



No child forced to live on the street



MAKING THE
INVISIBLE
VISIBLE

An Enumeration of
Children on the
Streets in Malawi

Retrak

Across the world, there are hundreds of thousands of children living on the streets. Every day they suffer hunger, poverty, abuse and violence. Retrak is a charity which reaches out to these vulnerable children to provide them with the food, medicine, clothing, hygiene and shelter which they desperately need. Beyond this, Retrak works hard to tackle the reasons why children end up on the streets - this means helping families to heal rifts, enabling children to complete their education or gain a vocational qualification and providing children and parents with the means to earn a sustainable income. This long-term approach helps to make sure that children never have to go back to living on the street, and it works; to date more than three-quarters of the children helped by Retrak have remained at home with their families.



Chisomo Children's Club

Chisomo Children's Club (CCC) has been working in Malawi since 1998 and has promising practices and approaches in working with street children. CCC is a registered NGO with the Ministry of Justice (2002) and current member of CONGOMA and NGO Board of Malawi. It has had a strong reputation as a vibrant organisation that values child participation and child rights and recognised the value of family re-integration, protecting children in the criminal justice system and the need to reduce the trafficking of children. Recently, CCC with Retrak's assistance, it has re-build the creative and highly regarded work CCC was doing with street children, families and communities.

CCC believes that long-term child development depends on the use of trained professional, a development-related focus, reaching children where they are, individualised attention and tailor made service, children's participation, inclusion of physical and mental care, involving family and community, lobbying and advocacy, integration of services, networking and institutional cooperation.



Foreword

Government of Malawi

The Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare developed a National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets in order to "facilitate the effective coordination and provision of services and interventions which provide a safe and supportive environment for children living and or working on the streets". The aim of the strategy is to guide "various stakeholders on principles and approaches of dealing with children living and working on the streets". The strategy acknowledges the difficulties in approximating the number of children on the streets, due to their "fluid, and unpredictable lifestyle". But it was estimated that about 3,000 children were living on the streets in a Voice of America report from 2000.

One of the recommended actions in the National Strategy for Children Living and Working on the Streets is to "undertake studies to estimate the extent of children living and working on the streets, and provide disaggregated data by geographical areas including districts." The responsibility for the research, the dissemination of the results, and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the services and policy direction and guidance lies with the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare.

The Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare in collaboration with Retrak and Chisomo Children's Club embarked on an enumeration exercise of children living and working on the streets of Blantyre and Lilongwe, with support from HDF in late 2014.



Government of Malawi

This report has revealed the extreme manifestation of deteriorating social capital and social exclusion. While the immediate factors responsible for their condition are unique for each child, they generally represent some combination of low family income, lack of housing, failure in school, family neglect, abuse and epidemics.

The finding of this report will not only help to sustain and expand the existing services but also assist the government, NGOs, FBOs and the private sector to monitor and evaluation the services and interventions, while allowing the building of capacity of the staff and continuously improving their professionalism. The process is a building block for the institutionalization of the data collection to be used for the multi-agency development programming for street children.

I therefore urge every Malawian to play a role on providing the services for street children.

Dr Mary Shawa
Secretary for Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare

This study was undertaken in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, and specifically the Directorate of Children's Services.

This study was made possible through the support of the Human Dignity Foundation, in partnership with Retrak and Chisomo Children's Club.

Human Dignity Foundation

Retrak's pioneering work in the area of counting children living and working on the street will help make these invisible children ... visible again.

We were delighted to support this study on the enumeration of children on the streets in Malawi. Not only does it directly support the Malawi government's Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets, but it also brings together other like-minded services and organisations in a collaborative way so that going forward, they can plan together and have an even stronger impact for helping these children and their families. We hope that this additional evidence will help focus where energies must be channelled so that the push factors and root causes of poverty and deprivation for these children can be tackled, and further enhance Malawi's ability to achieve the current development goals.

Mary Healey

CEO Human Dignity Foundation



Acknowledgements

This study was led by Maggie Crewes (Retrak), Charles Gwengwe (Chisomo Children's Club), David Whitford (consultant with Retrak) and Joanna Wakia (Retrak). We are particularly indebted to David who builds on his experience with the US Census Bureau and volunteered much of his time to provide guidance on the methodology and undertake the data processing. This report was written by Joanna Wakia.

The following organisations contributed to this study through their participation in planning and reviewing meetings and contributing their staff's time for data collection and entry:

- Blantyre City Council
- Children of the Nation
- Chisomo Children's Club
- Department of Social Welfare
- Every Child
- Federation for Disability Organisations of Malawi (FEDOMA)
- God Cares Malawi
- Lilongwe Christian Centre
- Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA)
- Malawi Judiciary
- Onesimus
- Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM)
- Retrak
- Step Kids Awareness (STEKA)
- Student Volunteers
- The Samaritan Trust
- Theatre for a Change
- Tikondane Youth Care
- Youthcare Ministries



Contents

	PAGE NO.		PAGE NO.
Acknowledgements	5	4. Implications for policy & practice	50
Executive summary	8	4.1. Children working on the streets	50
1. Introduction	14	4.2. Children living on the streets	52
1.1. Problem statement	14	4.3. Gender considerations	55
1.2. Goal and key problems	15	5. Conclusion	58
1.3. Literature review	15	6. Recommendations	59
2. Methodology	20	6.1. Malawi strategy and interventions	59
2.1. Preparation	20	6.2. Further research	63
2.2. Ethics and child protection	22	7. Annexes	64
2.3. Definition and survey interview tool	23	7.1. Annex 1: Risk analysis	64
2.4. Data collection	25	7.2. Annex 2: Interview form for count 1	65
2.5. Data processing	26	7.3. Annex 3: Interview form for count 2	67
2.6. Estimation	28	7.4. Data flow diagram	70
2.7. Analysis	29		
2.8. Limitations	29		
3. Findings	30		
3.1. Street population estimate and characteristics	30		
3.2. Street and work life	34		
3.3. Variation between children living and children working on the streets	38		
3.4. Gender focus	43		

Executive summary

There is a global lack of reliable evidence available to inform policy and practice aimed at assisting children on the streets and their families and communities, especially in determining the number of children on the streets. It is recognised that enumerating children on the streets is complex: due to lack of agreement on definitions and partly due to the highly mobile nature of children’s involvement on the streets. Retrak examined approaches to estimating populations of children connected to the streets and recommended the use of the capture/recapture approach: a methodology suitable for populations where a complete census will be difficult. It is this approach which this study builds upon within the Malawian context.

Although some qualitative studies have been undertaken recently looking at the experiences of children on the streets in Malawi (EveryChild Malawi, 2012 and Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2012), there is still a lack of clarity of their numbers and characteristics. A new National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets recommends undertaking further studies to understand the number of children on the streets.

Methodology

This study uses a capture/recapture method as it is suitable for populations where a complete census will be difficult due to their mobile, hidden or hard to reach nature, and because it provides an estimation of the total population, with a measure of accuracy. Capture/recapture requires two counts from which the two sets of respondents are then compared or matched to establish the overlap. This comparison allows an estimate of the total population by establishing the number of people who were missed

in the first count and adding in this undercount. Planning, definitions and data collection were agreed upon and undertaken in collaboration with the government and other local stakeholders. In both Lilongwe and Blantyre, interviews on the streets were carried out over 2 days by teams of experienced and trained enumerators with any child who was observed to be working, sleeping or hanging out on the streets. The interview process was repeated over another 2 days with different teams going to different locations. Data entry, cleaning and matching was undertaken leading to an estimate for the total street population for each city and further analysis of children’s characteristics. The study was guided by an approved ethical strategy.

Findings

Population estimate and characteristics

This study estimates the number of children, aged 7-15 years, living and working on the streets in Lilongwe to be 2,389 and in Blantyre to be 1,776, this is based on children reporting or being observed to sleep or work on the streets or other public locations. This is less than 0.5% of the children aged 7-15 years in each city according to the 2008 census. In both locations close to 1 in 5 children living and working on the streets is a girl. This is in line with other recent studies which found the percentage of girls to be between 7% and 20%.

Over 50% of children living and working on the streets of Lilongwe and Blantyre are 10 to 13 years old, with another 25% who are 14 or 15 years old, and less than 20% are 7 to 9 years old. When compared to national census results it is clear that 10-14 year olds are

over-represented on the streets. The ethnicity of children on the streets is largely similar to the distribution of ethnicities reported in the most recent census. The vast majority of children on the streets in both locations come from homes within the district, 87% in Lilongwe and 82% in Blantyre.

Very few children have a visible disability, only 1% in Lilongwe and 2% in Blantyre, but slightly more were observed to be accompanying an adult with a disability, usually for the purposes of begging: 2% in Lilongwe and 5% in Blantyre.

Street and work life

Only 9% of children on the streets in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre reported sleeping on the streets or in other outdoor/public locations. Based on our estimate for each location, this is just over 200 children in each city. Around two-thirds of children on the streets return to their parents’ home to sleep, and an additional 16% in Lilongwe and 13% in Blantyre return to another relative’s home. This is a similar finding to other recent studies in Malawi, which had estimates ranging from 72% to 93% of children living with parents or other relatives.

Roughly a third of children in both towns are involved in each of scavenging, selling goods, and begging. A smaller proportion of children carry loads. These are the same types of work reported in other studies. Observation revealed only a very small percentage to be involved in commercial sex work: 3% in Lilongwe and 1% in Blantyre, with a further 9% and 4% possibly involved for each location respectively.

Over 60% of children are living and working on the streets every day, with around 35% engaging on an irregular basis. Despite so many children being daily involved on the streets many are combining school and work, with over one-third of children still attending school on a daily basis, and a further 26% in Lilongwe

and 20% in Blantyre attending irregularly. However, 30% in Lilongwe and 35% in Blantyre have completely dropped out of school. This is much higher than the national average for primary school aged children to be out of school which is 11%.

Variation between children living and children working on the streets

A slightly higher proportion of children who live on the streets (sleeping and working on the streets) are male and over 14 years old. Most have limited contact with their families, even though they may be close by, and they have less access to and are further behind in their education. Children living on the streets are more likely to be involved in begging and sex work.

The vast majority of children on the streets are working during the day and returning home at night. They are therefore likely to see their parents every day, and 40% of these children are still attending school every day. Around 60% of children who work on the streets are doing so on a daily basis, whilst others come to the streets more irregularly.

Gender focus

This study found 1 in 5 children on the streets is a girl, in line with other national and global research. It was found that girls are less likely to sleep on the streets and more likely to be living with relatives (not their parents) when compared to boys.

Boys are more likely to engage in scavenging and carrying loads, whilst girls are more likely to be involved in selling goods and begging. Both boys and girls are reported to be involved in sex work. Although more girls were found to be engaged in sex work in Lilongwe, this is likely to be due to one agency’s ability to negotiate access to the girls places of work. Boys are further behind in their education.

Implications for policy and practice

Key implications of these findings include:

- Focus on strengthening families in the informal urban settlements through a combination of livelihoods support and wider family strengthening initiatives such as family therapy and parenting skills
- Greater community-level awareness raising events, through existing structures including schools, on issues related to:
 - Child labour in order to improve sensitisation, monitoring and referral and working conditions,
 - Child protection and parenting skills,
 - Gender norms;
- Sensitive outreach activities with a focus on relationship building, especially to identify children who are new to the streets;
- Coordination of transition centres, focusing on children living on the streets, to provide temporary shelter to children who choose to access it;
- Reintegration and alternative care options for children in centres, with extensive follow-up and family strengthening support; these will largely be in the urban informal settlements and so can be linked to initiatives to prevent child labour and separation;
- Specific initiatives to target children in commercial sex work, both boys and girls.

These specific interventions need to be supported by wider initiatives to improve the quality and capacity of the education sector, so that hidden and opportunity costs are removed and education is more widely valued.

Recommendations

Malawi strategy and interventions

The new National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets provides a solid foundation on which to build appropriate and necessary intervention. The strategy highlights the need to have a rights-based and multi-sectoral approach, and to ensure that a national approach is followed through with local implementation and backed up by adequate resources.

The findings of this study highlight the need to:

Focus on child labour and family strengthening in urban settings. Most children on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre are working during the day and returning to family within the city or the surrounding district. Therefore interventions need to focus on dealing with issues of child labour and providing economic and family strengthening within the urban informal settlements. Child labour initiatives should combine family level support and wider community awareness to reduce the incidence of child labour, and efforts to improve conditions of child work. Economic and family strengthening should include livelihoods support and initiatives such as parenting skills training, alongside family therapy for the most fragile families.

Improve outreach and avoid unnecessary family separation and criminalisation. Since most children on the streets remain in daily contact with their family it is important to avoid unnecessary separation. Mass round-ups and arrests of children on the street should be discouraged, as this leads to children being separated from their families and being stigmatised as criminals. Instead, there is need for a greater emphasis on street outreach to build positive, trusting relationships with children, alongside a greater level of diversion from the courts, in order to help children access further services and for their families to receive appropriate support.

Ensure services are individualised. The diversity of children's experiences on the streets requires multidisciplinary expertise to be invested in assessing the individual situation of each child so that a tailor-made child care plan can be developed. Programmes should build on each child's skills, resilience and socio-cultural assets, to help build their self-esteem and ease their transition of the streets and into family or community life.

Build capacity for reintegration and alternative care with local follow-up support. Alternative care guidelines for Malawi should be developed immediately, followed by capacity building of agencies to deliver quality and coordinated services, especially by local government. Provision for adequate, tailor-made follow-up and monitoring is essential to ensure that families receive support and that children are protected. Follow-up support could be linked to family strengthening interventions in the urban, informal settlements to reduce duplication of efforts.

Increase specific support for children involved in sex work and those affected by disability. Children involved in commercial sex work, both boys and girls, need to be reached through specialised outreach activities, transitional care, reintegration and alternative care options. Families are likely to need additional support and supervision. Children who are disabled and those who are caring for disabled adults also need additional support to enable them to return to or remain in their families or to access suitable alternative care.

Ensure national coordination and monitoring of all activities which benefit children on the streets. Formation of a national network of stakeholders involved with children on the streets and their families should aim to ensure all service providers are working together, to map services and identify any gaps, to share experiences and to plan for national advocacy activities. A forum should also be created to facilitate

sharing, coordination and monitoring across different government ministries and the judiciary.

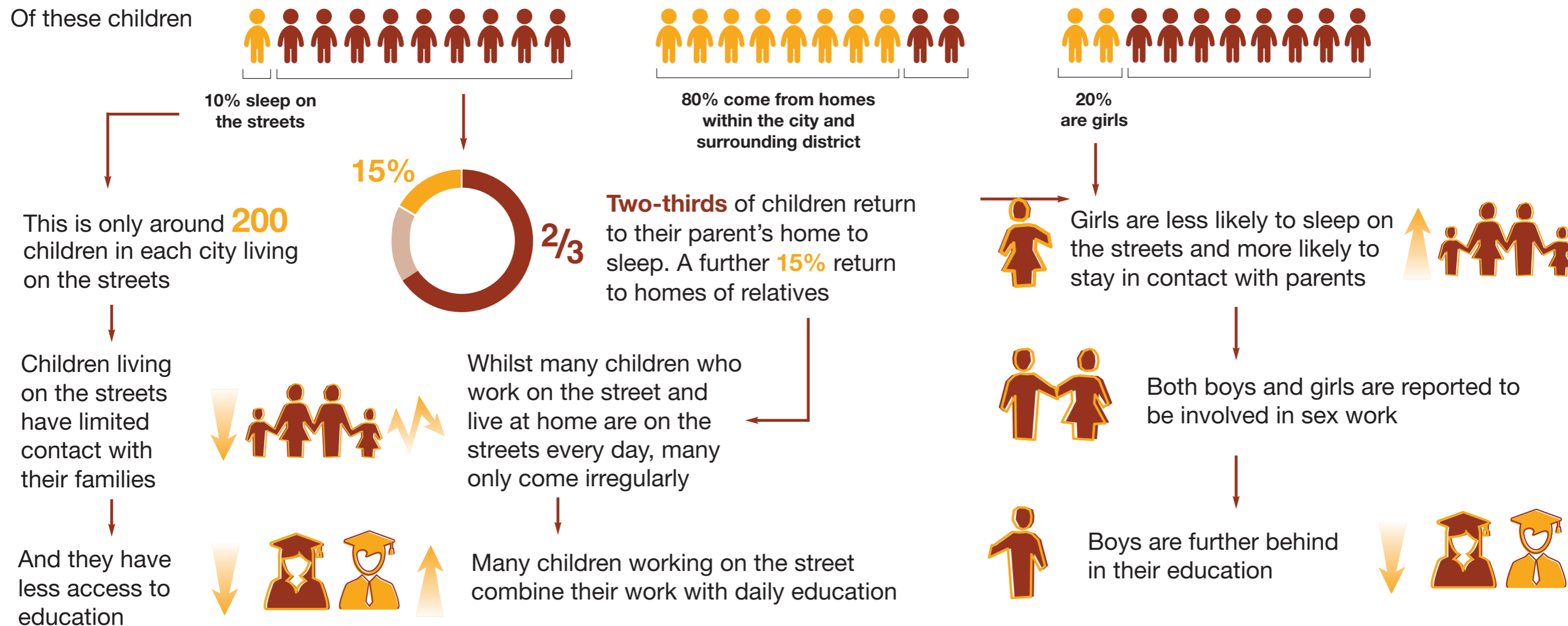
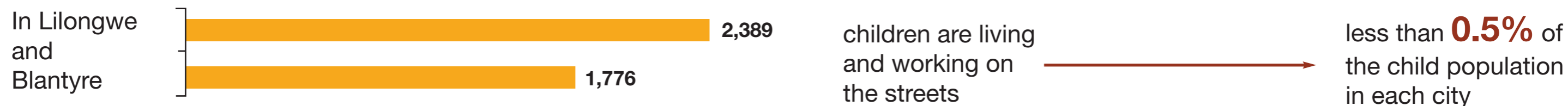
Advocate for and pursue alignment of national policy and legislation. To ensure that children are given the chance to move away from the streets through their own choice and in a way that is suitable to their needs, changes to the law should be made to decriminalise street activities and ensure children are not taken into custody and separated from family unnecessarily. This includes ending all street round-ups and building capacity of police and juvenile justice actors. In addition, national guidelines should be developed to guide the implementation of alternative care options, along with minimum standards to ensure necessary and appropriate care. Finally, the Malawian government must work towards improvements in education quality and a reduction in hidden costs associated with primary education in order to reach universal primary education and reduce child labour. Civil society has a role to play in advocating for these changes to policy and legislation.

Further research

This study has shown how the capture/recapture approach can be used to estimate populations of children living and working on the streets. Further studies and discussion of these results are needed to build the understanding of limitations and child protection concerns and of what adaptations are needed for different contexts.

Further research should build on this study and similar ones, to track impact on policy and practice and to build an understanding of the economic and social costs of children living and working on the streets.

Our enumeration study revealed that



We therefore recommend

- Focusing on reducing child labour and strengthening families in urban settings
- Improving outreach and avoiding unnecessary family separation and criminalisation
- Ensuring services are individualised
- Building capacity for reintegration and alternative care with local follow-up support
- Increasing specific support for children involved in sex work and those affected by disability
- Ensuring national coordination and monitoring of all activities which benefit children on the streets
- Advocating for and pursuing alignment of national policy and legislation

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

There is a global lack of reliable evidence available to inform policy and practice aimed at assisting children on the streets and their families and communities, especially in determining the number of children on the streets. The often cited estimate of 100 million street children has been questioned and recent research concludes that this estimate has “no basis in fact, and we are no closer today to knowing how many children worldwide are working and/or living in the streets”¹. It has been suggested that such large “guesstimates” may have elicited support but have also led to large-scale and sometimes repressive responses by governments². The result has been that children on the streets are often villainised, denied their rights and further marginalised.

