual abuse (e.g. a case was cited of a landlord who forced girls to have sex in exchange for staying in the house). There is also considered to be a high risk of exploitation of younger girls by older girls in the home. If such an option were to be tried, it would require the full time presence of adult carers, including both female and male carers so as to ensure the physical safety of the house. It would also be more appropriate for older teenage girls (e.g. 17 onwards).

Advantages and shortcomings of independent living (from group exercises)

Advantages of independent living	Shortcomings of independent living
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonomy ▪ Managing our own finances, our own life ▪ Avoiding friends with bad influence ▪ Avoiding verbal violence and discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High levels of insecurity ▪ Lack of protection from violence (including. sexual violence & exploitation) & discrimination ▪ Younger girls at risk of forced prostitution by older ones ▪ No formal support ▪ Isolation ▪ Financial problems ▪ Interpersonal violence from peers ▪ Debts between girls leading to returning to prostitution

Older and hard to reach girls connected to the streets

As shown above, group discussions with girls highlighted the issue of violence by older peers called “sister yayas” while on the streets. This problem also came up from discussions with service providers who highlighted that they are a particularly hard-to-reach group on the streets. From past studies looking at the phenomenon of street connected children in Kinshasa, it looks like the yayas – usually older teenage girls from 17-18 years old and young women over 18s involved in commercial sex work - play a key role in the rites of passage of younger girls into prostitution. Other research has suggested that these girls, often more linked with street gangs and groups, are less likely to attend NGO-run services and less likely to wish to be reunited with their families.²⁷ They have a stronger link with the streets, often have street husbands or boyfriends as well as children under their care.



Older girls could be a key group to influence in order to reach and improve protection for younger girls, their situation is often overlooked as they can be over-18s and therefore do not fulfil the criteria for most centres who care for children, but they also inspire fear (according to one girl’s testimony in this research) among centre staff and girls, since they are known to be highly violent, to control girls on the streets and to be connected with influential gangs.

²⁷ World Bank 2009. *Op. cit.*

Careful consideration of the needs of “hard to reach” girls through other means than day or night residential centres is therefore key to enabling older girls to opt out of the streets and look towards positive reintegration and address the cycle of violence and sexual exploitation on the streets. Providing them with social reintegration options - although not necessarily with family reintegration as an objective – and maintaining links with them through activities and outreach could have a positive impact on the whole street connected girl population in Kinshasa.

Family reintegration may not be the best option for groups such as girl street mothers or “street couples” since they often consider that they have started a new family life and wish to be supported to live independently. In an interview with researchers, the programme coordinator of the NGO Chemin Neuf highlighted that there is an increasing demand from older aged-street couples (20s and above) to be supported to reintegrate back into society; the impact from this is too early to see as this programme is currently just starting - with a first group of 10 couples supported.

V Learning from other reintegration experiences and models globally

Global literature review and expert interviews: elements of good and promising practices

Although there has been much more work on boys among programme literature and focus, there has been in recent years a growing interest in finding ways to work more effectively with girls connected to the streets²⁸. Overall studies find that, as in Kinshasa, there are far fewer girls on the streets than boys, however, their experiences and profiles differ greatly from that of boys and that needs to be taken into account in programme approach and design. Girls end up in the streets for different reasons, have different degrees of connectedness to the streets, face different dangers while living or working on the streets and develop different coping strategies. All that will influence their prospects for social or family reintegration.

Abuse and neglect, especially sexual abuse for instance, has been highlighted as a key causal factors pushing girls to break away from their families of origin²⁹. When this is found, girls tend to have maintained less contact with their families or origin, therefore making reintegration more challenging and complex³⁰.

Good principles highlighted by experts and literature on reintegration, including reintegration of street-connected girls include:

▪ Looking at all the options

Globally, there has been a shift in approaches looking at long-term rehabilitation of street connected children, often institutionally-based, towards NGOs and donors prioritising family reintegration and supporting families to be able to care for their own children. However, there is a growing recognition that programmes need to be flexible and consider the full range of alternative care possible when trying to address complex cases of girls and boys trying to

²⁸ Cf. Plan Because I am a Girl. 2010; CSC Street Girls Literature Review draft summary 2013 and work in progress to develop a toolkit on working with street girls.

