



CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

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Summary

INTRODUCTION	4
SECTION 1: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH & CHALLENGES FACED	6
1. A primarily qualitative approach, enriched by quantitative data	7
2. Investigation sites	7
3. Qualitative data collection: overview	8
4. Quantitative online survey	8
5. Research team members	8
6. Ethical considerations	8
7. Challenges encountered in gathering information	8
SECTION 2: CROSS-ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL DYNAMICS OF THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS IN THE THREE COUNTRIES	9
1. Extent of the phenomenon and changing dynamics	10
2. Socio-anthropological profiles of children in street situations	10
3. The societal causes of the phenomenon of children in street situations	13
4. Major issues and challenges facing children living on the streets	15
5. Community perceptions of children in street situations	16
6. Indifference on the part of public authorities: a regional constant	17
7. Career prospects for children in street situations	17
8. Care centres: operation and challenges	18
9. Family reunification: approaches and results	19
10. Ways off the streets for children	20
11. Messages from children in street situations	21
SECTION 3: CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS OF THE THREE COUNTRIES	22
1. Legislative framework: comprehensive but not very effective legislation	23
2. Occurrence of specific terminology relating to children in street situations	23
3. Government initiatives in favour of children in street situations	23
4. Insufficient financial resources	23
RECOMMENDATIONS	25
CONCLUSION	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Central Africa is facing a major social issue that concerns all development actors: **the growing number of children in street situations**. This phenomenon, which is particularly visible in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo, reveals deep divisions in these societies and calls into question their collective ability to protect the most vulnerable.

The approach adopted in this study is based on General Comment No. 21 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017), which defines «children in street situations» in an inclusive and nuanced manner. This definition encompasses:

- Children who depend on the street to live or work, alone, with peers or with their families;
- A wider population of children who have formed close ties with public spaces, and for whom the street is an essential part of their identity and daily life.

This broader population includes children who occasionally live or work on the street, as well as children who do not live or work on the street, but regularly accompany their peers, siblings or family on the street.

Terms used in the past to refer to children in street situations include 'street children', 'street kids', 'runaways', 'abandoned children', 'children who live or work on the streets', 'homeless children' and 'children with links to the street'¹.

In line with this United Nations definition, *Apprentis d'Auteuil* considers that the term 'children in street situations' covers several realities experienced by children:

- Sleeping on the streets and no longer having contact with their families;
- Living on the streets with their families;
- Alternating between the street and shelters;
- Working on the streets or spending most of their time there and returning home in the evening.

This diversity of situations requires a detailed understanding of individual circumstances. The children in question differ in terms of age, gender, background, abilities and experiences, which results in different needs and a range of survival strategies.

Faced with the complexity of this social reality, the *Apprentis d'Auteuil* Foundation and its partners, including the Réseau des Intervenants sur le Phénomène des Enfants en Rupture (REIPER), the Foyer de l'Espérance, the Chaîne des Foyers Saint-Nicodème (CFSN), LBM / Centre Ndako Ya Biso (NYB), Œuvre de Reclassement et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue (ORPER); Œuvre de Suivi, d'Éducation, et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue (OSEPER); Vivre et Travailler Autrement (VTA); Aide à l'Enfance Défavorisée (AED); Jeunes au Soleil (JOS); **have initiated in-depth socio-anthropological research as part of the ARCADE programme** (*Accompagnement et Renforcement des Capacités et Actions Dédiées aux Enfants en situation de rue* - Support, capacity building and actions dedicated to children in street situations.). This approach favours a participatory methodology that makes children's voices a focal point of the analysis.

1. Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 21 (2017) on children in street situations*. 2017 <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g17/170/35/pdf/g1717035.pdf>

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research has four complementary objectives:

- **To draw up a socio-anthropological profile** of children in street situations and their families in the three countries studied;
- **To gather the voices of the children in question**, their perceptions of the obstacles to the fulfilment of their rights, and their proposals for change aimed at families, communities, law enforcement agencies and authorities;
- **To compile existing data** on children in street situations in the Central African region;
- **To examine national and regional legislative frameworks** and existing institutional protection mechanisms.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is structured around three complementary analytical axes:

- **The first section outlines the methodology used and the challenges encountered** during data collection.
- **The second section presents the results of the socio-anthropological survey** and paints a picture of children in street situations and their families, while faithfully conveying their messages to decision-makers;
- **The third section offers a comparative analysis of the legal and institutional environments** in the three countries in question.

This study aims to contribute to a **better understanding of a complex phenomenon in order to inform public policy and guide the actions of actors in the field** towards greater effectiveness and respect for children's rights.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
MASSAH	Ministère des Affaires Sociales, de la Solidarité et de l'Action Humanitaire Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Humanitarian Action (Republic of the Congo)
MINAS	Ministère des Affaires Sociales - Ministry of Social Affairs (Cameroon – Democratic Republic of the Congo)
REEJER	Réseau des Éducateurs d'Enfants et Jeunes de la Rue Network of Educators of Children in street situations and Youth
REIPER	Réseau des Intervenants sur le Phénomène des Enfants en Rupture [Network of Stakeholders Working with Children in Crisis] (Republic of the Congo)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

SECTION 1

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH & CHALLENGES FACED



RELEVANCE OF THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

- ▶ **Extensive geographical coverage:** 6 sites investigated in 3 countries.
- ▶ **Significant sample:** 543 participants in qualitative activities (372 children in street situations and 171 community members).
- ▶ **33 reception centres mobilised** for the quantitative survey.
- ▶ **Diversity of perspectives:** children, community, institutions.
- ▶ **Ethical rigour:** protection of participating children

1. A PRIMARILY QUALITATIVE APPROACH, ENRICHED BY QUANTITATIVE DATA

This study relied primarily on qualitative methods in order to explore the complexity of the phenomenon under study. Through in-depth interviews (individual interviews, group discussions) and field observations, the research made it possible to understand the meanings that the various actors attribute to their practices, as well as the underlying logic of their interactions with their social, cultural and political environment.

A quantitative online survey was also carried out to provide recent and measurable data on the position of children in street situations in Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although secondary, this approach helped to contextualise and reinforce the qualitative results. The combination of the two methods provided a nuanced understanding supported by quantifiable data, while maintaining a clear focus on the qualitative analysis.

2. INVESTIGATION SITES

The following sites were visited:

Republic of the Congo	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Cameroon
Brazzaville Pointe Noire Kingoué (Bouenza Department)	Kinshasa	Douala Yaoundé

They were chosen based on the number of children in street situations who live there.

3. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION: OVERVIEW

Comparative table of collection activities

Country	Focus groups	Individual interviews	Total activities
Republic of the Congo	16	56	72
Democratic Republic of the Congo	16	41	57
Cameroon	18	32	50
TOTAL	50	129	179

Breakdown of participants by category

Country	Children in street situations	Community members	Total participants
Republic of the Congo	102	68	170
Democratic Republic of the Congo	151	45	196
Cameroon	119	58	177
TOTAL	372	171	543

Profile of community members surveyed

Community members surveyed include:

- educators;
- parents of children in street situations (of both sexes);
- former children in street situations;
- administrative authorities;
- heads of care centres;
- neighbourhood leaders;
- religious leaders.

Other stakeholders consulted

- Relevant ministries;
- International organisations.