It is recognised that enumerating children on the streets is complex: partly due to lack of agreement on the definition of who should be counted and partly due to highly mobile nature of children’s involvement on the streets. Children move around on the streets for family and work reasons and to avoid contact with governments and NGOs. They are often hidden away and are likely to be distrustful of adults, especially if they are unknown and do not approach them with respect and understanding. Despite these challenges there is interest in establishing more reliable methodologies in order to produce estimates which can be used to inform policy and practice³.

Retrak’s paper “Enumerating street children” examined approaches to estimating populations of children connected to the streets and recommended the use of the capture/recapture approach⁴. The capture/recapture methodology is suitable for populations where a complete census will be difficult due to their mobile, hidden or hard to reach nature. It provides an estimation of the total population, with a measure of accuracy. It is this approach which this study builds upon within the Malawian context.



No recent surveys or censuses have been carried out in Malawi to establish the numbers of children living and/or working on the streets. Some qualitative studies have been undertaken recently looking at the experiences of children on the streets (EveryChild Malawi, 2012 and Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2012). However there is still a lack of clarity of their numbers and characteristics. Some NGOs suggest there could be anything up to 10,000 children living and working on the streets, especially when considering children from informal urban settings. Without an accurate understanding of the numbers of children and their migrations and levels of involvement on the street it is difficult to ensure that governmental and non-governmental interventions are correctly targeted and achieving their aims to improve the lives of these vulnerable children. A better understanding of the number of children on the streets would allow further research into the impact and cost effectiveness of interventions, and what the economic costs of inaction are. Given the government’s current work on a strategy for street children it is important that the strategy and subsequent monitoring is well-informed.

1.2 Goal and key questions

The goal of this project is to provide an estimate of the number and characteristics of children living and working on the streets in Blantyre and Lilongwe, in order to provide insights for the government strategy on street children, as well as the work of Chisomo Children’s Club and other NGOs working with children on the streets.

It also provides an opportunity for Retrak to pilot its proposed capture/recapture methodology in order to make a judgement on its suitability for use with street populations, to refine the process and to make recommendations for future use by Retrak and other agencies around the world.

In order for the results to be of use to the government and other stakeholders in Malawi the following questions will be addressed:

1. How many street-connected children are there in Lilongwe and in Blantyre?

- a. How many children in total in each location?
- b. How many children broken down by:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Home location
 - Activity on street
 - Length and frequency of time on street
 - Ethnicity
 - Disability
 - Education

1.3 Literature review

Three recent surveys of street children were identified by stakeholders in Malawi, as well as a draft of the Ministry’s National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets⁵. These were reviewed to help gain an understanding of what definitions and numbers already exist and what the broader evidence is in relation to children on the streets in Malawi.

The Ministry has developed a draft National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets in order to “facilitate effective coordination and implementation of all interventions aimed at providing a safe and supportive environment for children living and or working in the streets. It is also aimed at guiding various stakeholders on principals and approaches of dealing with children living and working in the streets.”⁶ The strategy acknowledges the difficulties in measuring the number of children on the streets, due to their “fluid, and unpredictable lifestyle”. But it is mentioned that it was estimated that about 3,000 children were living on the streets in a Voice of America report from 2000. However a copy of this report has not been found so it is not possible to verify the source of this number. One of the recommended actions in the strategy is to “Undertake studies to measure the extent of children living on the streets, and provide disaggregated data by geographical areas including districts.” The responsibility for this kind of research and the dissemination of the results, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation of services and policy, lies with the Ministry⁷. Nowhere in the strategy is a definition given of who a street child is, but throughout the strategy the main phrase used is “children living and working on the streets”.

The strategy presents the findings of other studies on street children in Malawi and the current policy in place to support work with these children⁸, and highlights current government programmes which attempt to respond to the situation of children on the

¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) (2012) Protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street, UNOHCHR, Geneva

² ibid

³ For instance, as part of the US Government’s Action Plan on Children in Adversity guidelines have recently been published on undertaking such a national survey and are currently being piloted: Stark, L, BL Rubenstein, K Muldoon and L Roberts (2014) Guidelines for implementing a national

strategy to determine the magnitude and distribution of children outside of family care, Washington DC, Center for Excellence on Children in Adversity

⁴ Whitford, D & J Wakia (2014) Enumerating street children, Manchester, Retrak

⁵ Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MGCSW) (2014), *National strategy for children living and working in the streets “Home for every child project”*; EveryChild Malawi (2012) Situation analysis for children living on the streets of Lilongwe city; Malawi Human Rights Commission (2012)

Violence against Children Living and/or Working on the Streets in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda & Zimbabwe: Malawi country report; God Cares Orphan Care (2012), *Survey Street Children Mzuzu: July/August 2012: Report*

⁶ MGCSW (2014) op cit

⁷ Ibid, p18-19

⁸ This includes the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as Malawi’s constitution, Child Care, Protection and Justice Act and National Policy on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children.



streets⁹, although none of these programmes are targeted based on vulnerability to family separation. In 2007 the Ministry did establish a Social Rehabilitation Centre to provide psychosocial support, education and training, and reintegration support for children on the streets. But it is acknowledged that this initiative and those of NGOs are only implemented on a small scale. The strategy recognises the need for a more coordinated response and more efficient use of resources. It proposes four strategies: prevention, early intervention, protection and reintegration, which will be coordinated the Child Development Technical Working Group.

A study by EveryChild Malawi¹⁰ aims to inform the inclusion of children living on the streets in their strategic plan for 2012-2015, by generating information on the context, situation and perspective of children on the streets. Information was gathered from a survey with 137 children living on the streets in Lilongwe and from key informant interviews and focus group discussions with children on the streets, family and community members, and NGO and government officials. Whilst the report discusses the conflicting definitions of street children, at no point does the

survey state clearly what the operational definition is for the survey. The term “children living on the streets” is widely used, yet the survey includes many children who are living with their families.

Whilst the EveryChild study is not based on a representative sample, it does provide insights into the situation of children on the streets. The findings reveal that 93% of children surveyed are male and 76% are between 7 and 14 years of age. In line with other studies, the main push factors are related to poverty (such as employment and dropping out of school) and family breakdown (such as separation of parents and abuse). Over a third of the children surveyed were living with one or both parents and another third with other relatives. The children were involved in a variety of income-generating activities on the streets such as collecting items to sell, carrying loads, touting, begging and stealing. The study recommends: child empowerment initiatives, family strengthening interventions, rehabilitation services and reintegration based on individual assessments to avoid returns to the street, and a clearer coordination mechanism.

⁹ These include family strengthening through the Social Support Project (now phased out); National HIV and AIDS Response which includes psychosocial support and economic strengthening to children and families; a Social Cash Transfer Scheme targeting the ultra poor (with limited coverage); and the Public Works Programme and a Farm Input Subsidy Programme.

¹⁰ EveryChild Malawi (2012) op cit



The second study was undertaken by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) as part of a study on Violence against Children Living and/or Working on the Streets in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe¹¹. The aim of these studies is to provide recommendations to guide policy makers and practitioners on how to enhance child protection and reduce violence within families. The Malawi study gathered information through a survey with 647 children (from 21 districts) and focus group discussions with and case studies of children, as well as key informant interviews with other stakeholders. The report states clearly that it is using the term “street connected children”¹² but does not say how this is operationalised. Therefore it is not clear how children were selected to participate. It is noted that it was difficult to find female street children to participate.

Like the EveryChild study, the MHRC study also found boys to be in the majority on the streets, 88%, with an average age of 14 years. It was also found that most children slept at home, 83%, and of these 50% are staying with their parents or other relatives. Reported types of work for children on the streets included: selling items, ferrying luggage and begging. Factors that push children to the streets include poverty or a desire to support family (56% for boys and 68% for girls) as well as violence, neglect and family breakdown. The study recommends that more is done to meet the needs of children on the streets through policy development, enforcement and resourcing and more effective programming on rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as on community sensitisation and education.

The final study¹³ was undertaken in Mzuzu, Malawi’s third largest town and the capital of the northern region¹⁴, by God Cares, an NGO working in that location to provide support to OVC. The NGO undertook the survey to inform their work with children in Mzuzu and its localities, through learning about their problems and what they want for their

futures. Children, aged 4-18 years, were identified by market committees and interviewed by trained youth volunteers over a 4-day period. The inclusion of children in the study was based on the judgement of market committees and not on clear criteria.

The results of the survey reveal, in line with the other studies, that most children on the streets in Mzuzu are boys (80%), aged 12-16 years and are living with one or both parents (54%) or other relatives (39%). The main ways to earn money are through piecework, selling in the market, begging and assisting in a family business. The study recommends that the NGO should focus on children who are newest on the streets and get them back into school by strengthening their families’ income.



¹¹ Malawi Human Rights Commission (2012) op cit
¹² “The study uses the definition of the term ‘street connected children’ as defined by Thomas de Benitez and Hiddleston (2011) and Meincke (2011), to define children living and/ or working on the

street. The term ‘street connected children’ refers to ‘children, for whom the street has become a central reference point, playing a significant role in their everyday lives and identities.’” p2

¹³ God Cares Orphan Care (2012) op cit

¹⁴ Mzuzu is a small town compared to Lilongwe and Blantyre, with a population roughly a quarter of the size.



From this literature it was clear that there is a reasonable understanding of children’s experiences on the streets and the need to provide more and better coordinated services to meet their needs. There is also a consensus that there are many children who work on the streets but return home to families, often their parents, and a smaller number who sleep on the streets. All the studies concluded that the majority of children on the streets are boys and explored the type of work children are involved in.

None of the studies provide a clear definition of who a street child is. The term “children living and working on the streets” was widely used, sometimes interchangeably with other terms. Agreeing on a

definition of who to include in a study or policy is essential to ensure consistency across all participants or beneficiaries. Although there is little clarity in the previous studies and the policy, there was a clear focus on where children sleep and what work they do, indicating an interest in both children who live on the streets and those who come to the streets during the day to work. This focus links to ongoing debates internationally around definitions of street children, which often cite UNICEF’s terminology: children of the streets, referring to those who live on the streets, and children on the streets, referring to those who work on the streets during the day and return home to families at night.

It was noted in some of the studies that even though Malawi has ratified both the CRC and ACRWC, which give the age of a child as under 18 years, in the Malawi Constitution and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act children are given to be persons under the age of 16. The latter defines these persons to be the responsibility of parents. A child is considered to be in need of care and protection if they are, or are at risk of being, abused, neglected or abandoned. This includes children who are “allowed to be on a street, premises or any place for the purpose of begging or receiving alms...[or] carrying out illegal ... activities detrimental to the health and welfare or retard the educational advancement of the child” (section 23, 1, k). When a child is considered to be in need of care and protection then any person “may take the child and place him/her into his/her temporary custody or a place of safety” (section 24). This conflict in the age of a child under Malawian law and the international conventions Malawi has ratified brings confusion as to which age of person should be considered a child. A clear age range is also important for undertaking an enumeration, or applying a policy, to ensure ease of implementation. Definitions for this study are discussed further in the following section on the methodology.

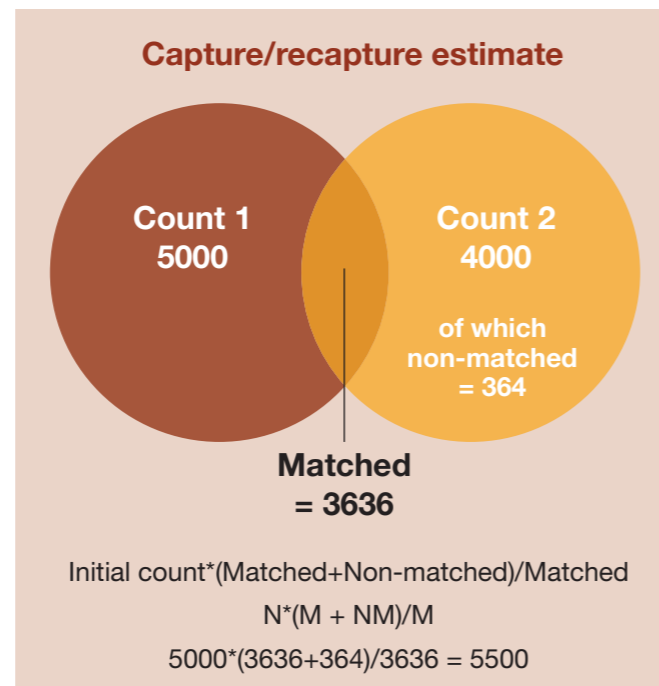


2. Methodology

This study uses a capture/recapture method, building on Retrak’s proposed methodology in the paper “Enumerating Street Children”¹⁵. This methodology was chosen because it is suitable for populations where a complete census will be difficult due to their mobile, hidden or hard to reach nature, and because it provides an estimation of the total population, with a measure of accuracy.

Capture/recapture requires two counts from which the two sets of respondents are then compared or matched to establish the overlap. This comparison allows an estimate of the total population by establishing the number of people who were missed in the first count and adding in this undercount. This is done by taking the ratio of the matched (M) plus non-matched (NM) respondents divided by the number of matched respondents (M) and multiplying by the net number of respondents in the initial count (N). This “dual system estimate” of the population can be expressed as $N*(M + NM)/M$.

The capture/recapture methodology has previously been used with children on the streets of Ghana, Mali, Brazil, Egypt and Senegal¹⁶. These studies highlighted some challenges relating to access to children on the streets, gaining children’s trust in order to obtain correct information, ensuring independence between counts and clearly outlining the methodology followed. Ways to mitigate these issues have been incorporated into the design of this study, this includes: a full day’s training for enumerators on street outreach approaches, engagement of local stakeholders with knowledge of the streets at every stage of the study, and a specific focus on finding harder to reach groups such as girls involved in sex work. These will be discussed in more details in the following sections.



2.1 Preparation

2.1.1 Stakeholder meetings

In the planning stages of this study Retrak and Chisomo Children’s Club staff met regularly with key stakeholders to gain their support and benefit from their understanding of the situation. The Head of Children’s Services, in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, in particular, was very supportive.

In early November 2014, stakeholder meetings were convened in both Lilongwe and Blantyre. These meetings included government officials, representatives from the police and those working with street children through government centres and NGOs. The meetings provided a forum to explain the proposed capture-recapture methodology and roles for different stakeholders, as well as informing the implementation through creating a space for discussions of:

- criteria for including children in the survey;
- potential challenges and risks and how to address them; and
- known locations where children work, sleep or congregate.

The meetings went well and generated a lot of discussion.

On the topic of which children to include there was a desire to include all ages, although ethical concerns were raised around interviewing children under 12 years. This is often set as the lower age limit for research for ethical reasons, although from a child rights perspective “there is no lower age limit at which CYP [children and young people] can participate in research, assuming the methodology is appropriate to the age group in question”¹⁷. The upper age limit was also discussed as the Malawi constitution and Child Care, Protection and Justice Act defines a child as below 16 years¹⁸, counter to the international definition of below 18 years¹⁹. It was suggested that older youth could help identify children’s location. In addition it was highlighted that it was important to include children who spend their whole life on the street, as well as those who return home, often to informal urban areas around the cities. These children are known in Malawi as “commuters”. Other groups of children who were recommended to be targeted were those who beg, often with a disabled adult or child and those selling items in the street.

The risks which were discussed are presented in Annex 1 (page 62), along with further risk assessments undertaken during the training workshop with enumerators.

The stakeholder suggested that the survey cover locations such as markets, bus terminals, bars, dump sites, petrol/filling stations, road junctions with traffic

lights / robots, video show rooms, rest houses/ restaurants, under bridges and abandoned buildings. Specific locations were initially mapped by Chisomo Children’s Club and other NGOs working on the streets and then presented at the stakeholders meetings. These maps were generally agreed to and some additions or clarifications made. These maps were further discussed in the training workshop with enumerators.

2.1.2 Recruiting enumerators

As recommended in Retrak’s “Enumerating Street Children” paper, it is good practice to ensure that those undertaking the enumeration “have a good understanding of street child culture and locations [and] the right skills and attitudes to build rapport with vulnerable children”²⁰. Therefore, during the stakeholder meetings both governmental agencies and NGOs working with children on the streets in Blantyre and Lilongwe were requested to volunteer their staff to be enumerators. Enumerators needed to have experience of working with children, preferably on the streets, as well as being having good interpersonal and communication skills. 25 enumerators were recruited for each location and during the training workshops 5 of these were identified to be supervisors, based on their high level of experience of street outreach work. It was agreed with the enumerators’ agencies that their time was an in-kind contribution from their agency towards the study. All their costs were covered (food, transport and phone credit) and they received a small gift at the end of the survey.

¹⁵ Whitford, D & J Wakia (2014) op cit

¹⁶ Hatloy, A & A Huser (2005) *Identification of street children: characteristics of street children in Bamako and Accra*. Fafo-report 474, Oslo: Fafo; Gurgel, RQ, JDC da Fonseca, D Neyra-Castañeda,

GV Gill, LE Cuevas (2004) ‘Capture-recapture to estimate the number of street children in a city in Brazil’, *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 89, pp222-224; Guarcello, L & N Koseleci (2009) A profile of Cairo Street Children, Understanding

Children’s Work (UCW) Programme Working Paper Series November 2009, Rome, UCW; Koseleci, N, FC Rosati & M Tovo (undated, c2006) *Measuring the worst forms of child labour: the case of begging children in Dakar*

¹⁷ Shaw, C, L-M Brady and C Davey (2011) *Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People*, London, National Children’s Bureau Research Centre, p17; see also Lansdown, G (2001) Promoting children’s participation in democratic decision-making, Innocenti Insight, Florence, UNICEF, p2

¹⁸ Republic of Malawi (Constitution) Act, (6 July 1994), para 23:5; Parliament of Malawi, *Child Care, Protection and Justice Act*, Act No 22 of 2010 (30 July 2010), para 2

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Resolution 44/25 (20 November 1989) New York, United Nations

²⁰ Whitford, D & J Wakia (2014), op cit

2.1.3 Training

The training was designed by the survey leadership team, based in part of Retrak’s Outreach Standard Operating Procedures²¹ and building on the team’s experience in leading similar training on surveys, research methods and child protection.

The objective of the training was to ensure that every person involved in gathering, checking and entering data as part of the study had the skills, knowledge and attitudes to undertake their tasks in a way that is child sensitive, safe, ethical, appropriate and accurate. The workshop covered the methodology, principles of outreach work, risks, child protection and ethics, interview tool and interview locations. It was designed to be participatory and build on the enumerators’ own experiences in working with children.

There were 26 participants in the training workshops in Lilongwe and 25 in Blantyre, only one person in Lilongwe did not go on to participate in the survey interviews.

The end of workshop evaluation revealed that 79% of participants in Lilongwe and 83% in Blantyre felt well equipped to undertake their role in the survey²² They also highlighted that the most useful parts of the training were the methodology (19 mentions), outreach principles and how to work with children on the streets (13 mentions) and the participatory nature of the workshop (12 mentions).



2.1.4 Risk assessment

Risks to the survey were identified during the stakeholder meetings and the enumerator training workshops, they are shown in annex 1 along with the agreed response from the survey leadership team, based on suggestions from stakeholders and enumerators. All the risks were addressed through ethics, safety and child protection procedures which the enumerators received training on, or are dealt with in the capture-recapture methodology.

2.2 Ethics & child protection

The survey leadership team developed an ethical strategy for the survey, based on strategies used by Retrak in past research projects. The purpose of the strategy was to outline the planned response to ethical issues that may be faced during the course of the survey. It included the process for assessing risks (as shown above), the need to identify a Child Protection Coordinator and the process for dealing with children who may become distressed or who are identified as being in immediate danger. The strategy also establishes the importance of and process for establishing informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Finally it requires that the survey findings are shared in appropriate ways with all stakeholders, including children, in order for their feedback to be received and considered.

Consent was obtained verbally, after an explanation of the study’s goals and use of findings, as well as a guarantee of anonymity and that participation or non-participation would not affect future access to rewards or services (see annex 2 and 3 for interview guide).