²⁹ CSC/Anita Shrader 2013.

³⁰ Sarah Thomas de Benitez 2012 (citing Wernham 2001 about research in Kenya, Senegal, Bolivia, Brazil and Guatemala). (cited in Sarah de B)

escape from highly abusive or violent situations. Specialized street children advocacy groups, most recently the UK-based Consortium for Street Children (CSC), have cautioned that the current emphasis on family reunification programming needs to be tempered with a recognition that family reunification can be a complex, labour-intensive activity that is not always successful nor necessarily appropriate for all populations of street children³¹.

▪ Taking the time

Acknowledging that family reintegration is a complex process whose feasibility and length will be different for each individual girl, according to family history and cause for departure³²; past trauma and psychological consequences; level of family and street related violence; and the ability to cope and come to terms with anger and distrust towards adults. All this needs to be taken into account on an individual basis. There can be programmatic pressure to achieve results on reintegration but money and resources will be wasted if this process is not properly thought through. For each girl, there will be a different pathway towards reintegration: “The forced return of girls and boys to their families, ostensibly because of their right to family life, is profoundly detrimental when children have escaped from these families in the first place”³³. This will mean that time spent before reintegration will be critical and the length of preparation will vary according to each case. According to some organisations, follow-up may be necessary for up to 3 years or more after a child has been successfully reintegrated.

▪ This is about behaviour change

Envisaging sustainable reintegration for girls cannot be done only by addressing individual cases and families alone. This is about societal change and tackling the social norms behind the exclusion of girls: “Take away the fact that she is on the streets and look at changing family feelings and community attitudes”, says Dr Sarah Thomas de Benitez³⁴. In the Congolese context, this is all the more important when considering that girls come from a deeply patriarchal society and some have been rejected from their families and communities for being a “witch”. “You have to raise awareness within communities and work hand in hand with schools” says UNICEF Child Protection Manager Florent Boto.

▪ Ensuring girls are safe

For girls who have undergone serious trauma or violence within their home of origin, each family reintegration process will need to think through carefully which option is safer for the girl, looking at ensuring her best interest, taking into account her own preference and choice and ensuring that girls are reintegrated in a safe place. Staff should be well aware and well trained and proper safeguards in place during case management so that family reintegration initiatives do not end up putting girls at risk of further harm and abuse.

▪ Supporting positive relationships

Family reintegration doesn't mean that a girl should necessarily be reunified with her biological parents or initial caregivers, but that she is able to recover from past violent experiences and break up from society, and develop trusting relationships with adults again. Reintegration programmes should put in place communication processes so that girls can maintain positive relationships with one or several members of their families (even though

³¹ January 2005 publication “In Best or Vested Interests? An Exploration of the Concept and Practice of Family Reunification for Street Children”, cited in USAID

³² CSC 2005. Thomas Feeny. In best or vested interest.

³³ Lam & Cheng 2007. Cited in Anita Shrader 2013.

³⁴ Interview with Dr Sarah Thomas de Benitez, June 2013.

not living with them) and/or develop positive relationships with adults outside their families (though educators and social workers, psychotherapeutic work, play etc). This will be a key step towards their sustainable reintegration in society and for them to regain confidence in their ability to form stable relationships outside the streets.

Examples of Reintegration Programmes in other parts of the World

RETRAK research summary: The situation of street girls in Kampala and Addis Ababa

Retrak recently undertook situational analyses of street girls in Kampala and Addis Ababa. Although providing estimates of numbers of street children is difficult, it has been reported that there are around 10,000 street children in both capital cities, of whom 25% or 2,500 are girls. Girls are less visible on the streets. They are frequently employed to do housework or sell food; others hideaway in video halls or are involved in commercial sex work. In the evenings and nights, when groups of boys are clearly visible on the streets, girls instead come together to rent rooms or try to find safer places.

Both boys and girls go to the streets because of multiple difficulties at home – often due to a combination of poverty, social exclusion and family dysfunction. In Uganda, Retrak found that the majority of girls on the street are orphans or from broken homes and had previously lived with grandparents or extended-family. The most common push factors were a lack of food, clothes and education as well as being physically abused.

