

International Social Work

<http://isw.sagepub.com>

Faith-based programs and outcomes for street-living youth in Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi: A comparative study

Kristin M. Ferguson, Karl Dortzbach, Grace R. Dyrness, Neela Dabir and Donna Spruijt-Metz

International Social Work 2008; 51; 159

DOI: 10.1177/0020872807085856

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/51/2/159>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



International Association of Schools of Social Work

ICSW

International Council of Social Welfare



International Federation of Social Workers

Additional services and information for *International Social Work* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://isw.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/51/2/159>

Faith-based programs and outcomes for street-living youth in Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi

A comparative study

● **Kristin M. Ferguson, Karl Dortzbach, Grace R. Dyrness, Neela Dabir and Donna Spruijt-Metz**

They are a barometer for social progress in urban America and abroad and a conspicuous sign that social and economic development often do not progress in harmonious strides. They are the 10,000 homeless youth living on the streets of Los Angeles and the tens of millions on the streets across the developing world (ISHP, 2004; UNICEF, 2003). Because governments alone cannot possibly address this global crisis, civil society organizations (i.e. faith-based, community-based and non-governmental organizations or NGOs) have emerged as prominent service providers in addressing the increasing numbers of street children (Villamizar, 2000).

Despite their efforts, information on outcomes within these organizations – in particular faith-based organizations (FBOs) – remains largely absent from the literature (Johnson et al., 2002). Two challenges inherent in evaluating service outcomes with street youth consist of their transient nature and the accompanying lack of precision-based outcome measures (Karabanow and Clement, 2004).

To explore how FBOs intervene in the lives of street youth, an interdisciplinary research team developed a framework in 2003 for

Key words ● comparative ● faith-based organization ● homeless ● outcomes ● street youth

evaluating organizational success and client outcomes in FBOs serving homeless youth (aged 12–21) in Los Angeles. The following year, additional funding allowed expansion of the study to include FBOs in Mumbai and Nairobi, cities with large populations of street youth and diverse religious traditions. The following article compiles the findings from both studies and addresses the following questions. First, what are the various services provided by FBOs to street-living youth in Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi? Second, what are the definitions of client outcomes according to staff and youth clients in each city?

Conceptualization of homeless and street-living youth

This study adopts the UNICEF definition of street youth: ‘street children consist of any boy or girl for whom the street (in the widest sense, e.g. including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults’ (Ennew, 1994: 15). We also recognize the classification of youths ‘on the streets’ and ‘of the streets’. Youths on the streets are those youths who earn their living in the streets but maintain some family ties. Youths of the streets are those youths completely on their own who frequently live with other street youths (Ennew, 1994). This study utilizes the term ‘street-involved’ youth that combines both concepts, for it recognizes that the categories are not discrete, nor fixed, nor homogeneous (Panter-Brick, 2002).

Los Angeles

UNICEF’s definition of street youths is accurate for some sub-populations of homeless youths in Los Angeles. US researchers have identified three categories of street youths (Thompson et al., 2001; Zide and Cherry, 1992). Runaway-homeless youths have left home for one or more nights, without notifying their parents or guardians. Throwaway youths have left home because their parents have asked them to leave or have locked them out. Independent youths are those youth who do not have a home to which they can return. In Los Angeles, another category of homeless youths has emerged (i.e. emancipated foster youths), who are over age for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services’ (DCFS) foster-care system. At age 18, without either a family to return to or the vocational and educational skills and financial

resources needed to live independently, these youths often become homeless (Covenant House California, 2004).

In comparing these categories with UNICEF's definition of children in and on the streets, there is a variety of factors to consider. One is the presence of non-residential and residential facilities in Los Angeles. Most street-living youths are more likely to receive services from non-residential centers, yet many also receive services simultaneously from residential services (De Rosa et al., 1999). Age is another factor that influences whether youths are considered in or on the streets. The Los Angeles DCFS foster-care system is designed to service children under the age of 18, so homeless minors often have more options for housing off the streets than young adults. To be consistent with UNICEF's categories, youths who seek services from drop-in centers but remain living with family or friends could be considered in the streets, whereas those youths without family ties who sleep on the streets (or in unoccupied dwellings) could be considered on the streets. Street-living youths who are part of peer street-families would be an example of youth in this latter category (Denfeld, 2007).

