

Key Messages for Policy and Practice

Key policy and practice areas for street connected young people need to address issues of prevention and support, and deal with problems of abuse, discrimination, exploitation and employment as well as their engagement with services and participation in community life.

Abuse, family breakdown and economic problems are causal problems that push young people to go out to the street.

Abuse and exploitation within families, along with breakdown of relationships and orphan-hood are primary causes pushing young people into leaving home, often without preparation, and so going to the street. Peer pressures, perceptions of freedom, absence of responsibility, and urban glamour help draw uncertain young people towards street situations.

Youth recommendations: develop services to work on prevention by acting on abuse, engaging with children and young people and involving their participation, and providing support for youth and families. Services should appropriately and effectively respond to and act on abusive and exploitative family relationships which are the cause of many young people leaving home and going out to the street. Services should include social support schemes for orphans and disintegrated families, and engage with children and young people through developing their participation in communities

Formal and informal support systems for street connected youth should be strengthened.

Young people living and working on the street develop strong connections and attachment to public space, and adopt resourceful and resilient strategies for living. Realistic interventions for community support to enable young people to move on permanently from the street need to take account of their individual needs and ambitions, but much existing rehabilitation for street connected youth is top-down. The research found a tendency of breaching the rights of the most marginalised and street connected youth by different government offices and other stakeholders working with them.

Youth recommendations: develop interventions and services for reintegration based on the participation of youth, taking account of individual needs and ambitions, and building on their capacities for resilience and adoption of practical strategies. Reintegration in the community through the provision of skills, finance and employment should be co-constructed with the involvement of the youth themselves. Young people can play the leading role in the preparation of interventions and projects concerning their life.

Youth centres can play vital role in shaping the development of street connected and marginalised youth

Despite government attempts to increase provision of youth centers and playing fields, the numbers are insignificant in comparison to the need, are often not easily accessible, and lack facilities, staff and services. There are problems of inaccessibility for youth with disabilities. Many street connected youth are not aware of the availability of youth centres and their services.

Youth recommendations: youth centers need to be provided that are promoted for and inclusive of street connected youth and young people with disabilities in accessible places. Centres should operate to quality standards, have sufficient competent staff and appropriate facilities, and involve young people in design and provision of services.

The creation of employment opportunities is a key to solving problems for street connected youth

The informal sector is the main arena for livelihood for many street connected and marginalised youth who often lack other employment opportunities and community involvement.

Youth recommendations: provide services to support street connected young people in developing their entrepreneurship and employment. This should include legalizing and providing places for production and sale, supporting their work, and providing opportunities for involvement in community development

Street connected youth should be engaged, involved and valued as members of the community

Experiences of abuse, discrimination, vulnerability, and pressures on livelihoods, can alienate street connected youth from the local community in which they live.

Youth recommendations: Recognized the value and potential contributions of all young people to communities. Make provision of services to engage with street-connected young people and support them to connect with local residents and local government, develop mutual relationships with peers, become involved in development work and participate in their community.

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YOUR World Research

Insecurity and uncertainty: Marginalised youth living rights in fragile and conflict affected situations in Nepal and Ethiopia

Research from
Addis Ketema Ethiopia

March 2019

act:onaid
NEPAL



Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

ChildHope
Inspired by children; challenging injustice



Addis Ababa University
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Youth Uncertainty (YOUR) World Research has worked with some of the most marginalised young people across eight fragile environments in Ethiopia and Nepal. The detailed qualitative research has generated new knowledge about how marginalised youth perceive, navigate, negotiate and respond to uncertainty, and how this may affect their rights and pathways out of poverty in impoverished fragile and conflict affected communities, which may be prone to natural disasters.

In Addis Ketema the research assessed how marginalised and street connected young people perceive and respond to uncertainties shaped by the context in which they are living. The research investigated how their perception of uncertainty changes and differs depending on intersecting aspects of poverty, wellbeing, inclusion, age, identity, gender and other structural inequalities.

This summary provides an overview of the main findings from street connected young people in the Addis Ketema research site and the policy and practice implications and requirements.

Key Findings

The main findings from street connected young people fall into three interconnected aspects of their lives, from an underlying poverty, discrimination and marginalization, the lack of support, opportunity, employment and access to services, through to the use and abuse of various substances to relieve their difficulties but which cause other problems.

Marginalization of street connected youth

As the result of poverty, discrimination and the context in which they live, street connected youth are marginalised. In particular, the widespread discriminatory social labelling of young people who are in street situations as thieves and drug addicts makes them feel alienated from the everyday social and economic life of the community. Because the Merkato and Atobis Tera are respectively the largest open market and the biggest bus station in the country, they provide and are seen as creating ample opportunities for criminal activities. Since these are places where street connected young people congregate, they are often regarded as the primary suspect for any criminal activity. As a result of this, street connected young people reported non-judicial torture and imprisonment. They also assert that the judicial system is discriminatory, and that they are marginalised and not included in the provision and access to social services.