Street girls are also more vulnerable to violence and abuse, especially sexual abuse and rape. In comparison to street boys who sometimes become aggressive and replicate violence, street girls tend to internalise violence and become more vulnerable to abuse and victimisation. As a result, they suffer psychological trauma often resulting in low self-esteem and low self-confidence.

Programmatic implications

Street girls require the same basic services as boys in order to meet their basic needs (...)it is also important to develop services that meet the specific needs of street girls.

- Outreach activities need to go beyond street visits in order to find girls who are more **hidden** away.
- **Shelter** must be a priority because it means safety for girls.
- **Clothing, toiletries and a place to wash** are also vital to girls' safety and self-esteem.
- **Counselling and psychosocial activities** (life-skills lessons, arts and sports) must be adapted to deal with the impact of sexual abuse, early motherhood and involvement in commercial sex work.
- **Health education**, including reproductive health and HIV prevention and care, must be available to girls whilst they are on the streets as well as whilst participating at centres.

Safe Families Safe Children

The SFSC coalition is an international group of organisations (i.e. Juconi Ecuador, Railway Children, Retrak etc) working globally to research, develop and implement effective methodologies to enable the most excluded children around the world to gain sustainable access to their rights and have their development needs met appropriately, including emotional and relational needs which greatly impact their future resilience and life outcomes. Their 2011 report, 'Breaking the Cycle of Violence' (see bibliography), advocates investment in therapeutically oriented, family based interventions to prevent

violence from recurring and ensure children and parents achieve the emotional stability and skills they need to participate positively and actively within their local communities.

SFSC strategy :

1. Sustained Therapeutic Support: Not enough work is invested in fulfilling children's emotional needs (developing positive relationships, feeling loved, managing **their feelings** etc) as opposed to physical needs. Children who live in violent families require attention to their emotional needs, both to help their emotional recovery and to build the internal resilience and capacity to manage relationships differently in the future. Therefore, there must be a therapeutic intent to services delivered for these children. By "therapeutic" we mean interventions, responses or strategies which specifically aim to help children and parents gain insights into their experiences, develop self-esteem and emotional well-being, and build healthy relationships.

2. Family-based work: To create sustainable changes, a functional and positive support network needs to be developed around the child. For highly excluded children and families, home-based services are the most effective delivery strategy (...) Home visitation programmes have also been shown to be highly effective in reducing violence in the home. Investing in the whole family to resolve violence, rather than only working with a child, is the key to permanently breaking intergenerational cycles of family violence.

Fenix Fundacion Bogota (Mexico)– reaching girls through mentors

Fénix is a not-for-profit foundation, registered in Colombia as 'Fundación Social Fénix'. It provides educational assistance, group support, peer leader mentoring, tutoring and leadership training to vulnerable young people without resources. Fénix developed out of the experience of supporting girls from a child care programme in the difficult transition to independent living and tertiary education.

Street girls from 12 to 22 are the group at highest risk. Small Fénix teams that include nurses and social work students, help get them back into school, to re-establish contact with families and whenever possible to enter therapeutic programmes to recover from the deep traumas most suffered as victims of childhood abuse and rape and that led them to the streets and ever worse victimisation and dangers.

El Refugio has a home for those up the age of 18, under contract with the government child protection agency (ICBF), and Fénix works closely with the El Refugio team, putting girls in direct contact with the team, taking girls to visit the home and to explore the possibility of leaving the street, helping them make decisions and supporting girls who want to leave the streets and reintegrate into society.

One day a week Fénix has a systemic therapy programme for street girls with those family members who support their efforts to change. The success of this outreach and therapy programme is the result of peer leadership methodology– people of the same age and social origins, who speak the same language, who have suffered similar neglect and exclusion and know from their own previous experiences what the street girls are going through and feeling, but now also are models, mentors and guides through change.

<http://www.fenix.org.uk/>

Every Child best practices relating to child fostering

Fostering better care. Improving foster care provision around the world. Positive care choices: Working paper 2 (extracts), June 2011.