The safety and respect of children participating in the survey was established through ensuring enumerators were already experienced in working with children and received training in outreach techniques, child protection and the interview tool including obtaining

²¹ Retrak (forthcoming) *Retrak Standard Operating Procedures: Outreach*, Manchester, Retrak
²² Participants scoring a 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all and 5 = completely, in response to the question “Overall, how well equipped do you feel to undertake your role in the survey?”



informed consent. They were also made, aware of safety and referral protocols and signed a commitment to the child protection code of conduct. The interviews were undertaken individually, but groups of enumerators always remained within sight of each other and under the guidance of a supervisor. Every group of enumerators included a female enumerator, in order to ensure that any girl was interviewed by a woman.

With the Ministry’s permission it was decided that the survey would include children between the ages of 7 and 15 years, as they were considered able to safely participate in the interviews given the above safety, ethics and child protection procedures.

2.3 Definition & survey interview tool

Building on the findings of the literature review (see section 1.3) and based on discussions with local stakeholders, the definition of this study was agreed to be:

- Any child reporting to be sleeping or working on the streets;
- Any child observed to be sleeping or working on the streets;
- Between the ages of 7 and 15 years.

Sleeping on the streets was taken to include any public location such as on verandas, in markets and in work locations such as bars or restaurants. Work on the streets included any economic activity undertaken in public locations such as begging, carrying loads, scavenging and selling goods or hawking.

Enumerators were instructed to approach and, after obtaining consent, interview any children they observed to be working, preparing to sleep, or hanging out in a street or public location. Inclusion of



responses during data processing. Children whose data did not meet the definition criteria would not be included in further processing.

The interview tool was designed to fit the definition and methodology and to be able to answer key questions about children’s involvement on the streets. The first part contained demographic information, to be used for matching children and allowing analysis by characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and home location. The second part contained questions about the child’s life on the streets and engagement with family and school (see annex 2 and 3).

The interview tool was initially piloted with a small number of children with Chisomo Children’s Club centres, and then, after adjustment, again with a small number of children in a street situation.

The interview form was translated and back translated into Chichewa. It was available to the enumerators in English or Chichewa, depending on their preference.

2.4 Data collection

Data collection took place between 26th and 29th November 2014 in Lilongwe and between 3rd and 6th December 2014 in Blantyre. In each location data collection was preceded by two days of training for the enumerators. The interviews were carried out over two days for count one and followed immediately by another two days of interviews for count two. The counts included a Friday, to include children who beg outside mosques, and Saturdays, to include children particularly involved in activities around the markets on busy days.

To maintain the independence of the two counts, different teams went to different locations in each count. Most locations were covered during the day and early evening (between 9am and 7pm) in order to be able to connect with children who are working and sleeping on the streets (dusk is around 5pm in Malawi so work activities finish and children return to sleeping areas earlier than might be expected in other locations). A few areas known to be places where children sleep or engage in commercial sex work were visited in the later evenings, until 9 or 10pm, as this is known to be when the children are more visible.

Supervisors monitored their groups' progress and did repeat interviews on the first day in order to ensure data collected was valid. These repeat interviews did not show any problems.

At the end of each day the teams were debriefed covering general feedback, issues related to the interviews and any child protection concerns. These debrief sessions created an opportunity to share experiences and learning, provide encouragement and make clarifications on the interview forms. These clarifications were only minor issues related to ensuring all questions were correctly answered. During these sessions the supervisors also made final



checks of the interview forms and submitted them to the survey leadership team.

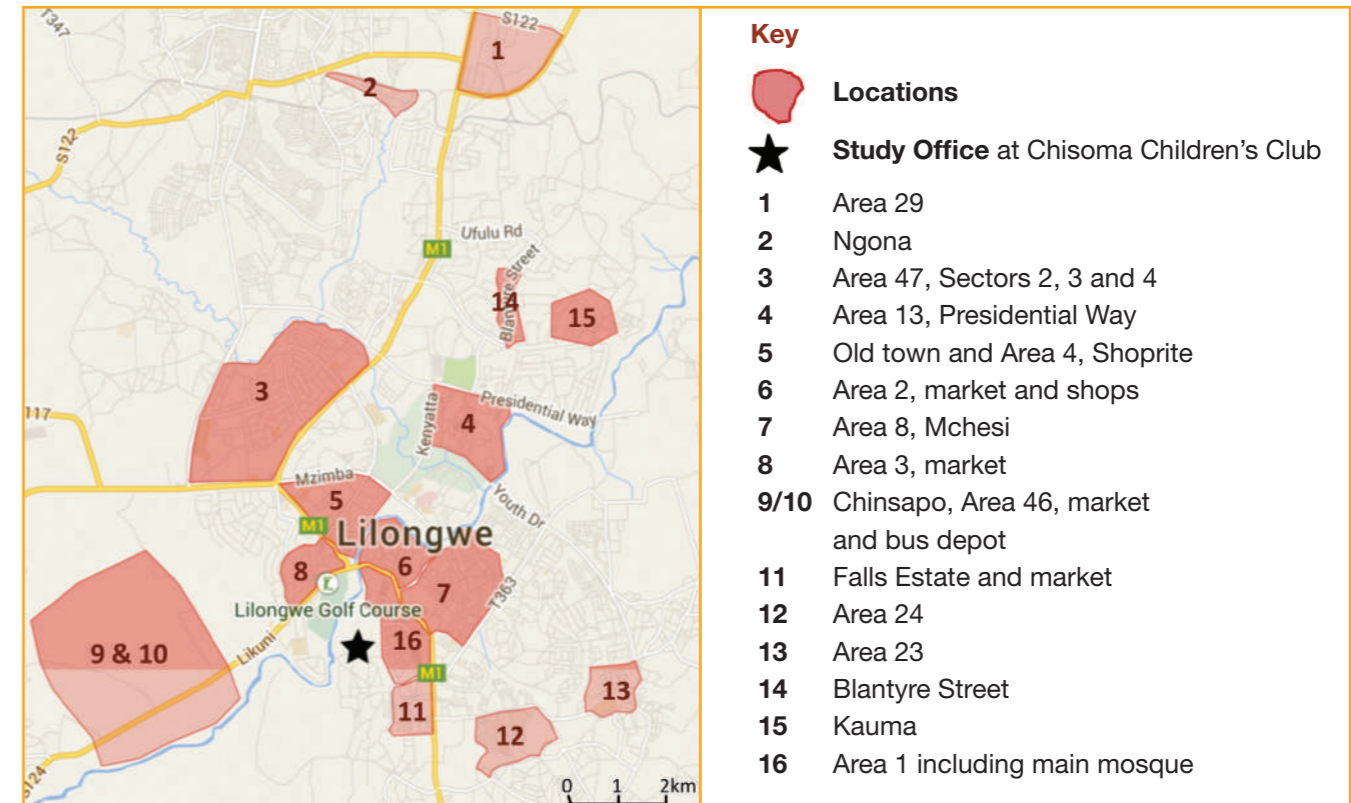
In Lilongwe, very few child protection issues were reported. A few children deemed to be highly at risk were referred for further services at one of the participating NGOs. In Blantyre, no major child protection issues were reported. One child who had only been on the streets for 3 days was very distressed and was brought to Chisomo Children's Club to be assisted, and another child who was suffering following sickness was also brought to the centre and later collected by his mother who had been searching for him. In a couple of isolated situations some issues with uncooperative gang leaders and adults were met but either the survey was explained and problems overcome, or the enumerators recorded these few children through observation only (these children would not be included in the match due to limited information but their details are included in the overall analysis).

2.4.1 Lilongwe interview teams and locations

In Lilongwe the enumerators went out in five teams of five people, covering 16 different areas as shown in figure 1²³. In count one locations 1 to 14 were covered, during count two an additional location was added (location 16) as it was noted that children would likely come to beg outside the main mosque on a Friday.

²³ Locations 9 and 10 were combined as it is one large informal settlement

Figure 1: Map of locations covered in Lilongwe



2.4.2 Blantyre interview teams and locations

In Blantyre, as with Lilongwe, the enumerators went out in five teams of five people, covering 14 different areas²⁴ as shown in figure 2. In count one all locations were covered, during count two area 12 was not revisited because no children were found in this location during count one, this area was specifically targeted as it was believed to be a place where girls were engaged in prostitution. Some locations were covered by more than one team, such as Limbe Market (location 8), as it was a large busy area with many children and around the Mosque on Friday (location 4) when many children come to beg. In these cases the location was clearly subdivided to avoid duplication.

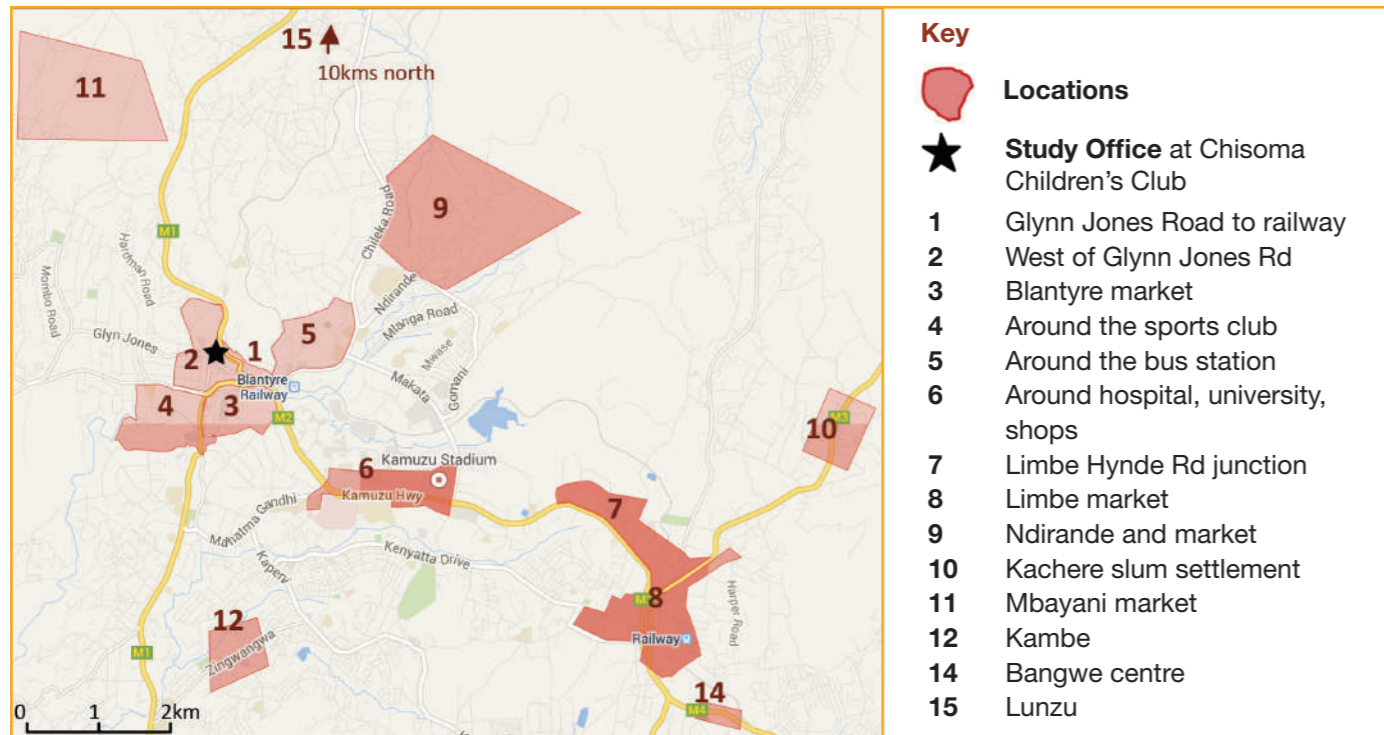
2.4.3 End of survey feedback

At the end of the final day of interviews, the enumerators were asked to complete a feedback form, asking five simple questions:

- What surprised you most over the last 4 days?
- What new thing have you learnt about the children on the streets?
- What was the child's story that had the biggest impact on you?
- What would you like to do differently in your work as a result of your experiences over the last 4 days?
- What suggestions or comments do you have about the logistics and organisation of the last 4 days?

²⁴ It should be noted that no area was allocated the number 13, there are 14 areas in total.

Figure 2: Map of locations covered in Blantyre



The aim of these questions was to document the perspective of the enumerators on their findings and the impact on their work going forward. The latter was included since it was clear from the debrief sessions that the enumeration experience was challenging and changing people’s perspectives and attitudes.

The themes from the feedback were mapped out revealing some interesting learning. For example, enumerators reported that there were large numbers of children, not always in the locations they expected and many with high levels of need. They also reported being surprised that most children had families they return home to and that so many were keen to go back to school. In addition, most enumerators reported that the experience had impacted their attitudes towards the children, for example in seeing them as welcoming and helpful (this contrasted starkly to input during the training where the attributes of street children were mainly listed as negative by participants). Many people

also stated that they felt more motivated to undertake street outreach and engage further with children on the streets. It is clear that participating in this study was helpful in educating and motivating those working in the sector in Malawi which has potential to bring long-term benefits.

2.5 Data processing

2.5.1 Keying, quality control, record identification and data cleaning

In each location, data entry started on the second day of the count and was completed within a few days of the end of the count. Volunteers from the participating NGOs worked together at the Chisomo Children’s Club offices. They were orientated to the survey method, data collection form and the data entry template in Excel before starting. It was made clear that they should enter the data exactly as it appeared

making any judgement on the validity of the responses. All keyers (six at most) worked in the same room thus affording the opportunity for their supervisor to discuss with them at any time all problems that arose.

Data from each form were entered each day into each keyer’s Excel spreadsheet. Each column’s entries contained responses from a single form, which included all necessary identifying information for that interview. The Excel form was collected from each keyer at the end of the workday and stored locally and backed-up. Each keyer began a new file at the outset of the next day.

For the five or six keyers working in the same room at the same times, quality control of their work was handled on an informal but systematic basis. Supervisors would review the keyers’ work. If errors were found, they were usually handled through talking about them to the whole group. Sometimes a conversation with an individual keyer was in order.

After each of the two counts for a city was keyed, the data were combined into a single file. At this point for the sake of replicability, each record/interview was given an individual record number regardless of the city or whether it was in the first or second enumeration. Finally, for the sake of version control, files were dated within their filename, and a log kept of changes to any file or new files and their predecessors.

The data were then cleaned by removing unallowable data responses. For instance, interviewers sometimes added additional information to a multiple-choice only question. For example a response to question 23: “Do you come in the day time only, or do you spend your nights here too?”, which had possible answers as “1) Only daytime, 2) Day and night time, 3) Only night time”, could include additional text such as “comes every morning” which needs to be removed or

recoded to one of the expected responses. Responses to a few open ended questions which were recorded in Chichewa were translated into English.

2.5.2 Identifying and unduplicating children captured more than once

At this point we began the task of determining whether respondents met our predetermined definition of a child living and working on the streets. The first subtask was to eliminate duplicate children from within our data for each of the four counts. A package in the R programming language was used, called Record Linkage²⁵. It is mathematically-based and emanated from work done at Statistics Canada and the US Census Bureau. Responses that were excised from the datasets were kept in a separate file. 12 children were excluded as duplicates from each city’s data (see flow diagram in annex 4).

2.5.3 Determining eligibility

Since, as planned, all children who were observed to be working or living on the street were interviewed, a set of criteria to determine whether each respondent met the definition was developed based on the agreed definition (see section 2.3). The inclusion criteria were:

- Consented to participate
- Within age range (7-15 years)
- Reported sleeping or working on the streets (questions 23 and 25)
- Observed sleeping or working on the streets (questions 8 and 30)

²⁵ R is a widely used, open source software, freely available to download. Some expertise in this software is needed, especially to use the Record Linkage package.

These were applied during computer processing. The results were the four datasets used to estimate a city's street population.

At this point it was helpful to examine these semi-final data to aid the development of an analysis plan. For each appropriate interview question in each of the four datasets a frequency distribution was tallied. Examination led to some unexpected and interesting results that were incorporated into the analysis plans.

2.6 Estimation

2.6.1 Matching for capture/recapture population estimation

The capture/recapture methodology used to estimate the total population in each city necessitated that the two counts from each city be matched to determine how many children were counted in both counts. The aforementioned Record Linkage package of programmes was applied to the data. It considers all of the input from each child (using a subset of all the data gathered in the interview) and compares it to every child's data in the other enumeration. Then it computes a measure of how well the data match for each pair of children.

Data from pairs of children from the largest of these matching measures (above 0.8 match), arranged in decreasing order, were subjected to professional review from which those that actually match were determined. The key to this review is that the list of pairs of possible matching children is ordered by the measure of the degree to which they match.

2.6.2 Producing population estimates

The estimation formula, $N*(M + NM)/M$, as outlined in section 2, was then applied to each city's enumeration data as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: Estimate calculations

Estimate of street child population calculated as $N*(M + NM)/M$	
Lilongwe calculation $329*(50+313)/50 = 2389$	Blantyre calculation $352*(58+233)/58 = 1776$

The purpose of this estimation is to accommodate a correction for the degree to which the counts missed eligible children. As described above, the counts covered all of the physical areas of a city where children on the streets are known to gather (see section 2.4). The degree of undercounting in our study reflects the fact that enumerators only visited an area for long enough to interview those children present during that short period of time. As discussed later, the results show a great degree of fluidity in children's street connections, with much time also spent at school and home (see section 3.1 and 3.2). The capture/recapture methodology is applicable and widely used in these situations as well as in situations in which a greater proportion of subject respondents were interviewed²⁶.

As with typical censuses of homeless people (eg. the homeless count portion of the US Decennial Census), only areas where the homeless congregate are included in the count. Our enumerations were, likewise, censuses. In the current application, no sample of areas was drawn from a sampling frame; no inferences were made from a sample. Therefore the estimates we have made do not have variance. What they do include is the estimate of error explained above.

2.6.3 Preparing a file of all eligible interviews

After the estimation, all the eligible children's data were compiled into a single file for each city. The resultant file was then used for tabulations that are presented here as percentages of those children interviewed. Therefore, the file does not include the data of one record for each child matched in both counts.

2.7 Analysis

The analysis in this study consists for the most part of calculations of the frequency distributions of all responses to questions of interest and cross-tabulations of all responses to two or more questions. An example of a cross-tabulation is a breakdown by responses to the school attendance question by responses to the age question. These are presented in the findings section below.

2.8 Limitations

The study is the pilot of the methodology proposed in Retrak's paper²⁷. Those involved in leading this study had considerable experience in working with children on the streets and in research and statistical studies, but this was the first study of this kind they had undertaken. Many lessons have been learnt throughout the planning, data collection, analysis and reporting. Mostly these were small adjustments to logistics and ways of collecting or processing data, and have been reported here. Some examples include: ensuring a clear layout of the interview form so that questions are not missed, providing clear instructions and explanations about the interview questions and how to record responses, and keeping track of records which have been excluded due to ineligibility.

The size of the locations and of the street population in Malawi provided a small and simple context for this pilot. Undertaking a similar study in a larger urban area or in places where there are more children living on the streets with a more deeply engrained street culture may well require additional risks to be considered and would certainly need greater resources.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the findings of this study are useful for the practitioners and policy makers in Malawi. The age range for children to be included was set to reflect the law in Malawi and so

only included those up to 15 years old. Therefore those young people aged 16 and 17 who are also living and working on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre were not included. It is important that consideration be given to how these young people can access support.

The mobile and hidden nature of many children's lives on the streets will always be a challenge to studies such as this. The methodology followed here helps to overcome some challenges. However, the nature of girls' lives on the streets makes them particularly difficult to include, especially when they involved in commercial sex work. It is clear from the results of this study that working alongside an NGO, Theatre for a Change, in Lilongwe with specialist knowledge and skills in reaching out to these children enabled a greater coverage of this group. It was also important to build a good understanding of the study amongst those with authority over the girls. This was not possible in Blantyre as no equivalent NGO exists, so it likely the girls were undercounted in Blantyre. This is area for future research and should be considered a priority for service provision.