Mumbai

Street youths in Mumbai comprise multiple categories of youths who use the street milieu to socialize, to supplement their families' income and to survive. Due primarily to the fluidity across categories in the Mumbai context, the UNICEF definition has several limitations. The use of the term 'on' and 'of' the street becomes confusing as many youths frequently move between the street and their homes depending upon such practical factors as weather conditions (e.g. monsoon season), family dynamics, nature of the peer group, and the comparative economic conditions of the home and the street (Aptekar, 2004).

Another challenge in understanding street youths in Mumbai consists of their relationship to their family. Many families migrate to the capital city from rural regions across India and reside on the city pavements, often in a provisional shelter constructed in a public setting. Given limited urban space, family ties are often quite loose. It is important to acknowledge that many youths – rather than being abandoned – leave home in an incremental manner, initially staying away for a night or two, then progressively spending more time away from home (Aptekar, 2004). Many migrant mothers are street vendors and their children often help

and are trained in similar trades. It is also possible that the parents initiate the children into begging as a source of livelihood. These youths tend to contribute their earnings to supplement the household income.

Nairobi

In Nairobi, a 2002 governmental report defined street youths as those who are 'living and working on the streets' and who gain their subsistence from the streets (SNV Kenya and GTZ, 2002). In theory, this conceptualization reflects the UNICEF definition. Often for the institutional provider, however, the term 'street children' is used to refer to children who have no known or consistent parental guidance and support. Without such, it is assumed that these children are street children. According to this definition, other categories of vulnerable children may also be considered street children, even though they reflect different situations and have distinct needs: commercially and sexually exploited children, children who work or beg in the streets, children orphaned by AIDS and other causes, and child 'heads of households'.

In addition to the types of vulnerable youths on the streets, multiple structural factors influence their movement into the streets to meet their needs. First, unlike the western world, African countries have limited social welfare systems, so school-age children are often on the streets, either working or socializing. Additionally, the AIDS pandemic in Kenya is also creating increasing numbers of orphans and children who assume the care-giving responsibilities of deceased family members (USAID, 2000). Generally the social structure of African society promotes caring for younger children in extended families, while older youth are released to an early independence in and on the streets, often without social welfare assistance.

Methods

Research design and sampling procedure

This study employed a mixed-methods (i.e. quantitative and qualitative) research design, consisting of two phases. In Phase 1, we determined the types of FBOs in Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi that service homeless youth through a detailed internet, telephone book and word-of-mouth search. Program literature, demographics and publicly available information were gathered. A preliminary

telephone and/or personal interview was conducted with the executive directors of the participating organizations that service homeless youths aged 12–21.

In Phase 2, from the organizations contacted in Phase 1, organizations that met at least one of the following inclusion criteria were recruited:

1. are centered on a church or congregation;
2. are focused on religion and/or are dependent on a formal religious institution;
3. receive funding from a religious institution;
4. have staff and/or members of their board of directors who are religious clergy;
5. are directed by an individual who is motivated by faith or religion; or
6. use faith or religion in the provision of services to their client population.

Our inclusion criteria expanded Corbitt and Nix-Early's (2003) definition of faith-based and faith-integrated programs. Faith-based programs refer to those programs that are centered on a church or congregation, whereas faith-integrated programs denote those that are independent of a formal religious institution and seek to serve the broader community outside the congregation. Given the exploratory nature of our study, we chose to use a more comprehensive definition in order to include as many programs as possible in our sample.

Quantitative surveys were administered and qualitative interviews were performed with program directors, key informants and youth participants. Using in-depth interview techniques, we explored the meaning of effectiveness with staff and youth clients and their perceptions of client outcomes. Within each agency, trained interviewers administered 3–5 page survey questionnaires and conducted in-depth interviews lasting 1–1.5 hours. For the qualitative interview, we spoke first with the program director. Using snowball sampling, the program director was asked during the interview to designate one other person as a key informant in the agency to be interviewed. The designated key informant was subsequently approached and asked to participate in a similar interview. Likewise, the key informant was asked to identify the youth clients to participate. A final interview was conducted with the designated youth clients.

Research instruments

We constructed a qualitative interview guide and quantitative survey that incorporated outcomes measures and faith-based predictors from the literature. On the qualitative guide, we asked program directors, key informants and youth participants to identify how faith and religion were manifested in services and how these practices influenced client outcomes along seven dimensions: feelings, environment, status, skills, knowledge, behavior and attitudes (Rapp and Poertner, 1992). The quantitative survey included questions regarding subject and organizational demographics. All instruments were translated into Marathi and Kiswahili for the Mumbai and Nairobi samples respectively. Both the survey instruments and interview guides were piloted in two agencies in each city.