There is widespread acknowledgement that for many children outside of parental care, family-based care offers a preferable alternative to residential care. However, in many regions of the world, foster care, a potential key mechanism for providing such family-based care, remains under-resourced and rarely used. It is more cost effective than residential care and can be more suitable than kinship care in some cases. Decisions should always consider the best interest of the child and their participation in the decision. Foster care should be offered alongside other care options so as to make sure children have access to options appropriate to their individual needs. In developing fostering programmes attention should be given to:

- Not developing foster care in isolation but as a complement to other alternative care options and linked to prevention and family reintegration programmes
- Developing locally appropriate systems of fostering
- Challenging attitudes towards foster care
- Addressing specific support needs of children and foster carers
- Strengthening the capacities of social services and communities to support foster care, including strong monitoring systems

Principles of good practice include:

- **Maintain links with families and communities:** foster placements should also support continuing links with the child's biological family where possible (and in the best interest of the child)
- **Recognise the diverse needs of children in foster care programmes:** Fostering need to be assessed considering the needs of specific groups (e.g. exploited children, girls etc.)
- **Focus on listening to children and their genuine participation:** making sure children are taking an active part in decisions affecting their lives
- **Encourage careful community engagement in foster care programmes:** especially in resource-poor environments when social workforce is weak.

Pendekezo Letu - Kenya

Family & community Reintegration/re-unification Model for Girls working and living on the streets

Pendekezo Letu (PKL), meaning "our right to have a choice" in Kiswahili, is a Kenyan, non-religious, non-profit organization, which was established in 1997 and specializes in assisting young street girls, their families and other highly vulnerable children living in marginalized urban communities in Kenya.

According to the programme director, the success of PKL's approach is due to the level of investment of the programme at individual level and the wide community approach. In order to ensure successful reintegration of children back to their families and communities, PKL considers 3 main actors: the child, the family, the school and community.

PKL implements the following model:

1. Identification and documentation of children including sexually exploited girls.
2. Tracing: This step is undertaken following consultation with the child who decides whether to reunify with immediate, extended or foster family. An agreement is signed between PKL rehabilitation centre and the family and the child enrolls for a 10 months programme at the centre before reintegration.
3. Re-unification and reintegration process
 - Interventions with the **child**: An assessment is done of all individual needs and an intervention plan developed for each child that can include: provision of basic needs and referrals, behaviour change, remedial education, guidance and counselling, lifeskills etc.
 - Intervention with the **family**: economic empowerment, guidance and counselling, sensitization around parental responsibility & positive discipline, improved shelter etc.
 - Intervention with the **community**: Provision of training for teachers on child rights & protection and positive discipline, support to pupils through school-based child rights clubs, positive discipline committees in schools.
4. Follow-up
 - Follow-up is done for 2 years at the individual child and school level.
 - In every school children are enrolled, there is a PKL children register marked by a pupil on daily basis. This pupil has been nominated by other PKL children in that school.

Pendekezo Letu – Case study

Alice Wairimu's story

Alice is the youngest in a family of three children. In 1998, Pendekezo Letu's (PKL) Social Workers met Alice begging in the streets and scavenging around the market places of Nairobi at the age of 12. She had dropped out of primary school in standard 2, two years earlier due to constant violence and abuse at home. At the time, her mother, a resident of Korogocho slum, was an alcoholic and had numerous sexual partners.



**Alice aged 12 years (right in blue dress)
with her family outside their home in Korogocho slum**

Upon completing the ten-month residential rehabilitation programme in January 1999, PKL reintegrated Alice with her maternal uncle in the rural town of Murang'a and enrolled her in Muchungucha Primary School in standard 3.

However, after 3 years of continuous counselling and support, Alice's mother finally stopped drinking and decided to relocate from Korogocho slum to Murang'a in 2001. PKL assisted her to secure a piece of land and provided a loan to enable her to construct a house to live with her daughter. PKL also disbursed a business loan to enable her to start

a shop.

In 2003, whilst in standard 8, Alice, aged 17, got pregnant and gave birth. However, with the support of PKL's Social Worker, she succeeded in completing her primary education, while her mother looked after the baby boy.

Following the disbursal of additional loans by PKL and the expansion of the mother's grocery business so as to adequately support Alice's son while she was studying in secondary school, in October 2008, Alice, aged 22, completed her secondary education with a C+. Finally with the support of PKL she was enrolled in a three-year Diploma course in Mechanical Engineering.



Now 25 years of age, Alice is currently in her final year at college and is one of the best performers in her class. She is scheduled to graduate in December 2011 and plans to pursue an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering. Alice's son, who is now 8 years old, is fully supported by her family in Muchungucha Primary School.