Another complex part of street life is the seasonal and irregular nature of children's presence on the streets. This study included a variety of days of the week in order to find children who only came on Mosque or market days. However the study was undertaken at only one point in the year, November/December so it is possible that variations throughout the year will have been missed. The children were asked about their length and frequency of involvement on the streets to try and gain some insight into seasonal fluctuations. If resources were available it would be useful to repeat the exercise at another time in the year for comparison.

²⁶ See for example the recent use of capture/recapture to estimate deaths in the Syrian conflict: Price, M, A Gohdes & P Ball (20015) 'Documents of war: Understanding the Syrian conflict', *Significance*, 12, pp14-19

²⁷ Whitford, D & J Wakia (2014) op cit

3. Findings

3.1 Street population estimate and characteristics

3.1 Key findings

- 2,389 children living and working on the streets of Lilongwe and 1,776 in Blantyre
- 1 in 5 children on the streets is a girl
- Most children on the streets are between 10 and 14 years old
- The ethnicity of children on the streets matches that of the general urban populations
- Over 80% of children on the streets come from homes within the same district
- Less than 2% of children on the streets have a disability, but up to 5% are accompanying a disabled adult

Figure 4: Estimate and characteristics

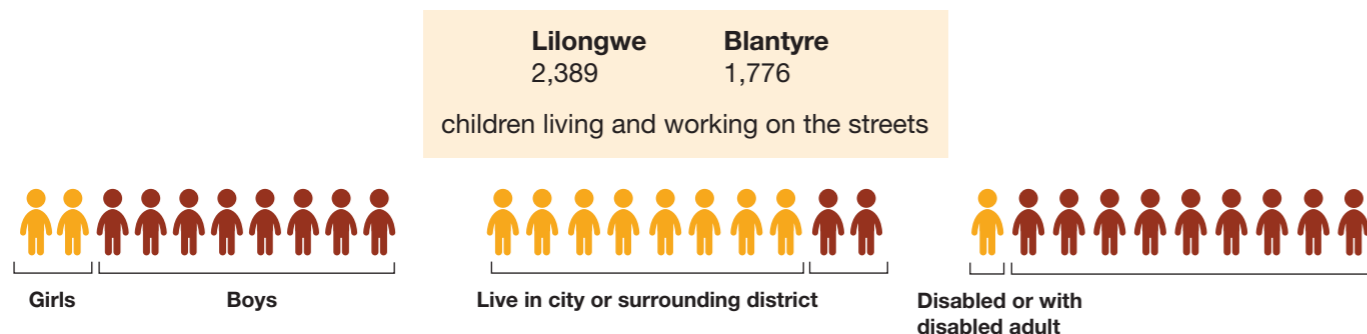


Figure 5: Children ages (7-15 years) and sex

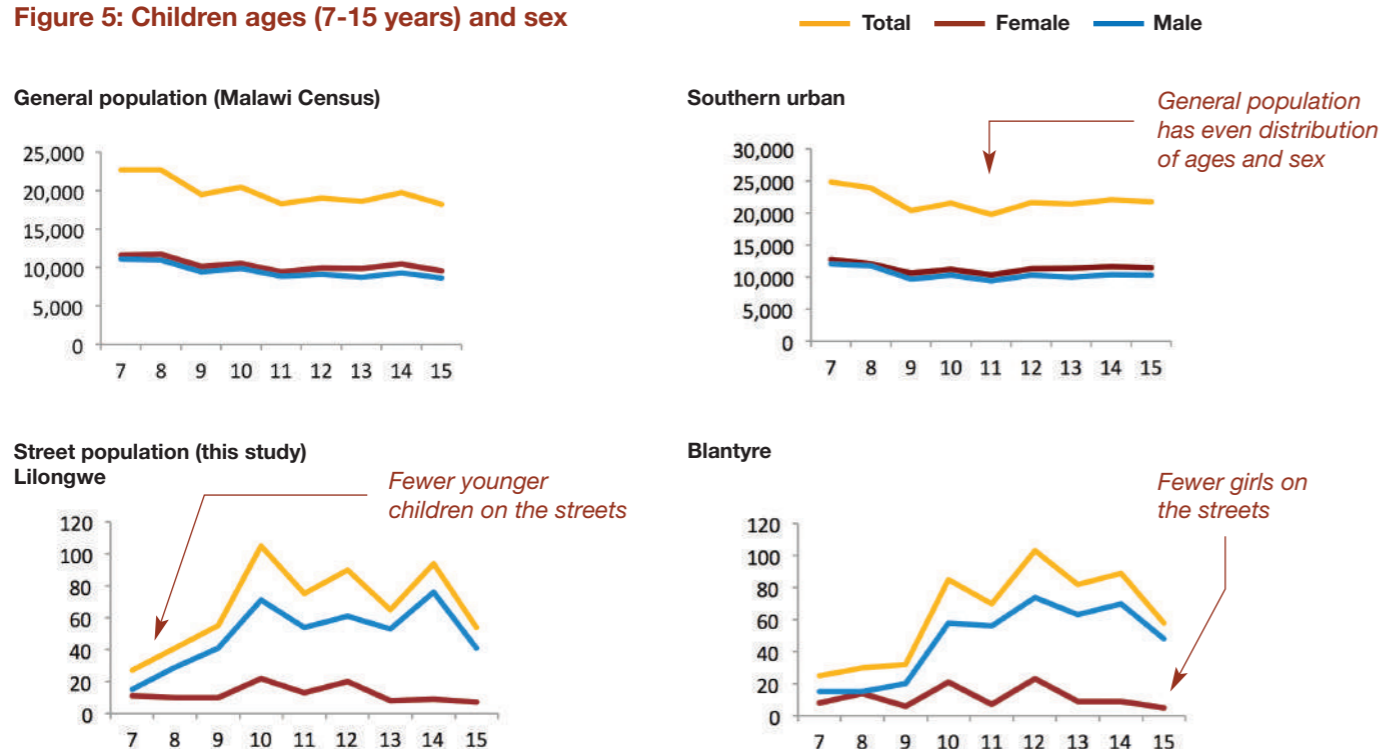
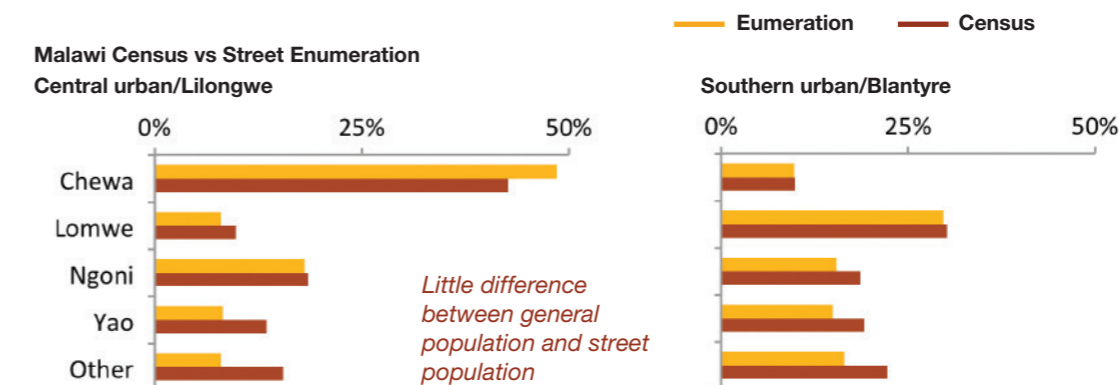


Figure 6: Children's ethnicity



3.1.1 Total estimate

The aim of this study was to provide an estimate of the number of children living and working on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre, in order to inform policy and practice. No reliable estimate has been provided before. Figures for the whole country have been quoted, ranging between 3,000 and 10,000, with little evidence to back them up.

As a result of this enumeration study we estimate the number of children living and working in Lilongwe to be 2,389 and in Blantyre to be 1,776, this is based on children reporting or being observed to sleep or work on the streets or other public locations (see figure 3 and 4).

These estimates of the population of children living and working on the streets are less than 0.5% of the children aged 7-15 years in each city according to the 2008 census²⁸. Children living and working on the streets are a small proportion of the overall child population in Malawi. For comparison, 15% of children under 15 years are orphans and/or vulnerable (based on sickness or death of an adult in the child's household)²⁹. It should be noted that orphan populations, based on census or household surveys, will not include children outside of households, such as children in institutions or those living on the streets.



²⁸ Calculations based on 2008 Malawi census data available at National Statistical Office of Malawi www.nsomalawi.mw

²⁹ National Statistical Office (NSO) & ICF Macro (2011)

Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2010, Zomba, Malawi, & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NSO and ICF Macro

³⁰ Calculations based on 2008 Malawi census data available at National Statistical Office of Malawi www.nsomalawi.mw

3.1.2 Gender

In both locations close to 1 in 5 children living and working on the streets is a girl. Girls are under-represented on the streets. This is in line with other recent studies which found the percentage of girls to be between 7% and 20% (see table 1). This is also

comparable with findings from many other locations around the world. Several studies have found that girls make up 10% to 20% of the street population³¹ (see section 3.4 for further discussion of gender findings).

Table 1: Key results from three qualitative studies and this study³²

Study:	EveryChild Lilongwe	MHRC 21 districts	God Cares Mzuzu	This study Lilongwe & Blantyre
Gender ratio	93 male: 7 female	88 male: 12 female	80 male: 20 female	80 male: 20 female
Average or most prevalent age	76% 7-14 years	Average 14 years	Average 12 years	Over 50% 10-13 yrs
Sleeping at home	37% living with one or both parents and 35% with other relatives	83% sleeping at home, of these 50% with their parents or other	54% living with one or both parents and 39% with other relatives	Over 60% living with parents, and another 13-16% with relatives
Most common type of work	collecting items to sell, carrying loads, touting, begging and stealing	relatives selling items, ferrying luggage and begging	piecework, selling in the market, begging and assisting in a family business	scavenging, selling goods, begging



3.1.3 Age, ethnicity, home location and disability

Over 50% of children living and working on the streets of Lilongwe and Blantyre are 10 to 13 years old, with another 25% being 14 or 15 years old, and less than 20% are 7 to 9 years old³³. When compared to national census results it is clear that 10-14 year olds are over-represented on the streets (see figure 5). It is hard to compare these results with other studies as different age ranges were included and the ages have been grouped differently for analysis (see table 1). However it is clear from all the studies that most children on the streets are of upper primary school age (10-14 years) and above.

The ethnicity of children on the streets is largely similar to the distribution of ethnicities reported in the most recent census (see figure 6). Since most children on the streets are still living at home (see next section) it and would have been included in the census, the correlation in results between this study and the census shows that ethnicity is not a factor in children coming to the streets.

The vast majority of children on the streets in both locations come from homes within the district, 87% in Lilongwe and 82% in Blantyre. The remaining are nearly all from other districts within the same region.

Very few children have a visible disability (as observed by the enumerator), only 1% in Lilongwe and 2% in Blantyre, but slightly more were observed to be accompanying an adult with a disability, usually for the purposes of begging: 2% in Lilongwe and 5% in Blantyre. Such activity is illegal under Malawi's Child Care, Protection and Justice Act.

Table 2: Total estimate and children's characteristics

Characteristics	Lilongwe	Blantyre
Total estimate	2,389	1,776
Gender		
Female	19%	18%
Male	72%	72%
Don't know/missing	9%	10%
Age		
7-9yrs	19%	15%
10-13yrs	52%	58%
14-15yrs	23%	25%
Don't know/missing	6%	2%
Home location		
Within district	87%	82%
Outside district	11%	16%
Don't know/missing	2%	2%
Ethnicity		
Chewa	49%	10%
Lomwe	8%	30%
Ngoni	9%	15%
Yao	18%	15%
Other	8%	17%
Don't know/missing	8%	14%
Disability		
Disabled	1%	2%
With a disabled adult	2%	5%

³¹ Thomas de Benitez, S (2011) *State of the World's Street Children: Research*, London, Consortium for Street Children
³² EveryChild Malawi (2012) op cit, Malawi Human Rights Commission (2012) op cit, God Cares Orphan Care (2012) op cit

³³ This age breakdown was used as it related to school stages: lower primary, upper primary and lower secondary; as well as to the age limit for children's work at 14 years (as stipulated in the National Action Plan on Child Labour)

3.2 Street and work life

3.2 Key findings

- Only 9% of children on the streets in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre are sleeping on the streets
- Two-thirds of children return to their parents' home to sleep, roughly a further 15% return to homes of relatives
- Roughly a third of children are involved in each of scavenging, selling good, and begging
- Over 60% of children are on the streets every day
- Over one-third of children still attend school on a daily basis

Figure 7: Where children sleep

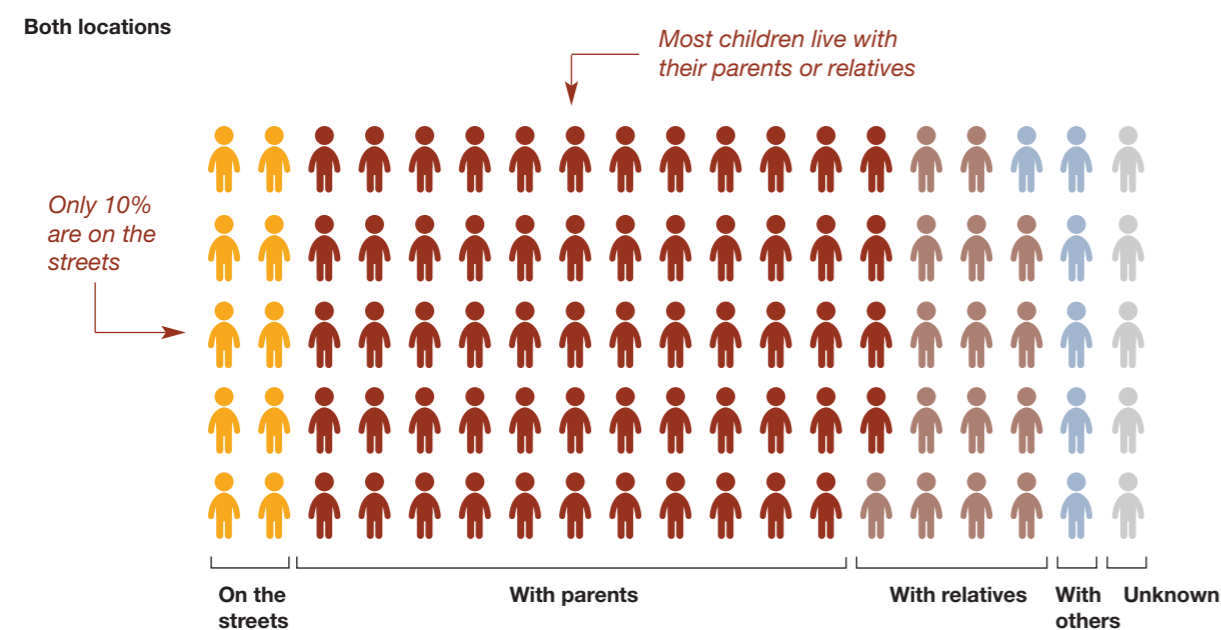


Figure 8: Children's work

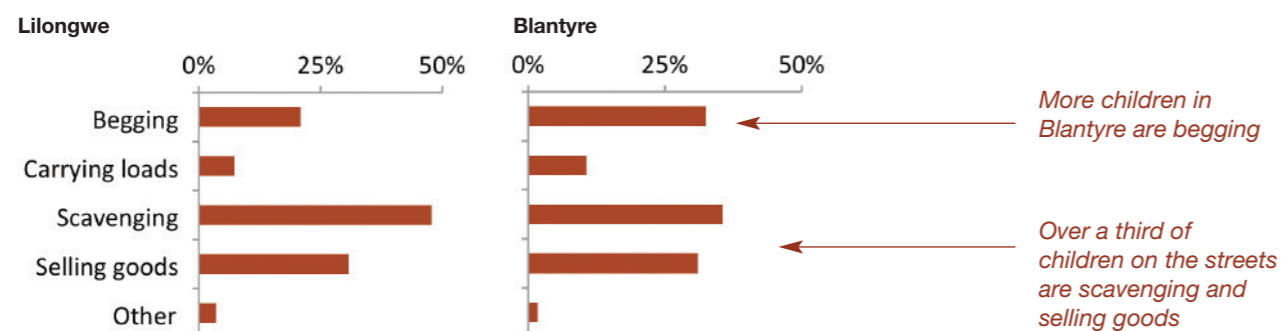
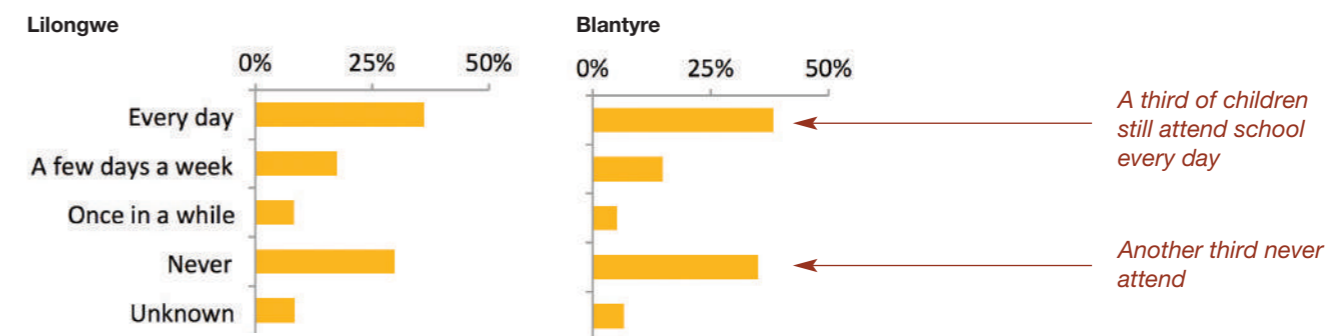


Figure 9: Children's school attendance



3.2.1 Sleeping locations

Only a small minority of children interviewed are actually living on the streets. Only 9% of children on the streets in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre reported sleeping on the streets or in other outdoor/public locations (figure 7). Based on our estimate for each location, this is just over 200 children in each city (217 children for Lilongwe and 213 for Blantyre).

Around two-thirds of children on the streets return to their parents' home to sleep, and an additional 16% in Lilongwe and 13% in Blantyre return to another relative's home (see figure 7 and table 3). This is a similar finding to other recent studies in Malawi, which had estimates ranging from 72% to 93% of children living with parents or other relatives (see table 1)³⁴.

National estimates suggest that close to 20% of children in households do not live with either parent.³⁵ However, this study found that over 30% of children living and working on the streets do not live with their parents.

Other enumerations of children living and working on the streets have found a similarly high proportion of children living with their parents. It is hard to compare results because of variation in definitions and methodologies, however some examples include: in Aracaju, a middle sized town in Brazil, 95% of children on the streets slept at home at least once per week; in Georgia 65% of children on the streets live

with their families; in Cairo, Egypt, 63% of children on the streets sleep at home; and in Delhi, India, 60% of children live with their family in Delhi.

3.2.2 Street work

Roughly a third of children in both towns are involved in each of scavenging, selling goods, and begging. A smaller proportion of children carry loads (figure 8 and table 3). Other types of work reported included working in people's homes, commercial sex work, washing cars/dishes/brushes, peeling potatoes, breaking stones or operating a bicycle taxi. These are the same types of work reported in other studies (see table 1).



³⁴ EveryChild Malawi (2012) op cit, Malawi Human Rights Commission (2012) op cit, God Cares Orphan Care (2012) op cit

³⁵ NSO & ICF Macro (2011) op cit

In line with international guidelines³⁶, it was decided that asking directly about involvement in commercial sex work was not appropriate since the interviews were not being conducted in private, but on the streets. It was also felt that direct questions would not yield accurate results due to the nature of this form of exploitation leading to shame and fear of the law. Instead, enumerators recorded whether they thought the child was/possibly was involved in commercial sex work or not based on their observation of the child's situation or what the child said in response to the general question on work. This revealed only a very small percentage to be involved in commercial sex work: 3% in Lilongwe and 1% in Blantyre, with a further 9% and 4% possibly involved for each location respectively. Given the way this information was obtained it is likely that not all involvement in sex work was accurately gathered. However it is enough to point to children's vulnerability in this area and the need for further research.