Data coding and analysis

Descriptive analyses were conducted with the study's quantitative data using SPSS. MAXqda was used to analyze the qualitative findings. The in-depth interviews were tape-recorded, translated into English and transcribed. A combination of content analysis and narrative analysis was used to code and analyze the data. The original coding scheme was developed for the study in Los Angeles utilizing an iterative process that confronted definition characteristics, interview transcripts and field notes with our original research questions. Three members of the Los Angeles research team, from three disparate disciplines (social work, psychology and anthropology) developed the final coding system. When Nairobi and Mumbai joined the study, the initial scheme was used as a basis for the development of a revised coding scheme. We again approached the development of the coding scheme using an iterative process triangulating transcripts, field notes and original research questions. The final scheme, with a total of 180 codes, was a collaborative product of Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi researchers.

Results*Sample description*

The scan of FBOs that service homeless street-living youths revealed 22 agencies in Los Angeles, 42 in Mumbai and over 400 in Nairobi. Since the Los Angeles study was conducted a year before the Mumbai and Nairobi study, sufficient funding allowed the inclusion of 11 organizations and an effort was made to select programs with diverse religious backgrounds. Four organizations in Los Angeles

did not identify with a particular religious orientation; however, faith and religion were evidenced in their organizational structure (e.g. funding or board of directors) or in service provision. In Mumbai and Nairobi, funding limited us to selecting three programs, one associated with each of three global faiths in both cities: Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. In Los Angeles, we interviewed one program director, one key informant and one youth participant in each of the 11 organizations. Seeing the importance of better reflecting youths' voices in this study, it was decided to interview additional youths in Mumbai and Nairobi. Table 1 displays selected demographic characteristics for the participants.

Organizations and services for street-living youths: similarities and differences

As evidenced in Table 2, selected characteristics of FBOs revealed similarities as well as differences across cities.

The youths' ages varied across cities, with the oldest in Los Angeles. One explanation for this difference is that in Los Angeles, the DCFS foster-care system serves minors under the age of 18. If homeless or runaway minors are found on the streets, agencies must refer them to the foster-care system. The program strategies in Los Angeles were thus aimed at preparing clients for independent living, whereas the younger average age and lack of welfare assistance in the other two cities required a focus on more family-oriented living arrangements, reunification, basic education and socialization.

In Los Angeles, the organizations had large-to-moderate buildings, albeit some older than others. They were all fairly well-supplied with equipment such as computers and other learning materials. The kitchens were spacious and well-stocked. One of the organizations also had good medical facilities for use by the residents.

In Mumbai, by contrast, the three organizations in the sample did not have much capital infrastructure, yet they were very different. The Christian agency, for example, had several different locations: one near the train station where many children work on the trains and the others on several acres with individual homes and shelters for the children. One of the organizations had no actual building, but rather conducted all the programs on the streets, teaching children on mats outside store-fronts on busy boulevards. The other agency had separate centers for males and females, dedicating most of their space to vocational training.

Table 1 Sample demographic characteristics across cities for program directors, key informants and youth participants

	Los Angeles			Mumbai			Nairobi		
	Program director	Key informant	Youth participant	Program director	Key informant	Youth participant	Program director	Key informant	Youth participant
Gender									
Female	6	5	1	0	3	6	0	2	5
Male	5	6	10	3	0	6	3	1	7
Age (mean)	38.73	34.27	18.91	50.33	44.33	17.08	41.67	36.33	14.92
Education									
≤ 8th grade			3			2		1	9
Some high school			4			8		8	3
High-school degree	2	2	4			2			
Some college	4	6					1		
College degree	2	3		2		1	1	2	
Graduate degree	3	0		1	3		1		
Years at agency	8.35	5.92		7.83	6.47		11.27	6.03	

