STREET WORK RESPONSE TO COVID-19
IMPACT, CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS
OCTOBER 2020
SIERRA LEONE
GHANA
KENYA
ZIMBABWE
INDIA
STREETINVEST
NO CHILD SHOULD GROW UP ALONE
INTRODUCTION: COVID-19 ON THE STREETS

In March, StreetInvest wrote about the initial impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the street-connected children (scc) supported by our partners’ Street Workers. Livelihoods earned through begging, working in markets, carrying goods, washing windcreens or collecting recycling disappeared almost overnight. Food, already scarce and often afforded through daily wages, or discarded or donated by restaurants and street vendors, could no longer be found.

New guidance on hygiene seemed impossible to adhere to without clean water or soap. Schools and drop-in centres closed their doors. Children already facing stigma and discrimination for being on the street were doubly targeted for being street-connected, instructed to ‘go home’, when for many, that is where they already were. For others, home was even more dangerous than the street.

When Covid-19 was first declared a pandemic, there was confusion among many of the communities where Street Workers operate. Street-connected children and young people did not see a virus, but rather felt the impact of new rules, curfews and lockdowns which, through the restriction of movement and decimation of the informal economy, threatened their very existence.

“There is confusion. Children are asking us, is this virus really going to hit?”
Bokey Achola, Director, Glad’s House, Mombasa

“Now that we are being told no one will be allowed to roam around the streets from 7pm, does it mean we are going to die of hunger instead of corona? How do you see it guys?”
Martin, street-connected young person in Mombasa, when curfews were imposed in March

“How do we stay safe from a virus outbreak when we live on the pavements? Is it even possible?”
Street-connected child, Ward 47, Kolkata
Five months later, street-connected children’s lives are still severely disrupted; while some lockdowns have been eased, others have continued, and some are unpredictable, with no notice of when lockdown is being reinstated, leaving street-connected children with little opportunity to prepare. The virus itself is now spreading in communities. Street-connected children and young people are in the path of the Covid-19 and still unable to stay safe or access vital services, and are more excluded than ever. StreetInvest and our partners have continued our efforts to reach and support the most marginalised street-connected children through Street Work.

“People are afraid of us because they think we have COVID-19. I cannot go back home because my family is afraid that I may bring the disease home. On the streets there is no work, no food, if you get sick you can’t go to the hospital because they now require a Covid-19 negative certificate before admitting you, things are just difficult. We are actually grateful for your awareness campaigns, you have given food so we will survive, and I pray God blesses you with a long life.”

A street-connected young person in Harare, Zimbabwe, supported by Street Empowerment Trust & StreetInvest
STREETINVEST'S RESPONSE

StreetInvest has been working with our partners in Kenya, Ghana, India, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone to develop, fund and deliver specialist responses for street-connected children during the pandemic.

“Street Workers from Glad’s House in Mombasa have engaged with new children on the street since the Covid-19 crisis hit...”

Shaibu Chitsiku, Street Empowerment Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe

EMERGENCY RELIEF in the short term

StreetInvest's first priority was finding a way to continue to keep children safe, able to access services and feeling a sense of belonging in their communities through Street Work, including distributing both information and food & hygiene supplies.

£55,000+ mobilised
(new grants via StreetInvest or direct and existing funds adapted for Covid responseS)

4,228 children reached

1500+ masks
1 x 3000 L water tank
Soap, sanitizer, PPE
Sanitary pads
1000+ meals & food packages
SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT for the long term

StreetInvest has adapted our Theory of Change in the face of Covid while retaining our rights-based, child-centred approach based on StreetInvest’s ‘Four Pillars’ of research & data collection, advocacy & awareness raising, capacity building and organisational development. We believe long term sustainable change requires:

- Quantitative and, participatory, qualitative data to understand the scale and complexity of the pandemic impact
- The inclusion of street-connected children’s voices in policy and practice formation to ensure the development of appropriate relief measures
- Building the knowledge, skills and values of duty bearers to street-connected young people
- Sufficient resources for the long term effectiveness of, and collaboration between, civil society, communities, government and service providers.

In this way, basic services of food, health and shelter may be available and accessed, new Covid responses will not put street children at further risk, livelihood issues will be addressed and street communities included even without legal ID or residency documentation.

THEORY OF CHANGE

STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN (SCC) ARE EMPOWERED TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHTS

Network of trusted, informed street workers providing support and referrals to SCC

Emergency protocol for SCC agreed and published through Street Forum

Multi-stakeholder Street Forum plans joint responses to advocacy demands of SCC

- Street Champions present their needs & demands to policy makers and service providers
- Street Forums established
- Community engaged (e.g. Safe Adult Networks)
- Service providers engaged

Changes in knowledge attitudes and practice of service providers & other duty bearers

- Street Workers trained
- SCC trained as Street Champions
- Service Providers & duty bearers trained on SCC needs

- Local NGO network formed
- Funding secured

INFORMED

Data collection & research informed by beneficiaries, led by experts

Quantitative: Headcounts & Qualitative: SCC-led Vulnerability & Service Mapping (V&SM)

INFLUENTIAL

Positive policy and practice change through beneficiary-led advocacy & awareness raising

EQUIPPED

Beneficiaries and duty bearers trained to deliver on their obligations and responsibilities

STONG

Organisations and individuals resourced and supported for sustainable change

UN GENERAL COMMENT #21 ON CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS 2017
1. RESEARCH & DATA COLLECTION

The United Nations General Comment on children in street situations (2017), as well as the Global Goals highlight the lack of data as a key factor in inhibiting appropriate responses for the ‘missing millions’. As an expert in this field, StreetInvest supports our partners to fill the quantitative & qualitative data gap for street-connected children.