16% in Blantyre see their parents infrequently. 9% of children interviewed in Lilongwe and 14% in Blantyre reported never seeing their parents, similar in proportion to children's sleeping away from home. Other studies have shown that even children who live on the streets away from their family remain in contact with them. For instance, a study in Ghana and Mali revealed that 60% of children living on the streets of Bamako had regular contact with their families and that 73% of children living on the streets in Accra had contact in the last year.

3.2.3 Street and family involvement

Children's involvement with the streets, home and school also revealed interesting patterns. Over 60% of children are on the streets every day, with around 35% engaging less frequently on an irregular basis.

Children's length of involvement on the streets varied greatly. 36% in Lilongwe and 40% in Blantyre had been on the streets for less than 6 months and another third for between 6 months and 2 years. Some children had spent a longer time on the streets with 27% in Lilongwe and 22% in Blantyre for more than 2 years, this included a number of children who had been on the streets for 5 or more years or who had been born on the streets (10% in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre).

In line with so many children sleeping at home with their parents, over two-thirds of children see their parents every day. A further 19% in Lilongwe and

3.2.4 School involvement

Despite some many children being daily involved on the streets, over one-third of children still attend school on a daily basis, with a further 26% in Lilongwe and 20% in Blantyre attending irregularly (figure 9 and table 4). Clearly many children are combining school and work. However, of those interviewed for this study 30% in Lilongwe and 35% in Blantyre have completely dropped out of school. This is much higher than the national average for primary school aged children to be out of school which is 11%, rising to 18% for the poorest quintile³⁷.

Using children's reported last completed year of education, it is clear that being involved on the streets is impacting their performance at school. Three-quarters of children living and working on the streets are over-age for their class at school, by an average of 3.2 years. Only 6% are on time for their age at school, this compares to a national average of 13%³⁸.

Table 3: Children's living and working responses

Living and working criteria	Lilongwe	Blantyre
Sleep location		
Streets/veranda/market etc.	9%	12%
Parents' home	65%	63%
Other relative's home	16%	13%
Other location	5%	6%
Don't know/missing	4%	5%
Type of work³⁹		
Selling goods	31%	31%
Carrying loads	7%	11%
Begging	21%	32%
Scavenging	48%	36%
Other	4%	2%
Commercial sex work		
Appearing to be involved	3%	1%
Possibly involved	9%	4%
Not appearing to be involved	72%	84%
Don't know/missing	17%	11%

Table 4: Children's street, family and school involvement responses

Street, family & school criteria	Lilongwe	Blantyre
How often on the streets		
Most days	63%	61%
Once in a while	34%	36%
Don't know/missing	3%	2%
How long on the streets		
Less than 6 months	36%	40%
6 month to 2 years	33%	35%
More than 2 years	27%	22%
Don't know/missing	4%	3%
How often visit parents		
Most days	69%	67%
Once in a while	19%	16%
Never	9%	14%
Don't know/missing	4%	4%
School attendance		
Most days	36%	38%
Once in a while	26%	20%
Never	30%	35%
Don't know/missing	8%	7%
School progression⁴⁰		
Over age	75%	78%
On time	6%	6%
Under age	2%	2%
Don't know/missing	17%	14%

³⁶ For example: Ellsberg M, and L Heise (2005) Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists, Washington DC, World Health Organization, PATH

³⁷ FHI360 Education Policy and Data Center (2014) National Education Profile: 2014 Update, available at www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Malawi.pdf

³⁸ FHI360 Education Policy and Data Center (undated) Core USAID Profile, available at www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Malawi_coreusaid.pdf

³⁹ Children were able to report more than one type of work, therefore the percentages total more than 100%.

⁴⁰ School progression looks at children's age for their class at school, it assumes that children in Malawi start school at 6 years old and progress up a class with additional year of age.

3.3 Variation between children living and children working on the streets

3.3 Key findings

- Only around 200 children are living on the streets away from their families
- A higher proportion of these children who live on the streets are male and over 14 years old
- Most children living on the streets have limited contact with their families, even though they may be close by, and they have less access to and are further behind in their education
- Whilst many children who work on the streets and live at home are on the streets every day, many only come irregularly
- Many children working on the street combine their work with daily education

Figure 10: Children's contact with parents

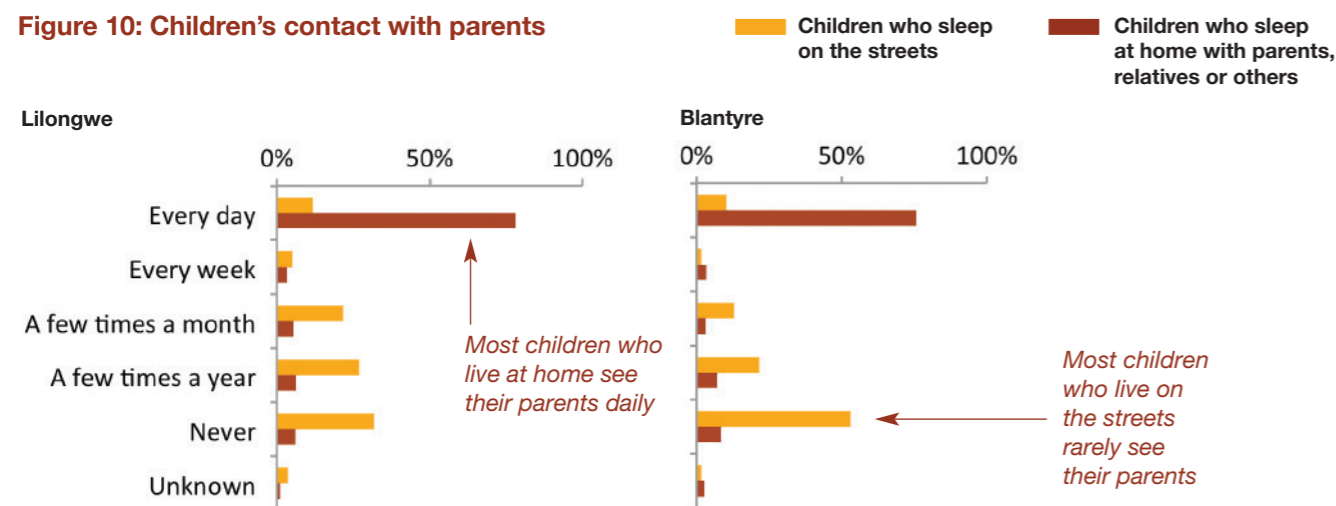
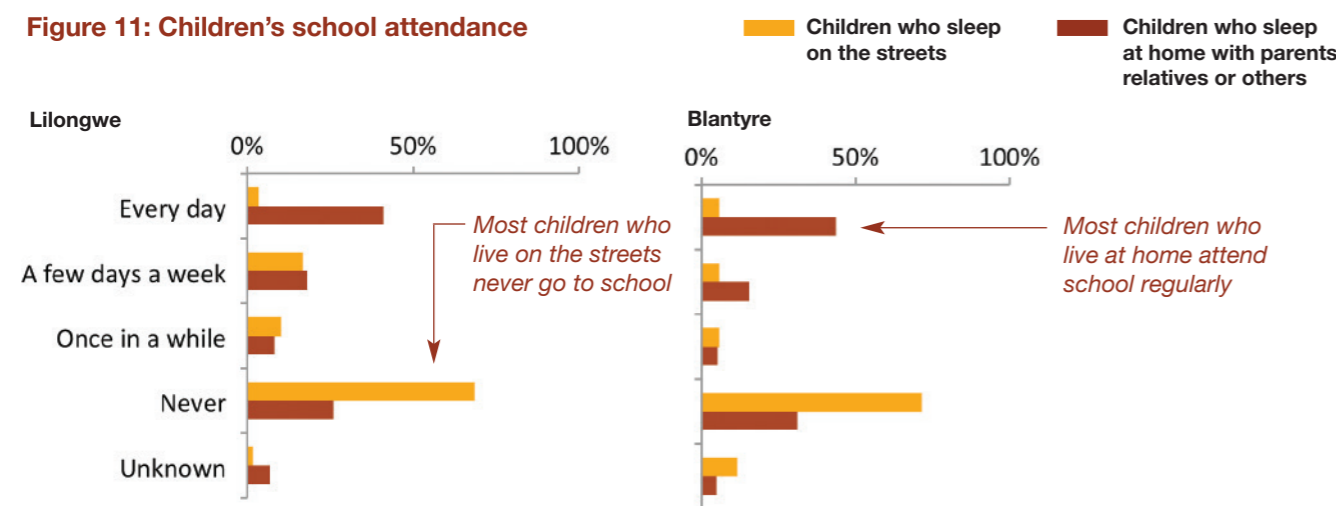


Figure 11: Children's school attendance



In the Malawi Street Child Strategy talks about children who live and work on the streets. Part of the aim of this enumeration was to understand how many children live on the streets and how many come daily to work on the streets but return home, and what differences there may exist between these two groups. In this section we will be talking children who **live** on the streets, these were identified as those children who reported sleeping on the streets or another public location as well as working on the streets during the day. This group will be contrasted with children who **work** on the streets, who are those also reported working on the streets during the day but are returning to sleep in a home.

As shown above, only a small proportion of those interviewed in this study are children who **live** on the streets, 9% in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre, around 200 children in each city. The majority are children who **work** on the streets. A look at the differences between these two groups reveals some interesting results.

A slightly greater proportion of children living on the streets are male and in the oldest age category (14-15yrs). They are also slightly more likely to come from homes beyond Lilongwe or Blantyre district, however the vast majority have family within the district. Children living on the street are more likely to be disabled, however it must be kept in mind that very few disabled children were found (table 5).

There is some variation in the type of work undertaken by each group of children. In Lilongwe a higher proportion of children who **work** on the streets reported engaging in scavenging, a pattern that is slightly less pronounced in Blantyre, where street-working children were more likely to be selling goods. In both locations, a higher proportion of children who **live** on the streets reported begging (table 6). Children living on the streets are more likely to engage in sex

work (when taking both definite and possible involvement together), this was seen more in Lilongwe where it is likely that the involvement of Theatre for a Change in Lilongwe impacted the results. Theatre for a Change is an NGO working directly with girls involved in commercial sex work. Their familiarity with the girls' places of work meant that their enumerators were able to negotiate access and permission to do interviews thereby leading to more girls living on the streets and in engaged in sex work in Lilongwe being included in this enumeration.

Greater variation can be seen between children living and working on the streets when considering children's interaction with the streets, family and school. 90% of children who **live** on the streets in Lilongwe and 86% in Blantyre, are present every day, whilst 61% and 58% of those who **work** on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre come daily (table 7).

There is also a greater proportion of children who **live** on the streets who have been doing so for over 2 years (45% in Lilongwe and 41% in Blantyre), this links to the presence of more older children living on the streets as mentioned above. Most children who **work** on the streets are returning home daily to their parents (69% in Lilongwe and 76% in Blantyre), whilst a third of children who **live** on the streets in Lilongwe and over half in Blantyre never see their parents (figure 10).

Over 40% of children who **work** on the streets in both locations are still able to attend school daily. In contrast around 70% of children who live on the streets have never attended school (figure 11). Consequently, children who **live** on the streets are more disadvantaged in terms of lack of education: they are behind by an average of over 4 years, whilst street-working children are behind by an average of 3 years.

Table 5: Children’s characteristics by living or working status

Characteristics	Lilongwe			Blantyre		
	Live	Work	All children	Live	Work	All children
Gender						
Female	10%	20%	19%	4%	19%	18%
Male	80%	71%	72%	87%	71%	72%
Don't know/missing	10%	9%	9%	9%	10%	10%
Age						
7-9yrs	8%	20%	19%	9%	16%	15%
10-13yrs	45%	53%	52%	57%	59%	58%
14-15yrs	38%	21%	23%	31%	24%	25%
Don't know/missing	8%	6%	6%	3%	1%	2%
Home location						
Within district	82%	89%	87%	64%	84%	82%
Outside district	17%	10%	11%	34%	15%	16%
Don't know/missing	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Disability						
Disabled	3%	1%	1%	6%	1%	2%
With a disabled adult	0%	2%	2%	6%	5%	5%

Table 6: Children’s living and working responses by living or working status

Living and working criteria	Lilongwe			Live	Work	All children
	Live	Work	All children			
Type of work						
Selling goods	24%	28%	31%	13%	30%	31%
Carrying loads	11%	6%	7%	13%	9%	11%
Begging	31%	17%	21%	45%	26%	32%
Scavenging	29%	45%	48%	28%	33%	36%
Other	6%	3%	4%	1%	1%	2%
Commercial sex work						
Appearing to be involved	3%	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Possibly involved	18%	8%	9%	7%	4%	4%
Not appearing to be involved	70%	78%	72%	80%	85%	84%
Don't know/missing	8%	10%	17%	11%	10%	11%



Table 7: Children's street, family and school involvement responses by living or working status

Street, family and school criteria	Lilongwe			Blantyre		
	Live	Work	All children	Live	Work	All children
How often on the streets						
Most days	90%	61%	63%	86%	58%	61%
Once in a while	10%	38%	34%	11%	41%	36%
Don't know/missing	0%	1%	3%	3%	1%	2%
How long on the streets						
Less than 6 months	28%	38%	36%	29%	42%	40%
6 month to 2 years	23%	35%	33%	27%	36%	35%
More than 2 years	45%	26%	27%	41%	20%	22%
Don't know/missing	3%	1%	4%	3%	1%	3%
How often visit parents						
Most days	12%	78%	69%	10%	76%	67%
Once in a while	53%	15%	19%	36%	13%	16%
Never	32%	6%	9%	53%	8%	14%
Don't know/missing	3%	1%	4%	1%	2%	4%
School attendance						
Most days	3%	41%	36%	6%	44%	38%
Once in a while	27%	26%	26%	11%	21%	20%
Never	68%	26%	30%	71%	31%	35%
Don't know/missing	2%	7%	8%	11%	5%	7%
School progression						
Over age	83%	76%	75%	76%	79%	78%
On time	2%	7%	6%	3%	6%	6%
Under age	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Don't know/missing	13%	15%	17%	20%	12%	14%
Average years behind	4.1	3.1	3.2	4.6	3.1	3.3

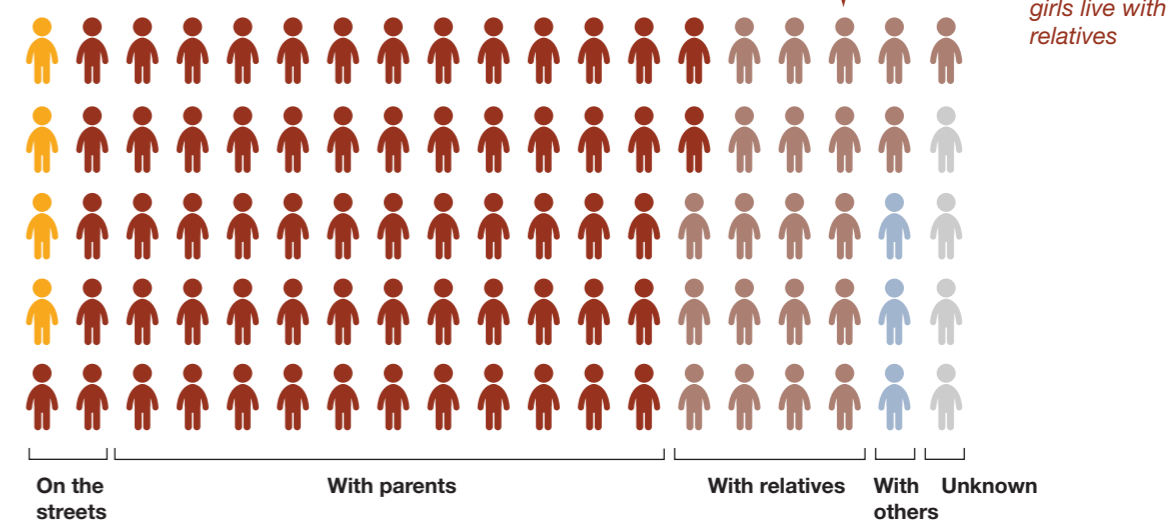
3.4 Gender focus

3.4 Key findings

- 1 in 5 children on the streets are girls
- Girls are less likely to sleep on the streets and more likely to stay in contact with parents
- Boys are more likely to engage in scavenging and carrying loads, whilst girls are more likely to be involved in selling goods and begging
- Both boys and girls are reported to be involved in sex work
- In Blantyre only, girls are more likely to remain in school, but in both locations boys are further behind in their education

