



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

This summary is based on a socio-anthropological study conducted by Scorpius Conseil in **three Central African countries (Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo)** for the Apprentis d'Auteuil Foundation and its local partners: 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); the 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) and Jeunes au Soleil (JOS).

It was carried out as part of the ARCADE programme (*Accompagnement et Renforcement des Capacités et Actions Dédiées aux Enfants en situation de rue* - Support and Capacity Building and Actions Dedicated to Children in street situations). Based on 179 field activities¹, including **interviews with 372 children in street situations** in three countries, the study provides an accurate overview of the phenomenon and makes concrete recommendations for prevention, protection and reintegration.

This study uses the definition of children in street situations provided by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which refers to children who depend on the street for their livelihood or work, whether alone, with peers or with family members, and those who have developed close social and economic ties to public spaces. These are children who do not permanently reside or work in public places, but who are regularly present in places such as markets, parks and transport hubs. For these children, the street has become, in various ways, a source of income and connections.



¹ The study is based on 179 data collection activities: 50 focus groups and 129 individual interviews conducted with 543 participants — including 372 children in street situations and 171 community members (educators, parents of children in street situations, former children in street situations, administrative authorities, shelter managers, neighbourhood leaders and religious leaders).

1. SCOPE AND EVOLUTION OF THE PHENOMENON

The growth of the phenomenon is worrying in all three countries:

Republic of the Congo

- **Trend:** from 1,900 children (2003) to **at least 5,000-5,500** today (2025);
- **Concentration:** Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire as the main locations, with emerging locations: Dolisie, Nkayi, Bouenza, Lékoumou and Likouala;
- **Current capacity in centres:** 5% of needs.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- **Trend:** from 18,097 children (2006) to an estimated **25,000-60,000** today;
- **Main concentration:** Kinshasa;
- **Current capacity:** 1% of needs.

Cameroon

- **Current estimates:** approximately **5,000 children** (unofficial figures, exceeding government statistics which indicate 1,500 to 2,000);
- **Concentration:** mainly in Douala and Yaoundé, but also in the country's 10 regions;
- **Current capacity:** 5% of maximum needs.

The study reveals a **critical lack of official data** in all three countries. Only Cameroon has had a national system for referencing vulnerabilities affecting children since 2017, administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS). This gap is a major obstacle to the development of targeted public policies.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF THE PHENOMENON

The study reveals that the phenomenon of children in street situations is the result of **interconnected structures of vulnerability**. At least five categories of vulnerability factors combine to cause children to end up on the streets:

Dimensions	Identified factors	Impact
Economic	Material poverty of families.	Main triggering factor.
Social	Domestic violence (physical, psychological, sexual), family neglect, etc.	80% of children are victims of violence.
Cultural	Accusations of witchcraft, stigmatisation.	Particularly prevalent in the Congos.
Institutional	Failure of protection systems.	Absence of effective social safety nets.
Circumstantial	Deaths, divorces, armed conflicts, natural disasters.	Precipitating factors.

**Numbers
have tripled
over the past
20 years**

FOCUS ON ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT

This phenomenon, amplified by certain religious practices (particularly linked to the **rise of so-called Revivalist churches**), is a major factor in family exclusion. Although more prevalent in the two Congos, it remains a tangible reality in Cameroon. **In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 70% of children assisted by UNICEF in 2011 were accused of witchcraft²**, and some of the shelters visited as part of this study have up to **30% of residents who are victims of this type of accusation**

3. PROFILES OF CHILDREN AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES ON THE STREETS

3.1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ **Geographical origin: 80%³ of children** originate from the city where they live and its surroundings, demonstrating that the phenomenon is mainly local in all three countries.
- ▶ **Gender composition:** approximately **20% girls** in all three countries.
- ▶ **Social diversity: all social backgrounds are affected**, albeit to varying degrees. Poverty remains the main factor, but the phenomenon is not exclusive to the most disadvantaged areas.
- ▶ **Age distribution: all age groups are represented**, with specific challenges for those aged 14 and over, who are often reluctant to go to care centres in order to retain their independence.

