# Strengthening Faith-Based Organisational Strategies to enhance the welfare of street children in Uganda

[1]Fred Ojok, [2]Gilbert Obici & [3]David Mwesigwa

[1, 2, 3] *Faculty of management sciences, Lira University, Uganda*

Corresponding author's email: dmwesigwa@lirauni.ac.ug

## Abstract

**Purpose**: The study aimed to unpack the effectiveness of FBOS in enhancing the WSC in Uganda.

**Methodology:** This study took a literature review of available an obtainable source namely books, peer-reviewed journals, annual reports, statistical abstracts to analyse the effectiveness of FBOS.

**Findings:** Results suggest that the effectiveness of FBOS in WSC can straightforwardly be enhanced by putting greater attention on the preventive strategies, rehabilitation strategies, outreach strategies and collaborative strategies. These have proved to be very effective in several parts of the world, and especially, countries whose conditions appear to be similar to those of Uganda.

**Conclusion:** The different analyses extracted is significant in bringing the ideas of operation of FBOS such as prevention means, rehabilitation, collaboration and outreach programmes which are all meant to enhance the welfare of street children.

**Recommendation:** This study encourages the government of Uganda to identify feasible means that can boost the ability of households to access better household needs such as feeding, shelter, social protection to children, meaningful education, and essential healthcare.

**Unique contribution to policy and/or practice:** This study is expected to facilitate policy makers, especially those working with urban councils, to evolve practical policies that can allow them deal with the modern challenge of street children.

**Key words:** *FBOS, WSC, street children, rehabilitation*

## 1. Introduction

In Africa, the idea of welfare was witnessed in several segmented societies of Balkan regions, Oyo States in Nigeria, and other pre-colonial states in West Africa when such societies would offer 'assistance' to the needy, vulnerable and communities that would experience bad harvest or running away from hostilities (Siegelbaum, 2021). As pointed by Marco & Van Leeuwen (2016), there are two groups of street children: the first group is 'Children of the street', which refers to children who are homeless, and streets in urban areas are their source of livelihood, where they sleep and live; and the second group is 'Children on the street', who work and live on the streets in the daytime but return back home at night where they sleep, although some of them sleep occasionally on the streets (Berezina, 2017). A report by Sarah & Thomas de Benitez (2019) indicate that street children face difficulties in providing themselves with good sources of food, clean drinking water, health care services, toilets and bath facilities, and adequate shelter. They also suffer from absence of parental protection and security due to the missing connection with their families. According to Lewis (2021), report from 2018 Consortium for Street Children, UNICEF estimated that 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. The report however contends that "the exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing." In the United States of America, the number of homeless children supported had reached a record high after increasing from 1.2 million in 2007 to 1.6 million in 2010 (Poonam; Naik; Seema; Bansode; Ratnenedra; Shinde & Abhay, 2021). Interesting to note is that about 83% of "street children" in the USA did not leave their state of origin, and if they did leave their state of origin, they were likely to end up in large cities, notably the New York, Los Angeles, Portland, and San Francisco (Poonam, et al 2021).

### 1.1 The concept of FBOs

The concept of Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) has become a guiding pillar in charities and welfare. According to Mwithu and Andrew (2019), these are entities dedicated to specific religious identities, often including a social or moral component, and that the Bank recognizes their distinct strategic value given their unique attributes, including the fact that more than 80% of the world's population claims religious affiliation. A faith-based organization is thus an organization whose values are based on faith and/or beliefs, which has a mission based on social values of the particular faith, and which most often draws its activists from a particular faith group. With varying ideas of what constitutes the right definition of 'street children', Robert & Nelson (2016) refer to the United Nations International Children Education Fund's concept of boys and girls, aged less than 18 years, for whom "the street", including unoccupied dwellings and wasteland have become home and/or their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised.

### 1.2 The landscape of street children

In the East African region, and most especially in Kenya, Mwithu and Andrew (2019) revealed that 92% of 41,733 street children can be found to be living in large cities of Nairobi,

Kisumu, Mombasa and Nakuru, with the phenomenon more prevalent in densely populated urban hubs. In Uganda, the concept of street children emerge when a number of children took to the street because of poverty and hunger as individual families could not meet the basic demand (Amed 2021). A UNICEF Report (2021) estimated the number of street children at 28,276 and about 47% of that living on the streets of Kampala city, with the same report noting that in Lira City (Lira Municipal Council), there were an estimated 11.06% living on the streets. This study was grounded by the Maslow theory of motivation and specifically focusing the basic needs aspect. Maslow (1943, 1954) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and that some needs take precedence over others. Maslow identified the first need in his hierarchy of needs as being Physiological needs which are biological requirements for human survival, and they include: air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, sleep (Mcleod, 2020).