The core approaches for this are Headcounts and Vulnerability & Service Mapping (V&SM). The V&SM is truly a participatory approach which has been adapted for Covid related issues and is led by “Young Health Researchers”, street-connected children trained as “Street Champions”, who are peer researchers, educators and advocates.

All our partners have now established Street Champion programmes.

RAPID SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT (an integral part of V&SM)
KOLKATA 2020

To address the lack of data and evidence relating to the current situation for street-connected children, the first stage of a rapid situational assessment (RSA) exercise, based on the framework of the UN General Comment No. 21 on the rights of children in street situations (UNGC#21), was undertaken by street workers. This was a survey, adapted from StreetInvest's Vulnerability and Service Mapping methodology, with 120 children reached through street work. Their initial responses showed that:

- 21% feel that the government considers their needs
- 24% feel they do not have anyone they trust that they can turn to, when they are hurt
- 55% know how to access support services if they exist
- 38% do not feel safe in the street where they spend their time
- 65% stay on the street full time
- 48% have been forced to move from where they live by police within the past 12 months
- 66% live alone without an adult caregiver
- 59% are not enrolled in school
- 69% feel they are treated worse than other children who do not spend time on the street
- 74% report being harassed or mistreated within the past 12 months
- 21% feel the government considers their needs
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Since March, StreetInvest’s advocacy activities have focused on securing suitable, specialist support for street-connected children during the pandemic – and ensuring that government responses to Covid-19 take street-connected children, and the realities of their lives, into account, and that protective measures work for them too.

• On 31st March, StreetInvest issued Guidance for Street Workers during Covid-19, circulated to 200 organisations working with street-connected children worldwide. This document lays out practical guidelines for continuing to safely support children during the pandemic as well as providing clear advocacy messaging and a template letter to authorities for organisations fighting to remain on the street, and reaching the most marginalised children, during lockdown.

• StreetInvest contributed to a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and a briefing for the UN Secretary General about the impact of Covid-19 on street-connected children’s rights, to ensure that at the highest level, the experiences of street-connected children during this crisis are heard, and responded to.

• In the UK, StreetInvest contributed to a report to the International Development Committee on the impact of Covid-19 on street-connected children, and the role that Street Work organisations play in keeping them safe during the crisis. StreetInvest also worked with Baroness Miller and Baroness Sheehan to develop and table questions in the House of Lords in April on how the FCO and DFID are ensuring that small frontline organisations are being supported to reach the most marginalised children during Covid-19

• Glad’s House, like our other partners, has successfully negotiated with local government officials to get authority to continue street outreach work and have made recommendations based on the information directly gathered from street children and homeless youth themselves on the issues that these children anticipate that they will face due to the curfews and the lockdown.

2. ADVOCACY & AWARENESS RAISING

STREETINVEST AND PARTNERS’ KEY DEMANDS OF DUTY BEARERS DURING COVID-19

• Keep Street Work on the streets and scale up the numbers of Street Workers.

• Make hygiene services more readily available to street populations.

• Keep food and essential services running on the streets.

• Ensure that where options exist to provide children who need it with shelter off the streets, these do not put street children at further risk of infection or harm.

• Include the voice of street-connected children in policy and practice formation.

“We our partnership with StreetInvest enabled us to realise about the immense importance of the presence of trustworthy adults in the lives of street connected children, and it made us think of innovative ways to keep the connections intact with those children even during strict lockdowns and restrictions. Together, we were able to strategize about advocating for and arranging immediate critical responses to the needs of the children in the face of tremendous distress brought about by the pandemic and the devastating Cyclone Amphan.”

Debapiya Bhattacharyya, Kolkata Urban Unit, CINI
The Glad's House Street Work team head out in to Mombasa central business district to conduct a rapid headcount of new children observed on the streets during Covid-19.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING

StreetInvest has developed a series of training modules all designed to supplement our original core university accredited ‘Introduction to Street Work’ course. This has been accompanied by training of and training for trainers that has resulted in a network of local trainers led by in-country StreetInvest Global Trainers.

The training reinforces the rights based, child-centred approach, adds specific street work skills. It has been adapted for all audiences, as well as, more recently for COVID.

5000+ Participants trained*

**MODULES**
- Introduction to Street Work
- 1:1 engagement
- Group work
- Safeguarding
- Headcounting
- Street Champions
- V&SM (incl. FGDs, RSA, etc)

**AUDIENCES**
- Street Workers
- Service Providers
- Community Members
- Police
- Social Workers
- Government Authorities

Training is an integral part of our ongoing support. Recent training has included:

**Kolkata:** 300 street-connected children as Street-Champions

**Ghana:** Street Worker training

**Kenya:** Rapid Headcount training

**Zimbabwe:** Community Training

**Sierra Leone:** Street worker & community training

*Since StreetInvest’s inception

Sierra Leone, Street Workers completing ‘Introduction to Street Work’.
Strengthening local organisations and building networks is an integral part of StreetInvest's approach to supporting and promoting Street Work.

Financial support is of course vital and we are proud to have contributed to the mobilisation of over £55,000 in Covid-related funding since March. This has included a Crowdfunding campaign supported by StreetInvest's existing and new individual donors, new grants from institutional donors both via StreetInvest and direct to our partners and redirecting existing grants to the Covid responses.