4. QUANTITATIVE ONLINE SURVEY EN LIGNE

Period: 6 August - 9 September 2024.

Objective: to rank the significant elements identified during the qualitative interviews in order of importance.

Targets: managers of care centres (in order to obtain an overview of the trends and dynamics affecting children in street situations).

Thirty-three care centres responded to the survey: thirteen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, eleven in the Republic of the Congo and nine in Cameroon.

5. RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

Hierarchical structure

- One Head of mission: socio-anthropologist, expert in community development and change management;
- One Subject area expert: sociologist specialised in child protection;
- Three teams of local investigators (one per country).

Structure of national teams

Each national team comprises:

- One national focal point (coordinator);
- Four investigators (2 men, 2 women) with proficiency in the relevant local languages.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A code of conduct for the protection of children has been published, approved by the mission sponsor, and signed by all investigators who worked on this study.

7. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN GATHERING INFORMATION

Institutional constraints

- **Long response times** from institutional officials.
- **Insufficiently updated institutional data in the three countries:** much of the data is at least two years old, due to a lack of regular updates.

Technical constraints

- **Difficulties accessing IT equipment** in several care centres.
 - Lack of computer skills;
 - Inadequate material and technical conditions.
- **Impact on the online survey:** reduced participation by certain centres.

SECTION 2

CROSS-ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL DYNAMICS OF THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS IN THE THREE COUNTRIES



1. EXTENT OF THE PHENOMENON AND CHANGING DYNAMICS

Numbers tripling over the last 20 years

The phenomenon of children in street situations is growing significantly in all three countries, with **numbers tripling in some cases over the last 20 years**:

- **Republic of the Congo**: from 1,900 children in 2003² to **at least 5,000-5,500** today, according to national authorities³. Those working in the field believe that the reality may even exceed these official figures, as they do not take into account children in secondary localities such as Dolisie, Nkayi, Bouenza, Lékoumou, Likouala, etc

- **Cameroon**: there are at least 1,500 children in street situations in the country, according to the Minister of Social Affairs⁴. Those working in the field estimate the number to be **around 5,000** (conservative estimates) because all 10 regions of Cameroon have children in street situations.

- **Democratic Republic of the Congo**: from 18,097 children in 2006 to around 25,000 currently, according to civil society. Some actors (notably those in charge of care centres) cite figures of **50,000 to 60,000**.

Common challenges in measuring the phenomenon

All three countries suffer from **a severe lack of official data**. Only Cameroon has had a national reference system since 2017, administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), which publishes quarterly reports. This shortcoming is a major weakness in child protection systems in Central Africa

Insufficient care accommodation capacity

There is a significant mismatch between needs and the supply of accommodation in all three countries:

- **Kinshasa**: 1% of needs covered⁶;
- **Republic of the Congo**: approximately 5% of needs covered⁷;
- **Cameroon**: maximum 5% of needs covered⁸.

2. SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROFILES OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

A. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Children in street situations have diverse profiles, but there are commonalities in all three countries:

- ▶ **Abused children**: Violence against children is widespread in Central Africa: 80% of children under the age of 14 are victims of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo⁹, 85% of 3-4 year olds in the Republic of the Congo¹⁰, and 92% in Cameroon¹¹.
- ▶ **Children with physical and/or mental disabilities**: These children often represent a significant challenge for their families in terms of care. They are often victims of abuse, neglect and/or rejection.

1. Census conducted in 2003 by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and UNICEF. 2. Action Plan for the National Social Action Policy 2023-2026. P.10. 3. Speaking on the Day of the African Child in 2022, Ms Pauline Irène Nguéné, Minister of Social Affairs, stated: "More than 1,500 children and young people live on the streets of Cameroon, particularly in Douala and Yaoundé." 4. Census conducted by REEJER (Network of Educators of Children and Youth in Street Situations), with the support of UNICEF. 5. According to REEJER, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 6. According to the REIPER, Republic of the Congo. 7. According to officials from shelters interviewed. 8. UNICEF, UNICEF *Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2018*. Activity report. 2019. 9. According to the 2014-2015 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). 10. Naudin, C., Gatti, V., Kounou, K. B., Bagnéken, C. O., Ntjam, M. C., Clément, M. É., & Brodard, F. (2023). Physically Violent Parental Practices: A Cross-Cultural Study in Cameroon, Switzerland, and Togo. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 1-13.

- ▶ **Children accused of witchcraft:** This phenomenon is more prevalent in the two Congos than in Cameroon. In 2011, UNICEF reported that 70% of children in street situations they had helped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo said they had been accused of witchcraft¹². Some of the shelters consulted in this study said that up to 30% of the children they house had been accused of witchcraft.
- ▶ **Children seeking independence:** There are also children who live on the streets without having a particularly difficult family background. Some of them say they went to the streets to imitate friends they used to hang out with, or out of a desire for independence and autonomy.
- ▶ **Orphaned children:** There has been a weakening of family ties, meaning that orphaned children are increasingly less able to rely on the extended family to take care of them.
- ▶ **Children who are victims of trafficking :** Most of these children have been victims of sexual exploitation, forced labour or domestic servitude.

B. PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Children develop similar psychological characteristics in all three countries. They demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of adversity and develop defence mechanisms that make some of their behaviours appear problematic.

- ▶ **Exceptional creativity and resourcefulness:** they develop practical skills to find food, shelter, money, and other basic necessities. The ability to fend for oneself is a crucial skill in the survival situations in which these children generally find themselves.
- ▶ **Resilience in the face of adversity:** they demonstrate the ability to cope with and overcome difficult situations (violence in all its forms, poverty, stigmatisation, harassment, material deprivation, etc.). This resilience is often the result of coping mechanisms and ingenuity that children have learned to develop, either on their own or through contact with their peers.
- ▶ **Solidarity among peers:** they develop strong bonds with each other and show mutual support in certain circumstances, sharing resources and protection.
- ▶ **Violence sometimes as a means of expression and behaviour** (in response to emotional deprivation):

« Many of them do not know affection, they solve their problems through violence. We try to convince them that the solution is not in violence, but in love and affection. **Violence is a means of expression for them** »

Educator, Democratic Republic of the Congo

- ▶ **Distrust and concealment** (defence mechanisms): many educators have noticed that children in street situations tend to distort the truth when talking about themselves, especially during initial exchanges. This distrust/lying/concealment reflects a defensive reluctance on the part of the child.
- ▶ **High sensitivity:** children in street situations are often highly sensitive, reflecting low self-esteem caused by experiences of rejection, stigmatisation or violence. Their strong reaction to criticism or indifference may reflect an inner wound linked to a deep feeling of not being recognised or protected¹³.
- ▶ **Overemphasis on virility:** children in street situations like to boost their self-esteem, particularly by giving themselves names and adopting attitudes that they believe convey ideas of courage, strength, fearlessness, virility, etc. Some group names are revealing: "hell", "fire", "the Americans", etc. These behaviours are often the source of confusion between children in street situations and other young hooligans who commit offences and crimes on the streets.

¹². U.S. Department of States, *Democratic Republic of the Congo Report on Human Rights Practices* (2011), p.79, [online]: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/160453.pdf>. ¹³. Adler A., *L'enfant difficile. Technique de la psychologie individuelle comparée*. Paris, Éditions Payot, 1930

C. GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIAL ORIGINS OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

The phenomenon is **mainly local in nature** in all three countries: 80% of children in street situations come from the city where they live and its surroundings. They tend to congregate in **the most attractive economic centres**, creating an urban paradox where the most developed cities also have the highest levels of vulnerability.

