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Causes and Effects of Street Children on Development in Uganda: A Case Study of Street Children in Kabale Municipality, Kabale District

The problem of street children is global and has been experienced by almost all cities and small towns in the world and has affected development. The objectives of this study were: to find out the number of street children, to examine the causes of the street children phenomenon, to find out the extent to which street children affect development and to analyse the mitigating factors to the problem of street children in Kabale Municipality. The study was largely qualitative though quantitative methods were used to a small extent. The population of study involved street children, community members, government leaders and non-governmental organisations whose activities concern street children. Non-random sampling techniques were used and the research was based on a sample size of 140 respondents. Interviews, observation and documentary analysis were the data collection methods used. The findings of the study indicated that the causes of street children problem were mostly domestic centred such as domestic violence, child sexual abuse, poverty, family breakdown, child neglect and torture. The increase in the number of street children in Kabale Municipality was found to have affected development through increased illiteracy rates which limits the number of future professionals in different sectors like engineers, doctors, teachers and lawyers. Infant mortality rates which affect population growth, increase in HIV/AIDS prevalence due to child prostitution were also found to affect development. However, several church-founded and community-based organisations have played a significant role in rehabilitating street children to turn them into productive citizens. These organisations provide children with school fees, scholastic materials and medical care. The study recommends that the government and community members should aim at promoting poverty alleviation programmes to strengthen people's economic bases, sensitising parents to stop administering corporal punishments on children, and observing children's rights. More child centres and orphanages should be built to absorb all children on the streets.

Keywords: Street Children, Development in Uganda, Kabale Municipality