Building organisational capacity locally is of equal importance and all partners continue to build their local networks including not only civil society organisations but also local authorities, the judicial system, community and, during the Covid crisis, relief and emergency services.

In Kolkata, the network’s collaborative activities have reached out to more community members, duty bearers such as the police and government authorities such as the West Bengal Child Protection Committee. As a result:

- A councillor of ward 26 arranged temporary ration distribution for 2000 street and slum families who lack documents required to access emergency food support from Government.
- The Railway Police of Sealdah division are arranging cooked food for families living near Sealdah platform.
- Families living near Ward 26 have been provided with temporary shelter by Kolkata Police at beginning of lockdown.
- Cooked food, raw food as well as art and craft materials are distributed on regular intervals by Kolkata Police.
- The West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights have started offering helpline numbers for the children under stress during the lockdown.

In Mombasa, the need for collaboration grew with the pandemic as many NGOs closed down at the same time as the needs of the children and the demands from both the county and national government for data and expertise on supporting the children, young people and families that live and work on the streets expanded exponentially.

- While this collaboration still needs to expand, examples of the impact of working together are growing:
  - Glad’s House have conducted a number of smaller, rapid headcounts conducted by a team of 11 social workers and street workers from Glad's House, 6 social workers from the County Government of Mombasa and 2 from the Methodist church of Kenya.
  - Glad’s House has successfully negotiated with local government officials to continue street outreach work. They have also made recommendations to the local government, sharing the information directly gathered from street children and homeless youth themselves including at an emergency meeting chaired by the by the Mvita Sub County Commissioner and Administrator Mvita Sub County of the County Government of Mombasa together with the Red Cross, Haki Africa and the Committee formed to oversee food distribution in Mvita Sub County.

In Accra, Street Girls Aid are supporting young people on the street to form ‘households’ of five friends, who are being educated on social distancing, the symptoms of the virus and how to isolate the group should they become unwell. Each group is being provided with food and a small stove for cooking, as well as face masks, soap and hand sanitiser.

“it’s more than 2 months since all our work took a different direction. However, the knowledge of the street, the relationship of trust between the SSC and GH and the commitment of GH team has added more value and power to street work. Street work has enabled us to disseminate knowledge and information, provide the most needed protective gears, offer food support and just be on the streets for those who need us.”

Liz Achola, Head of Programmes, Glad’s House, Mombasa, speaking in May 2020
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ‘STREET WORK’?
Street Work: An Essential Service During the Pandemic

Street Work is a rights-based response to street-connected children based on the provisions and specific guidance of the UNCRC. It is a distinct form of work with marginalised and excluded children because it takes place where the young person is physically, including on the street.

Street Work also begins where young people are in terms of their values, attitudes, issues and ambitions and is concerned with their personal growth and development and addressing the stigma and discrimination they face.

It is characterised by a purposeful and empowering interaction between children and Street Workers, founded upon a relationship of trust. It utilises a range of youth and community work methods to engage directly with young people and members of the communities in which they live.

This way of working is characterised by unconditional positive regard for the child, congruence and developing empathy and embodies the principles of a child rights approach which creates a human environment that fosters trust in order to facilitate meaningful participation.

ADAPTING STREET WORK TO COVID
All partners have had to adopt to the pandemic.

CoDWelA Street Workers in Sierra Leone responded to the crisis on the 14th of March and, based on the regulations given by the Ministry of Health and StreetInvest’s Coronavirus Guidance for Street Workers, agreed to:

Social distancing with street children: Contact with street-connected children will be on a one to one basis, focused on Covid-19 and preventive behaviours such as social distancing, washing of hands, stopping unnecessary physical contact and covering one’s face with the elbow when coughing.

Involve the Safe Adult Network: Engaging Safe Adult Networks across the four project locations to ensure their full cooperation in protect street-connected children.

Formalising permissions to continue Street Work: Securing permission, using the StreetInvest template, to continue to reach street-connected children on the street and in their hideouts in the event of any lock down. Three government-issued Street Work permits were issued during lockdown in Waterloo.

Hygiene sensitization: Distribution of buckets, soap and hand sanitizers across all listening points where street-connected children have their hideout and demonstrating their use.
Kolkata
Street Champions are leading the way.

Adapting Street Work in Kolkata

- Meeting no more than two street connected children at the same time and avoiding public gatherings.
- Telephone counselling sessions conducted with children to talk about their stress and anxieties.
- Online workshops conducted on art therapy and relaxation in order to release stress.
- Information and education materials covering hand washing, social distancing, etc produced and shared on digital platforms as well as for a poster campaign (distributed by street champions).
- Constant contact with the stakeholders via telephone.
- Linking street-connected families involved in the research with the relief programmes in 11 wards so that they could access relief during lockdown.

In 5 wards of Kolkata, street-connected children have been taking part in participatory health research project over the past 6 months, implemented by CINI and StreetInvest in partnership with Wellcome Trust. The ‘Street Champions’, trained by CINI using StreetInvest’s training pack for young advocates and researchers, are now acting as community links for Street Workers who cannot access vulnerable street communities themselves. As the public health crisis unfolds, they are leading a street-level response to Covid-19 and making sure that the most vulnerable are not being missed.

With the support of Street Workers, the Street Champions have been on the streets of their communities informing their neighbours on good hygiene practices and what to do if they get sick. In the run up to the lockdown announced on 24th March, the Street Champions provided advice to families living on the streets to prepare them for the lockdown measures: keep identity documents safe and close in case they should be apprehended by authorities; minimise buying non-essential items to reduce social contact; keep a stock of essentials during the lockdown period.

