



Growing up on the Streets

Fact Sheet Accompanying Anonymised Data Set TO BE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE USING THE DATA SET

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Abstract

GROWING UP ON THE STREETS was a qualitative, longitudinal (2012-2016), participatory research project following the lives of street children and youth as they grow up on the streets of three African cities: Accra, Ghana; Bukavu, DRC and Harare, Zimbabwe. Street children and youth were participants and researchers alongside street work practitioners, UK academics, a UK charity and African NGOs. Funding came from Backstage Trust and the ESRC (for knowledge exchange). The innovative research design was developed with street children and youth (aged 14-20), employing a capability (rather than vulnerability) approach to their lives. They defined the 10 capabilities which formed the framework for the project. The project won awards for its innovative approach and impact. The data (over 2600 interviews) released in January 2020 provides unique insights into the patterns of young people's daily lives on the street as they seek to create adult lives to value.

Introduction

The international research project GROWING UP ON THE STREETS worked with hundreds of street children and youth in three African cities, gathering thousands of qualitative files and providing unique insights into the patterns of their daily lives, struggles, capabilities and coping strategies as they seek to create adult lives to value. The *GUOTS Knowledge Exchange Training Pack* is used worldwide by NGOs and governments working with street children and youth and its participants contributed to key UN legislation. See the [Story map](#) by Accra's street youth in for a visual representation of the project.

Overview

Growing up on the Streets is an innovative participatory research project following the lives of street children and youth as they grow up on the streets of African cities (Accra, Ghana; Bukavu, DRC and Harare, Zimbabwe).

The research aims to bridge the gap between the realities for young people living on the street and political attitudes about street children and urban poverty. By challenging the prevailing binary view that children are at risk 'on' but safe 'off' the streets, it reveals the complexity of life for young people for whom the street is their home, source of income and identity. Collaboratively collecting in-depth qualitative data over a lengthy period, the research provides evidence to challenge accepted thinking, improve policies, practice, and ultimately transform the lives of street children.

The team has strong ongoing relationships with young people, local project teams, and practitioners across Africa. Street youth were engaged from inception, dissemination, to data analysis: defining research objectives; training as researchers; involving a network of 500+ participants; and facilitating street youth to directly share their knowledge with stakeholders who have power over their lives. The participants and outputs made a decisive input into recent UN legislation on street children, as well as to inform and engage UK and African Governments. Participation in the research, enhanced by training, led to street youth becoming active citizens and peer advocates to government. Some are now employing their research skills as a new generation of street workers.

The research was jointly developed and led by Professor Lorraine van Blerk (University of Dundee), independent consultant Dr Wayne Shand and the late Father Patrick Shanahan of the NGO StreetInvest, and funded by Backstage Trust. The innovative research design was developed by street children and youth (aged 14-20), employing a capability (rather than vulnerability) approach to their lives.

During phase 1 (2012-2016) street youth undertook ethnographic research with a network of young people living on the street, sharing their findings via weekly interviews with local project managers from community-based NGOs. This regular, long-term commitment (plus quarterly focus groups involving the entire network) demonstrates consistency and skills among street children and youth, providing unique insights into the patterns of their daily lives, struggles, capabilities and coping strategies as they seek to create adult lives to value. The team gathered 3,000 qualitative files creating the largest ever database of street children and youth's lives.

Knowledge exchange events have created an ongoing dialogue between street children and youth, police, government, judiciary, social work, schools, churches, charities, NGOs, the public and media. Findings are shared via freely accessible briefing papers and the Knowledge Exchange Training Pack has been adopted worldwide and used to engage many other young people in policy dialogue and development beyond this research.

A key success is contributing to International Law through consultations for the UN General Comment on Children in Street Situations. Professor van Blerk was invited by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Working Group to provide an Expert Consultation in January 2016 on its General Comment on children in street situations (published July 2017). In addition, the project team (academics and charity partners) provided written submissions, and significantly, Growing up on the Streets led the [African consultations](#) engaging a 200-strong network of street children/youth. Comic Relief, who co-funded some activities, said that the methods used to engage with young people "will be used as the global benchmark for consulting with young people in matters that affect their lives."

Since first publication the [Growing up on the Streets Knowledge Exchange Training Pack](#) has been used globally with hundreds of street children and NGOs in Africa, Brazil and most recently, India. The project won the MRS President's Medal 2015 for extraordinary contribution to research and the University of Dundee Stephen Fry Award for Public Engagement, Project of the Year in 2017 recognising outstanding research communication and practice. [Briefing Papers](#) on the key topics identified by street children and youth are freely available online in English and French.