VI Recommendations

To War Child, OSEPER and organisations involved in the family reintegration of street connected girls in Kinshasa

Working with extremely vulnerable girls, who have experienced high levels of violence before and while on the streets, requires an approach sensitive to their specific recovery needs, especially those who are survivors of sexual violence. It is likely to need interventions requiring a specific skill set, outside of the mainstream IDMRS process used in Kinshasa for street-connected children. In the current context, the family reintegration of girls needs to be carefully and realistically thought through, with less emphasis or attention on success rates alone, and more on the quality of the approach and taking the necessary time to identify and tackle the underlying problems. It is important to incorporate proactive learning into the process and to building from small successes.

Ensuring reintegration readiness

- Bring in outside expertise on conflict resolution, mediation and psychotherapeutic approaches;
- Invest more time and resources in improving the individual level work with the girls and their families. This needs to be done through trained and supported social workers, psychologists and mentors³⁵.
- Positive adult role models and relationships: an important component and a first step towards reintegration is to help girls regain confidence in adults and in themselves and to facilitate building individual relationships between social workers and girls connected to the streets.
- Put in place a monitoring and evaluation framework related to measuring reintegration readiness (indicators of readiness) of the girls and their families before reintegration.
- Put in place a monitoring and evaluation framework related to measuring well-being outcomes of reintegrated girls or girls in alternative care.
- Ensure girl's voices are heard and that their participation is at the centre of all decision-making processes related to their reintegration (e.g. timing of reintegration, socio-economic reintegration support), especially in the choice of the individual she would like to be reunified with.
- Make sure that the programme, both the staff and the methodologies used, is really supportive and not coercive in its approach to reintegration. ***No girl should feel obliged to return home.***

How to work with street-connected girls by strengthening learning

- Put learning at the centre of the programme cycle by facilitating regular learning opportunities which can feed into a re-orientation of the programme approach focus, in which both project staff and the girls themselves participate actively. Integrate the girls' feedback into project approach and quality.
- Facilitate learning and coordination among CBOs and NGOs working with girls connected to the streets as well as REJEER.
- Share global learning and expertise from organisations in other countries, specializing in family reintegration of street connected boys and girls with programme staff.

³⁵ It is very stressful working with the street-connected girls and professional counselling advice should be made available to those who are working with the girls.

- Pilot and test methodologies with a successfully proven behaviour change content (for example or the GIZ Inter-Generational Approach).

Family reintegration and care options

There is no one single care option or model that will suit girls connected to the streets, therefore a wider range of alternative care options need to be tested to meet girls' needs. Ensuring a successful reintegration of these girls requires a holistic approach that understands the complex dynamic of their families, including how decision-making occurs; who in the family influenced others, or the girl, in her decision to leave (sister, uncle, step-parent or other key relative); who in the family is supportive of the girl, etc.

- Consider piloting fostering and kinship care or strengthening partnerships with organisations that are already doing so.
- Consider offering short-term alternatives to a centre-based approach such as temporary kinship care for girls who have kept positive links with a particular relative or family friend.
- When girls cannot be reunited with their biological family (or other relatives), support the continuation of positive relationships with relatives or former caregivers (through communications, regular visits etc.). This needs to be adequately thought through, supervised and budgeted.

Preventing and addressing failure:

- Promote attitudes among reintegration staff not to blame girls for failure in reintegration but to emphasize the right for trial and error. Girls must be able to freely express doubts about their new situation or environment.
- Within NGOs and residential centres, put in place mechanisms for girls in alternative care to get support if needed, a “point of call” for any issues, debriefs or support needed.
- Strengthen families: Give a stronger emphasis to working with families (recommended by most of the groups participating in this research, including girls and service providers) so as to tackle effectively discriminatory attitudes and stigmatization towards returning girls.

Ensuring socio-economic reintegration of girls

- Consider partnerships with agencies specialized in providing sustainable and economically viable income-generating activities³⁶.
- It is important to work with specialist partners to tackle economic problems – it is probably better if this is a separate project and not “added on” to the work of an NGO which does not have specialist staff to cover this area.
- Improved monitoring mechanisms of school reintegration, attendance and educational progress
- Ensuring girls have access to local social networks is key to ensure that their social reintegration needs are met, this can be through supporting local youth clubs and initiatives where girls can have the opportunity to mix with others and have time to play and create new friendships that are non-street related (e.g. through play, music theatre or sports).