Concerned that further restrictions may make street-connected children dangerously isolated, the Street Champions have established ways to stay connected, through WhatsApp groups, mobile phones and social media and occasional visits to the street accompanied by Street Workers early in the morning during permitted shopping hours.

“...The lockdown might cause a sense of loneliness among us, as we will not be able to go out and meet our friends. Some of our friends experience domestic abuse, which they were able to share with us and feel a little better. But now they will not be able to share such things...”
Street Champion supported by CINI in Kolkata
CINI have added support to 100 families in 5 wards including:

- Children and their families in Sealdah and Canal West Road who were dependent on rag picking, finding leftover food from empty train compartments and begging in order to sustain their daily lives;
- Children including Street champions and their peers living on the pavements of Halder Lane near Bowbazar, among whom majority of the families’ bread-earners are migrant labourers from nearby states;
- Children and community members of Tiljala, who were engaged as daily labours in leather factories;
- Children who used to live in the pavements of Hedua, but have now been displaced and sheltered in nearby school;
- Children living in temporary settlements or streets who were engaged in selling items New market and nearby locations.

A survey conducted by Street Champions found 91% of their peers reported feeling severely anxious due to the crisis - with loss of livelihood and means to buy food cited as the main reason by 42% of them.

The lack of sanitation represents another relevant challenge for street-connected children especially during the pandemic. Medical kits and hand sanitisers are either not available or too expensive. Among 99 girls surveyed, only 25% could afford sanitary napkins.

CINI are therefore distributing sanitary napkins to street living girls who would normally be provided by schools and other services that are now shut, including for 50 girls of Ward 4 with supplies provided by the female police officers from a local police station. They also distributed 500 bars of soap across Kolkata to ensure that street-connected children and their families are able to observe hygiene and sanitation guidelines. During the outbreak a local network member helped seven children to access testing for corona.

The Street Champions and other children visited their local police stations to facilitate more open dialogue and closer relationships and expressed their difficulties caused by police round ups using flip charts and comics they had prepared themselves. The police agreed that at least prior warning would now be given when they get to know about a possible eviction order, so that the street families can protect themselves.

Just as CINI and others in Kolkata were building responses to Covid, Cyclone Amphan, the worst in a decade, hit West Bengal. Buildings were destroyed, roofs blown off, services interrupted and a significant amount of relief supplies stored for Covid responses spoiled.

StreetInvest sent additional, and redirected other, funds to support the new crisis. Once again, street-connected young people and families were worst hit as informal shelters were destroyed. CINI extended its support to these communities with tarpaulins, water purifiers, water storage drums and disinfectant.

Over 100 families were supported with funds supplied mobilized by StreetInvest.

In India:

Indiacapital

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What are the issues

The issues faced by the communities are shared on a regular basis with the service providers, especially those offering emergency relief support, in order to generate immediate responses. On the basis of regular communication with the street-connected children and their communities, the following issues were highlighted while coordinating with service providers:

• Significant food insecurity due to loss of income and prohibition of mobility
• Difficulty in maintaining social distancing due to shortage of spaces among families on streets
• Inability to access government-sponsored emergency schemes due to lack of legal documents
• Increased usage of clothes as well as using other alternatives during menstruation due to the unavailability and cost of sanitary napkins.

“Through the survey, we will be able to pinpoint the specific reasons which are causing barriers for street connected children in accessing services, in spite of those services being actually there. We will then be able to work together along with them to bridge those gaps. For example, a lot of children express that the police do not listen to them. So, we facilitated their visits to police stations and encouraged them to present flip charts and posters depicting their experiences, and thus established a friendly dialogue among the police and children.” – Young Health Researcher, Ward 46

On 7th of July, 225 street connected children and their families from wards 26, 47 and 65 were provided with hygiene and sanitation items.

“People do not know what to do right now, which makes them anxious and stressed, increasing their panic instead of preparing them for safety. If we can inform them about how to be safe and provide authentic information about the disease, there will be less panic and more preparedness.”

Street Champion supported by CINI in Kolkata
StreetInvest's Regional Coordinating Partner (RCP) for the West Africa Network of StreetInvest's Global Alliance for Street Work (GASW), Muslim Family Counselling Services (MFCS) is based in Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana which has grown rapidly in recent years and remains a destination for migrating children. Kumasi's CBD markets have over 50,000 stalls. Busy markets attract children driven by poverty in Ghana's rural north looking to earn money to send home to families and survive.

Migrating girls outnumber boys in Ghana. In 2013, the StreetInvest supported headcount in Kumasi led by MFCS identified 7,831 street-connected children (scc): 5,455 girls, 2,376 boys. Many girls work in markets as porters (kayayei). Covid has simply exacerbated their vulnerabilities and exclusion. The destruction of livelihoods, especially in the informal sectors, and the inaccessibility to healthcare is becoming even more critical. Violence, discrimination, lack of food, water and shelter expose these young people to poor health and high Covid risk. The socio-economic impact of Covid will hit the poor hard, including those in the impoverished north of the country, leading to an increase in children migrating to cities and becoming SCC.