The strategies adopted by many Faith-Based Organizations such as vocational skill training, drug detoxification programmes, and provision of street children with a safe family-like environment were always aimed at keeping those street children from going back to the streets. According to Bassuk, *et al* (2011), a faith-based organization is any organization whose values is based on faith or beliefs, which has a mission based on the social values of the particular faith, and which most often draws its activists from a particular faith group. The term "faith-based organization" is more inclusive than the term "religious organization" as it refers also to the non-congregation faith beliefs. FBOs are thus entities dedicated to specific religious identities, often including a social or moral component (Bassuk, *et al*, 2011). According to Lewis Siegelbaum (2021), a faith-based organization refers to charitable organizations or non-profits affiliated with a religious group or inspired by religious beliefs, and is premised on the enhancement model which is defined as a faith-based program theoretical approach positing that the spiritual activities serve a supportive function to bring about social change; and that social service programs that do not incorporate spiritual activities are insufficient for addressing important human needs.

### 1.3 Theoretical imperatives

This study is guided by the theory of social welfare which was postulated by Amartya Sen in the 1970s. Lee, Wonhyung; Donaldson, & Linda Plitt (2018) stated that the theory emphasizes the role of interest groups in defining social welfare and provides an explanation of why some groups remain marginal to the welfare enterprise. Marco & Van Leeuwen (2016) explained that social welfare theory carries two assumptions: that freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance; and that freedom to achieve well-being must be understood in terms of people with capabilities. The theory was significant in the identification of action plans to address the plight of vulnerable members of society. But Amartya Sen asks whether the enlightenment dream of a rationally organized society can still be realized. Therefore, believed to be a group of individuals united on the basis of religious or spiritual beliefs, FBOs have traditionally directed their efforts towards meeting the spiritual, social, and cultural needs of street children, and their members in general (Coren; Hossain; Pardo & Bakker, 2016). Realizing that there is a relationship between religious or spiritual beliefs and
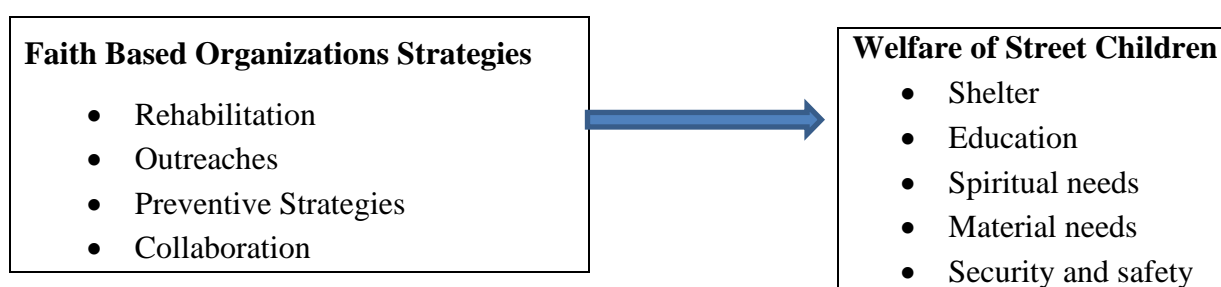
welfare, many FBOs have attachment with churches, temples, synagogues, and mosques. In Lira City, the report of Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU, 2020) detailed that there were 21 FBOs that targeted vulnerable children, with street children being catered by 15 of those FBOs. While some governments have implemented programs to deal with street children, the general solution involves placing the children into orphanages, juvenile homes, or correctional institutions have greatly rested with FBOs.

## 1.4 Objective of the study

This study aimed to analyse the effectiveness of FBOS in enhancing the WSC in Uganda. Specifically, four questions are answered, namely: (i) what is the effectiveness of preventive strategies in enhancing the welfare of street children in Uganda? (ii) What is the effectiveness of rehabilitation strategies in enhancing welfare of street children in Uganda? (iii) What is the effectiveness of outreach strategies in enhancing the welfare of street children in Uganda? And (iv) What is the effectiveness of collaboration as a strategy in enhancing the welfare of street children in Uganda?