Youth with disabilities who work on the street are also a discriminated group and experience marginalization. They report that this starts from placement in schools built in consideration of their perceived special needs, and continues through the varied challenges they experience in access to vocational training, provision of financial support and lack of job opportunities. They find that discriminatory practices and lack of social protection schemes make their lives so difficult that some have to work and live on the street.

Lack of support and access to basic services

One of the basic and most significant supports that street-connected youth have is from other young people who work and live on the street. They work and live together for security reason and peer support is also a substitute for the love they have lost from their family. They say they experience psychological gratification through contact with other young people from street situations. Most street connected young people have come into this situation and gone out to the street as a result of abuse and problems in their family. Even when they have support among themselves, finding someone who can and will help them get employment is challenging, so they become involved in informal activities which don't require relationships or other collateral.

Although government and NGOs have schemes for supporting street connected youth and vocational training, there are still problems of finding jobs, and employment opportunities are not provided. For example, Meron, a street-connected young woman, took up vocational training on paving roads, and found there was no work at the end:

We were mobilized and got trained for two weeks in paving roads using cobblestones by the local government. However, we have not yet started working. Although they promised to offer us jobs right away it all turned out to be a lie. As the cost of life is rising, we found it very difficult to pay for house rentals and be able to eat three times a day working in the informal sector (Meron, young woman aged 23 years, code 073)

Some street connected young people say they feel alienated as outsiders when they go to local youth centres, but the majority of them do not have even an awareness of the different services provided through such places. Zeru explained this condition:

We [street connected young people] don't get the chance to take part in the affairs of the community. We are not taken as benefitting group of people by the local administration. There is a youth Centre in the Woreda. However, street youth hardly go there as they are regarded as outsiders. (Zeru, young man aged 23 years, code 079)

Substance use among street connected youth

Substance use among street connected youth is common. It is their way of coping with their life on the street. They use various substances, including glue and benzene sniffing, local liquor drinking, *Khat* chewing, tobacco smoking and in some instances marijuana use. Street connected youth relate their use of such substances to the confrontation of difficulties on the street. They assert that the substance will help them forget their vulnerability and calm their hunger, but also offer entertainment, provide courage, a feeling of belonging with other young people while using it together and enable sleep without being interrupted by voices and noise of overcrowding and the cold weather.

The use of substances greatly affects the life of street connected young people. Reported effects include lack of confidence to go for formal employment, boredom, feelings of shame, depression and hopelessness, nervousness, sleeping difficulties, sweating and mental fatigue. According to the young people, substances are easily accessible, affordable and become normalized over time. Relevant stakeholders involved in focus group discussions say they are well aware of these issues. Lack of enforcement of laws that prohibit the sale of substances to minors, and the unavailability of detoxification and rehabilitation programs are mentioned as reasons for the perpetuation of the problems.



Youth led walk with street connected youth in Addis Ketema Sub city



Open mapping with street connected youth



Roads and rivers of life drawing with youth



Community mapping and resource tracking map

What We Did

Methodology

The methodology was co-constructed with marginalised young people, exploring their perceptions of uncertainty across dimensions of place and space, mobility and migration, transition and growing up, self/others autonomy and relationships, and in conflict and environmental crisis. Two cross cutting themes - strategies and interventions, what helps and doesn't help in times of uncertainty – help provide insight for policy makers. Participatory, creative and moving methods were used, and data was drawn from multiple sources including direct observations, interviews, physical mapping, drawing, and audio-visual materials. Researchers spent time on-site interacting with people from local communities.

Location

This research was conducted in Addis Ketema Sub-City of the City Administration of Addis Ababa. The area of this Sub-City is 8.64 square kilometres, with a total population of 297,793 (144,954 male and 152,839 female) in 2015. The research location is a highly populated slum area with a population density of 37,488 persons per square kilometre. The majority of residents work in Addis Ketema as daily labourers, civil servants or businessmen and businesswomen. Prostitution is also common due to the influx of increasing numbers of people from different parts of the country, arriving there for various reasons. Addis Ketema is selected as a destination because it is seen as a commercial core of the country, in which Merkato, the largest open-air market in the continent, is located. The place is also home for the many young people who work and live around the city bus station and the market.



Participants

Researchers worked with a total of 125 marginalised young people throughout the five stages of research in Addis Ketema, with care to include a gender balance in the numbers participating. The participant sample and criteria of marginalisation and vulnerability were developed through the inception and piloting phase of the project. Snowballing was used to reach the most marginalised and a coding system was developed to monitor and report on the diversity of the young people in the case studies.

Research

The research was conducted in five phases, with a qualitative approach and applied creative and engaging participatory and visual methods. These include mapping, rivers of life, photo narrative, timelines, seasonal maps, youth led walks, network and support diagrams which helped to reveal youth perspectives on the complexities of their lives. These methods enabled in-depth investigation of how uncertainty affects the lives of young people and how in turn they seek strategies to shape their rights and change their contexts. Forty detailed case studies were collected from Addis Ketema. The case studies show how marginalised youth experience intersecting aspects of poverty, disability, education, employment and socio-economic status, and provide insight into the strategies employed by young people in the face of uncertainty.