Responding to pre-Covid feedback from 28 NGOs working with scc who expresses a desire for stronger collaboration, MFCS has established a network of NGOs supporting street-connected children in Kumasi, Tamale and Accra who have been working together for 2 years and are committed to a rights-based, child-centred support for scc. Kumasi, Tamale (Ghana's third largest city) and Accra, the capital, all have extremely high numbers of scc (reported in one study to exceed 60,000 in Accra only) including the predominantly girls migrating from the north. These young people struggle to access health and other services, are stigmatised and are deemed ‘too difficult' by service providers and duty bearers who lack the data & knowledge to respond effectively. MFCS's recent survey of 100 children identified poverty as the biggest factor driving migration to towns and cities while street-connected girls interviewed identified NGOs as a crucial part of their support network, critical to their survival. COVID exacerbates the situation, with schools closing, school feeding programmes ending and the loss of livelihoods. An increasing number of children from neighbouring countries (Niger, Northern Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso and Togo) are also being driven onto the streets after fleeing hunger and conflict.

MFCS’ rapid assessment of Covid’s impact illustrated the scarcity of support, food and income as a result of the pandemic, a lack of knowledge about services available and a mistrust of authorities distributing relief at a time when the young people are seen to be criminals for breaking lockdowns and curfews. Like all our Partners, MFCS and the Ghana network's immediate response therefore focussed on maintaining Street Work and the delivery of both information and emergency relief supplies. MFCS gained permits from the government to continue their work. Together, the six key organisations across the three cities worked together to reach 1,491 otherwise unsupported scc missed by government relief and provided support for over 4,000 young people. MFCS alone conducted 124 street visits offering one to one contact with children on the street while the Accra team included support of food and hygiene products to over 300 street-connected families in the Railways, Kantamanto and Quarters, Okaishie Market and Odawna market areas of the capital. Street Girls Aid's staff in Accra visited the various street communities to educate children and youth on symptoms and signs of the disease and, with the aid of the Ministry of Health approved educational materials, reached an additional 210 community members with this information while offering their centre in Railways as a relief distribution centre. Their programme of forming groups of five children into peer support groups has been used as a role model elsewhere.
In Kumasi, street workers engaged 91 scc and young people from less privileged communities to create awareness and promote education on COVID-19 safety protocols. MFCS and the network collected and distributed food relief provided by the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) to children hidden from, or wary of the government presence on the street. MFCS were able to mobilise a rapid, targeted response including distributing leaflets and posters, and the installation and maintenance of handwashing points and sanitation supplies in the hidden parts of the city where ssc are now spending their time since being cleared from main streets and markets by authorities. A Civil Society Organisations group mobilized some funding and bought food items for vulnerable groups including scc, which they asked MFCS and partners to collect and distribute.

StreetInvest, MFCS and the local network is now seeking to continue emergency relief supplies while developing longer term responses. Data collection based on the participation of the street-connected remains critical so that policy and practices responses are properly informed. MFCS has already laid the basis for a “Street Champion” programme similar to those run by StreetInvest’s other partners. A pilot of the Street Champion programme in 2019 successfully supported 23 SCC to address duty bearers on the International Day for Street Children; in Tamale the Mayor committed to support SCC for the first time and has shown a sustained political will over the past year. The training programme is based on StreetInvest’s participatory research Knowledge Exchange approach, developed through the GUOTS project through which in Accra street-connected young people developed strong support mechanisms for one another which continue to this day.

During Covid, the Municipal Officer for the Department of Social Welfare accompanied Street Workers in Kumasi in order to better understand the situation and lives of SCC during the crisis. He subsequently requested closer collaboration with NGOs to reach SCC in emergencies with a view to informing the development of a joint emergency protocol for SCC and training for emergency relief staff. Similarly, contact with Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies have drawn attention to situation for scc during the lockdown period.

A need for additional capacity building and Street Work training has been requested to support rebuilding trust with the children, undertaking and evidencing Street Work and creating formal referral partnerships to link to services.

KUMASI 1st Half 2020
Number of children reached 808
Q1: 281 (186 new children)
Q2: 527 (191 new children)
161 boys (76 new) &
366 girls (115 new)

“I just borrow from my friend and pay back following day if I get something”

“It is very sad to be a beggar. I do not want it but there is almost nothing else that you can do”

Street-connected children

“It is not easy for the children to accept everyone who come to talk to them on the streets. But at the end of day, she appreciates education on COVID prevention and thanked the team and also promised to share the messages with her friends”

Street worker

“It is not easy for the children to accept everyone who come to talk to them on the streets. But at the end of day, she appreciates education on COVID prevention and thanked the team and also promised to share the messages with her friends”

Street worker
Mombasa

As the crisis evolved, so too did Street Work. In Mombasa, Glad’s House noticed a worrying new development in late April: an influx of new, and mostly young, children begging on the streets of the central business district, seemingly unaware of the risks of the virus and not observing distancing or wearing masks. It is common for there to be an increase in begging to benefit from giving during Ramadan as well as on Fridays in Mombasa, where 41% of the population is Muslim – but many of those usually on the street during these times are known to Street Workers.

The Street Work team carried out a rapid head-count and identified 59 children, some as young as 3, who were begging for money and food so that their families could eat – having lost what little livelihood they may have had as a result of the lockdown. These children were highly mobile, weaving in and out of traffic and moving around the city, making engaging them in conversation difficult. Glad’s House developed posters on Covid-19 safety which the children were invited to colour in. During these quiet, child friendly activities, Street Workers could offer a supportive ear, share important information about the virus and learn who the children were, and were they were from. Through this process, Street Workers earned the trust of children who later introduced them to their families – some on the street, some living nearby. With this connection made, Glad’s House are now working with families to protect children from the risks of the street, and engaging governments to support the livelihoods of families who, with no other means of income, are relying on their children to beg for money for survival.