## 1.5 Linkage between FBOS and WSC

The choice of Uganda for this particular study was based on the sole reason that it is one of the most urbanized nations with a large population of street children and a host to many FBOs. The major focus is on the last three years: 2019, 2020 and 2021. This was based on the fact that the time chosen was an adequate scope to come up with a realistic assessment of the effectiveness of FBOs strategies in the management of welfare of street children. This is very significance given that: (a) For the religious institutions, many FBOs have been at the forefront in the management of street children affairs in Uganda but limited documentation are found in regards to this field. (b) It provides information on the operations of FBOs and presentation of how they are changing the lives of street children through different welfare services; this is further expected to be of significance in areas of policy formulation in the field of street children. (c) It provides an extra motivation to Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in providing other options on handling the welfare of street children in the country (d) it contributes to the debate on FBOs and welfare of street children, and this will be one of the sources of literature since a copy of the dissertation would be displayed in the University library which can serve as reference point for future researchers in the field of livelihoods.

**Faith Based Organizations Strategies**

- Rehabilitation
- Outreaches
- Preventive Strategies
- Collaboration

**Welfare of Street Children**

- Shelter
- Education
- Spiritual needs
- Material needs
- Security and safety

**Source:** *Adopted from Jabareeb (2009) & modified by the Researcher (July, 2022)*

*Figure 1: Shows the structural explanation on the perceived Effectiveness of FBOs Strategies in Enhancing the Welfare of Street Children*

Figure 1 illustrates the view that FBOs undertake different strategies such as rehabilitation, outreaches, prevention and collaboration to handle the welfare of street children. It is further conceptualized that these strategies by FBOs would manifest in welfare services for street children such as the provision of shelter, education, spiritual needs, material needs, security and safety. However, this is also the existence of moderating factors such as government policies on child welfare and peer pressure which tend to affect both the FBOs strategies and welfare of street children.

## 2. Effectiveness of FBOS in enhancing WSC

In unpacking the effectiveness of FBOS, we focussed on the preventive strategies in enhancing the welfare of street children, rehabilitation strategies in enhancing welfare of street children, outreach strategies in enhancing the welfare of street children and, collaboration as a strategy in enhancing the welfare of street children.

### 2.1 Effectiveness of preventive strategies in enhancing the WSC

Watson (2015) states that children in street situations face numerous human rights concerns when they are separated from their families. This includes a lack of access to shelter, food, clothing, healthcare and education, psychological distress, and significant stigma, amongst other concerns. This trend calls for preventive measures to stop children from accessing streets. In the views of Rogoff & Barbara (2014), preventive modalities aimed at offering proactive programmes that are intended to stop or drastically reduce an event, thus organizations undertake these measures to stop the influx of children to streets. Further elaborating this views, he contends that children who live on the streets should be placed in foster care until they can be adopted; financial support should be given to struggling families so that they can afford to care for their children before they end up on streets; a child welfare system should be set up if it does not exist and improved if it does in order to better protect children; recourses should be invested in mental health care and substance abuse treatment; and that public awareness campaigns should be conducted to encourage members of extended families to be responsible.

In Bangladesh, Chavajay & Rogoff (2012) revealed that FBOs are instrumental in the implementation of programmes that address the rights of children. There are vast arrays of human rights concerns affecting children in street situations separated from their families: children's separation from their families and life on the streets can lead them to becoming extremely vulnerable to a range of human rights violations, thus FBOs usually endeavour to do everything possible to stop these children from getting to streets in Bangladesh. In Uganda, Okia p (2019) enumerated some of the preventive strategies adopted by CARITAS and Plan Uganda to avert the increasing trend in street children as: building relationships with the communities that children are from and facilitating communication between communities and

families; training and supporting social workers; supporting families and caregivers by providing support and intervention strategies, and ensuring families are consistent in using the skills acquired; monitoring children's progress in their homes and communities; and helping schools to understand the needs of children with mental health challenges.

## 2.2 The effectiveness of rehabilitation in enhancing the WSC

The concept of rehabilitation encompasses actions that involve passionate attempts of restoring, reintegration and recovering the original trends of a phenomenon (Marco & Van Leeuwen, 2016). Thus, rehabilitation is very vital especially when approached at the perspective of street children and this was proved by Sarah and Thomas de Benitez (2019) who conducted a study in 2017 which revealed that 66.2% of street children in Bangladesh had at least suffered either physical, spiritual, emotional or psychological torture before being offered rehabilitation. Siegelbaum (2021) undertook a cross-sectional study in the Asante State in Nigeria and found that organizations affiliated to religious institutions had well established rehabilitation programmes where street children were fully resident at different dwelling places. In such facilities, they offer a holistic approach that include drug detoxification programmes and formal education from which the street children learn and adopt how to live in a place of safety, sleep at night, bathe, brush their teeth and wear clothes. Siegelbaum (2021) further reported that an administrator at Ogunko Safer Initiatives bragged of having 'many academically sound street children who could have never had the opportunity to go to school.