Figure 12: Where girls and boys sleep

Girls



Boys

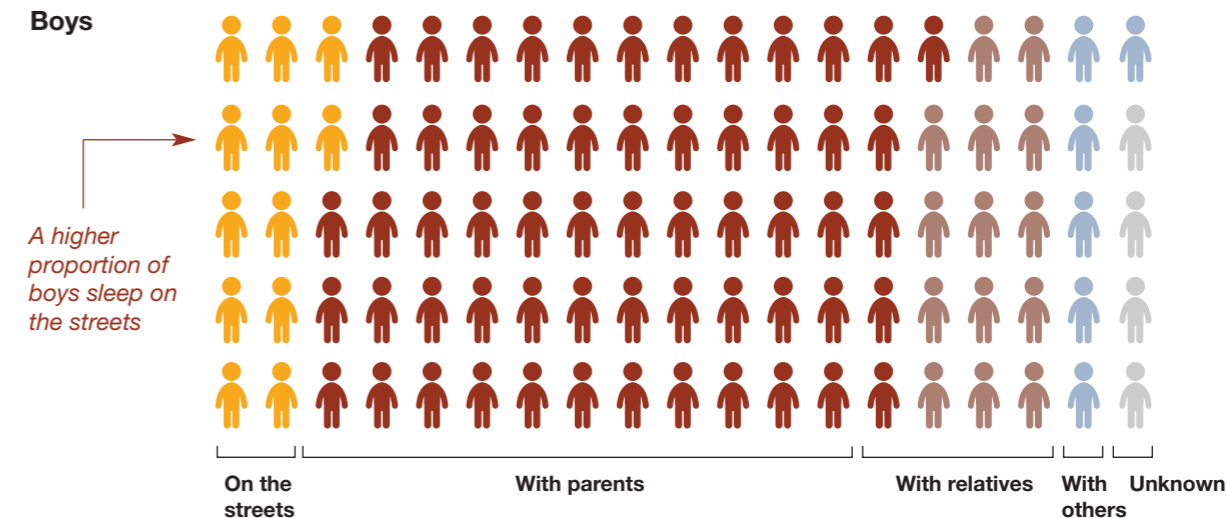


Figure 13: Girls' and boys' contact with parents

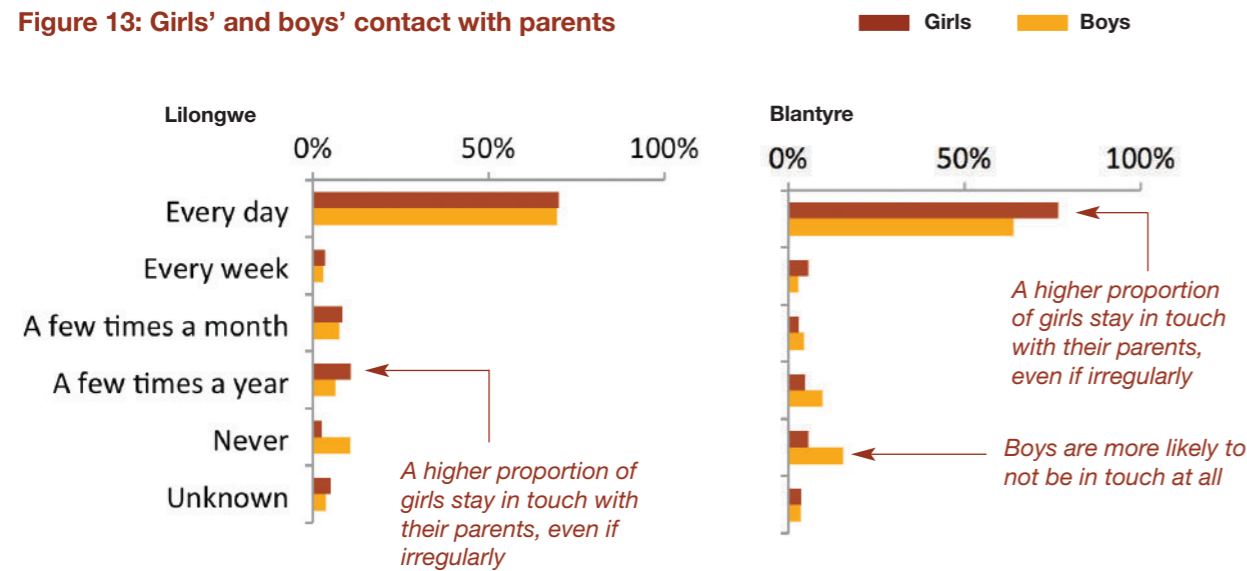
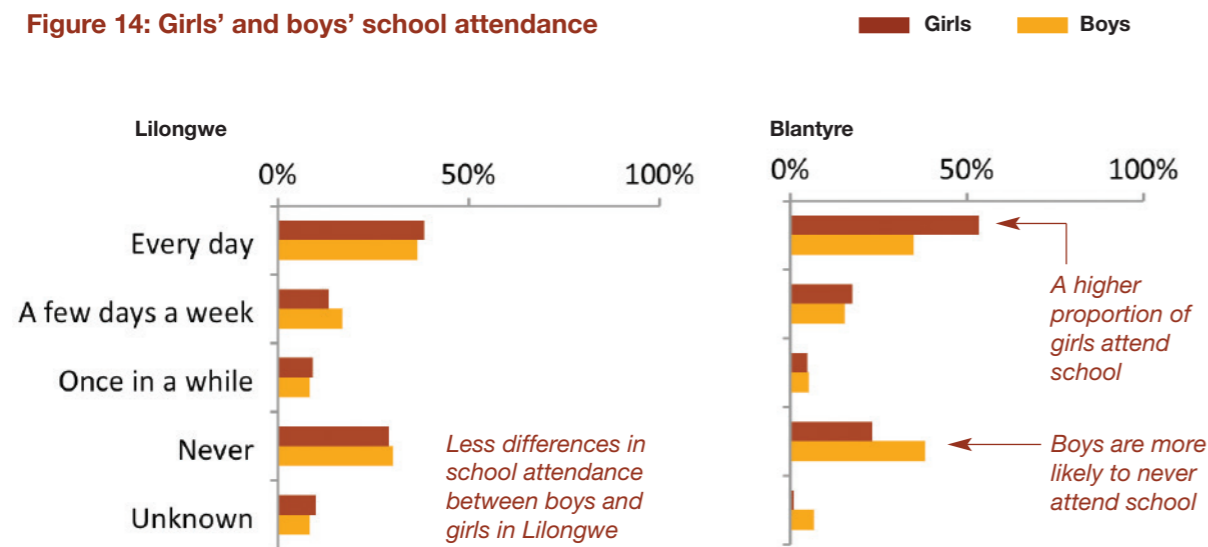


Figure 14: Girls' and boys' school attendance



As highlighted previously, 1 in 5 children on the streets is a girl. Global experience suggests there are more boys on the streets than girls, but it is also acknowledged that girls are often less visible and that their experiences and levels of vulnerability are different from boys⁴¹.

Efforts were made during this enumeration to target areas where girls were known to congregate on the streets and for work. It's possible this was more successful in Lilongwe where Theatre for a Change is specifically targeting girls involved in commercial sex work.

The results from this enumeration revealed little difference in age of boys and girls on the streets. There is a slightly higher proportion of boys in the oldest age category (14 years and above) and a slightly higher proportion of girls in the youngest age category (7-9 years) (see figure 5 and table 8). It appears that girls are more likely to seek or find a way off the streets.

There is no noticeable difference in home location when comparing boys and girls (table 8).

There is a slightly higher proportion of girls accompanying disabled adults, but, as before, this is based on only a small number of children (table 8).

Two-thirds of boys and girls live with their parents whilst working the streets. However, as already noted, a lower proportion of girls live on the streets (5% in Lilongwe and 3% in Blantyre), whilst a slightly higher proportion are living with other relatives especially in Lilongwe (figure 12). Girls are more likely to be involved in domestic work in addition to their work on the streets⁴². It is possible that girls living with relatives may have been placed there as a source of additional domestic labour.

There is a noticeable difference in the types of work by gender. Although both boys and girls reported participating in each type of work, boys in both locations are more likely to engage in scavenging and carrying loads, whilst girls are more likely to be involved in selling goods and begging (table 9).

In Lilongwe, where locations for sex work were specifically targeted, a higher proportion of girls are involved or possibly involved in sex work (21% of girls, 11% of boys), however in Blantyre the proportion of boys and girls involved in sex work is even (6% of girls and 5% of boys) (table 9). It is possible that there are more children involved in sex work in Blantyre but, because of its hidden nature and the lack of organisations specifically targeting them, they were not included in this enumeration.

There is little difference in the frequency and length of boys and girls involvement on the streets (table 10).

However, it is clear from the results that girls are more likely to stay in contact with their parents, only 3% of girls in Lilongwe and 6% in Blantyre reported never seeing their parents, compared to 10% and 16% for boys respectively (figure 13).

In Blantyre girls are also more likely to stay in school with over 50% attending daily. In Lilongwe there is no difference in school attendance between boys and girls (figure 14). However in both locations a higher proportion of boys are over age for their class at school, this is slightly more pronounced in Blantyre (81% over aged for boys, 65% for girls), with boys being on average 3.4 years behind and girls 2.8 years (table 10).

⁴¹ Thomas de Benitez, S (2011) op cit, Haliu, T, J Tusingwire, J Wakiya & P Zacharias (2012) *Retrak research summary: The situation of street girls in Kampala and Addis Ababa*, Manchester, Retrak

⁴² Ministry of Labour (MoL) (2010) National Action Plan on Child Labour For Malawi 2010-2016, MoL, Lilongwe; International Labour Organization (ILO) (2013) Emerging good practices of the ILO-IPEC Project "Support the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labour in Malawi" (SNAP Malawi), ILO, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Lilongwe

Table 8: Children's characteristics by gender

Characteristics	Lilongwe			Blantyre		
	Female	Male	All	Female	Male	All
Age						
7-9yrs	26%	18%	19%	27%	12%	15%
10-13yrs	53%	51%	52%	58%	59%	58%
14-15yrs	13%	25%	23%	14%	28%	25%
Don't know / missing	8%	6%	6%	1%	1%	2%
Home location						
Within district	88%	86%	87%	79%	83%	82%
Outside district	8%	12%	11%	18%	15%	16%
Don't know / missing	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Disability						
Disabled	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
With a disabled adult	5%	2%	2%	11%	3%	5%

Table 9: Children's living and working responses by gender

Living and working criteria	Lilongwe			Blantyre		
	Female	Male	All	Female	Male	All
Sleep location						
Streets/ veranda/ market etc.	5%	10%	9%	3%	14%	12%
Parents' home	65%	66%	65%	71%	62%	63%
Other relative's home	26%	15%	16%	15%	13%	13%
Other location	2%	5%	5%	4%	6%	6%
Don't know / missing	3%	4%	4%	8%	4%	5%
Type of work						
Selling goods	42%	29%	31%	37%	29%	28%
Carrying loads	3%	7%	7%	4%	12%	10%
Begging	27%	18%	21%	40%	31%	29%
Scavenging	33%	51%	48%	25%	38%	32%
Other	5%	3%	4%	0%	2%	2%
Commercial sex work						
Appearing to be involved	10%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Possibly involved	11%	9%	9%	5%	4%	4%
Not appearing to be involved	58%	73%	72%	85%	84%	84%
Don't know / missing	22%	16%	17%	9%	11%	11%

Table 10: Children's street, family and school involvement responses by gender

Street, family and school criteria	Lilongwe			Blantyre		
	Female	Male	All children	Female	Male	All children
How often on the streets						
Most days	62%	63%	63%	60%	63%	61%
Once in a while	37%	33%	34%	38%	36%	36%
Don't know/missing	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%
How long on the streets						
Less than 6 months	42%	36%	36%	40%	40%	40%
6 month to 2 years	32%	33%	33%	34%	36%	35%
More than 2 years	23%	27%	27%	25%	21%	22%
Don't know/missing	4%	4%	4%	1%	4%	3%
How often visit parents						
Most days	70%	69%	69%	77%	64%	67%
Once in a while	23%	16%	19%	14%	17%	16%
Never	3%	10%	9%	6%	16%	14%
Don't know/missing	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
School attendance						
Most days	38%	36%	36%	53%	35%	38%
Once in a while	23%	25%	26%	22%	20%	20%
Never	29%	30%	30%	23%	38%	35%
Don't know/missing	10%	8%	8%	1%	7%	7%
School progression						
Over age	63%	78%	75%	65%	81%	78%
On time	13%	5%	6%	12%	5%	6%
Under age	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Don't know/missing	21%	15%	17%	20%	12%	14%
Average years behind	3.0	3.3	3.2	2.8	3.4	3.3



4. Implications for policy and practice

The aim of this study was to provide an estimate of the number of children living and working on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre, in order to inform policy and practice. The lack of data on the street population in Malawi, as in the rest of the world, and the persistence of reference to guesstimates which have no basis in fact, undermine efforts to plan and provide for the needs of these children⁴³.

However, it is important that policy and practice is driven not just by numbers, but by an understanding of the “appalling conditions that force children to choose to move onto urban streets.”⁴⁴ Therefore, it is important to consider the findings of this study alongside the results of other recent research which explored the reasons children come to the streets in Malawi. This was intentionally not covered by this study as evidence was already available.

Recent research has shown that many children come to the streets because of poverty. Their families are not able to adequately provide for their needs, so they seek an income on the streets⁴⁵. Many children contribute their earnings to their families, and this is a key motivation for their work on the streets. However, poverty is often combined with experiences of abuse and neglect from which children seek an escape. This may be rooted in alcoholism, lack of employment or inadequate care from step-parents or other kinship carers⁴⁶. Education also plays a role, with children dropping out of school due to not being able to afford it and because they are not interested⁴⁷. Finally, children may be influenced by their peers whose experiences of street life appeal to their friends⁴⁸.

4.1 Children working on the streets

This study has shown that most of the children (over 80%) on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre are working during the day and returning home, to parents and other relatives, who live within the city

and its surrounding district. For these children their connections with the streets are more fluid and they remain connected to their families. Whilst many are there every day (around 60%), a large proportion only go to the streets irregularly, perhaps once a week or once a month (around 40%). Similarly, over 40% of these children still attend school every day, whilst over 20% attend irregularly.

Children are mostly engaged in selling goods and scavenging, with some involvement in begging, carrying loads and sex work. Therefore, most children working on the streets can be considered to be in child labour due to the hazardous conditions in which they work, as well as the impact on their education and the stigma they experience⁴⁹.

These children are the urban poor. They are likely to live in the informal settlements, which account for 76% of Lilongwe’s and 65% of Blantyre’s population⁵⁰, with their parents also working in the informal sector, with low pay and unpredictable working conditions.

Since children working on the streets remain connected to their families and, in many cases, their schools, the interventions needed should focus on strengthening urban poor families and communities. Malawi’s experience in addressing child labour has shown that an integrated and holistic approach is needed in order to deal with the “complex constellation of factors which cause child labour.”⁵¹ Livelihoods programmes at the household level on their own are unlikely to be sufficient.⁵² It is important to provide both direct services to families in need and to raise awareness of issues related to child labour in order to improve local and national sensitisation, monitoring and referral and to improve working conditions (by reducing hours and removing hazards). Good practice in this area has emerged from the SNAP Malawi project (Support the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labour in Malawi)⁵³ which could be scaled up.

However, much of the focus on child labour in Malawi to date has been on the agricultural sector, which accounts for 95% of children’s work and 53% of child labour, and has been driven especially by concerns about the tobacco industry⁵⁴. There has also been some focus on domestic work which accounts for another 43% of child labour, and is more of an urban concern. The government has acknowledged that children working on the street are also “one of the most vulnerable segments of the children that are susceptible to all forms of abuse and worst forms of child labour” and should therefore be prioritised as a target group⁵⁵. Due to the differences between the agricultural sector and the informal urban sector it is likely that interventions used to date will need some adaptations. Consideration will need to be given to available vocational training and apprenticeship options, suitable for young people in the informal urban setting, which may need to be formalised and standardised⁵⁶.

Engagement with children on the streets must be approached carefully. Children’s experiences on the streets, in an informal and unregulated environment, coupled with their family background, often leads to a low level of trust in adults. The stigma surrounding children on the streets also means that people will approach them with prejudice and fear. These attitudes on both sides are barriers to effective engagement and relationship building. International experience shows that street outreach work hold positive relationships as the central goal. Trained and well-supported outreach workers are essential. Key principles of outreach work should include: a rights-based approach, gaining a deep understanding of each child’s situation, building relationships, flexibility, reflective practice and staff care and protection⁵⁷. These principles were part of the enumerators’ training for these studies and it was clear from the feedback at the end of the counts that many of the enumerators’ attitudes had been changed. They



reflected that the children had been more welcoming and helpful than they expected and that they were able to connect with them if they approached them with the right attitude (this contrasted with a general sense of fear before the exercise).

Services to families must include more than economic strengthening, but also focus on broader family strengthening. Although poverty is a major push factor towards the streets, many poor children do not end up on the streets. There is usually additional family instability, violence, discrimination and social exclusion⁵⁸. It is important for children with these experiences to receive emotional support, as well economic and educational support, which can often be the main focus of interventions. Helping families to (re)build positive attachments in order to create “a foundation of emotional well-being, for both children and parents, is a critical element in achieving lasting and significant change.”⁵⁹ Family strengthening provides an opportunity to improve the situation of children working on the streets and prevent complete separation from their family. Work at the family level

⁴³ UNOHCHR (2012) op cit

⁴⁴ Ibid, p10

⁴⁵ Malawi Human Rights Commission (2012) op cit

⁴⁶ EveryChild Malawi (2012) op cit

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ MoL (2010) op cit; International Labour Organization (ILO) & Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) (2004) *Report of the sectoral study on Child Labour and the Urban Informal Sector in Uganda*

⁵⁰ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) (2011) Malawi: Blantyre urban

profile, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi; United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) (2011) Malawi: Lilongwe urban profile, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi

⁵¹ ILO (2013) op cit, p5

⁵² MoL (2010) op cit

⁵³ ILO (2013) op cit

⁵⁴ MoL (2010) op cit

⁵⁵ Ibid, p25

⁵⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2003) *Skills training strategies to combat worst forms of child labour in the urban informal sector: Four Country Studies in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa*

⁵⁷ Retrak (forthcoming) op cit

⁵⁸ UNOHCHR (2012) op cit, para 16

⁵⁹ Safe Families Safe Children (2011) *Breaking the cycle of violence – building a future for the most excluded*, Safe Families Safe Children coalition, p13

will also aid these children's siblings who are also at risk of turning to street life. Reducing child labour and preventing separation must "involve family-based work to address the root causes of intergenerational cycles of neglect and abuse."⁶⁰ Juconi's work in Latin America is a good example of intense programmes of home-based counselling for family members⁶¹, which is well suited "to children with complex needs and/or a history of violence".⁶²

Wider community work, as well as raising awareness of child labour, can also be used to ensure families are adequately supported and to prevent further separation. Community education on child protection and parenting skills, alongside community-level support to build agency, have been used effectively by Retrak in Ethiopia and Hope and Homes in Rwanda to improve child care in vulnerable communities⁶³. The design of community interventions must keep in mind the ongoing debate on how to target community support, so that it does not reinforce stigma for the most marginalised⁶⁴.

Education is recognised as key to reducing child labour.⁶⁵ Children's schooling must be seen as valuable and affordable when compared to children's contribution to family income and work. The high level of school attendance amongst children working on the streets, 40% daily and 20% irregularly, shows that education is attractive to children and families, but that there is still work to be done. Other studies amongst children living and working on the streets have shown that school dropout is often due to the hidden costs within Malawi's free primary education system, but also because it is not seen as valuable or interesting.⁶⁶ The lack of a clear policy to increase the capacity and quality of education in Malawi must be addressed, as acknowledged in the National Action Plan.⁶⁷

4.2 Children living on the streets

Children living on the streets were found to be only a small proportion of the total street population, 9% in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre. This is roughly 200 children in each city. These children do not return to their families at night but sleep on the streets or in other outdoor locations. Nearly all children living on the streets are there every day, and 70% never attend school. Children who live on the streets are behind at school by an average of over 4 years (compared to an average of 3 years for children who work on the streets). A greater proportion of children living on the streets come from families outside Lilongwe and Blantyre and their surrounding districts. These children are more marginalised than children who work on the streets as they are largely outside of both family and education structures. However, it is important to recognise children's agency in deciding to be on the streets, which may be to "reduce harm or improve socio-economic options for their families or themselves".⁶⁸

It also appears that they are excluded for longer periods of time. Over 40% of children living on the streets have been doing so for over 2 years, and there is a greater proportion of older children (14-15 years) living on the streets compared to children working on the streets. Although this study did not include children who are 16 and 17 years old (in line with the Malawian definition of a child) it is possible that there are many more older children living on the streets. Children living on the streets will form close relationships with their peers, forming networks which are key to survival, support and protection.⁶⁹ These friendships and sense of independence on the streets, combined with push factors from home, can make it difficult for children to leave the streets once

they are established⁷⁰. Therefore, early interventions, when children have recently arrived on the streets, enable an easier transition away from the streets.

Outreach to children on the streets must respect the importance of street connections and understand that most children on the streets have experienced broken relationships and will have a tendency not to trust adults. As stated above, outreach activities must be centred on the goal of building trusting relationships. For children who have experienced broken relationships and mistrust adults, an outreach worker will have to model a positive alternative. Building a close attachment will mean the children "are less likely to abandon the process when it becomes uncomfortable and difficult".⁷¹ Outreach workers must respect the children and seek to understand them: their background, interests and aspirations. By following a rights-based approach, children are seen as active agents in their own lives, with strengths and capabilities which can be built on as they make decisions about their future.⁷²

Outreach activities, which must take place in the locations where children are found to congregate, can be carried out in the evening time to help identify

those children who are sleeping on the streets. These children need to be offered access to temporary shelter so that they can be removed from the immediate dangers of the streets. This could be through transitional centres or through emergency foster care, an emerging practice with some success in the African context⁷³. The Malawi Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, which applies to children on the streets, outlines the need for temporary places of safety, to which children can be taken by "a police officer, social welfare officer, a chief or any member of the community".⁷⁴ However, forcing children into shelters, whether part of the social welfare or judicial systems, is likely to end with them simply returning to the streets. Children need to be self-motivated and have a trusting relationship with a key adult in order for them to feel able to move forward positively.⁷⁵ Access to shelters should therefore be linked to outreach work and must be voluntary. For some children extensive outreach work will be needed before they feel able to accept the offer of shelter and to think about a different future.