As for the social origins of children in street situations, **virtually all social backgrounds are affected**, albeit to varying degrees. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the most disadvantaged areas. There have been cases of children from the so-called middle class (parents who are magistrates, teachers, military personnel, etc.) who have ended up on the streets due to parental neglect and lack of attention, and/or because of the appeal of marginal lifestyles.

In terms of family background, it has been noted that the children come from a variety of family structures. Some come from polygamous families, others from single-parent families (with the mother as the primary parental authority in the vast majority of cases), and still others from blended families. A number of children were born on the streets, i.e. their parents were living on the streets when they were born; others are without parents (orphans). **More rarely, there have been cases of children in street situations whose parents still live together in a monogamous household.**

D. GENDER AND AGES OF CHILDREN LIVING ON THE STREETS

**Approximately
20% girls
in all three
countries**

Girls are less visible on the streets than boys because they develop different survival strategies, often involving sexual exploitation (relationships with men, survival sex) and have more alternatives available to them (foster care, domestic work, etc.).

All age groups are represented on the streets, with increased difficulties in keeping those over 14 in shelters due to a stronger desire for freedom and independence in this category.

E. EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

All levels of education are represented on the streets, from "no education" to "secondary school level", with **the vast majority having never attended school or having left school early**. This diversity reveals that **schools do not provide sufficient protection in the three countries**, particularly for secondary school pupils, who should have the tools to seek help when needed.

Common barriers to schooling for children in street situations

After several years spent on the streets, children who want to return to school face numerous obstacles:

- ▶ **Lack of material support:** difficulty in covering the costs associated with returning to school (uniforms, school supplies, etc.).
- ▶ **Priority given to survival needs:** children living on the streets may be more concerned with finding food, shelter and basic amenities than with schooling, although a number of them express a desire to return to school or undertake vocational training.
- ▶ **Lack of identity documents:** Many children in street situations do not have civil status documents, and the centres that try to help them obtain these documents do not receive any special assistance from the public authorities, which require them to pay all the costs involved.

- ▶ **Age/school level gap:** after years spent on the streets, some children find themselves older than the children in the classes corresponding to their level, which sometimes discourages them from returning to school.
- ▶ **Self-exclusion and stigmatisation:** some children internalise the stigma they face and refuse to return to school out of shame or mistrust.
- ▶ **Health problems - illnesses that prevent them from attending mainstream schools:** children in street situations sometimes suffer from illnesses that discourage them from returning to school (skin diseases, trauma, drug addiction, etc.).
- ▶ **Lack of specialised facilities:** none of the three countries has school facilities with operating procedures and programmes adapted to the characteristics of children in street situations.

In all three countries, educational institutions could become "protective ecosystems" by :

- Making **free public education** a reality;
- Systematising **knowledge of social services** amongst students;
- Training teachers in **psychosocial approaches**.

3. THE SOCIETAL CAUSES OF THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

A. A WEB OF FACTORS UNDERLYING THE PHENOMENON

The study reveals a complex web of causes, structured over four levels:

- **Individual level:** the child themselves;
- **Family level:** the immediate family unit;
- **Community level:** the immediate social environment and the wider community;
- **Institutional level:** state structures.

Each level contains vulnerability factors that combine with those of other levels to create a **causal structure** that predisposes the child to ending up on the streets. Vulnerability factors fall into five main categories:

Categories	VULNERABILITY FACTORS
POVERTY	Material, moral and intellectual poverty
VIOLENCE	Physical, psychological and sexual violence, kidnapping for trafficking, social stigmatisation, harassment, accusations of witchcraft, armed conflict, etc.
INDIFFERENCE	Community: unprotective community; institutional: lack of involvement by public authorities, absence of effective protection frameworks, etc.
NEGLECT	Family and social: family lacking in affection, uncaring, unwilling to take responsibility for the child, etc.
FATALITY	Death of parents or guardians, divorce, natural disasters, etc.

ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT: A REGIONAL SCOURGE

A phenomenon amplified by religious superstitions

In the three countries studied, accusations of witchcraft against children are a major factor in their arrival on the streets (more so in the two Congos than in Cameroon). Christian churches known as the Revivalist churches play a decisive role in legitimising fears about children's witchcraft powers and organising paid "exorcisms". These institutions spread the idea that child witches can cause illness, accidents and death, transform themselves into animals and enter their victims' homes. In Cameroon, the phenomenon also exists in Muslim communities in the north of the country, where children accused of witchcraft are often enslaved by the marabouts who are supposed to exorcise them.

Consequences of accusations of witchcraft against children

Accusations of witchcraft against children have serious and multifaceted consequences. Often, children are driven from their homes by their own parents or guardians, leaving them homeless and without support. Physical violence is also used against them (beatings, burns, or other forms of torture) in order to "purify" them or force them to confess to acts of witchcraft. In some extreme cases, accused children are killed by their families or members of the community. Those who escape murder are often stigmatised and marginalised in their communities. **The psychological trauma suffered often lasts well beyond the child's stay in a care centre.**

Are children accused of witchcraft scapegoats for societies in crisis?

Analysts consider accusations of witchcraft against children to be false pretexts for abandoning them, particularly in blended families or families in economic difficulty. Often, these accusations reveal a triple crisis: economic, institutional and spiritual, pushing communities towards mysticism to explain their difficulties.



4. MAJOR ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING CHILDREN LIVING ON THE STREETS

A. HOW CHILDREN END UP ON THE STREETS

Two types of departure to the streets are observed in the three countries:

- ▶ **Sudden departures:** caused by tragic events linked to death (death of parents, war/insecurity, etc.).
- ▶ **Gradual departures:** gradual development of a connection with the street. The child becomes attached to the street, familiarises themselves with it, assesses the resources available there and their accessibility, etc., and repeatedly goes back and forth between the street and their family before leaving for a longer period.

B. ARRIVAL ON THE STREETS

Integration into groups

Survival on the streets necessarily requires integration into a protective group. This process involves rituals and allows the child to rebuild a positive identity, even if it is sometimes accompanied by exploitation.

Survival strategies and daily challenges

On the streets, children survive as best they can, depending on the opportunities available to them. The activities they engage in seem to follow a pattern of specialisation according to age:

- ▶ **Under 12 years old:** mainly begging;
- ▶ **13-17 years old:** manual labour, car washing, cleaning, collecting and reselling recyclable items, etc.
- ▶ **17-20 years old:** in addition to the activities carried out by 13-17 year olds, they are involved in activities related to nightlife, various types of trafficking, survival sex, etc.

Gender-specific characteristics

Boys are more visible in public spaces and engage in a variety of activities.

Girls opt for strategies of discretion and mainly engage in domestic tasks or survival sex.

Health and safety challenges

The three countries face similar problems:

- ▶ **Common diseases:** malaria, skin diseases, respiratory and sexually transmitted infections, dental problems, psychological disorders, etc.
- ▶ **Widespread violence:** physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse.
- ▶ **Drug addiction:** use of drugs to "stave off hunger", to give themselves courage, fit in with groups, or lose their inhibitions so they can perform certain difficult tasks that sometimes involve embarrassment or shame (rummaging through rubbish bins, sleeping with more than ten men in one night, burglary, etc.).