Mwithu and Andrew (2019) conducted a survey in Kenya; their results revealed that FBOs affiliated to Born Again and Pentecostals churches (58.6%%), Catholics (20.1%), Anglicans (17.8%), and others at (3.5%) had undertaken reconciliation and resettlement programmes for street children in the last five years prior to the survey. Such organizations were also found in the same survey to have established counselling programmers and had recruited or set in place a team of social workers who work closely with each of the street child to hear their individual stories and discover why they've ended up on the streets. In Ethiopia, Tim Rhodes (2016) revealed that 79.4% of FBOs offer a family-like atmosphere for street children, with full-time social workers on hand to offer much-needed care and stability, in addition to offering access to child-friendly education programs, schools and vocational trainings. This study further revealed that yearly, an average of 962 street children were being reintegrated into public schools, vocational training and other comprehensive support plan adapted to the child's holistic needs. A similar finding was revealed by (Mwithu & Andrew, 2019) who contended that FBOs in Pokot county of Kenya do provide support to families to start an income generating micro business to prevent the child from returning to the street, and that a total of 475 street children had already been successfully integrated into homes by 2015. In Uganda, the Police Crime Report (2018) indicated that the country was partly being relieved by FBOs in managing the increased crimes that emanate from street children, in that those FBOs were offering homage, training, psycho-social support and reintegration.

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*2.3 The effectiveness of outreach strategies in enhancing the welfare of street children*

Glivet, Bassuk, Elstad, Kenney, Jassil and Lauren (2014) opined that an outreach is the activity of providing services to any population that might not otherwise have access to those services. In the views of Lee, Wonhyung and Plitt (2018), the key component of an outreach is that the group providing it is not stationary, but mobile; in other words, it involves meeting someone in need of an outreach service at the location where they are usually accessible. Compared with traditional service providers, outreach services are provided closer to where people may reside, efforts are very often voluntary, and have fewer, if any, enforceable obligations (Glivet et al 2014). With the issues of street children, an outreach is not intended to be a one size fits all answer to homelessness, as the population of people who are un-housed is very multifaceted in their needs and backgrounds and the majority of outreach programs face significant limitations (Hardill & Kathy, 2012).

Regardless of its form, the essence of street outreach is the desire to meet people where they are at, build deep trust and connections, offer support, and reinforce the human dignity and respect that is deserving of all people (Tsemberis, 2017). The core elements of effective street outreach include being systematic, coordinated, comprehensive, housing-focused, person-centred, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, as well as emphasizing safety and reducing harm. A study by Nasir, Khalid and Aisha (2016) revealed that n Hong Kong, outreach programmes for street children is well arranged in such a way that the Outreach Team sets the foundation to build a relationship of trust with street children, identifying and understanding how the children came to be living and working on the streets. The goals of the Outreach Team was to support street children who do not have or have little access to basic services such as food, medical care, shelter, and education (Muhammad et al 2016). It was further revealed that 14,292 medical care interventions to street children were undertaken.

Alem and Laha, (2018) indicated that in Accra, Ghana a host of FBOs undertook outreaches to identify and provide towards homeless street outreach, in addition to redirecting un-housed individuals to housing resources, some outreach programs are also concerned with delivering and fulfilling other basic needs such as food, water, and hygiene. The kinds of services and resources provided vary based on the outreach organization and the resources available to them at the time. In California, Baker and Evans (2016) reported that number of non-profit organizations such as Dorothy Day House in Berkeley, do mobile outreach services to areas street children who live in the concentrated homelessness around the city to distribute essential items such as hot meals, groceries, water, rain gear, clothing, and hygiene products.

On the whole, social services are an essential part of outreach work in any city (Rowe; Deborah, Frey & Larry, 2020). Outreach workers in this sector are responsible for connecting individuals to physical and mental health resources as well as drug and alcohol counselling. Typically, these services are provided by trained professionals such as clinicians, case managers, and social work specialists. Several homeless street children outreach programs in Sub-Sharan Africa focus on providing specialized mental health services, harm reduction, or health services in response to the lack of public services that effectively address these needs

among street children (Smith, 2018). Thus, due to the intersectionality of issues that contribute to homelessness, some Faith-Based Organizations in Ghana have developed outreach that allows services to be offered concurrently for individuals who belong to more than one category.