Given the relatively small population of children living on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre, the existing government and NGO shelters, if targeted to children



⁶⁰ Schrader McMillan, A & E Herrera (2014) *Strategies to ensure the sustainable reintegration of children without parental care: JUCONI, Mexico*, Family for Every Child & Juconi
⁶¹ *ibid*
⁶² Wedge, J (2013) *Reaching for Home: Global learning on family reintegration in low and lower-*

middle income countries, Interagency Group on Reintegration
⁶³ Wedge, J (2013) *op cit*; Retrak (2014) Mid-term review of "Reintegration of street children and community-based child protection in SNNPR, Ethiopia", Manchester, Retrak
⁶⁴ STRIVE (2015) Symposium Report: Keeping Children

and Families together with Economic Strengthening, FHI360 & USAID, Washington
⁶⁵ MoL (2010) *op cit*
⁶⁶ *ibid*, EveryChild Malawi (2012) *op cit*
⁶⁷ MoL (2010) *op cit*, p20
⁶⁸ Thomas de Benítez, S (2011), p22

⁷⁰ Beazley, H (2010) 'The Construction and Protection of Individual and Collective Identities by Street Children and Youth in Indonesia', *Children, Youth and Environments* 13(1); Davies, M (2008) 'A Childish Culture?: Shared Understandings, Agency and Intervention: An Anthropological Study of Street Children in Northwest Kenya', *Childhood*, 15(3): 309-330; God Cares Orphan Care (2012) *op cit*;

UNOHCHR (2012) *op cit*, Corcoran, S & J Wakia (2013) *Evaluating Outcomes: Retrak's use of the Child Status Index to measure wellbeing of street-connected children*, Manchester, Retrak
⁷¹ Safe Families Safe Children (2011) *op cit*, p31
⁷² Wakia, J (2014) *Retrak Outreach Work*, Retrak, Manchester

⁷³ For example, Give a Child a Family in South Africa (see www.gcf.org.za/fostercare.htm) and OPRIFS in Ethiopia
⁷⁴ Parliament of Malawi, Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, Act No 22 of 2010 (30 July 2010), para24
⁷⁵ Wakia, J (2014) *op cit*

Figure 15: Principles of promising reintegration practice⁷⁹

1. Respecting the individual's journey
2. Rights-based and inclusive programming
3. Gendered perspective
4. Child participation
5. Taking a holistic view of the child
6. Standard operating procedures and national guidelines
7. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation
8. Coordination and collaboration
9. Cultural and family sensitivity
10. Local ownership
11. Long-term investment

living on the streets, could accommodate a large proportion of the population. However, it is important that the focus of these centres is prioritised on to children who are living on the streets without their families, or those who need to be removed from their family care as a last resort. It is also important that shelters are linked to outreach activities as the first step in building relationships with children living on the streets. The new Street Child Strategy currently sees drop-in centres as the first step.

In addition, centres offering shelter should be transitional, with an aim of enabling children to be reintegrated with families as the first priority, or to be placed into alternative care such as foster care or independent living. It is good practice that any child entering care should have an exit strategy and be monitored through a well structured case management system.⁷⁶ Ensuring a flow of children through transitional centres ensures places are available for new children arriving on the streets, aiding early intervention. There is a gap in policy in Malawi regarding reintegration and alternative care. Whilst it is mentioned as a key strategy in the new Street Child

Strategy, it is not explicitly or adequately addressed, nor in policies such as the National Policy on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children or the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act. It has also been suggested that knowledge of these existing policies is low among practitioners⁷⁷. Guidance can be found in the UN Alternative Care Guidelines and in Retrak's Family Reintegration Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).⁷⁸ Retrak's SOPs are already in use across East Africa and in Malawi through Chisomo Children's Club, and have been adapted for use within a range of contexts. Further guidance can also be found from the Inter Agency Working Group on reintegration who have highlighted principles of promising reintegration practice (see figure 15)⁷⁹ and who have forthcoming international guidance.⁸⁰

Whilst care in families is considered the preferred option for children, initial assessments and ongoing support to families must be provided to overcome any factors that previously pushed children out and to ensure that they are able to continue to safely care for and support their children⁸¹. Regular follow-up must assess that a child's placement, whether with their own family or an alternative, is still in their best interest. As with families of children working on the streets, provision of family strengthening services along with economic strengthening is key in addressing both poverty and issues of family breakdown. Support of some form may be needed for a number of years. Retrak's study of children's wellbeing during reintegration showed that some children who had lived on the streets still had low wellbeing more than 1 year after their placement, especially in the areas of school attendance and performance and psychosocial wellbeing⁸². Given that children living on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre are on average 4 years behind in their education it is likely that reintegration into the formal education system will be challenging. Education in Malawi needs further investment, as already stated, this should include a

greater understanding of inclusive education for vulnerable children, such as those who have lived on the streets.

Experience suggests that providing support to reintegrated families, or those in alternative care, who are dispersed over large geographic areas, especially in rural settings, is complex⁸³. Infrastructure, time and resource constraints limit regular follow-up. Referrals to local community and government structures can ease provision of support. However, since this study has shown that only 17% of children living on the streets in Lilongwe and 34% in Blantyre come from families outside those districts, dispersed reintegration and its challenges will be limited. For the remaining children and families who are located within the towns and their surrounding districts, provision of follow-up will be easier and could be linked with family and economic strengthening provided to families of children working on the streets or more generally within the urban informal settlements. For all families, no matter their location, it is important for follow-up support to be tailor-made to each individual child's

and family's situation. Assessments of children's and families' vulnerability or wellbeing, such as those used by Retrak or the Uganda SCORE project, help to identify the level of need and prioritise the most vulnerable families.⁸⁴

As with working children, it is important that wider community-based interventions are implemented to prevent children separating from their families. These interventions should focus on the push factors of poverty and family breakdown. Family strengthening can be more broadly targeted to families in informal urban communities who are at high risk, and should be combined with community education on parenting skills, child protection, and the dangers of child labour and street life. Retrak has successfully implemented a prevention programme in Ethiopia by targeting communities where a high proportion of children living on streets come from.⁸⁵ The provision of shelters, transitional care and reintegration can only be successful in the long-term if they are combined with prevention programmes which target push factors at the family and community level.



4.3 Gender considerations

This study has found, in line with other studies in Malawi and beyond, that there are fewer girls engaged on the streets than boys, only 1 in 5. Girls on the streets are more likely to be working there during the day and returning home to their parents or other family at night (91% in Lilongwe, 85% in Blantyre). Only 5% of children living on the streets in Lilongwe, and 3% in Blantyre, are girls. This is only around 20 girls.

It is likely that this difference is due to gender norms which mean that women's work is mostly within the domestic sphere: cooking, collecting firewood and water, caring for children and food production.⁸⁶ Similarly, research shows that girls are more involved in domestic or non-economic work within family

⁷⁶ UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*, A/Res/64/142 (24 February 2010) New York, United Nations

⁷⁷ SOS Children's Villages International (2013) A snapshot of alternative care arrangements in Malawi, SOS, Innsbruck

⁷⁸ UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, op cit; Retrak (2012) *Retrak Standard Operating Procedures: Family reintegration*, Manchester, Retrak

⁷⁹ Wedge, J (2013) op cit

⁸⁰ For more information on the forthcoming interagency global guidelines on reintegration

contact the chair of the interagency group Family for Every Child: www.familyforeverychild.org

⁸¹ UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, op cit; Retrak (2012) op cit

⁸² Corcoran, S & J Wakiya (2013) op cit

⁸³ Wedge, J (2013) op cit; Chaffin, J & A Kalyanpur (2014) What do we know about economic strengthening for family reintegration of separated children?, Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) Network & Women's Refugee Commission

⁸⁴ For more information please contact Retrak: www.retrak.org or SCORE project lead agency AVSI: www.avsi-usa.org/africa/uganda

⁸⁵ Retrak (2014) op cit

⁸⁶ African Development Fund (2005) Republic Of Malawi Multi-Sector Country Gender Profile, Agriculture And Rural Development North East And South Region



dwelling (57% of girls compared to 43% of boys), with 36% of female child labourers (those under 14yrs working for over 7hrs a week) in urban areas working in community and social services, largely in domestic work. Although fewer girls are present on the streets, this does not mean they are not working, instead their work is more likely to be hidden away inside households where it is harder for it to be addressed. It is possible that the higher rate of girls living with relatives who are not their parents could be linked to their involvement in domestic work.

It is also likely that girls will be more tolerant to violence and abuse if they have witnessed their mothers or other female relatives being treated in the same way. Domestic gender-based violence is common and often tolerated, with 31% of women in Malawi reporting an experienced of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁸⁷ Furthermore, “much domestic violence goes unreported due to financial dependence, lack of awareness of legal rights (on both the part of women and police

officers and judges), and fears of retribution or ostracism”.⁸⁸ Girls may be slower to leave home for the streets, instead being involved in work within the home, whilst subject to violence and abuse.

Initiatives to address child labour must consider the impact these gender norms will have on their interventions. Family support and community education must also cover issues related to domestic work so that children are not pulled into this more hidden form of work when they are withdrawn from the streets. Similarly economic strengthening for caregivers must consider unintended impact on girls who may take on additional domestic work if their mothers spend more time working outside the household.⁸⁹

Another gender-related finding that must be considered is children’s involvement in sex work. It must be kept in mind that this study chose, for child protection reasons, to only record observed involvement in sex work and not to directly ask about the topic. The results found very few children involved or possibly

involved in commercial sex work: 12% in Lilongwe and 5% in Blantyre. However in Lilongwe 21% of girls were reported to be involved or possibly involved, compared to 11% for boys. The higher level of girls’ involvement in sex work in Lilongwe is likely due to the involvement of Theatre for a Change who work specifically with this group of children and were able to negotiate access to their locations and permission to interview the girls. This highlights the hidden nature of this work and the importance of specifically targeting these children. There is need for similar work in Blantyre.

It should also be noted that children are vulnerable to

engagement in sex work beyond these hidden locations, since 5% of children were reported to be involved in Blantyre, where there was no agency to negotiate access to the more hidden locations. Here the gender division was equal, highlighting that both boys and girls are vulnerable to exploitation in this way. It is likely that boys and girls who have been affected by sexual exploitation, including sex work, will need additional support as they transition off the streets. Additional psychosocial support may be needed, alongside extra support during reintegration, especially to reduce rejection and stigma related to child sexual activities.⁹⁰



⁸⁷ Social Institutions & Gender Index: Malawi, available at genderindex.org/country/malawi

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ CPC Livelihoods and Economic Strengthening Task Force (2013) *Children and Economic Strengthening Programs: Maximizing Benefits and Minimizing Harm*, Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) Network, FHI360 & Women’s Refugee Commission

⁹⁰ Wedge, J (2013) *op cit*

5. Conclusion

This study estimates the number of children living and working in Lilongwe to be 2,389 and in Blantyre to be 1,776, this is based on children reporting or being observed to sleep or work on the streets or other public locations.

In line with other recent qualitative studies in Malawi,⁹¹ 1 in 5 children were found to be girls, since girls are likely to remain at home despite abuse and neglect, and more likely to undertake work within the home.

As with previous studies, only a small minority of children are living on the streets, only 9% in Lilongwe and 12% in Blantyre. Based on our estimate for each location, this is just over 200 children in each town. These children spend their days and nights on the streets and 70% never attend school. They are largely excluded from society, being outside both family and education structures through which children are normally included.

The majority of children remain within the care of their parents or other relatives whilst working on the streets. Many combine this with attending school. Their families are largely residing within the Lilongwe and Blantyre, probably in the large informal settlements. Children's work on the streets is likely to be detrimental to children's health and development given the hazardous conditions, impact on education and associated stigma.



Key implications of these findings include:

- Focus on strengthening families in the informal urban settlements through a combination of livelihoods support and wider family strengthening initiatives such as family therapy and parenting skills;
- Greater community-level awareness raising events, through existing structures including schools, on issues related to:
 - Child labour in order to improve sensitisation, monitoring and referral and working conditions,
 - Child protection and parenting skills,
 - Gender norms;
- Sensitive outreach activities with a focus on relationship building, especially to identify children who are new to the streets, without it being seen purely as way to bring children into centres;
- Coordination of transition centres, focusing on children living on the streets, to provide temporary shelter to children who choose to access it;
- Reintegration and alternative care options for children in centres, with extensive follow-up and family strengthening support; these will largely be in the urban informal settlements and so can be linked to initiatives to prevent child labour and separation;
- Specific initiatives to target children in commercial sex work, both boys and girls.

These specific interventions need to be supported by wider initiatives to improve the quality and capacity of the education sector, so that hidden and opportunity costs are removed and education is more widely valued.

⁹¹ EveryChild Malawi (2012) op cit, Malawi Human Rights Commission (2012) op cit; God Cares Orphan Care (2012) op cit

6. Recommendations

The goal of this study is to inform policy and practice in Malawi and to provide an example of reliable methodology for enumerating children on the streets in order to promote further discussion. The following recommendations speak to these two goals and include feedback from stakeholders in Malawi following their discussion of the findings in March 2015.

6.1 Malawi strategy and interventions

The new National Strategy for Children Living and Working in the Streets provides a solid foundation on which to build appropriate and necessary intervention. The strategy highlights the need to have a rights-based and multi-sectoral approach, and to ensure that a national approach is followed through with local implementation and backed up by adequate resources.

The findings of this study in particular highlight the need for the inclusion of or a greater emphasis on certain interventions:

Focus on child labour and family strengthening in urban settings

This study has shown that most children on the streets in Lilongwe and Blantyre are working during the day and returning to family within the city or the surrounding district. The circumstances in which street children find themselves are a reflection of the vulnerability of their social environment. Therefore interventions need to focus on dealing with issues of child labour and providing economic and family strengthening within the urban informal settlements. Such interventions will build resilience and ultimately prevent more children turning to the streets.

Child labour initiatives should combine family level support and wider community awareness to reduce the incidence of child labour, and efforts to improve conditions of child work. Economic and family strengthening should include livelihoods support and



initiatives such as parenting skills training, alongside family therapy for the most fragile families. Interventions can draw on good practice from past work in the rural and agricultural sectors (such as SNAP), but it is important to consider the impact of rural-urban migration on economic and social assets. Adults and young people may need support to shift from rural to urban employment, perhaps through business and vocational skills training.

Community awareness-raising should focus on the dangers of child labour and street life and help build communities' capacity to deal with child protection issues in appropriate ways. Community members who play significant roles in the lives of children, such as police officers, shop owners, health care workers and teachers, should be enabled to identify and assist vulnerable children. Campaigns can use local radio stations and mobile phones, combined with community discussion forums, to allow people to engage directly with the topics. School-based activities, such as child protection clubs, can also provide a forum to reach children already working on the streets and those vulnerable to such activities.

Improve outreach and avoid unnecessary family separation and criminalisation

Since most children on the streets remain in daily contact with their family it is important to avoid unnecessary separation. There is need for a greater emphasis on outreach on the streets to help build positive, trusting relationships with children in order to help them find the most suitable way off the streets. Therefore, mass round-ups of children and arrests of children for street activities should be discouraged, as this leads to children being separated from their families and potentially being incorrectly stigmatised as criminals.

Outreach on the streets, when following good practice, allows positive relationships to be built and for children to be supported on an individual basis. Outreach can be an entry point to family strengthening support, as recommended above, or to transitional care. Entry to such services will need to allow for a gradual transition from the streets.

This study has shown that only a minority, those sleeping on the streets, will require this level of care, which can be provided through emergency shelters or foster care. Whilst a few shelters already exist in both cities, they need to be linked to outreach activities and focused on providing care for children who live on the streets. Emergency foster care should also be explored so that children quickly enter family care and avoid the potentially negative effects of residential care.

Similarly, increasing access and support for court diversion programmes will help children who come into contact with the law receive protection and support from the social welfare system, rather than being criminalised in the justice system.

Ensure services are individualised

This study has shown the diversity of children's experiences on the streets, with variation in street, family, work and school engagement. Therefore, the uniqueness of each child's situation requires time and multidisciplinary expertise to be invested in assessing her/his individual situation so that a tailor-made child care plan can be developed. Programmes should build on each child's skills, resilience and socio-cultural assets, to help build their self-esteem and ease their transition of the streets and into family or community life.

Build capacity for reintegration and alternative care with local follow-up support

Children who are living on the streets, and any child who is removed from her/his family as a last resort, will need reintegration and alternative care options. There is currently a lack of guidelines in Malawi for such care which should be addressed immediately. This can build on UN guidelines and similar alternative care initiatives in the region. Once guidelines are in place capacity should be built of government and non-governmental agencies to deliver quality and coordinated services.

It is important that provision is also made for adequate follow-up and ongoing monitoring of placements, to ensure that families receive support and that children are protected. Follow-up interventions should be tailor-made to the individual needs of the child and family: in terms of content as well as intensity and longevity.

There is much overlap in the kind of support needed during follow-up of reintegration and alternative care placements and that needed to support families of children who are working on the streets. Since most children who live and who work on the streets come from similar areas around Lilongwe and Blantyre it would be efficient to ensure support to both groups

of children and families is coordinated to reduce duplication of efforts.

Key to this is ensuring that local government is adequately equipped, in terms of personnel, skills and resources, to oversee and provide follow-up interventions and coordinate with other initiatives. Social workers at the local level should have a case load and support that allows them to flexibly respond to the needs of each family, provide them with support and sign-post them to further local support where necessary.

Increase specific support for children involved in sex work and those affected by disability

Children involved in commercial sex work and those with disabilities, although a small percentage of the overall street population, will need specific support that is tailor-made for their situations.

Children involved in commercial sex work, both boys and girls, need to be reached through outreach activities which focus on locations where they are found, and which aim to build positive relationships with the children and those with power over them.

Transitional care may need to be provided in a separate location, and may need to be single-sex, in order to provide services tailor-made for this group. Reintegration and alternative care options will likely need additional support and supervision to ensure children are safe and to support their transition back to family life. Whilst commercial sex work is likely to involve more girls than boys, it is important that initiatives to reach boys are included, and that these are all done with sensitivity to break down the silence and taboos surrounding children's involvement in this work.

Similarly, there is a need to reach out to children who are disabled and those who are caring for disabled adults. Again, these children will need additional support to enable them to return to or remain in their families or to access suitable alternative care.

Programmes which already exist to meet the needs of these children, such as those run by Theatre for a Change, MACOHA and FEDOMA, should be reviewed in light of the findings of this study to see how good practice can be built upon and scaled up where needed.



Ensure national coordination and monitoring of all activities which benefit children on the streets

A national network of stakeholders involved in providing services to children on the streets and their families should be formed to ensure that all service providers are working together to meet the needs of children and families. Such a network should regularly map services on offer and their reach to determine if there is any unnecessary duplication or gaps. It would also create a forum to share experiences and good practice, and to plan for national awareness-raising activities or policy advocacy. This network should also work towards a common monitoring framework to allow data to be aggregated across agencies. There should be a focus on monitoring activities as well as tracking longer-term outcomes for children and families, in order to build the evidence-base on effective interventions.

Interventions to benefit children on the street will include those under the remit of several government agencies including the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Judiciary. A forum should be created to facilitate sharing, coordination and monitoring across these agencies.

Advocate for and pursue alignment of national policy and legislation

To ensure that children are given the chance to move away from the streets through their own choice and in a way that is suitable to their needs, changes to the law should be made to decriminalise street activities and ensure children are not taken into custody nor separated from family unnecessarily. This includes ending all street round-ups. Key to achieving fair treatment for street children is building the understanding and skills of police and other juvenile justice actors.

As mentioned above, there is need for national guidelines to be developed to guide the implementation of alternative care options, along with minimum standards to ensure necessary and appropriate care. It is important to contextualise the UN guidelines so it is easier for local practitioners to follow. Guidance on reintegration with family should also be included, this could build upon Retrak's Family Reintegration SOPs and the forthcoming international guidelines.

This study has shown that education is still a major factor in many children's lives, even when they are working on the streets. Schools therefore provide an opportunity to educate children on their rights and on

how to stay safe from all forms of abuse and neglect, including those linked to life and work on the streets. Education is also essential at combating child labour and keeping children at home. The Malawian government must work towards improvements in education quality and a reduction in the hidden costs associated with primary education if they are to truly reach universal primary education.