Relations with law enforcement

Testimonies reveal **systems of racketeering and sexual exploitation by certain law enforcement officers** in all three countries, with girls being particularly vulnerable to such abuse.

The specific case of girls

Girls living on the streets face specific challenges in all three countries:

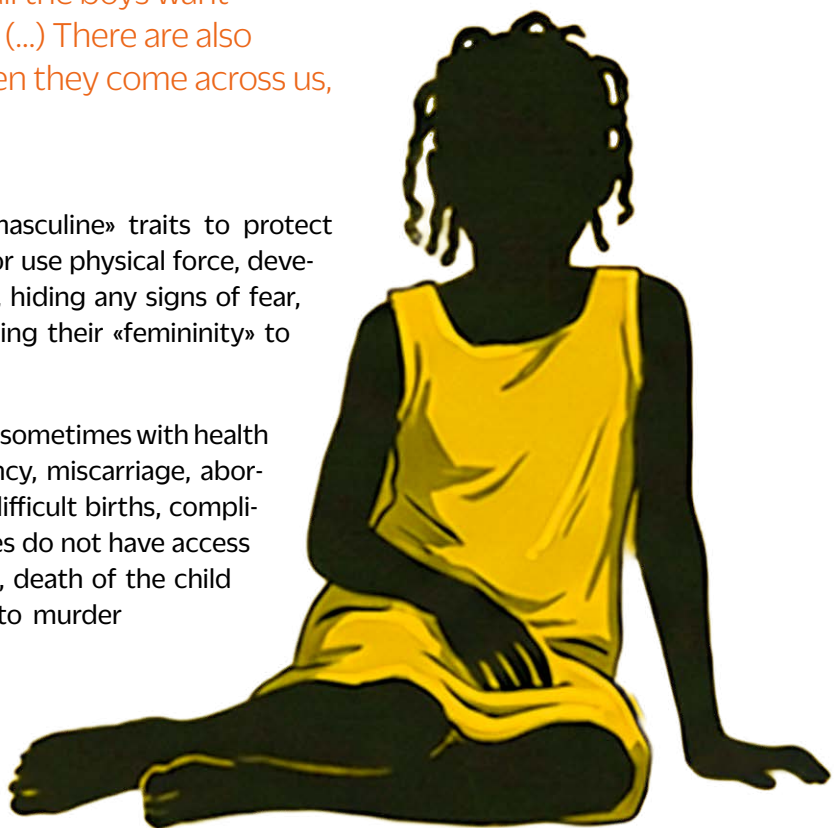
- ▶ **Systematic sexual assault** by peers, adults in the community and law enforcement officers;

« When you're a girl, you can't escape sexual assault; that's why girls don't like sleeping on the streets; all the boys want to sleep with you, even very old adults. (...) There are also police officers who sleep with girls; when they come across us, they touch our breasts or buttocks »

17-year-old girl in a street situation, Douala

- ▶ **Identity paradox:** obligation to adopt «masculine» traits to protect themselves (showing a willingness to fight or use physical force, developing an aggressive manner of expression, hiding any signs of fear, wearing loose-fitting clothes), while exploiting their «femininity» to access resources;

- ▶ **Early motherhood:** unwanted pregnancies, sometimes with health and social complications (denial of pregnancy, miscarriage, abortions performed in unhygienic conditions, difficult births, complications in newborns (many premature babies do not have access to adequate care), abandonment of infants, death of the child and/or mother and occasionally attempts to murder the baby, etc.)



5. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

The three countries share a **widespread stigmatisation of children in street situations**, who are perceived as “thugs”, “sorcerers”, “bandits”, “thieves”, etc. This stigmatisation is accompanied by a **culture of tolerance of the phenomenon**, as if it were a normal part of urban life.

« Children are rejected by the community. They are seen as thieves, family sorcerers, bandits, difficult children, stubborn children. Some in the community equate them with *Kuluna*¹⁴. People mistrust them when they see them and keep their distance. »

Church pastor, Kinshasa

« These children are stigmatised and considered to be little bandits, delinquents, sometimes bringers of bad luck. It is important to raise awareness in the community in order to put an end to these negative perceptions »

Priest, Douala

14. Term used to refer to bandits; very dangerous individuals.

6. INDIFFERENCE ON THE PART OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: A REGIONAL CONSTANT

Lack of governmental commitment

In all three countries, protection workers deplore **the indifference that the political authorities show towards children in street situations**. They are particularly criticised for allocating derisory resources to child protection and taking few concrete initiatives.

« The state is procrastinating. Appeals are being made, but it is not easy to convince the state to invest in this issue »

Centre Manager, Pointe Noire

« The state has given up; it is indifferent to the issue of children in street situations. It does not support us »

Centre Manager, Kinshasa

7. CAREER PROSPECTS FOR CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

The children in street situations we met generally consider their time on the streets to be temporary and have ambitions for socio-professional reintegration. Their ambitions vary according to age and gender, but show similarities in the three countries studied.

Among boys, ambitions range from modest professions (drivers, mechanics, soldiers, tailors) to prestigious occupations (magistrates, doctors, lawyers, professional footballers, businessmen).

Among girls, we find the same distribution between modest and high ambitions, with some specificities: some are oriented towards religious orders or prefer to start a family. The professions they envisage include teacher, doctor, nurse, seamstress, pastry chef, model, market gardener and beautician.

The main motivations are the search for **quick financial gains and the acquisition of social prestige**. However, most lack concrete strategies to achieve their ambitions and require structured support to develop the necessary personal discipline.

In most cases, care centres offer multidimensional support, including **psychological, educational and professional components**. However, they face structural constraints related to **insufficient resources** for post-secondary support and an inability to meet **community demand**, which exceeds their capacity to intervene.



8. CARE CENTRES: OPERATION AND CHALLENGES

Reasons for entering centres

Children generally enter centres when they feel they have more to lose on the streets than in a centre. At this stage, they are in a favourable psychological state for institutional support. The reasons for entering care centres are the same in all three countries:

- Seeking shelter and escaping poor living conditions on the streets;
- Seeking opportunities for family and social reintegration;
- Access to healthcare and regular meals;
- Seeking opportunities for schooling and vocational training.

Children particularly appreciate the security, availability of food, sociability and restoration of self-confidence that the centres can offer. The testimonies collected in the three countries converge on these points.

Constraints common to all three countries

The care centres all suffer from a lack of financial resources. The public authorities generally do not grant subsidies, endowments or exemptions from charges. The educators, although dedicated, consider themselves to be poorly paid and sometimes lack professional training. This situation sometimes compromises the quality of care provided to the children.

The needs of care centres

The common needs identified are:

- State funding;
- Supply of sanitary products, pharmaceuticals and basic necessities;
- Infrastructure rehabilitation;
- Educational and IT equipment;
- Improving the professional capacities of staff, etc.

The issue of **improving the skills of centre staff** is frequently raised, as they have to deal with complex situations (adolescent sexuality, homosexuality, violence, etc.) without specialised training.