SOME STREET WORK RESPONSES

- Daily contact with mothers, children and young adults stranded on the streets to understand their challenges, aspirations and concerns.
- Referrals for specialist interventions as required/possible
- Installed a 3,000 litre tank and fresh water points so that children can have access to clean water for drinking and sanitizing
- Secured water delivery for the water tank from the Mombasa Water Company.
- Provided 68 children and young adults with 1 hot healthy meal and a fruit a day for 3 months.
- Shared welfare and situation reports with County and State authorities and supporting the county government in the distribution of relief food to street families.
- Distributed over 700 face masks and sanitizers to children and young adults on the streets.
- Offered first aid and hospital referrals
- Funded and assisted several children to get home once the lockdown was lifted
- Supported women street dwellers to settle back to home away from the streets alongside their children.
- Provided start-up capital to young mothers to set up small enterprises to support them away from begging.
Zuhura and Amina  
By Liz Achola, Glad’s House, Mombasa

Zuhura is an 11 year old girl who we met in the city centre in the company of eight other children. The group represent four families. Zuhura is looking after her 2-and-a-half year old brother who is eating and playing with a slice of bread. “My mother has gone back home to take some food including bread that we got from a well-wisher here in town. We come from Jomvu, and we will go back home. I don’t know at what time as we have to wait for our mother to come back,” she says with a mild smile.

Thirteen-year-old Amina wakes up her friend who is sleeping, as we come and say hello. She is sitting closely to a collection of items, which could be their belongings. “I come from Mshomoroni,” she says.

“My mother has just left and I don’t know where she is. We came yesterday. Today my mother has said that we will not go back so maybe we will go back tomorrow”. During Street Work we meet the same children in different locations and they recognize us so they came to talk to us again.

These situations are really challenging our Street Work because we understand the hardships that have come with Covid-19 but again these children are having experiences which will impact their lives in a bigger way.

“We have adjusted our street work and now have 2 teams working 8 – 12 noon and the other from 1 – 5pm. The objective is to have as much information and knowledge of the children and young person’s life and status in relation to the streets. So far we have issued 380 washable reusable face masks to children and young adults. “In the first few days, we took a lot of time to remind them on the importance of face masks. We have now noticed that most of them now make good use of them. This shows that they are learning,”

Wycliffe, Glad’s House social worker

Number of new children identified on the street in Mombasa from March – May, becoming the focus of a new expanded Street Work programme by Glad’s House
South & East of Freetown: Waterloo, Grafton, Tombo and Fogbo

The nationwide outbreak of Ebola in May 2014 caused widespread devastation across Sierra Leone, with 3,955 deaths and over 12,000 children estimated to have been orphaned as a result of the epidemic.

While major international aid agencies focused on emergency response through medical supplies and facilities, StreetInvest and its local partner network recognised the importance of a community-based response to both slow the spread and address the long-term impact of the crisis. In January 2015, the trustees of the Band Aid Charitable Trust (BAT) awarded StreetInvest a grant of £50,000 to support a national community-based response to street-connected and other children affected by the Ebola epidemic.

In November 2019, BAT awarded a further grant of £30,000 to StreetInvest for the delivery of a 2-year Street Work response for those street-connected children left behind in areas to the south and east of Freetown after humanitarian aid was withdrawn following the Ebola epidemic. The project began in January 2020, a partnership between StreetInvest and implementing partner CoDWelA. As Coronavirus spread around the globe, it became apparent that street-connected children in Sierra Leone were about to face a new threat.

The introduction of lockdowns and other measures to curb the spread of the disease in Sierra Leone has hit street-connected children the hardest. They are unable to earn money to survive, targeted by authorities for being on the street or unable to comply with new regulations, and facing even more stigma and discrimination as a result of their street-connectedness.

STREET WORK

Street Workers have played a crucial role in reaching and support street-connected children during the new public health crisis and BAT has allowed this to continue by supporting:

- Consistent Street Work by 9 full time CoDWelA Street Workers across the 4 communities of Waterloo, Grafton, Tombo and Fogbo for 2 years
- Training for the Street Workers in Introduction to street work (Core module), Working with Girls, 1-2-1 Engagement and Group Work
- A rapid assessment of the specific vulnerabilities experienced by children on the street and a mapping of services and support available to them to ensure that the Street Work response is informed & effective
- Training for 60 community volunteers in Street Work Attitudes & Values and Child Protection
- Forming 5 Safe Adult Networks across the targeted communities

From January to March, Street Work was delivered both day and night and included one-to-one counselling (330 children), emergency healthcare (73 children) group discussion and street corner education (254 children) and recreational activities including football and games (133 children). 12 children were reunited with their families and received ongoing support.

By late March the team began to prepare for Covid-19 to hit Sierra Leone – coordinating emergency food rations through local partners and, ahead of lockdown, installing water buckets and handwashing stations on street corners and in market areas. Despite lockdown restrictions, thanks to CoDWelA’s relationships with the community, they were able to continue their street work during the day, but curfew meant that night street work was not possible.
In the first half of 2020, nine full time street workers have undertaken a total of 621 street visits and supported 2,428 children, including 1,095 new children never before supported by CoDWelA.

The team still reached twice as many children in Q2 as Q1 – much of this increase was due to the urgent need for food, sanitation and information about Covid-19, with schools closing, livelihoods disappearing and more and more children taking to the street looking for food, facing the risk not only of the virus but punishment by authorities and stigma from the community.