Participants

There were several ways that young street people participated in this project. Participants were all street children and youth living in the project cities of Accra, Ghana; Bukavu, DRC; and Harare, Zimbabwe. Key participants (229), included 18 research assistants, six in each city, and their networks (nominally 10 street-living young people whom they knew, but often many more) also participated in annual surveys and focus groups. In total 399 street children and youth took part in focus groups, surveys etc. over the course of the project. There are also other individuals who were mentioned by the research assistants in their weekly interviews and have been given a pseudonym in the attached anonymised data set.

Research design and methods

Growing up on the Streets was a participatory research project where young people were both informants and investigators. Six young people in each city were trained in ethnographic methods and met weekly with city project managers, offering observations on the experiences of ten young people in their networks, around a framework of ten 'capabilities' defined by participants. These weekly interviews were supplemented by quarterly focus groups involving the wider network, each discussing one of the ten capabilities. These were (in brief): support of friends, plans for the future, resilience, enough to eat, health and wellbeing, meeting basic needs, time to play, safe movement, and building assets. An additional focus

group took place discussing rights; contributing to the UN General Comment on Children in Street Situations. In total 198 focus groups were held in the three cities, discussing 11 topics among six groups in each city.

Data collected

- **Interviews:** In total, 2,478 weekly interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, translated locally and delivered to for qualitatively coded at the University of Dundee; 856 interviews from Accra, 798 from Bukavu and 824 from Harare. These are included in the current data release.
- **Focus groups:** 198 focus groups were held in the three cities, discussing 11 topics among six groups in each city.
- **Surveys:** 694 questionnaire surveys in total from four annual surveys conducted in each of the three cities.

Project phases

- **2012-2016:** Phase 1 street youth were trained to undertake ethnographic research with others in their networks, supported by local project managers from community-based NGOs, providing weekly interviews, supplemented by quarterly focus groups
- **2015-2016:** Expanded knowledge exchange phase jointly funded by the ESRC
- **2016-2019:** Phase 2 continuing analysis, dissemination and knowledge exchange.

Collaborators

UK

- **Research Directors:** Professor Lorraine van Blerk, Chair in Human Geography, Geography, School of Social Sciences, University of Dundee; Dr Wayne Shand, EDP Associates Ltd; and the late Father Patrick Shanahan.
- **Researcher:** Janine Hunter, University of Dundee (undertook all qualitative coding)
- **UK NGO partner:** StreetInvest. Plus a Peer Network of street work practitioners from across Africa and India.

Country Project Managers and NGO Partners

- **Accra, Ghana:** Selassy Gbeglo / Street Girls' Aid
- **Bukavu, DRC:** Thomas d'Aquin Rubambura / PEDER (Programme d'encadrement des enfants de la rue / Street Children's Mentoring Programme)
- **Harare, Zimbabwe:** Shaibu Chitsiku / Street Empowerment Trust

Research Assistants and their groups

Accra

Interviews were facilitated and recorded in Accra, Ghana by Selassy Gbeglo and translated and transcribed by Esther Benyah (some by David Yawson). N.B. Participant names used below are pseudonyms.

- From 12 September 2013 to 31 January 2014 Anantoge was **A-RA1**. She was replaced Constance (relabelled **A-RA7**) from 2 March 2013. Anantoge was sponsored to go to school, returning to Arts Centre only to visit family. She continued to be part of A-RA7's group.
- Josephine fulfilled the role of **A-RA2** for the duration of the project.
- Sarah fulfilled the role of **A-RA3** for the duration of the project.
- Jonathan fulfilled the role of **A-RA4** for the duration of the project.
- Papa fulfilled the role of **A-RA5** for the duration of the project.

- From 8 July 2012 to 17 February 2013 Asher was **A-RA6**. He was replaced 19 March 2013 by Eric, who remained RA for the relabelled **A-RA8** group until the end of the project.
- Constance remained **A-RA7** until the end of the project. Constance sadly died in July 2017.

Bukavu

Congolese naming: Most participants have three names which were often used interchangeably in the data or in reverse order. The country project manager provided two name pseudonyms and these have been used here, with the family name appearing second (rather than first in the francophone style).

PEDER (Programme d'Encadrement des Enfants de la rue/Street Children's Mentoring Programme) is led by Thomas d'Aquin Rubambura, referred to by participants as 'kaka'/brother d'Aquin, who was the GUOTS Project Manager in Bukavu. CTEO is one of PEDER's street outreach centres. Interviews were facilitated by three Facilitators, each looking after two groups. Interviews were chiefly translated and transcribed by Luc Mufano.