Resistance of some children to integration into centres

Several factors explain why some children are reluctant to leave the streets and join the centres:

- ▶ **Attachment to personal freedom and financial independence:** children who are used to earning money and spending it freely perceive the centres as "prisons" that limit their freedom. This issue is particularly pronounced among adolescents aged 14 and over.
- ▶ **The desire to be sexually active:** the virtual impossibility of having an active sex life in the centres is a major obstacle. Centre managers in Pointe Noire and Kinshasa report runaways motivated by this frustration.
- ▶ **The taboo of homosexuality:** a phenomenon that is largely overlooked but present in all three countries, homosexuality (called "MUKUKULE" in Pointe Noire) drives some children to prefer the streets, where they can express their sexuality without constraints.

9. FAMILY REUNIFICATION: APPROACHES AND RESULTS

Positive outlook

- ▶ In all three countries, most centres are actively working to reunite the children in their care with their families, with encouraging results. The children maintain varying degrees of family ties (visits, telephone contact, occasional stays), ranging in frequency from once a week to once a year.
- ▶ **The centres support families through microloans**, financial donations to start small businesses, donations of food kits and school supplies, etc. A centre in Pointe Noire reports a 98% success rate (49 successful family reunifications out of 50), while a manager in Kinshasa notes that *"family reunification can be easier to achieve if the cause of the separation was poverty"*.

Exemplary methodology

- ▶ The Lisanga mpo ya Bokolisi Mboka centre in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has developed a comprehensive methodology¹⁵ covering on-site interventions, admission criteria, reunification procedures and stabilisation tools, which should be shared across the three countries.

Obstacles to family reunification

The obstacles to family reunification are similar in all three countries.

- ▶ **On the family side**, the following reasons are cited:

- **Superstitious beliefs:** persistent accusations of witchcraft;
- **Stigmatisation of the child's character:** faced with a lack of educational tools, some parents prefer to think that the child has a difficult, unmanageable character;
- **Poverty:** the family's financial inability to take in the child;
- **Persistent family conflicts:** hostile environment.

A mother from Pointe Noire illustrates the economic dilemma: *"At the centre, he eats three times a day. Will he agree to return to a home where we have to sell in the morning to be able to eat in the evening?"*

- ▶ **On the children's side**, the following reasons are cited:

- **Trauma:** persistent memories of abuse suffered in the family;
- **Better living conditions at the centre:** cost/benefit analysis unfavourable to returning to the family;
- **Loss of family habits:** adaptation to life on the streets;
- **Family poverty:** the child's reluctance to return to suffering.

A mother from Brazzaville testifies: *"My child has lost trust in his family (...) he sees us as strangers."*

Analysis reveals that the three countries share the same structural challenges. The centres need to strengthen their staff's psychosocial support skills and financial resources to develop family programmes.

The success of family reunification depends on the ability to address economic, psychological and relational issues simultaneously, requiring a specialised professional approach.

15. GODDING et MUSHIETE, *Petits bandits, petits voleurs, petits sorciers. Méthodologie du travail avec les enfants de la rue à Kinshasa*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2021

10. WAYS OFF THE STREETS FOR CHILDREN

"Unorthodox" exit: Illegal and marginal activities

The so-called "unorthodox" street exit corresponds to the involvement of children in illegal activities or activities that fall outside social norms. **Once they reach adulthood, some children become involved in illegal activities:** sexual exploitation, pimping, drug trafficking, organised crime, etc. The rise of digital technology is giving rise to new forms of exploitation: online prostitution sites, pornography, etc.

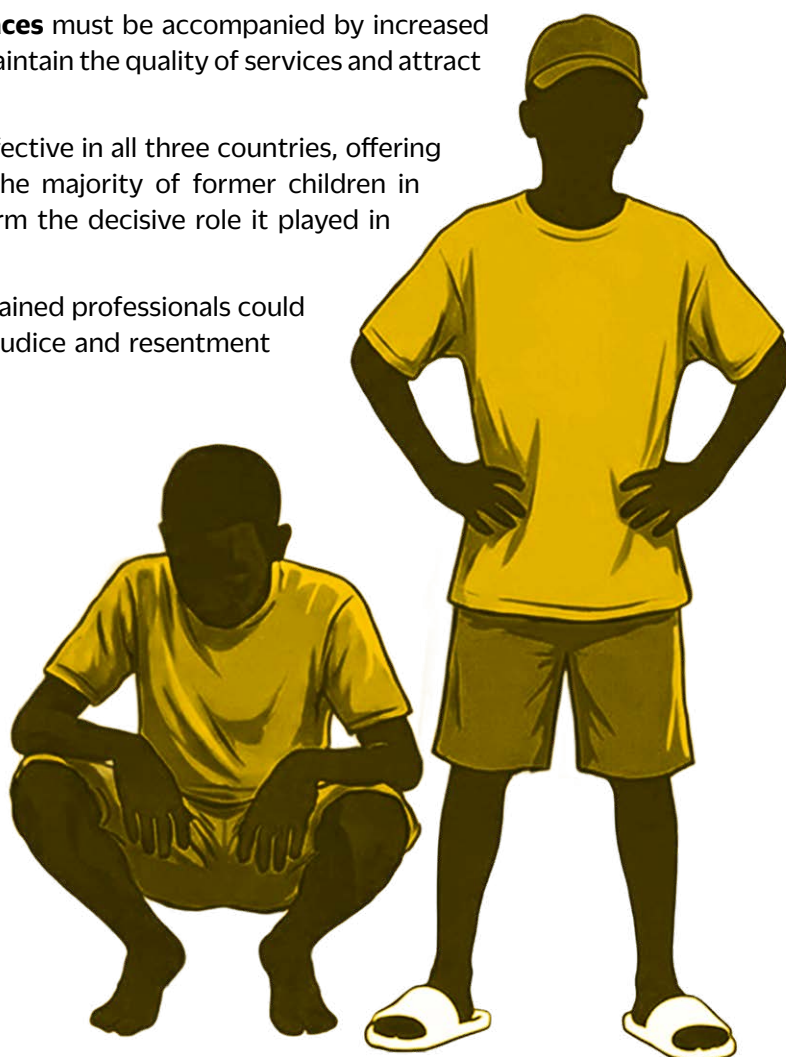
Specific national characteristics are emerging: pornography production is particularly prevalent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon, while Cameroon has seen the emergence of "no-pants cabarets"¹⁶ in the lively neighbourhoods of Douala and Yaoundé, which recruit former children in street situations.

"Orthodox" exit: conventional social reintegration

The so-called "orthodox" exit from the streets refers to an exit that complies with the laws and social norms in force; it corresponds, for example, to the integration of the child into a care centre, a foster family, their family of origin or even learning a trade.

Field workers in the three countries identify **five main factors that promote the social reintegration of children:**

- ▶ **Improving family income** is the fundamental lever, as chronic poverty is recognised as the primary cause of children living on the streets in all three countries. Centres develop programmes to help families, but their effectiveness remains limited without a substantial improvement in economic conditions.
- ▶ **Unbearable living conditions on the streets** (insecurity, malnutrition, abuse, etc.) often motivate children to enter the centres.
- ▶ **An increase in the number of places** must be accompanied by increased financial and human resources to maintain the quality of services and attract children.
- ▶ **Vocational training** has proven effective in all three countries, offering real prospects for reintegration. The majority of former children in street situations interviewed confirm the decisive role it played in their social reintegration.
- ▶ **Improving family mediation** by trained professionals could resolve the obstacles linked to prejudice and resentment that hinder reunification.