Girls outside mainstream services: consider new approaches targeted at “hard-to-reach” groups of girls such as girl mothers, older adolescent girls in commercial sexual exploitation

³⁶ Globally work is undertaken by the Child Protection Crisis (CPC) network to identify evidence on the impact of economic strengthening programmes on vulnerable children, see bibliography. <http://www.cpcnetwork.org/task-forces-details.php?ID=2>

and young women (or sister yayas), including those who exploit younger girls. Improve outreach as well as behaviour change methodologies to reduce levels of exploitation and to offer alternative socio-economic reintegration solutions for young women and girls who do not wish to return home.

Do no harm: ensuring girls are safe throughout the reintegration cycle

- Extreme caution should be taken so as not to carry out reunification to the same home and family in which the former abuser is still living. All staff should be trained in recognising signs of abuse and stress and how to address issues of abuse, especially sexual and physical abuse and violence.
- Street violence spilling over into NGOs centres: a number of girls have fed back on the levels of violence coming from older street peers and other girls attending NGO centres, threatening younger girls and even former friends. This is detrimental to the necessary stability and safety required for girls to envisage reintegration and regain self confidence. Give priority to ensuring that residential centres are safe places for girls, and put in place mitigation measures for resolving street issues and violence outside the centres; for instance by establishing agreements with other NGOs to ensure that girls at risk of inter-personal violence from former street peers are temporarily placed in a residential centre at some distance from her former street living and working place.
- Inter-personal violence within centres: Girls' testimonies also show that there are higher levels of violence from male peers in mixed day care centres than from girls in girls-only residential centres (transit or longer term). Again, mitigation measures need to be in place to address this and not jeopardize girls' confidence and the reintegration processes.

Safeguarding and accountability:

- Put in place child protection mechanisms for girls to report on any issues arising at the centre, including abuse and violence by peers or staff, such as an anonymous complaints box, a child protection focal point etc.
- Put in place participatory and safe feedback mechanisms for girls to be able to have a say on the running and management of the centres and ensure that this is fed back into project quality and relevance.

To organisations involved in protecting vulnerable children including street connected girls in Kinshasa

Prevention work

- Consider supporting programmatic initiatives that support and are inclusive of at-risk families within communities. Work with schools and community actors to identify "risk factors" such as family disintegration and conflict as well as abuse.
- Consider approaches using community "champions" or "natural leaders" with a genuine care and interest for protecting girls and who can play positive roles in the community to protect them and identify issues early on.
- Strengthen partnerships and coordination with community based child protection mechanisms such as the child protection networks to support and refer boys and girls in need of protection.
- Strengthen partnerships with NGOs or CBOs that can work to improve the environment which the girls come from/ return to, especially addressing discriminatory social norms and harmful practices such as witchcraft accusations.

- Target parents groups, schools, local associations and churches for increasing awareness of the situation of street-connected girls and communicating key messages around positive parenting and discipline.

Social workforce development

A stronger emphasis on strengthening the workforce has been recommended by most groups participating in this research (girls and service providers):

- **Stronger emphasis on case management skills to support girls and their families**, especially competencies to work with girls, survivors of sexual violence and exploitation.
- **Stronger emphasis on psychosocial support to girls and their families:** Consider investing in training³⁷ a social workforce so that they are equipped with psychosocial skills to address more complex reintegration situations. This will initially require bringing in external specialist skills in specialized psychological and therapeutic support.
- **Professional development and competencies of social workers:** improve the staff ratio in the centres and for outreach work – close accompaniment requires trained staff and sufficient time for each girl.

Coordination/ areas of expertise

- There are few available services devoted to street connected girls in Kinshasa (residential centres and alternative care options, sexual and reproductive health, services to survivors of gender-based violence etc). There is a need to develop additional services to bridge this gap.
- Not all specialized services can be performed by a single NGO. Agencies working to support NGOs working with street connected girls would gain by supporting the development of complementary specialisations and/or supporting partnering with other specialized organisations better equipped to carry out certain functions.
- It is essential to ensure that there is a strong and coordinated referral system in place, made up from for both formal and informal actors (government or municipality social workers as well as community volunteers and networks in order to meet the needs of the girls.
- Coordination bodies such as the REJEER could play a role in facilitating mapping and establishing referrals between specialized organisations in order to strengthen good partnerships and efficiency in response to the girls' specific needs.