3.2. ECONOMIC STRATEGIES DEVELOPED

The study highlights a differentiation in survival activities according to the age group of the children:

- **Under 12:** Begging, small services
- **13-17 years old:** Manual labour, waste recycling, informal trade, car washing, theft
- **17+ years old:** Activities linked to the black economy, various forms of trafficking, survival sex.

3.3. RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

Children in street situations develop various coping strategies to deal with the difficulties of everyday life. **Their creativity and resourcefulness** are reflected in their search for means of subsistence, while solidarity and mutual aid among peers are essential forms of collective support. These dynamics demonstrate their organisational skills and resilience in the face of adversity.

2. U.S. Department of States, *Democratic Republic of the Congo. Report on Human Rights Practices (2011)*, p.79. 3. Data from the Scorpius Conseil study.

4. SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG GIRLS

4.1. SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES

Girls represent about **20% of children in street situations in the three countries**. They are less visible than boys because they develop different survival strategies, often involving activities related to sexual exploitation, and have more alternatives (foster care, domestic work, etc.). They face specific risks that require special attention:

- ▶ **Systematic sexual violence** by various actors (peers, adults in the community, law enforcement);
- ▶ **Early motherhood**, sometimes with health and social complications;
- ▶ **High-risk survival strategies**, including survival sex;
- ▶ **Increased exposure to sexually transmitted infections and diseases.**

4.2. NEED FOR SPECIALISED SUPPORT

The testimonies collected highlight the **need for differentiated approaches** that take into account the specific gender characteristics and particular traumas experienced by this population.

« I knew a girl named Joyce; since she was a prostitute and also used drugs, she had a policeman who protected her and sorted things out for her; in return, she gave him a little money from time to time, and they also slept together. These are things I saw. »

Girl, 17, outside the centre, Kinshasa.

5. COMMUNITY PERCEPTION AND STIGMATISATION

The study reveals **widespread stigmatisation in all three countries**, where these children are perceived as:

- Potential or proven delinquents;
- Bringers of bad luck, accused of «witchcraft»;
- Threats to public safety, etc.

This negative perception is an obstacle to the social and political mobilisation needed for effective interventions. It also influences the allocation of public resources to this issue.



6. INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES TO CARE

Very few children are lucky enough to be admitted to care centres. The reasons for this are numerous and similar in all three countries:

6.1. IDENTIFIED OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

- ▶ **Insufficient financial resources** for care centres;
- ▶ **Insufficient number of places** in care centres;
- ▶ **Staff lacking specialised training;**
- ▶ **Lack of structural government support, etc.**

In all three countries, field workers lament the indifference to the phenomenon of children in street situations shown by political authorities. Governments allocate derisory resources to child protection and take few concrete initiatives.

6.2. RESISTANCE OF SOME CHILDREN TO INTEGRATION INTO CENTRES

Several factors explain the reluctance of some children to leave the streets and join the centres:

- ▶ Adolescents perceive centres as **restrictive and depriving them of their freedom;**
- ▶ **Loss of income and sexual freedom** for centre residents;
- ▶ The gap between living conditions in the centres and the expectations of young people; etc.

Centres impose strict rules (schedules, no free time outside the centre, no personal income, etc.) that contrast with the autonomy and financial freedom that young people enjoyed on the streets.

6.3. OBSTACLES TO CHILDREN RETURNING TO SCHOOL

After many years on the streets, children encounter numerous difficulties in returning to school:

- ▶ **Lack of identity documents** for many children;
- ▶ **Hidden costs of schooling** despite official free education (uniforms, supplies, etc.);
- ▶ **Discrepancy between age and school level** due to a prolonged stay on the streets;
- ▶ **Lack of educational facilities adapted** to the specific profiles of children in street situations, etc.

7. SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

7.1. FAMILY REUNIFICATION: ENCOURAGING RESULTS

Despite their limited resources and the little support they receive, the centres are achieving encouraging results in the social reintegration of the children in their care:

- ▶ **Effectiveness of family support programmes** (microcredit, support);
- ▶ **Maintenance of family ties in the majority of cases.**
- ▶ **Sustainable family reunifications**, with a low failure rate;

However, these encouraging results remain limited to a few centres with enhanced support resources and **do not reflect the overall situation in the three countries.**

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

7.2. VOCATIONAL TRAINING: A KEY LEVER

Despite limited resources, **care centres are doing remarkable work in terms of re-schooling and vocational training**. The training offered in the centres provides real opportunities and is a fundamental pillar of reintegration. Former children in street situations interviewed confirm that vocational training is a key element in their successful social reintegration. The main training courses currently offered are carpentry, mechanics, sewing, pastry making, urban agriculture and market gardening, hairdressing, catering, sales, etc.

7.3. FACTORS THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

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

- ▶ 1. **Substantial improvement in family economic conditions;**
- ▶ 2. **Professional psychosocial support for children;**
- ▶ 3. **Vocational training adapted to the local market;**
- ▶ 4. **Specialised family mediation;**
- ▶ 5. **Structured post-reintegration monitoring.**

8. ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK IN THE THREE COUNTRIES

8.1. LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF CHILD PROTECTION

The three countries have a relatively substantial legal and legislative arsenal:

- ▶ All three countries have ratified international conventions;
- ▶ There are specific national laws (Democratic Republic of the Congo 2009, Republic of the Congo 2010);
- ▶ National policy document in Cameroon (2017-2026).

However, **the effective implementation** of these legislative and regulatory provisions **remains suboptimal**.

8.2. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The main challenges to the implementation of the laws are:

- ▶ **Absence of implementing decrees** 15 years after the enactment of specific national laws (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo). **Positive note:** In the Republic of the Congo, two decrees implementing Law No. 4-2010 were adopted in April 2025:
 - Decree No. 971/MASSAH-CAB establishing the early warning system for children at risk;
 - Decree No. 972/MASSAH-CAB establishing the observatory for children at risk; These decrees relate to Article 61⁴ of the law and constitute a significant step forward, although their effective implementation remains to be seen.
- ▶ **Chronic underfunding** of protection policies;
- ▶ **Excessive dependence on international funding**, etc.

4. Article 61: "A decree issued by the Minister of Social Affairs shall establish early warning systems and an observatory for children at risk in order to carry out the tasks of observation, analysis and prevention of abuse and protection of abused children at the national level."

8.3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Democratic Republic of the Congo:

- ▶ **Budget implementation rate** for the social affairs sector: 33.93% (2020-2022)
- ▶ **Share of investments:** only 2.16%;
- ▶ **Proportion spent on remuneration:** 84.38%.

Cameroon:

- ▶ **Budget implementation rate** for child protection: 0% in 2021, 1.10% in 2022;
- ▶ Position of **near-total budgetary neglect**.

Republic of the Congo:

- ▶ **Stable but insufficient budget:** 0.8% of public expenditure;
- ▶ **Well below international standards** (>1% of GDP)

8.4. EXISTING GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The three countries have social programmes, but they:

- ▶ Are largely dependent on international donors;
- ▶ Only indirectly target children in street situations;
- ▶ Lack inter-sectoral coordination;
- ▶ Have very limited effectiveness.



9. CHILDREN'S WORDS: MESSAGES TO DECISION-MAKERS

The children interviewed wanted to send important messages to various stakeholders whose actions can have an impact on their lives:

9.1. MESSAGES TO POLITICAL AUTHORITIES

Priority requests expressed:

- Official recognition of their existence and their rights;
- Concrete support for the structures that assist them;
- Assistance to families to prevent family breakdowns;
- Protection against violence and economic and sexual exploitation.

« The authorities know we exist, they see us [...] but that's as far as it goes »

Girl, 17

9.2. MESSAGES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Main concerns expressed:

- Mistreatment and abuse of power;
- Lack of protection against violence;
- Need to be considered as citizens to be protected;
- Request for the benevolent attitudes observed in some officers to become widespread.