Table 2 Similarities and differences across cities in characteristics of FBOs

Characteristics	Los Angeles	Mumbai	Nairobi
Average age of youth served	18.9	17.1	14.9
Types of programs	Preparation for independent living: adult education, vocational, relationship and parenting skills	Focus on family and community-based programs: family reunification, basic education and socialization	Focus on family and community-based programs: family reunification, basic education and socialization
Services tailored to gender	No gender segregation among vocational programs	Differences in how youth were prepared vocationally: girls were trained in sewing and cooking; boys were taught animal husbandry, tailoring and carpentry	Differences in how youth were prepared vocationally: girls were trained in sewing and cooking; boys were taught animal husbandry, tailoring and carpentry
Funding sources	A few receive federal funding; a limited number receive ongoing assistance from religious-based funding institutions	All resources are through private donors or organizations	All resources are through religious organizations or private donors with a faith commitment
Faith-based affiliations	Majority are Christian; a few agencies are of other faiths (i.e. Muslim, Jewish)	Majority have no religious affiliations and some of them strongly believe in child-rights approach to service delivery; 40% associated with Christian churches	Majority are Christian; a few agencies are of other faiths (i.e., Muslim, Hindu)

In Nairobi, one organization had a large school with an adjacent building that housed the youths as well as a modern and well-supplied clinic. Another was located in a small building that included living quarters, worship space and classrooms. The third was in a more rural location, with ample land to farm for residential consumption and spacious quarters as residences.

Funding sources also differed among the agencies and affected the type and reach of programs offered. As in the private sector, the FBOs solicited and received donations from individuals and organizations with or without a faith background.

Our study reflects a breadth of perspectives from diverse religious traditions. Staff from the religiously-linked FBOs largely identified being motivated by their faith and a vocational calling, whereas those from the non-linked FBOs reported being inspired by personal satisfaction, previous homelessness, general spirituality and a desire to work with homeless youths. Staff from organizations that did not use faith in services nor were guided by faith (i.e. secular), nonetheless held personal faith values and were motivated by that faith. For them, the motivation to work with street youths came from a variety of sources, such as the vision for a just society, protecting human rights, the influence of Gandhi's values and satisfaction from working with this population. Whether or not they were explicitly religious, most FBOs across cities promoted religious tolerance by placing symbols of the different faith traditions in the institution and celebrating various religious festivals.

Table 3 highlights the similarities and differences in the services provided for youths. Although similar formal and informal educational services were provided, distinctions were evidenced across cities. In Los Angeles, non-formal education was generally used with those youths who had been out of the formal educational system for an extended period of time and those with substance abuse and mental-health issues. In Mumbai and Nairobi, formal education was seen as more important, to reincorporate youths into age-appropriate classrooms in the formal educational system. Non-formal education consisted of street schools and small educational groups for older youths.

Similarly, vocational skills training and job placement differed across cities, depending largely on the age of the youths and the market characteristics in each city. In Los Angeles for example, computer skills were common while youths reported learning tailoring, artisan training and animal husbandry in Mumbai and Nairobi.

Health and mental-health services and the professionals who provided them varied across cities. Some of this can be attributed to varying levels of government oversight. Whereas specialized professional licenses are needed in the USA to administer therapy, medications and mental health services, in Mumbai and Nairobi, clergy and respected community members (e.g. 'housemothers' in Mumbai and 'aunties' in Nairobi) often provided mental-health services and the medical help of first aid to the youths. Whether due to government regulation or simply the level of resources, a noticeable difference across cities was apparent in the organizational capacity to offer on-site, specialized mental-health, medical and substance-abuse treatment. Los Angeles had several agencies specializing in substance-abuse treatment, while youth with addictions in Mumbai were often referred to general substance-abuse agencies. In Nairobi, there was no reporting of referrals for substance abuse, as institutions generally attempted to address the issue internally with no specialized capacity.

Definitions of client outcomes: similarities and differences across cities

One of the significant measurements of program impact is the self-report of youth. In comparing the youth-identified changes in outcomes across Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi, multiple similarities and a few differences emerge. First, all youths' responses reveal similar positive changes. They reported feeling more confident and happy in both Los Angeles and Mumbai. In Mumbai and Nairobi, they reported feeling more hopeful for the future, having a sense of companionship and feeling gratitude towards the organizations that assisted them.