³⁷ The trained therapeutic professionals will also require ongoing support in their work with street-connected girls

VII. Annexes

Annexe A. Participatory exercises: respondents

Date	Participants	Location
15th April	10 girls = Profile: In the streets for less than 4 years, including girls accused of witchcraft.	Annuarite (OSEPER transit centre)
16th April	9 girls - Profile: In the streets for less than 4 years, accused of witchcraft, reunified, failed reintegration.	Point d'Eau (OSEPER day centre)
17th April	29 girls - Profile: In the streets for less than 7 years, accused of witchcraft, reunified, failed reintegration.	<u>Other centres:</u> Hope BBS ORPER (Irebu)
Total:	48 girls (aged 10-18 years)	

Annexe B. Key informant interviews respondents - Kinshasa

Date	Participants	Organisation	Meeting type
8th April	Dr Mamie – Gender and reproductive health Specialist – Project Manager (War Child) Alessia Polidoro – War Child Kinshasa Programme Manager	War Child	Orientation meeting (research preparations & logistics)
8th April	Mauro – project coordinator OSEPER Bertin – Centre Coordinator OSEPER Dorcias – centre educator OSEPER Miriam – centre educator OSEPER Zado Mutuku – training leader - REJEER	OSEPER/REJEEER staff Centre educators	Orientation meeting (research preparations)
8th April	REJEER head office staff (4)	REJEER head office	Discussion with REJEER staff (KII questions)
9th April	Madho Longo - Senior Field Officer for child protection	Save the Children	KII
9th April	Sr Lucie Mandeke – Psychologist	OSEPER	KII
9th April	RECOPE 15 area leaders (Kinshasa)	RECOPE	Discussion with RECOPE members (KII questions)
9th April	President of the Child Court M Emeka, (Head of the social workers)	Child Court	KII
10th April	Florent Boto Child Protection Manager	UNICEF	KII
10th April	Head of DISPE Assistant DISPE Assistant DISPE	DISPE	KII
10th April	Jean-Pierre, Project Manager Martin Ekakanya, Manager (health, reunified children)	Chemin Neuf	KII
16th April	OSEPER Street Leader	OSEPER	KII
17th April	Br Mauro (OSEPER Director of Activities)	OSEPER	KII
17th April	Family reintegration worker	OSEPER	KII
17th April	Père Alpha	ORPER	KII
Total:	40 people	10 organisations	

Annexe C. Key informant interview respondents (global)

Name	Organisation and area of expertise
1 Sarah Benitez de Thomas	Independent Senior consultant and researcher
2 Sylvia Reyes	JUCONI Ecuador Country Director
3 Anita Schrader McMillan	Circles of Trust in Guatemala
4 Timothy Ross	Fenix Colombia
5 Florence Martin	Knowledge Management and Technical Support Consultant (BCN, Better Care Network)
6 Erika Paez-Manjarres	Senior Programme Officer: Latin America & Caribbean International Aids Alliance
7 Victoria Goring	Head of operations Retrak
8 Leo Borg	Development Manager Consortium for Street Children (CSC)
9 Karen Baker	Child Hope Partnerships and Programmes Manager (Peru)
10 Eamonn Hanson	War Child Holland – Global advocacy Coordinator
11 Sarah Mbira	Pendekezo Letu Street Girls rehabilitation programme (Keyna) - Director

Annexe D. Data collection tools

In progress - WAR CHILD translating in English (ref. Anne Bouvier)