¹⁶. Striptease cabarets.

11. MESSAGES FROM CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

The children in street situations interviewed as part of the study wanted to send some messages to the political authorities in their countries and to members of their communities, including their families and the police.

To national authorities

Children in all three countries made similar requests: sanctions against negligent parents, active listening to their suffering, increased support for shelters, assistance for vulnerable families and direct humanitarian aid.

The testimonies reveal a shared feeling of institutional abandonment:

« The authorities know we exist, they see us (...) but that's where it ends. »

Boy, 17, Kinshasa

The inaccessibility of decision-makers and perceived indifference fuel frustration in all three countries.

Law enforcement

Children uniformly denounce police mistreatment, sexual abuse and lack of protection. Testimonies converge on the perception of law enforcement as **a threat rather than a protection:**

« For me, seeing them and seeing members of rival groups is the same thing »

Boy, 16, Yaoundé

However, some report that there are benevolent police officers who refer them to support services and treat them fairly well. They would like these positive attitudes to become the norm in their daily interactions with law enforcement.

To the community and families

Children in all three countries denounce **widespread social contempt and community indifference**. They see themselves as "ghosts" or "rats" that people want to get rid of at public events.

With regard to their families, they call for **an end to abuse and for more affection**. Accusations of witchcraft, particularly mentioned in the Congolese context, and excessive violence have a profound impact on these children. The ease with which families separate from their children raises questions about emotional bonds:

« Parents don't seem to be attached to their children »

Girl, 15, Pointe Noire

Despite the different national contexts, **the issues and aspirations of children in street situations show remarkable convergence in the three countries studied**. Poverty, domestic violence, and institutional and social indifference are common challenges that require coordinated responses tailored to each national context

SECTION 3

CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS OF THE THREE COUNTRIES



1. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: COMPREHENSIVE BUT NOT VERY EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION

The three countries share a similar international legal framework, having all ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. However, there are notable differences:

- ▶ **Specific legislation:** Only the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Law No. 009/001 of 2009) and the Republic of the Congo (Law No. 04-2010 of 2010) have a law dedicated to protecting children, unlike Cameroon, where these provisions are scattered across several texts.
- ▶ **Strategic documents:** Conversely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the only country without a specific national strategic document, while Cameroon has a National Child Protection Policy Document 2017-2026 and the Republic of the Congo has a National Social Action Plan 2023-2026.

In all three countries, the enforcement of the laws remains inadequate due to a lack of implementing decrees and sufficient budgets.

2. OCCURRENCE OF SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY RELATING TO CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

- ▶ **Republic of the Congo:** stands out for its explicit recognition of the term "children in street situations" in its legislation, particularly in Articles 6, 13 and 44 of its child protection law.
- ▶ **Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo:** favour broader terminology such as "vulnerable children" or "children in difficult circumstances", referring to children in street situations only indirectly..

3. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN FAVOUR OF CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

None of the three countries has any large-scale independent initiatives. Existing projects (LISUNGI¹⁷ et TELEMA¹⁸ in the Republic of the Congo, PAN OEVI¹⁹ in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, PIJER²⁰ in Cameroon) are largely dependent on international donors and only incidentally relate to children in street situations.

The three governments recognise the link between children in street situations and family breakdown, but this has not been translated into concrete actions to support families.

Cameroon has taken an important step forward with the establishment in 2017 of a national data collection system on vulnerable children, managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

4. INSUFFICIENT FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- ▶ **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** budget implementation rate of 33.93% for 2020-2022, with 84.38% of expenditure allocated to salaries and only 2.16% to investment.
- ▶ **Cameroon:** virtual budgetary abandonment with implementation rates of 0% in 2021 and 1.10% in 2022 for child protection.
- ▶ **Republic of the Congo:** stable but insufficient budget at 0.8% of public expenditure (less than 0.3% of GDP), well below the average for middle-income countries (>1% of GDP).

¹⁷ The LISUNGI project is a social safety net system designed to provide financial support to 10,000 households in seven localities in the departments of Pool, Kouilou, and Cuvette. ¹⁸ The TELEMA project supports vulnerable people in finding employment by financing income-generating activities. ¹⁹ The National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The main objective was to improve the care of OVCs in the country. ²⁰ PIJER – the Project for the Reinsertion and Socio-economic Inclusion of Street Youths is a programme aimed at removing young people from the streets, training them in trades, developing their life skills and facilitating their access to employment, entrepreneurship or further training in order to offer them sustainable prospects for the future.



The three countries present a similar paradox: **rich international and national legislation on the one hand, but glaring weaknesses in implementation on the other.**

The Republic of the Congo stands out for its better recognition of street children in its terminology, while Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo show complementary shortcomings (lack of specific legislation in one case, lack of a national strategy in the other).

Chronic underfunding and **dependence on international donors** are major challenges common to all three states

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATION 1 : IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY CHILD PROTECTION LAWS

Objective: To make existing laws truly effective.

► **For the Democratic Republic of the Congo:**

- **Urgent publication** of decrees implementing the child protection law
- Prioritise three areas: immediate protection of children (emergency procedures to remove children from the streets and refer them to safe centres), access to fundamental rights (education, medical care, social security, etc.), institutional coordination (clear roles for social services, the justice system, the police and civil society organisations).
- Acceleration of the regulatory process to make up for institutional delays.

► **For the Republic of the Congo:**

- **Effective implementation** of the two new mechanisms: the observatory for children at risk and the early warning systems for children at risk (human resources, budgets, equipment);
- Development of procedure manuals and management tools for the alert system and the observatory, with the mobilisation of the financial resources necessary for their implementation;
- Training participants involved in these mechanisms;
- Publication of the remaining implementing decrees that are still absent;
- Establishing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these structures.

RECOMMENDATION 2 : NATIONAL CENSUSES AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Objective: Establish a reliable database to guide public policy.

- Conduct comprehensive censuses in the three countries, coordinated by the ministries of social affairs, with UNICEF;
- Establish a national vulnerability reference system in the two Congos;
- Develop a secure platform for information sharing between actors in the two Congos. The examples of the *Child Protection Information Management System* (CPIMS) in Kenya and the *National Child Protection Register* (NCPR) in South Africa can serve as sources of inspiration.

Cameroon has taken an important step forward with the establishment of a national data collection system on vulnerable children. **The Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **the Republic of the Congo** should be able to follow suit in this area. With regard to the Republic of the Congo, MASSAH has signed a letter of intent with Both Ends Believing (BEB) to set up software for collecting data on children living outside the family environment.

RECOMMENDATION 3 : COMBATING VIOLENCE AND STIGMATISATION AGAINST CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES

Objective: To promote a lasting change in the social perceptions and behaviours that lead to violence and stigmatisation against children in street situations.

- Develop national campaigns to combat domestic violence;
- Raise awareness of the stigmatisation of children (particularly accusations of witchcraft) and its consequences;
- Train religious and community leaders on children's rights;
- Establish community monitoring mechanisms for violence against children and stigmatisation against them;
- Regularly assess all the activities implemented.

The trivialisation of violence against children, in its physical, psychological and emotional forms, as well as the rise in accusations of witchcraft against them, constitute serious attacks on their physical and moral integrity and contribute to children finding themselves in street situations.

RECOMMENDATION 4 : PREVENTIVE SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES

Objective: Support vulnerable families to prevent children from dropping out of school, family separation and street life.