All my hate and words of hate and sadness and anger I've had just melted away like that . . . it's been so long, and I felt I've lived so long with this hatred and this anger that I didn't know what being 'true' felt like . . . and it's just been great, I cried for the first time in a year . . . and I didn't feel scared or ashamed or embarrassed anything like that. I'm happy. I'm honestly happy now and I'm not always feeling depressed. (YP, Los Angeles)

The programs also shared a common outcome across cities of helping youths to leave the streets. This was identified in both residential and non-residential programs, in that the former provided youths with an independent living facility or shelter so that they were permanently off the streets, while the latter offered day programs so that the youths could have a safe haven off the streets during the day. Positive health outcomes were also consistent

Table 3 Similarities and differences across cities in services provided by FBOs

Services offered	Los Angeles	Mumbai	Nairobi
Outreach	Referrals from other agencies, published advertisements, broadcast commercials and agency street outreach efforts; mobile vans providing basic services to youth on the streets	Same as Los Angeles; in addition, use of special events	Referral, word of mouth, social worker performing outreach
Shelter	Most provide 24-hour shelter; multiple agencies have drop-in centers; shelters are short-term or long-term	Most centers provide drop-in facilities and a few have a 24-hour shelter; some have a night shelter	All participating centers have the facility of group homes (24-hour shelter)
Education	Formal, non-formal education, tutoring, mentoring, educational supplies	Same	Same
Vocational training/ skills training	Encouraged to join job-oriented skills-training courses; computer literacy courses; job interviewing, training and job placements	Mostly restricted to skills/self-employment opportunities requiring less education and money; some agencies have a systematic income-generation	Mostly restricted to tailoring and carpentry; more services needed to provide skills to produce marketable products

Family tracing/family reunification	Not a central focus of most agencies, as youths tend to be older; family reunification process initiated as part of individual client's case plan	program, training for job interviews and job placement	Many agencies try to reunify youths with biological or extended family as an exit service; family reunification is generally a central service component to programs; some agencies facilitate visits by the youths to their relatives during holidays
Social reintegration	Transitional living; independent living facilities	Group homes/family reunification	Reintegration with family/extended family
Treatment for substance abuse	Some agencies are actively involved in substance-abuse treatment and rehabilitation; other agencies refer youths to treatment centers when they do not provide this service internally	Mainly through referral to other agencies specialized in treatment and rehabilitation	Agencies generally attempt to address youths' substance abuse internally

(continued on next page)

Table 3 continued

Services offered	Los Angeles	Mumbai	Nairobi
Mental health services	All agencies have on-site licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) or access to LCSW through referrals; individual, group, couples therapy and case-management services offered on-site	Agencies have social workers on staff; housemothers run group homes for street youths; therapy services not reported	Agencies operated by religious clergy and/or 'aunties' and 'uncles' of programs; therapy services not reported
Health services	Most agencies have on-site health facilities; or refer youths to local health facilities	Most agencies provide health services as needed; some agencies conduct regular health check-up camps	Some agencies have modest medical facilities; most agencies provide health education to youths
Religious services	Some agencies offer religious teaching and activities as a program component; religious teaching offered for two or fewer hours per week	Only Christian agencies have some component of religious preaching/prayers; others celebrate important festivals from all religions	Religious teaching seen as more institutionalized component of programs

across cities. Youths reported improvements in their hygiene, cleanliness and overall health through the programs.

Changes in skills were also comparable across cities. Youths reported learning job skills through their programs in each city. The nature of the job skills in each city depended largely on the characteristics of the local economy. Whereas in Los Angeles computer literacy skills were most commonly noted, youths reported learning tailoring, artisans and adventure sports in Mumbai and animal husbandry, farming and barbering in Nairobi.

There is a program called IGP (Income Generation Program), in that we make glass coasters, learn how to cut the glass and design it; all that is shown to us and taught to us, so that while working, we are able to earn and buy necessities which we need. (YP, Mumbai)

Of all client outcomes, behavior changes were the most prevalent across cities. Agencies frequently seek to address the youths' street-survival behaviors through services designed to modify and replace illegal and self-destructive behaviors. Youths in each city reported a reduction or elimination in alcohol and drug use after participating in their programs. All youths noted positive changes in their behavior around respecting themselves and others. Youths in Los Angeles and Nairobi most often reported a reduction in fighting, while those in Los Angeles and Mumbai noted that they were more responsible and could take on more adult roles.

I don't think about fighting now. When I was on the street, I used to think about fighting all the time. When I came, I made friends. We love each other. We don't think about fighting anymore. (YP, Nairobi)

Changes in attitudes were also similar across cities. Youths in all three cities noted having a more positive attitude or self-image after involvement in the programs. Youths in Los Angeles and Mumbai reported that the programs helped them to adopt a future focus that included both work and school. Youths in Los Angeles and Nairobi felt that they valued work more and developed a desire to help others after participating in the programs.