SAFE ADULT NETWORKS

The five community volunteer networks are in place across Waterloo (two networks), Tombo, Fogbo and Grafton. All the networks meet monthly.

Throughout the period the number of participants in each network increased, through word of mouth and an increased understanding within the community of the importance of protecting street-connected children. At Fogbo, the number of network members attending meetings has risen from 12 to 20.

The network at Waterloo played a key role during periods of lockdown. They helped organize children during food distribution and helped to protect them from police harassment by reporting incidents to Street Workers and advocating with police officers when issues arose. They helped to raise alarm about security and other threats children were exposed to in their hideout areas during lockdown.

Children provided with emergency food rations during lockdown

“Hunger in the evening has been a serious issue reported by children who live permanently on the streets. Due to heavy surveillance by police and security forces, street children have to retire to their hide out early enough for fear of their safety. This limits their survival options and exposes them to hunger during the evening hours.”

CoDWelA Monitoring Report, June 2020c
As elsewhere, street children are vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the crowded street environment they work in and live in, their lack of knowledge of the disease or how to respond to it, a lack of essential resources like sanitizers and face masks and no access to health or other services they may require. With the lockdown, access to food has been a challenge since their usual work has been banned or compromised by the continued closure of the informal sector.

By the beginning of October 2020, Zimbabwe had recorded 7,888 confirmed positive cases and 228 deaths according to Ministry of Health and Childcare. These figures are believed to be significant underestimates and it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting street connected children and youths especially girls and young women with children.

Humanitarian organisations in Zimbabwe have taken emergency measures in response to the pandemic but very few have included street-connected children and young people for whom it is more critical than ever to guarantee their protection from disease, hunger and sexual exploitation and abuse. Street-connected girls are proving to be particularly vulnerable as members of the public are taking advantage of their dependence to abuse them.

In May, StreetInvest was granted US$5,000 from Aid4ZimbabweTrust to support the Covid work of our partner Street Empowerment Trust (SET) for two months. Given the continuation of the pandemic, Aid4Zimbabwe Trust subsequently offered another grant of US$3,500 to continue the support for a further three months.

The grants served to equip Street Workers to support 300 street-connected young people with:

1. Information and education on basic COVID-19 symptoms, transmission and prevention methods
2. Food and PPE so that they can cope with their curtailed livelihoods due the Covid-19
3. Street visits in order to help and refer children to services

The pandemic posed considerable difficulties for the Street Workers to continue their jobs. Prior to the initial lockdown, most street children, especially for the ages 10 to 16, were forcibly rounded up from the streets and placed in homes. While this was meant to protect them from the disease, some of the children were not prepared to be moved due to fear of the unknown or as a result of previous experiences - children have always complained of lack of food, entertainment and freedom in children's homes. Some of those who were rounded up simply ran away and back to the streets. Those who escaped the round ups fled from the city centre to the outskirts. Through the relationships of trust built by the Street Workers, Street Work was able to continue and the donation of food and personal protective equipment was possible.

Extending the lockdown exacerbated the uncertain future for street connected children as their lives, livelihoods, networks and social capital have been disrupted. However, the children now have a reasonable understanding of COVID-19, the symptoms, prevention and steps to take if one member of their networks if affected and, through the Street Champions there is a reservoir of knowledge about the disease living with the children.

Livelihoods continue to be interrupted. Street children, like all workers in the informal sector, are faced with many challenges, from lack of earnings, food, clean water and freedom of
movement and assembly. It is now mandatory for everyone to wear a mask outside the home and young people on the street are restricted when they want to go out and look for work. Street Workers are also affected as it is difficult to be going out on the streets to look for children who are living in fear of being rounded up or arrested. Workers have to move carrying letters allowing passage or they too can be arrested for violating lock down rules.

Street Champions are street-connected young people who are trained as peer researchers, educators and advocates. They work with the Street Workers to collect qualitative and quantitative information on the realities of street-connected lives, challenges, needs, access to services and the formulation of appropriate policy and practice responses.

May - June 2020: LOCK-DOWN IN HARARE

CBD police and army were manning roadblocks and controlled who moved into the CBD. Access was only for those carrying out essential activities and those employed in the formal sector who had to show letters from employer.

During the period under review due to national lockdown rules street children were not allowed to freely move around the CBD looking for work. There were few jobs, earnings were low resulting in less income for the children to buy food. Scavenging in bins was a problem because of movement restrictions and less people who would drop left over food in bins. Working in small groups we distributed food and sanitary equipment to 341 children and conducted awareness lessons to children in their bases.

We learnt that the children were not prepared for the national lockdown in terms of money or food to eat. Confirmed COVID-19 cases have since taken a spike from 34 positive cases and 4 deaths when activities commenced to 7,888 positive cases and 228 deaths at the time of writing this report. We therefore recommends extension of activities to reach more children especially with food, sanitisation and awareness on COVID-19.

“As the July sun sets on the western side of Harare city, we gathered outside our small office to reflect on how the corona virus has taken everything from us. I have never had any illusions that life on the street is in any way rosy. It has always been difficult in the past and with this disease it's now much more complex, depressing and so uncertain. As the three of us watched the sun go down I only wished for a new dawn, a new tomorrow. Yes I wished for new life, wished for better to come. We went back in the office to take stock of the next day's distribution and our mentor took a photo and again we began the long wait for a new dawn. A dawn in which my friends and I have access to work, food, freedom to move and the life that we have always known.”