- Establishing targeted social safety nets;
- Conditional cash transfer programmes (making cash transfers conditional on children's school attendance and regular health check-ups);
- Microfinance and income-generating activities;
- Food vouchers or nutritional kits for families experiencing severe food insecurity;
- Free essential services: basic healthcare, school dinners and supplies.

It appears that the issue of children in street situations is largely linked to the socio-economic conditions of their families. In such a context, **it is important, as a preventive measure, to support vulnerable families** so that they do not fall into situations that are detrimental to their children.

RECOMMENDATION 5 : FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CARE FACILITIES IN THE THREE COUNTRIES

Objective: To improve the quality and capacity of care for children in street situations.

- -Grant public subsidies to approved care centres;
- -When granting aid, give priority to care centres that are already operational but underfunded ;
- -Guarantee free healthcare and civil status documents for children in street situations;
- -Train staff in best practices for supporting children.

Financial support for care centres can consist of **a combination of subsidies** (granted on the basis of the specific needs of each approved centre) and **payments made by the institutions that place children** in the institutions that take them in. A decree or ministerial order may determine the daily rates for the care of a child, as well as for certain specific support activities (vocational training, purchase of medicines, psychological support, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION 6 : ESTABLISH SPECIALISED UNITS WITHIN THE LAW ENFORCEMENT

AGENCIES IN EACH COUNTRY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

AND THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

BASED ON THE MODEL OF THE CHILD PROTECTION AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION SQUADS (PEPVS) DEVELOPED IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Objective: To professionalise the intervention of law enforcement agencies with children in street situations.

- Train officers in children's rights and emergency protocols, including those of the PEPVS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Organise regular training sessions to maintain officers' skills;
- Establish collaboration protocols with care centres;
- Allocate a budget (amount to be determined) for equipment, training, external collaborations, etc.

The phenomenon of children in street situations is complex and can only be **properly addressed by professionals who are aware of and trained in this issue.**

RECOMMENDATION 7 : ESTABLISH DETOXIFICATION PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM DRUG ADDICTION IN THE THREE COUNTRIES

Objective: To offer an integrated response to addiction issues among children in street situations, combining medical and psychosocial support with socio-professional reintegration.

- Develop a network of specialised multidisciplinary centres (doctors, psychologists, social workers, community and religious leaders, etc.) for the comprehensive treatment of drug addiction, including screening, medical follow-up, psychosocial support and socio-professional reintegration.
- Train professionals involved in the project in validated therapeutic approaches;
- Mobilise partnerships with hospitals, local associations, and vocational training services.

The drug addiction that traps some children in street situations deprives them of the psychological and moral resources they need to engage in viable projects to get off the streets. **This is an issue that requires specialised skills that the state can help them acquire.**

RECOMMENDATION 8 : SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Objective: Align resources with stated ambitions.

- Increase the budgets of social affairs ministries to **1% of GDP**;
 - Create a national fund dedicated to vulnerable children;
 - Develop public-private partnerships to mobilise resources.

CONCLUSION



This socio-anthropological study conducted in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo reveals the multidimensional complexity of the phenomenon of children in street situations. Beyond the converging structural factors – poverty, armed conflict, family breakdown and rapid urbanisation – that characterise these three contexts, the analysis highlights individual trajectories marked by remarkable resilience and sophisticated coping strategies.

The accounts collected testify to the children's ability to develop informal solidarity networks and negotiate their place in urban spaces, thus revealing their status as social players in their own right. **This highlights the need to rethink interventions based on their own resources and aspirations.**

The institutional overview paints a mixed picture: while legislative progress can be observed in all three countries, the absence of implementing decrees fifteen years after the enactment of specific laws (with the exception of Cameroon, which has a national policy without a dedicated legal framework) illustrates the persistent gap between political intentions and effective implementation. This situation calls for a rethinking of approaches, focusing on the creation of sustainable institutional mechanisms, a coordinated mobilisation of resources and a genuine commitment from local communities.

The central role of actors on the ground, pillars of possible transformation

However, it is in the daily work of social workers, civil society organisations, educators and other local players that the most tangible hope lies. These actors in the field have developed expertise based on three fundamental pillars:

Family mediation, which forms the basis of their intervention, helps to dismantle the stigma and divisions that have led to exclusion. Through patient processes of dialogue and reconciliation, these professionals manage to overcome accusations of witchcraft, abuse and other family traumas, gradually restoring the essential links between a child and their original environment.

Psychosocial support is the second component of this integrated approach. By restoring self-esteem and working on rebuilding identity, these professionals enable children to look beyond their immediate survival and reconnect with their aspirations for the future. This therapeutic dimension, adapted to local cultural specificities, proves decisive in breaking with the logic of street life.

Finally, socio-economic integration brings this transformation to fruition through innovative programmes combining catch-up schooling and contextualised vocational training. These programmes offer concrete alternatives to subsistence activities, opening up prospects for economic empowerment and sustainable social integration.

Fragile successes in the face of systemic challenges

Documented successes show that **reintegration is possible** when intervention is rooted in a detailed understanding of local cultural and social dynamics. **Actors in the field embody a form of creative resistance in the face of institutional abandonment**, inventing solutions on a daily basis that are adapted to the realities they encounter.

Although their efforts often face obstacles, such as precarious funding, a lack of coherent public policies, and community resistance towards children who are often perceived as definitively "lost", **their specialised expertise should be recognised and supported by public authorities.**

Towards recognition of expertise in the field

The work of these local players fundamentally challenges collective responsibilities towards young people abandoned by traditional protection systems. Their daily practice, informed by an intimate knowledge of local realities, constitutes a laboratory for social innovation that deserves to be valued and made systematic.

The future of care for children in street situations will largely depend on the ability to integrate this field expertise into coherent national strategies, combining the urgency of humanitarian intervention with the demands of social justice. This means moving beyond the logic of one-off projects to build sustainable protection ecosystems, where the experience of local players informs and enriches public policy.

This study therefore calls for institutional recognition of these unsung professionals, whose daily commitment is shaping a more inclusive society capable of reintegrating its most vulnerable children.

Far from being a mere palliative measure, their work paves the way for a radical overhaul of child protection approaches, rooted in local realities and driven by a transformative vision of social intervention.



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OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANISATIONS

FONDATION APPRENTIS D'AUTEUIL

From its foundation in 1866, Apprentis d'Auteuil welcomed young people in street situations in Paris. A Catholic foundation recognised as being of public utility since 1929, it now supports more than 40,000 young people and 9,000 vulnerable families in France through programmes offering shelter, education, training, integration and parenting support, enabling them to become 'men and women who stand tall'. Since expanding its international activities in 1994, the foundation has been working with a network of 70 local partner associations in 36 countries operating in the same fields of action, benefiting nearly 15,000 children and families..

Apprentis d'Auteuil provides support to its partners working with children in street situations, helping them to strengthen their skills in terms of education, integration and advocacy, as well as in terms of structure, management, governance and financial empowerment. The foundation promotes networking and the exchange of practices and knowledge between actors from different backgrounds, cultures and contexts. In line with this approach, since 2004 it has developed a training programme for educators working with children in street situations, and in 2016 it created a community of practice and knowledge dedicated to these issues. Apprentis d'Auteuil has also designed an online training course accessible to all, the 'Carnets Numériques du travail social' (Digital Social Work Notebooks)⁵, focusing in particular on supporting unaccompanied minors and children in street situations.