Discussion and recommendations

Despite the internationally recognized concept of street children, differences are prevalent in how this population is defined and served across cities. In the first place, cultural understandings and societal

perceptions of the street-children phenomenon seem to vary considerably, and this must inform the services that are offered as well as the service providers who offer them. In the USA, street youths are often not able to take care of themselves financially and seem to be considered a failing of society as well as of parents and children. The main agenda of most agencies, aside from providing for basic needs, is aimed at mental-health services, education, job training and combating substance abuse. In India, children and youths on the streets are often earning a living and may be part of a fully functioning family. Society may not view them so much as failing, but rather as a contributing member of a household's income. After providing food, clothing and shelter, education and vocational training seem to be the main thrust of Mumbai agencies, along with socialization and family reintegration. In Nairobi (and increasingly in Mumbai), the HIV/AIDS epidemic has created a large cohort of homeless children and youths, who may also be orphans and/or heads of households. Providing food, clothing and shelter are often the main aims of services, along with some supplemental education or vocational training and efforts at reuniting children with members of their (often extended) family. Little is done regarding HIV/AIDS education and prevention, despite the growing impact it is having on this population.

Notwithstanding the noted differences, client outcomes reported by staff and youths were markedly similar. FBOs in Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi are responding to the needs of street-living youths within their respective cultural contexts and are yielding positive changes in the youths' lives. Consistent with the aims of street-youth organizations from the extant literature, the agencies studied here consistently aim to offer the youths a safe haven from the streets, provide them with needed medical and mental-health treatment, reduce high-risk behaviors, and equip them with academic and technical skills (Karabanow and Clement, 2004).

In light of our findings – that different services across cultural contexts yield similar outcomes – it is crucial to enhance government–NGO partnerships, cross-cultural and inter-faith collaborations as well as exchanges about effective models of service provision. Whether in a secular state such as India, a faith-integrated state such as Kenya, or a state where there is separation between church and state such as the USA, our findings show that FBOs are actively seeking ways to provide solutions to the street-youth phenomenon. In fact, in Kenya, it is these organizations that predominate in servicing street youths. By partnering with FBOs and

NGOs, government agencies could assist in providing more comprehensive services to these youths.

It is clear that there is not a 'recipe' approach to servicing street youths around the globe. International NGOs such as UNICEF and FBOs such as World Vision must ensure that the programs they adopt for street-living children are contextualized for the country in which they are implemented. For example, in Los Angeles, effective strategies to move older youths off the streets require more than moving them into low paying, service-sector positions, as formal labor-market participation by homeless youths is often hindered by the challenges inherent in living on the streets (e.g. lack of permanent address, difficulty maintaining personal hygiene, limited job skills and mental-health issues) (Cauce et al., 2000; Gaetz and O'Grady, 2002). Also, given homeless youths' use of often lucrative street activities to meet their basic needs, effective strategies must also offer them an equally profitable substitute for their street-survival behaviors. Conversely, in India, it is vital to adopt a policy of working with the whole family since most of the children still reside with their families, albeit on the streets. A more comprehensive plan is required that honors the integrity of the families with whom the children live. Lastly, in Nairobi, the impact of HIV/AIDS on children is on the increase. It is important to acknowledge this as a key factor in the growth in numbers of children who turn to the streets in order to survive. New categories of street children are emerging, including children with HIV/AIDS, AIDS orphans and child-headed households. A customized response plan is crucial, one that recognizes the vulnerability of these children and responds to the unique needs associated with each category.

In any study that includes research in three countries on different continents, there are bound to be limitations. First, the sample selection of sites was not scientifically bound. Los Angeles was a logical choice since the lead university is located in this city and it was natural to study the FBOs in our own context. The selection of the other two cities was based on the researchers' contacts. With limited funding, we deemed it necessary to have partners who could conduct the study in each city.

Another limitation consisted of using a different research team in each city. While the principal investigators were in continuous conversation through electronic mail and conference calls, there clearly were differences in the way the study was conducted in each city. The selection and training of research assistants was inconsistent across cities, although a training manual was developed by the Los Angeles

researchers and adapted to the Mumbai and Nairobi contexts by the cross-national research team. One of the Los Angeles researchers provided the training in all three cities for the research assistants. Ideally with more funding, all researchers would have been able to travel to all three sites.