Street Champion, Harare

STORY MAP
This story map was made with street youth in Harare in May and June 2020 as a collaboration between SET and University of Dundee. This is their story, captured in film and video, as they share how they find work, food, shelter and safety on the streets, in the shadow of the pandemic

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE STORY MAP
(https://arcg.is/1q4WvH)
Report from Harare

SET, with the support of Aid4Zimbabwe, has managed to support 341 street-connected children based on the work of 4 Street Workers and 6 Street Champions. They have distributed food, WASH products, PPE and information as well as continuing to offer one to one guidance and counselling. The children have expressed their gratitude during these discussion.

Masks are mandatory and if one is caught without one, it is possible to be imprisoned or fined the equivalent of USD $20. The young people were finding it difficult to move around without face masks. Some resorted to using discarded masks from bins. Some who survive by collecting materials for recycling are very grateful of the hand sanitizers which they would use to regularly sanitize their hands after working in the dumps.

Bleach (jik) has added some sense of security to the young people as they can now soak and wash heir dirty clothes after a day’s work.

Material Distribution: Numbers reached and percentage task completion
Reflections and Learning from Zimbabwe

“During the distribution and awareness raising exercise we learnt that any disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning which is done without an inclusive agenda leaves out the most vulnerable children and youths on the streets. In future mitigation strategies for disasters like COVID-19 need to ensure vulnerable groups like street children including those with disabilities participate in planning and benefit from emergency relief. Children that were forcibly rounded up and placed in children’s home without fully explaining why the exercise was being done ran away back to the streets. The children and young people are living in fear of arrest for moving around during the lockdown, for moving without a mask or for being rounded up an exercise the majority of children are uncomfortable with. There is still need for food, sanitizers and masks to ensure this special group on the street survive these difficult times”

Shaibu Chitsiku, Project Manager, SET

“People are afraid of us because they think we have COVID-19. I cannot go back home because my family is afraid that I may bring the disease home. On the streets there is no work, no food. If you get sick you can’t go to the hospital because they now require a COVID-19 negative certificate before admitting you. Things are just difficult. We are actually grateful of you awareness campaigns, you have given food so we will survive, and I pray God blesses you with a long life.”

Street-connected young person who has lived on the streets for six years, Harare

“Is the only reliable source of mealie-meal (a staple food in Zimbabwe), I am now blessed I can cook a hot meal, wash and disinfect my clothes and sanitise my hands all the time. COVID-19 has deprived me of my income, I had no money for food, for medicines and for any recreation. Thank you so much for helping us.”

Street-connected child, Harare
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report has been produced to provide an update on the responses StreetInvest has supported through our partners since the Covid-19 pandemic emerged. It not only highlights our immediate emergency relief activities but also considers the longer-term responses that will be required and how those align with StreetInvest's existing strategy. The report cannot chronicle all the activities of each of our partners but is intended to give examples of the outstanding ways in which they have responded with the limited financial and human resources available to them.

Our partners have continued to inspire us. Despite the challenges that they have faced themselves, none have closed, none have left the streets. Rather they have simply redoubled their efforts and have been the leaders in providing guidance and food, installing water tanks and buckets, supplying soap and PPE, offering shelter, guiding governments in appropriate responses and joining with other partners to reach out to the communities together. At the same time, they have been collecting the data required to understand what is needed and what works, advocated for governments to allow them to implement appropriate responses, built the capacity of all parties to deliver those responses and try to stay sufficiently strong to survive for as long as it takes.

StreetInvest is proud to have contributed to this work and would like to recognise the untiring efforts of:

- **Child in Need Institute (CINI) of Kolkata, India**: StreetInvest's Regional Coordinating Partner for Asia
- **Muslim Family Counselling Services (MFCS) of Kumasi, Ghana**: StreetInvest's Regional Coordinating Partner for West Africa
- **Street Girls Aid of Accra, Ghana**
- **Glad's House of Mombasa, Kenya**: StreetInvest's Regional Coordinating Partner for East Africa
- **Concern for Development Welfare Association (CoDWelA) of Waterloo, Sierra Leone**: StreetInvest's Partner for Sierra Leone
- **Street Empowerment Trust (SET) of Harare, Zimbabwe**: StreetInvest's Partner for Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Story Map “In the Shadow of a Pandemic” was created as part of the legacy of the “Growing up on the Streets” (GUOTS) with funding from Backstage Trust. It was led by Shaibu Chitsiku, Director of SET and Project Manager for GUOTS Harare, in collaboration with University of Dundee which provided ethical approval for the project as well as the licenced web application. Janine Hunter of the University edited the visual data and context detail to create the story map using the ArcGIS StoryMaps. The Zimbabwe stories and photos are included here with many thanks

We would also like to acknowledge the support of all those who have made this possible. In particular, our thanks go to all those who contributed to our Covid response Crowdfunder, to Aid4Zimbabwe for their two grants, to Ladderstream for supporting both Kenya and Ghana when they needed it most, to Wellcome Trust for extending the project funding to adjust to the Covid lockdown and GUOTS' key donor, Backstage Trust, for allowing some funds to be redirected towards the pandemic responses.

StreetInvest has also had to adjust to the Covid. We have reduced our staff, now work from home and have cut other costs to reduce our overall run rate by almost a half. We have been able to continue our support because of the generosity of many who have stepped up to underwrite our core activities at least until the end of next financial year October 2021. We would like to acknowledge their support as well as the continued work of our staff and volunteers, including our Board.

Should you wish for further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

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