Annexe E. Bibliography

Types of documents	Document title
Project-specific literature	<p>Comic Relief final project proposal, 2010 Year 1 report to Comic Relief, 2011 Year 2 report to Comic Relief, 2012 Services mapping study in Tshangu district 2012</p>
DRC-specific literature	<p>Street children workshop documents and presentations DRC, Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD). UNICEF, 2010. <i>DR-Congo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS</i>. UNICEF, 2011. Powerpoint presentation and guidance notes on “protected communities” in DRC. Azia Dimbu Florentin, 2009. <i>Enfants de la rue a Kinshasa et le lien familial : rupture de façade ou affective d’avec leurs familles d’origine ?</i>. <i>Revue La Recherche en Éducation Pédagogique Nationale</i>. Revue de l’Association Francophone Internationale de Recherche Scientifique en Éducation. Saint Louis; Colienne, Mémoire Louvain la Neuve. 2012. <i>Enfants de la rue et enfants “dits sorciers” à Kinshasa. Etude comparative des vécus, perceptions et solutions de mise en place sur base de récits de vie</i>. Florentin Azia Dimbu, 2012. Université Pédagogique Nationale de Kinshasa. <i>Revue de l’Association Francophone Internationale de Recherche Scientifique en Éducation. Facteurs explicatifs du phénomène enfants de la rue à Kinshasa</i> Save the Children, 2006. <i>The Invention of Child Witches in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Social cleansing, religious commerce and the difficulties of being a parent in an urban culture</i>. Human Rights Watch (HRW). 2006. <i>What future for street children in the Democratic Republic of Congo</i>. Vol. 18 No 2A. Médecins du Monde (MDM), 2009. <i>Etat des lieux des violences sexuelles dont sont victimes les filles des rues de Kinshasa</i>. Médecins du Monde (MDM). 2009. <i>La rue c’est la chance? Enquêtes sur l’exploitation et les violences sexuelles des jeunes filles des rues de Kinshasa</i>. Banque Mondiale, 2009. <i>Nous ne sommes pas dangereux, mais en danger. Les enfants des rues à Kinshasa</i>. UK APPG on Street Children, DRC mission. 2006. <i>“Child witches”, child soldiers, child poverty and violence: Street children in crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo</i>. REJEER publication guide on IDMRS: <i>Processus de la réinsertion sociale IDMRS: Identification, Documentation, Médiation, Réunification, Suivi</i>.</p>
Global literature	<p>United Nations, 2010. <i>Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children</i>. Human Rights Council resolution 16/12 - <i>Rights of the child: a holistic approach to the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street</i>. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street. UN expert consultation 2011 presentations http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Study/Pages/ExpertConsultation.aspx ILO, 2011. <i>Contribution concerning the study of children working and/or living on the street</i> by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. ECPAT International, 2011. <i>Contribution to the UNHCHR Report on Children living and/or working on the street and the links to sexual exploitation</i>. EveryChild, 2011. <i>Fostering better care Improving foster care provision around the world</i>.</p>

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Annexe F. Data protection protocol during research

Owing to the sensitivity of the issues being discussed in this research, the methodology is taking into account measures to ensure the protection of any data gathered during questionnaires and group work exercises. The basic elements of data protection (identity protection, confidentiality and consent) taken into consideration are detailed below:

- ✓ As discussed and agreed with research team, the data collection tools (including questionnaires and attendance sheets) will never mention the real full names of girls involved but only their initials.
- ✓ Participants to the research will be informed that, at no point during the research, their real names will be used.
- ✓ Participants to the research will be informed about the principle of confidentiality of any information given during all stages of the research.
- ✓ Participants to the research will be asked for consent in the participatory exercises (written forms) as well as the questionnaires stage (within questionnaire form).
- ✓ Families of reunified girls will be asked for their consent when 1. Asked to answer the family questionnaire 2. Asked if their daughter can answer questionnaires.
- ✓ At the data entry stage, initials will be then turned into codes.
- ✓ Addresses won't be taken in full but only the "quartier" and "province" or origin.
- ✓ The information from group discussions will be recorded without identifying individual participants
- ✓ The research team has been briefed on the critical importance of confidentiality during all stages of the research.
- ✓ The research team has been briefed on the need to find a protected area to discuss during any interviews with girls.
- ✓ Arrangements for data management have been agreed with team "supervisors" including regularly if possible daily collection of questionnaires; final collection of notebooks with written field notes.
- ✓ All related research documents (data collection tools and electronic files) will be given to War Child office in Kinshasa who will in turn need to decide what to do. If they decide to keep it, they will be advised to store in a locked cabinet only accessible by senior management staff.
- ✓ It is advised that attendance sheets are destroyed after the research
- ✓ All photos taken during data collection (mainly participatory exercises) will be taken with the consent of girls involved. They will not be published without their consent in an official written form.