- From the 16 May 2013 to 23 July 2014, **B-RA1** was Nicaise Balage. He was replaced due to extensive periods in detention. From 12 January 2015 Abdou Civiri fulfilled the role of B-RA1 for the remainder of the project. The Facilitator was Cold Musiwa.
- From the 16 May to 30 September 2013, **B-RA2** was nominally Gaston Matumwabiri. He was replaced having spent this entire period in detention. From 12 October 2013 Boniem Rukunda fulfilled the role of B-RA2 for the remainder of the project. The Facilitator for this group was Quintinus Muhobekwa. Boniem was murdered in July 2016.
- Didier Limbali fulfilled the role of **B-RA3** for the duration of the project. The Facilitator was Cold Musiwa.
- Baba Mbaluku fulfilled the role of **B-RA4** for the duration of the project. The Facilitator was Joseph Ikosa.
- Ntamu Chamwiti fulfilled the role of **B-RA5** for the duration of the project. The Facilitator was Quintinus Muhobekwa.
- Estelle Françoise fulfilled the role of **B-RA6** for the duration of the project. The Facilitator was Joseph Ikosa.

Harare

Interviews were facilitated by Harare Project Manager Shaibu Chitsiku (hence PMSC); and translated and transcribed by Victor Maunzeni. Please note re pseudonyms: Culturally appropriate naming hopefully used but some typical southern African names have been avoided so as not to be confused with real people.

- Goodwill Chipuriro fulfilled the role of **H-RA1** for the duration of the project. There is overlap between the membership of H-RA1 and H-RA5's participant network.
- From 26 September 2012 to 19 December 2012 **H-RA2** was Nhamo Takaza. Dai Lusinga (H-RA4) covered from 3 to 24 April 2013 when Nhamo was absent (in South Africa). Nhamo resumed as H-RA2 from 2 May until 21 August 2013 (except weeks of 1 and 7 August). Dai Lusinga (H-RA4) again covered from 4 September 2013 until 2 April 2014 when Dai became sick. On 14 May 2014 Pesanai Chando H-RA2 and fulfilled the role for the remainder of the project.
- Brighton Chivero was **H-RA3** for the duration of the project.
- Dai Lusinga was **H-RA4** from the start of the project. Dai was badly injured on 3 April 2014; Peace Hobane took over from 12 March 2014 to the end of June 2014. Dai returned to the role on 23 July until his arrest in February 2015; Peace again replaced him as H-RA4 from 25 February 2015 for the remainder of the project.

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- Nixon Tambara fulfilled the role of **H-RA5** from 26 September 2012 to 29 April 2015. Dai Lusinga (H-RA4, relabelled as **H-RA7**) replaced Nixon Tambara from 3 June 2015 for the remainder of the project.
- Taurai Tsoka fulfilled the role of **H-RA6** for the duration of the project.

Outputs

Briefing Papers (in English and French) and the *Knowledge Exchange Training Pack* are available via StreetInvest's website: <https://www.streetinvest.org/resources/growing-streets>. Please pay particular attention to [Briefing Papers 1 and 2](#) about the Research Design and Methodology.

Awards

- January 2017 – Growing up on the Streets won the University's Stephen Fry Public Engagement Project of the Year Award.
- December 2015 – Growing up on the Streets was awarded the 2016 Market Research Society's President's Medal in recognition of its extraordinary contribution to impact.
- **Growing up on the Streets** was chosen as an ESRC Impact Case Study, [Involving street children as field researchers](#).

Funding

Growing up on the Streets was funded by Backstage Trust with additional Knowledge Exchange programme funding in 2015 from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC; grant number ES/M006107/1).

Project Web Addresses and Resources

- **Growing up on the Streets Briefing Papers:** <https://www.streetinvest.org/resources/growing-streets>
- **Growing up on the Streets Knowledge Exchange Training Pack:** <https://doi.org/10.20933/100001150>
- **Growing up on the Streets: A Story Map by Accra's Street Youth** <https://arcg.is/0L8PSm>
- **Growing up on the Streets – Films by Street Youth**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gp7pnGdx2QQ&list=PL8XQ3SHRGcntoKxpqvPCnSdrM8oxrJxYt>

Your responsibilities when using this data set

This data set is now available to all researchers interested in this topic. We ask that you:

- Respect the aims of the project and its founders; which was to change the discourse around street children and youth. Young people living their lives on the street deserve basic human rights, respect, dignity and the right to self-determination;
- Respect the anonymity of the participants and if appropriate the individuals and organisations that work with them. Please do not identify locations unnecessarily or do anything that may bring the participants harm. Thank you.

Contact details

Please contact us if you have any questions or queries about the data set. Growing up on the Streets, Geography, University of Dundee. E: quots@dundee.ac.uk.