Jones and Battjes (2015) contend that there are many limitations of outreach programmes to the homeless street children in that it is often referred to as a "band aid" solution for homelessness. Outreach as a solution to homelessness cannot address the impacts of education, income, and other social determinants of health that would allow long term improvements in health and housing security. In some regards, homeless street outreach merely acts as a bridge or stepping stone to fixed site services that can provide greater support and continuity of care.  A survey conducted by Spence & Muneera (2020) in Madrid City, Spain revealed that of un-housed street children who engaged with services revealed that there was "improvement in general health, mental health, vitality after street outreach contacts, but only for those who later attended fixed site clinics (<50% of people).", implying that such outreach programs that remain knowledgeable of existing fixed site spaces or are integrated in networks of service organizations are better able to coordinate access to care. Additionally, Rubin, & Hank (2019) contends that due to the tendency for outreach organizations to be non-profit and grassroots based, a significant limitation for outreach services is their reliance on volunteers' time and capacity and donor funding to continue to work with un-housed street children. A barrier to widespread expansion of outreach services is the lack of awareness of the needs fulfilled by outreach and the difficulty in quantitatively representing the impact of outreach on the lives of un-housed street children.

*Effectiveness of collaboration in enhancing the welfare of street children*

Collaboration, which also encompasses the idea of partnership, is the process in which two or more people, or entities and organizations work together to complete or accomplish an assignment or a task to achieve a goal (Mejía-Arauz; Rogoff; Dexter, Amy; & Najafi, 2017). Non-profit organizations, including FBOs which are concerned with providing basic needs to society, usually tend to partner with local government as well as other non-profit organizations. Also, Tsemberis (2017) emphasizes the vital need for collaboration in the current system, in which services and care are fragmented and delivered by several different stakeholders, increases the need of all relevant stakeholders to coordinate and collaborate both within and between organizations in order to deliver services tailored to people's needs. This need of increased collaboration between stakeholders corresponds with the principles of people-centred care. In the Mazahua Indigenous community of Mexico, Rubin, & Hank (2019) reveal that FBOs such as Kukillah Initiatives had a partnership with UNICEF in the management of street children crisis of 2009, when the street children suffered an outbreak of acute dysentery and diarrhoea. This partnership and collaboration was later rolled out to all major organizations working for street children and other vulnerable children in Mexico. Smith (2018) states that the first collaborative programme for street children was seen in the USA when the Evergreen State College was established as an intercollegiate learning community in 1984, and appeared

to have created partnerships with different Christian organizations to refer a sizeable number of vulnerable children for college trainings, which was widely considered a pioneer in this area.

The centre was later credited for the reduction in the number of street children in the locality.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Baker & Evans (2016) reveals that most FBOs were either in working in partnership or collaboration with multi-national charity organizations such as the Bill Gate Foundation and other donor community in addressing the plights of street children in Africa. A study conducted by Rowe et al (2020) found that collaboration can increase achievement and productivity. However, Ferris & Elisabeth (2015) conducted a four-year study of inter-organizational collaboration in a mental health setting found that successful collaboration can be rapidly derailed through external policy steering, particularly where it undermines relations built on trust; and that collaboration is also threatened by opportunism from the business partners and the possibility of coordination failures that can derail the efforts of even well-intentioned parties.

## 3. Conclusion

From the literature analysed above, dearth of adequately especially in pointing out the ingredients of welfare of street children that are perceived to have been enhanced through the identified strategies.  In reality, there appears to be limited empirical research on the effectiveness of FBOs strategies in enhancing the welfare of street children in Lira City. Perhaps this could have been due to the fact that most of these FBOs have not been sharing their success story with the rest of the world or no interested party had made contact with them on this subject matter. This implies that this study topic had not attracted adequate attention in terms of empirical research. It is thus, this gap in literatures that this particular study will vigorously seek to bridge. Categorically, the different analyses extracted is significant in bringing the ideas of operation of FBOS such as prevention means, rehabilitation, collaboration and outreach programmes which are all meant to enhance the welfare of street children.

## 4. Recommendation

From the findings of this study, government is encouraged to enhance the ability of families to access better family needs like good feeding, shelter, social protection to children, good education, and health among others.

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