FONDATION APPRENTIS D'AUTEUIL INTERNATIONAL (FAAI)

Recognised as being of public utility and based in Geneva, Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International (FAAI) works to protect, educate and integrate the most vulnerable children and young people in order to help them become independent. It supports the international cooperation projects of Apprentis d'Auteuil and advocates to the United Nations for the defence of children's rights, particularly those of children in street situations. In Geneva, FAAI also carries out concrete actions on the ground for young people who have dropped out of school, namely the Birdhouse project, a restaurant promoting professional integration.

RÉSEAU DES INTERVENANTS SUR LE PHÉNOMÈNE DE L'ENFANCE EN RUPTURE (REIPER)

Réseau des Intervenants sur le Phénomène de l'Enfance en Rupture (REIPER) is the main actor in child protection in Congo. Founded in 2003, its purpose is to pool practices and knowledge, improve the continuing education of social workers, coordinate their actions, and conduct awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns with public authorities. It brings together 22 Congolese and international associations that care for vulnerable children. REIPER is also a forum for multisectoral collaboration between the community, child protection agencies, ministries and other relevant actors.

In addition, REIPER conducts outreach programmes for children on the streets of Brazzaville and, since 2014, has coordinated a local intervention unit composed of social workers and health workers, as well as a free emergency hotline.

Member organisations of the network

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| 1 Association Handicap Afrique (AHA) | 8 Association Serment Universel (ASU) |
| 2 Amour Sans Frontière (ASF) | 9 Communauté Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours (CNDPS) |
| 3 Enfance créatrice de développement (Encred) | 10 Orphelinat Saint Joseph Gaston Céleste (OSJGC) |
| 4 Action Espoir des Enfants en détresse (AEED) | 11 Orphelinat Cœur Immaculé de Marie (OCIM) |
| 5 Actions de solidarité internationale (ASI) | 12 Orphelinat Notre Dame de la Divine Miséricorde (ONDDM) |
| 6 Caritas Brazzaville | 13 Communauté Chemin de la Croix et de la Résurrection (3CR) |
| 7 Centre d'Insertion et de Réinsertion des Enfants Vulnérables (CIREV) | |

1. <https://www.apprentis-auteuil.org/nos-actions/international/protection-des-enfants-international/carnets-numeriques>

- 14** Education en Milieu Ouvert (EMO)
- 15** Compagnons des Artisans de Don Bosco (CADB)
- 16** Centre d'Accueil des mineurs (CAM)
- 17** Samu social Pointe-Noire (SS PN)
- 18** Association Espace Enfants (AEE)
- 19** Foyer père Anton (FPA)

- 20** Secours International du Mouvement Chrétien pour la Solidarité (SIMCS)
- 21** Association Maison du cœur -Amis du Congo (AMACO)
- 22** Association des Professionnelles en Protection de l'Enfance (APPE)

CHAINES DES FOYERS SAINT-NICODÈME (CFSN)

Founded in 1996, Chaîne des Foyers Saint-Nicodème is a non-political, non-profit organisation based in Douala, Cameroon. Its aim is to combat exclusion and poverty and to promote the social integration of children and young people in serious difficulty, as well as those in street situations. Chaîne des Foyers Saint-Nicodème comprises two shelters (Nylon-Brazzaville and PK24), a girls' reception centre and counselling centre (New-Bell), and a vocational training centre for girls (Nyalla).

FOYER DE L'ESPÉRANCE

Foyer de l'Espérance is a Christian non-profit organisation recognised by the Cameroonian government as a private social welfare organisation. Founded in 1977 on the initiative of Brother Yves Lescanne, it works to reintegrate children and young people from the streets and prisons of Yaoundé into family and society. Now a major player in the protection of children in difficulty in the Cameroonian capital, Foyer de l'Espérance currently has four complementary reception and accommodation facilities and provides comprehensive educational support for minors in Yaoundé Central Prison, from primary school to sixth form.

ŒUVRE DE RECLASSEMENT ET DE PROTECTION DES ENFANTS DE LA RUE (ORPER)

Founded in 1981 on the initiative of a missionary, Œuvre de Reclassement et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue (ORPER) has set itself the task of responding to the basic needs, poor living conditions and abuse of children in street situations through protection, education, socio-professional integration and family reintegration measures. ORPER has a mobile centre (providing information, prevention and healthcare), two open reception centres, three closed accommodation centres, and offers socio-cultural activities, literacy workshops and vocational training.

ŒUVRE DE SUIVI, D'ÉDUCATION ET DE PROTECTION DES ENFANTS DE LA RUE (OSEPER)

Founded in 1998 by a group of young people and a few mothers, Œuvre de Suivi, d'Éducation et de Protection des Enfants de la Rue (OSEPER) is a non-profit association that aims to provide a holistic response to the problems faced by children in street situations. Its goal is to reunite each child with their family whenever possible, or to help them integrate into society once they are able to take care of themselves independently. OSEPER has a mobile team, an initial assessment centre, four closed accommodation centres and a vocational training centre.

LISANGA MPO YA BOKOLISI MBOKA / COMMUNAUTÉ DU CHEMIN NEUF (LBM/CCN)

Founded in 2005 in Kinshasa by Communauté du Chemin Neuf, the non-profit association Lisanga mpo ya Bokolisi Mboka has developed a comprehensive approach to supporting children in street situations, covering field intervention, reception and care in centres, family reunification procedures, post-reunification stabilisation tools, and vocational training through its two centres (Ndako ya Biso and CFP) and a vocational integration office to support young people in becoming independent, with a focus on entrepreneurship.

AIDE À L'ENFANT DÉFAVORISÉ (AED)

Founded in 1966, the association Aide à l'Enfant Défavorisé (AED) aims to rehabilitate and provide social and personal guidance to children in street situations with a view to their socio-professional reintegration (school enrolment and vocational training). AED is strongly committed to helping young girls in street situations in Kinshasa and supports parenting and the implementation of income-generating activities.

JEUNES AU SOLEIL (JOS)

Founded in 2004, the association Jeunes au Soleil (JOS) works to protect children and young people in street situations by providing shelter and care, schooling and vocational training. In addition to the Cayla house in Kinzono, which accommodates young people in vocational training, JOS has two shelters in Kinshasa, one of which is for young girls.

VIVRE ET TRAVAILLER AUTREMENT (VTA)

In 1991, Sister Félicitas Cembranos of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Castres was a missionary in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She quickly began working with young girls in street situations in Kinshasa. In order to meet these young girls' needs for social reintegration, she created the association Vivre et Travailler Autrement (VTA) in 1997. Today, VTA has a transitional shelter with a capacity of 30 young girls, located in the heart of a working-class neighbourhood of Kinshasa and close to major gathering places for children in street situations.

Study conducted by

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This socio-anthropological study on children in street situations in Central Africa shows that they arrive on the streets at an early age, are increasingly exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation, and suffer persistent social stigmatisation, sometimes linked to accusations of witchcraft. Based on a participatory approach, it draws the voices of children and field workers to better understand their profiles, backgrounds and dynamics, examine existing legislative frameworks and propose concrete ways to strengthen their protection and support.



STUDY CONDUCTED BY



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