« I would like to tell the police to stop being mean to us.

They despise us, speak badly to us, and often even hit us for no reason.

If we had a choice, we wouldn't be living on the streets like rats, with everyone spitting on us.. »

Boy, 16

9.3. MESSAGES TO THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY

Children in all three countries denounce widespread social contempt and community indifference.

Social demands:

- An end to stigmatisation and rejection;
- Recognition of their humanity and potential;
- Support for their social reintegration.

« The community does nothing for us. (...) You can see mistrust and contempt in people's eyes. (...) When we are abused, no one takes any notice; it's as if we can be treated any way they like, as if it's normal »

Gitl, 15

9.4. MESSAGES TO FAMILIES

In all three countries, children question the quality of their emotional ties to their families because of the «ease» with which their families manage to get rid of them.

Messages to families focus on:

- An end to family abuse;
- More affection and protection

« Parents don't seem to care about their children. »

Girl, 15

« I would like families to be more loving; to take an interest in their children and look after them. »

Boy, 13



9. STRATEGIC 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 NGOs).
- 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, etc.);
 - Development of procedure manuals and management tools for the alert system and the observatory, with the mobilisation of the financial resources necessary for their operationalisation;
 - Training for those involved in these mechanisms;
 - Establishment of mechanisms to monitor and assess the effectiveness of these structures.
 - Continuation of the work of the interministerial committee already set up to draft the implementing provisions of Law 04-2010, accelerating the publication of the remaining decrees.
-

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 (Cameroonian model);
 - 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.
-

RECOMMENDATION 3 : COMBAT VIOLENCE AND STIGMATISATION AGAINST CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS IN THE THREE COUNTRIES

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

- 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.
-

RECOMMENDATION 4: PREVENTIVE SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES.

Objective: Support vulnerable families to prevent school dropout, separation and homelessness.

- Establish 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 canteens, supplies.
-

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.
-

RECOMMENDATION 6: ESTABLISH SPECIALISED UNITS WITHIN THE POLICE FORCE 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 law enforcement intervention with children in street situations.

- Train officers in children's rights and emergency protocols, including those of the child protection and sexual violence prevention squads 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.
-

RECOMMENDATION 7: SET UP 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 management 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.
-

RECOMMENDATION 8: SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE 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 study shows that, whilst the phenomenon of children in street situations is complex, it is not inevitable. **Solutions exist and have proven effective** when based on a detailed understanding of local realities and supported by appropriate institutional backing..

The three main lessons are:

- 1. The expertise of those working in the field** is a valuable foundation for developing effective public policies.
- 2. Reintegration is possible** with remarkable success rates when the necessary resources are mobilised;
- 3. Strong political commitment** can transform this social problem into an opportunity for human development.

Given the growing scale of the phenomenon and the proven capacity for success, **the development of strategic partnerships, particularly with the private sector, and the mobilisation of multiple sectors are essential.** It is up to policy makers to transform this field expertise into ambitious and sustainable public policies.

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Association Handicap Afrique (AHA) | 9 Communauté Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours (CNDPS) |
| 2 Amour Sans Frontière (ASF) | 10 Orphelinat Saint Joseph Gaston Céleste (OSJGC) |
| 3 Enfance créatrice de développement (Encred) | 11 Orphelinat Cœur Immaculé de Marie (OCIM) |
| 4 Action Espoir des Enfants en détresse (AEED) | 12 Orphelinat Notre Dame de la Divine Miséricorde (ONDDM) |
| 5 Actions de solidarité internationale (ASI) | 13 Communauté Chemin de la Croix et de la Résurrection (3CR) |
| 6 Caritas Brazzaville | 14 Education en Milieu Ouvert (EMO) |
| 7 Centre d'Insertion et de Réinsertion des Enfants Vulnérables (CIREV) | |
| 8 Association Serment Universel (ASU) | |

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

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.

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This executive summary of the 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.



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