Civil society has a role to play in advocating for and assisting in the implementation of the above changes to policy and legislation, especially in raising public awareness of issues related to children on the streets.

6.2 Further research

This study has piloted one approach to enumerating children on the streets, in way that provides a valid estimate of the street population. This builds on past studies using a similar approach, and demonstrates that providing such estimates is possible. However, further studies and discussions of these results are encouraged to build the understanding of limitations and child protection concerns and of what adaptations are needed for different contexts.

For this and future similar studies, it will be important to try and track the impact on policy and practice to understand how such studies can best influence and engage with ongoing efforts to provide for the needs of children on the streets.

Finally, this study should also be seen as a first step towards further studies in Malawi to look at the economic and social costs of children living and working on the streets. A major barrier to undertaking such research is a lack of reliable information on the size of the street population.



7. Annexes

Annex 1: Risk Analysis

Risk	Response
Risk to children	
Some children will need urgent assistance as they are in danger or crisis.	Children who need urgent assistance should be referred for help if s/he requests it.
Children may be afraid of participating or become distressed	Enumerators should speak to children, and their peers and leaders, calmly and be demonstratively friendly and non-judgemental. They should explain the confidentiality of the results and that the information will not be shared. They should remind the children that they are allowed to stop the interview if they wish. If a child is very distressed they should be referred for help if s/he requests it.
Children could be at risk of abuse or in danger whilst participating, from enumerators, other children or other adults.	Interviews should be conducted in safe, open places, with pairs of enumerators in visual contact and with an agreed emergency response. All enumerators will understand and agree to the survey's Child Protection code of conduct.
The survey may raise false expectations of the children	Enumerators should explain the purpose of the survey clearly to the children as part of gaining their consent.
Risk to enumerators	
Children or members of public, gang leaders or market leaders could be uncooperative, some might be verbally or physically abusive	Enumerators should approach children and adults in a friendly, open manner. Enumerators should carry an authorisation letter from the Ministry, work in pairs/teams with an agreed emergency response, dress appropriately and leave valuables behind. The police should be informed of survey activities and locations.
Risk to study	
The ethical issue pertaining to children under the age of 12 being interviewed	The Ministry gave approval to interview 7-12 years, as well as those over 12 years, as long as the enumerators were trained social workers. Every enumerator should have experience working with children, and trained and experienced social workers should be paired with less experienced social workers or other children's workers.
Children are likely not to trust anyone who is new to them, they may give false names and other information	Enumerators should be experienced social or children's workers and receive training on how to approach children on the streets in order to build trusting relationships.
Children are not stationary, they move around, and therefore could be missed by the survey	The capture-recapture methodology is specially designed for mobile populations, the comparison of the two counts allows estimation of those who were not counted.
Children might not know their age	An estimation of age by the child is ok since this is not essential information, other characteristics can be used for matching between counts.
Children might not want to participate	Enumerators should approach children in a friendly and engaging manner and children will be requested to consent after the survey is explained to them.
Children might demand money or expect handouts	Enumerators should explain the purpose of the survey clearly to the children as part of gaining their consent.
Children may be duplicated (participate more than once) during the survey	The information gathered will allow for each count to be matched with itself to find duplicates and remove them.

Annex 2: Interview form for count 1

1. Enumerator individual code:	2. Form #:	3. Supervisor check: Y N
4. City: Lilongwe Blantyre	5. Area ID #:	
6. Date:	7. Time: Morning Afternoon Evening	

Engage and greet a child, ask them about what they are doing, and who they are with. If they appear to be working, hanging out/idling or preparing to sleep on the streets then continue with the interview.

8. What is the child doing?	1) Working	2) Hanging out/idling	3) Preparing to sleep
9. Who is the child with?	1) Other children his/her own age	2) Older children	3) Younger children 4) Adults

Say to the child:

Thank you for talking with me, it's great to hear about your experiences, I'm really interested to know more about children who are living and working on the streets in Blantyre/Lilongwe. We want to make sure that we're able to provide children like you with the support they need. Would you be willing to help us by answering a few questions about yourself and your life at the moment, it'll only take 10min?

We will be writing a report and presenting the information we gather to those who want to work with children in Malawi and internationally, to help them improve the support offered to children like you. Your name won't be used in any reports. Your name will not be shared with anyone else. It will only be used to aid the project calculations and then deleted from our records. Accepting to do this interview you won't earn you any payment or reward. You are free to stop the interview at any point. If you don't want to participate or chose to stop the interview at any time this won't be held against you. If you have any concerns or complaints you can talk to our Child Protection Coordinator.

Are you happy to participate in this interview? (mark response below) Thank you so much.

10. Consent: 1) Yes 2) No	If yes, continue with questions below, If no, give estimate of age (13) and gender (15) and tell them about some of the organisations that are offering support and say goodbye
---------------------------	--

Please can you tell me a bit about yourself?

11. What's your name? (prompt for first name and last name)		
12. Are there any other names which you call yourself or your friends call you?		
13. How old are you? (if the child doesn't know give an estimate) (if the child is below 7yrs give the form number for an older child they are with _____ or ask an adult they are with to answer the rest of questions on their behalf: give adults' relationship to child _____)		
14. What's your date of birth? (note down any part)	Day	Month Year
15. Gender: 1) Female 2) Male	16. What is the name of your village?	
17. And which district is that in?	18. And which region? 1) Northern 2) Central 3) Southern	
19. What's your ethnicity/tribe?		

Great, thank you so much. I'd like to learn about more about your life on the streets, can I ask you a few more questions? Thank you.

20. How often do you come to this place?
 1) 1-3 days a week 2) 4-6 days a week 3) Every day
 4) Once in a while: *Is there a particular time?* _____

21. Do you come in the day time only, or do you spend your nights here too?
 1) Only daytime 2) Day and night time 3) Only night time

22. How long have you been coming to the streets?
 1) Less than 1mth 5) 1-2 years
 2) 1-2mths 6) 3-5 years
 3) 2-6mths 7) More than 5 years
 4) 6mths-1 year 8) Always (born on street)

23. Where do you sleep most of the time? (choose one place, where they sleep the most)
 1) Streets/veranda/market etc 4) Others' home: *Relationship to child?* _____
 2) Parents' home 5) Other location: *What location?* _____
 3) Other relative's home

24. How often do you visit your parents' or guardians' home?
 1) Every day 4) A few times a year
 2) Every week 5) Never
 3) A few times a month

25. What work do you do on the streets?
 1) Selling goods 3) Begging
 2) Carrying loads 4) Scavenging
 5) Other: *record details* _____

26. How often do you go to school at the moment?
 1) Every day (5 days a week) 3) Once in a while: *Is there a particular time?* _____
 2) A few days a week 4) Never

27. What is the last class you completed? Nursery 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Great, thank you so much. It's been really good to talk you! We'll be coming back in a few days to check we managed to talk to everyone. If you see our colleagues please do talk to them, they'll just check you've been included.

Can I tell you about some of the organisations that are offering support...

Then say goodbye.

Complete the following based on your observations:

28. Did the child have any visible disability? 1) No 2) Yes: *give details* _____

29. Did any adult with the child have any visible disability? 1) No 2) Yes: *give details* _____

30. Did the child appear to be engaged in sex work? 1) No 2) Possibly 3) Yes

31. If the child stopped the interview early, at what question was this _____

32. Please note down anything unusual about this interview and if you had to terminate it early for an emergency or other reason

Annex 2: Interview form for count 2

33. Enumerator individual code: 34. Form #: 35. Supervisor check: 1) Yes 2) No

36. City: 1) Lilongwe 2) Blantyre 37. Area ID #:

38. Date: 39. Time: 1) Morning 2) Afternoon 3) Evening

Engage and greet a child, ask them about what they are doing, and who they are with. If they appear to be working, hanging out/idling or preparing to sleep on the streets then continue with the interview.

40. What is the child doing? 1) Working 2) Hanging out/idling 3) Preparing to sleep

41. Who is the child with? 1) Other children his/her own age 2) Older children 3) Younger children 4) Adults

Say to the child: Thank you for talking with me, it's great to hear about your experiences, I'm really interested to know more about children who are living and working on the streets in Blantyre/Lilongwe. We want to make sure that we're able to provide children like you with the support they need.

10a. *Some of my colleagues came the other day to ask some questions, were you interviewed then?* 1) Yes 2) No

If Yes, say: *We'd like to check we got your information correctly would you mind just answering a few questions about yourself again, it'll only take 5min?*

If No, say: *Would you be willing to help us by answering a few questions about yourself and your life at the moment, it'll only take 10min?*

Then to all, say: *We will be writing a report and presenting the information we gather to those who want to work with children in Malawi and internationally, to help them improve the support offered to children like you. Your name won't be used in any reports. Your name will not be shared with anyone else. It will only be used to aid the project calculations and then deleted from our records. Accepting to do this interview you won't earn you any payment or reward. You are free to stop the interview at any point. If you don't want to participate or chose to stop the interview at any time this won't be held against you. If you have any concerns or complaints you can talk to our Child Protection Coordinator.*

Are you happy to participate in this interview? (mark response below) Thank you so much.

42. Consent: 1) Yes 2) No *If yes, continue with questions below, if no, give estimate of age (13) and gender (15) and tell them about some of the organisations that are offering support and say goodbye*

Please can you tell me a bit about yourself?

43. What's your name? (prompt for first name and last name)

44. Are there any other names which you call yourself or your friends call you?

45. How old are you? (if the child doesn't know give an estimate)
 (if the child is below 7yrs give the form number for an older child they are with _____ or ask an adult they are with to answer the rest of questions on their behalf: give adults' relationship to child _____)

46. What's your date of birth? (note down any part) Day Month Year

47. Gender: 1) Female 2) Male 48. What is the name of your village?

49. And which district is that in? 50. And which region? 1) Northern 2) Central 3) Southern

51. What's your ethnicity/tribe?

Great, thank you so much. I'd like to learn about more about your life on the streets, can I ask you a few more questions? Thank you.

If the child was interviewed before skip to **Q31**
 If the child was **not** interviewed before complete all questions **Q20-32**

52. How often do you come to this place?

- 5) 1-3 days a week
- 6) 4-6 days a week
- 7) Every day
- 8) Once in a while: *Is there a particular time?* _____

53. Do you come in the day time only, or do you spend your nights here too?

- 4) Only daytime
- 5) Day and night time
- 6) Only night time

54. How long have you been coming to the streets?

- 9) Less than 1mth
- 10) 1-2mths
- 11) 2-6mths
- 12) 6mths-1 year
- 13) 1-2 years
- 14) 3-5 years
- 15) More than 5 years
- 16) Always (born on street)

55. Where do you sleep most of the time? (choose one place, where they sleep the most)

- 6) Streets/veranda/market etc
- 7) Parents' home
- 8) Other relative's home
- 9) Others' home: *Relationship to child?* _____
- 10) Other location: *What location?* _____

56. How often do you visit your parents' or guardians' home?

- 6) Every day
- 7) Every week
- 8) A few times a month
- 9) A few times a year
- 10) Never

57. What work do you do on the streets?

- 6) Selling goods
- 7) Carrying loads
- 8) Begging
- 9) Scavenging
- 10) Other: *record details* _____

58. How often do you go to school at the moment?

- 5) Every day (5 days a week)
- 6) A few days a week
- 7) Once in a while: *Is there a particular time?* _____
- 8) Never

59. What is the last class you completed? Nursery 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Great, thank you so much. It's been really good to talk to you! Can I tell you about some of the organisations that are offering support...

Then say goodbye.

Complete the following based on your observations:

60. Did the child have any visible disability? 1) No 2) Yes: *give details* _____

61. Did any adult with the child have any visible disability? 1) No 2) Yes: *give details* _____

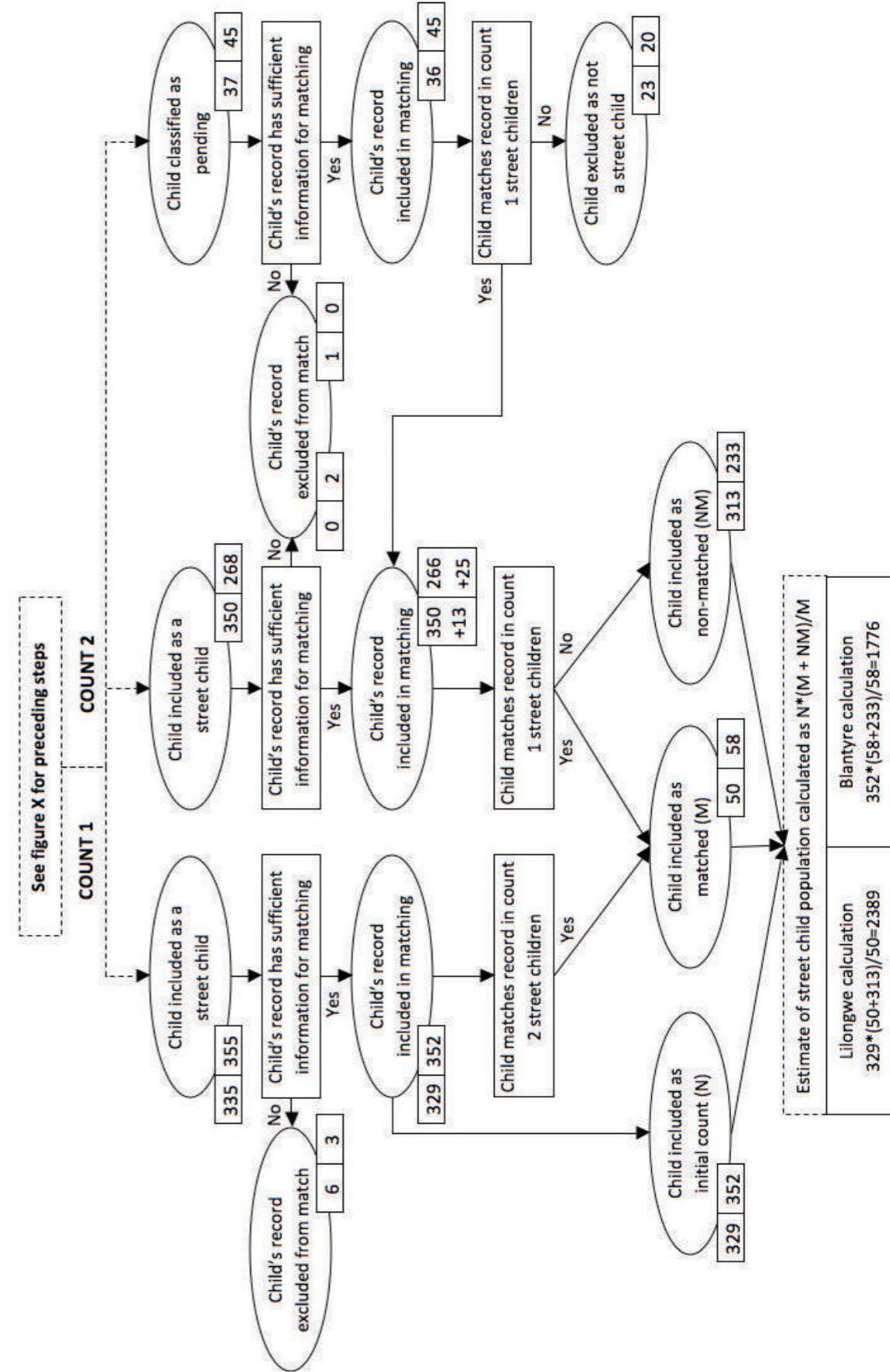
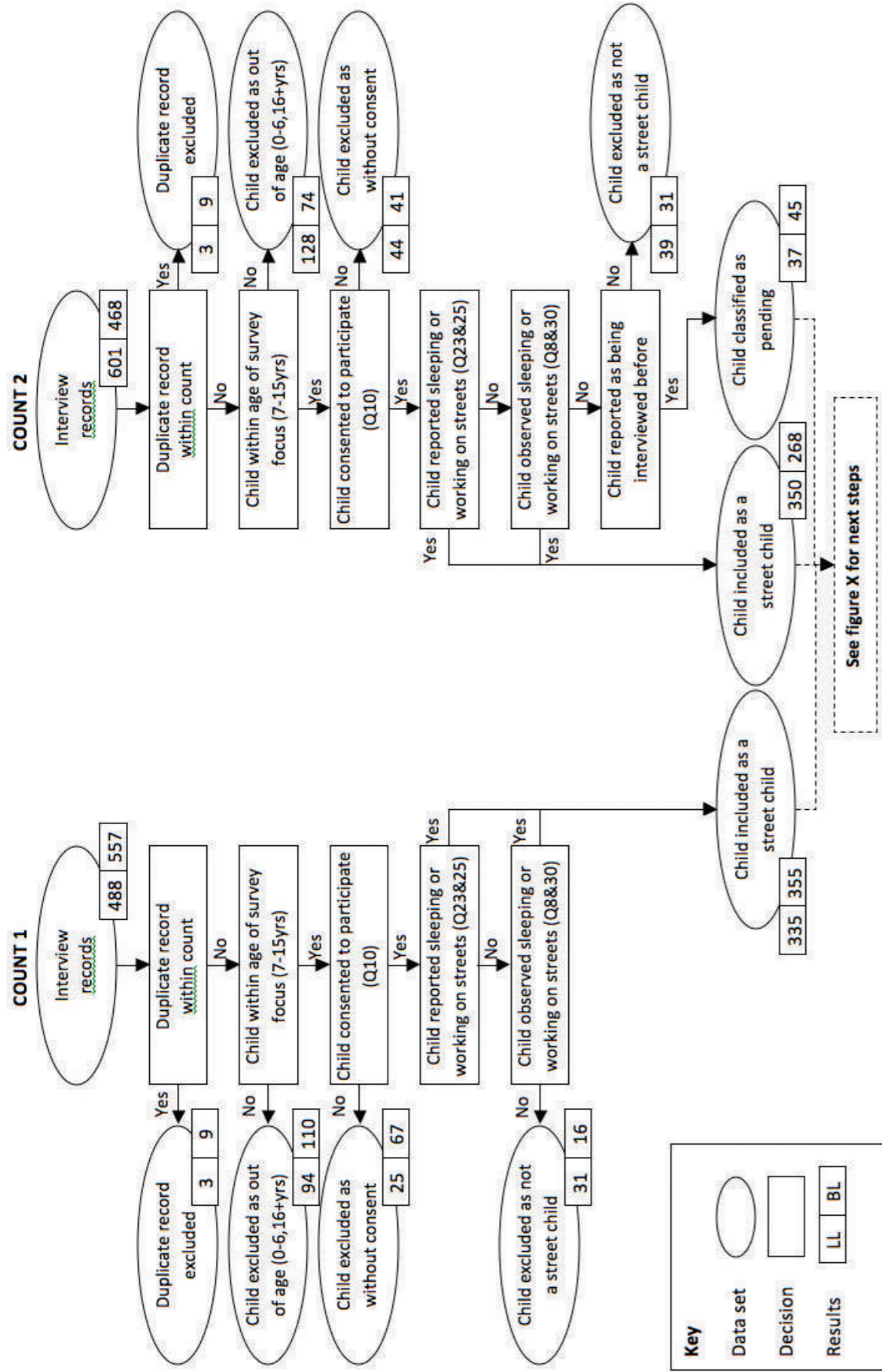
62. Did the child appear to be engaged in sex work? 1) No 2) Possibly 3) Yes

FOR ALL CHILDREN:

63. If the child stopped the interview early, at what question was this _____



64. Please note down anything unusual about this interview and if you had to terminate it early for an emergency or other reason

Annex 4: Data Flow Diagram →





No child forced to live on the street

 Retrak Charity
 @Retrak_Charity

Retrak, Metropolitan House, Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 7AZ, UK

Telephone: +44 (0)161 485 6685 **Email:** mailbox@retrak.org **Web:** www.retrak.org

Registered charity number 1122799. Registered company number 6424507

WE DO EVERYTHING
WE CAN TO HELP
STREET CHILDREN
HOW CAN YOU HELP?