Nevertheless, through ongoing collaboration, this study made progress towards developing reliable definitions and measures across three distinct countries and languages. In order to better understand the effectiveness of homeless youth programs, additional research is needed that further operationalizes precision-based outcome measures for homeless youth programs and then compares programs across different countries, cultures and religions. We nonetheless consider that this study provides a glimpse into the roles of FBOs that can be adapted to other contexts. Indeed, we anticipate that this study will be useful to organizations that support the lives of street youths around the world.

References

- Aptekar, L. (2004) 'A Global View of Street Children in the Third Millennium', in B. D'Souza, R. Sonavat and D. Madangopal (eds) *Understanding Adolescents at Risk*, pp. 1–10. Mumbai: Multitech Publishing.
- Cauce, A.M., M. Paradise, J.A. Ginzler, L. Embry, C.J. Morgan, Y. Lohr and J. Theofelis (2000) 'The Characteristics and Mental Health of Homeless Adolescents: Age and Gender Differences', *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 8(4): 230–9.
- Corbitt, J.N. and V. Nix-Early (2003) *Taking it to the Streets*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Covenant House California (2004) 'Statistics'. Available online at: <http://www.covenanthouseca.org> (accessed 18 March 2007).
- De Rosa, C.J., S.B. Montgomery, M.D. Kipke, E. Iverson, J.L. Ma and J.B. Unger (1999) 'Service Utilization among Homeless and Runaway Youth in Los Angeles, California: Rates and Reasons', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 24: 449–58.
- Denfeld, R. (2007) *All God's Children: Inside the Dark and Violent World of Street Families*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Ennew, J. (1994) *Street and Working Children: A Guide to Planning*. London: Save the Children.
- Gaetz, S. and B. O'Grady (2002) 'Making Money: Exploring the Economy of Young Homeless Workers', *Work, Employment and Society* 16(3): 33–456.
- Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty (ISHP) (2004) *Homelessness in Los Angeles. Just the Facts*. Los Angeles, CA: ISHP (August).
- Johnson, B.R., R.B. Tompkins and D. Webb (2002) *Objective Hope. Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Review of the Literature*, pp. 5–6. Philadelphia, PA: Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, Manhattan Institute.

- Karabanow, J. and P. Clement (2004) 'Interventions with Street Youth: A Commentary on the Practice-Based Research Literature', *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention* 4(1): 93–108.
- Panter-Brick, C. (2002) 'Street Children, Human Rights and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31: 147–71.
- Rapp, C.A. and J. Poertner (1992) *Social Administration: A Client-Centered Approach*. New York, NY: Longman.
- SNV Kenya and GTZ (2002) 'The Story of Children Living and Working on the Streets of Nairobi'. Available online at: <http://www.snvworld.org/Kenya/PublicaMain.htm> (accessed 23 March 2007).
- Thompson, S.J., A.W. Safyer and D.E. Pollio (2001) 'Differences and Predictors of Family Reunification among Subgroups of Runaway Youths Using Shelter Services', *Social Work Research* 25(3): 163–72.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2003) *The State of the World's Children*. New York: UNICEF.
- US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2000) 'USAID/KENYA Integrated Strategic Plan 2001–2005' (November). Available online at: http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABU260.pdf (accessed 29 March 2006).
- Villamizar, C. (2000) 'Street Talk', *Urban Age* (Spring): 14–15.
- Zide, M.R. and A.L. Cherry (1992) 'A Typology of Runaway Youths: An Empirically Based Definition', *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 9: 155–68.

Kristin M. Ferguson is Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California, School of Social Work, 669 West 34th St, Los Angeles, CA 90089–0411, USA. [email: kmfergus@usc.edu]

Karl Dortzbach is Senior International Representative, Peacemaker Ministries, Adjunct Faculty, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, 2806 N Calbert St, Baltimore MD 21218, USA.

Grace R. Dyrness is Adjunct Professor, University of South California, School of Policy, Planning and Development, and Research Fellow at the Institute for Transnational Research and Development, 2097 N El Molino Ave., Altadena, CA 91001-3051, USA.

Neela Dabir is Associate Professor at the Centre for Equity for Women, Children and Families, School of Social Work and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai 400088, India.

Donna Spruijt-Metz is Assistant Professor of Research, University of Southern California, Institute of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, 1000 S. Fremont, Unit 8, Room 4101, Alhambra, CA 91803, USA.
