Vulnerability of minors to sexual violence in Nairobi slums

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MSF
OPERATIONAL CENTER PARIS
AGENDA

- **Background**
  - Nairobi slums
  - MSF Sexual Gender-based violence program in Mathare slum

- **Study objective**
  - Assess community perceptions minors’ vulnerability to sexual violence

- **Methodology**
  - Evaluation timing, team composition and study areas
  - Focus group discussions and random survey

- **Results**
  - Elements of vulnerability to sexual violence for children

- **Conclusion and way forward**
  - Main recommendations for MSF program
  - Other recommendations
BACKGROUND: NAIROBI SLUMS

Nairobi Province: 3,138,369 people → 60% living in the slums

- **Mathare slum**
  - Density of population: 25,040 per km²
  - Primary occupations:
    - Small business & casual works
    - Prostitution & crime
    - Drug trafficking.
  - Single mothers & children are the poorest social categories.

- **Sexual violence in Nairobi: the vulnerability of children**
  - Sex crimes are on the rise & the brutality of such crimes had increased tenfold
  - Main sexual violence acts: rapes on adults and children, gang rape, domestic violence, sodomy, early marriage, sexual harassment, non-desire pregnancy, & HIV transmission
  - The primary victims seen at the Gender Violence Recovery Center in 2010-2011 were children under 11 years old, both boys and girls.
History of the program

- **2008**: MSF initiates the SGBV program after Kenya’s post-election violence
- **2011**: Clinic opens 24/7 & increases community mobilisation
  → Team of community agents, hotline number, ambulance service
- **2013**: Health evaluation in Nairobi Eastland to redefine MSF operational approach
- **2014**: Program approved with the MoH and Nairobi City Council
- The number of patients has grown steadily, reaching over 2,400 in 2014

In 2010-2014, 53% of victims were <18 years old (30% <12 and 5% <5)

Children received at the clinic

- 2013 data from MSF clinic shows that about half of rape victims are minors and a third are under age 12 years
THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

To better understand factors driving the high level of young victims, a socio-anthropological evaluation was conducted in informal settlements (22 villages in 4 districts) of East Nairobi July—December 2013.

MAIN GOALS

- Assess the factors contributing to minor’s vulnerability to sexual violence
- Inform the project’s operational approach
- Improve community awareness campaigns
**METHODOLOGY**

- **Evaluation timing** (25 weeks)
  - 2013 → 1st phase in Paris: literature search, defining the project & selecting main informants in concert with the field team
  - 2nd phase in Nairobi: field survey & drafted the report
  - 3rd phase in Paris: finalizing the report
  - 2015 → 4th phase in France: writing the overview for the Kenyan MoH

- **Kenyan team composition**
  - Catherine ASAVA, Alphonce ISAÏ WA ISAÏ, Jane IRUNGU & Juma MUKABANE

- **Study areas**

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<tr>
<th>DISTRICTS</th>
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<th>NJIRU</th>
<th>EMBAKASI</th>
<th>STAREH</th>
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<tr>
<td>RANDOM QUESTIONNaire VILLAGES</td>
<td>Fuata Nyayo, Marigoini Lunga-Lunga, Sinai &amp; Kingstone</td>
<td>Mali Saba</td>
<td>Soweto, Kayole Komarock</td>
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<td>FOCUS GROUP VILLAGES</td>
<td>Mbotela Commercial Paradise, Hazina Masai, Mukuru Kayaba</td>
<td>Gitarimarigo Dandora Phase 4, Mali Saba</td>
<td>Soweto</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Qualitative: Focus group discussion

- A semi-structured interview guide in Swahili
- 20 focus groups (totaling 160 community members)
- 40 individual interviews with police officers, Patients and clinic staff.
- Several topics:
  - Perceptions of risk factors for sexual violence
  - Characteristics of gender and intra-family relationships
  - Community perceptions about child & adolescent sexuality
  - Characteristics of seeking assistance for victims

Quantitative: Random survey

- A questionnaire based on transcripts from FGD
- 120 randomly-selected participants
- Findings compared with FGD responses
MAIN ELEMENTS OF VULNERABILITY TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE FOR CHILDREN

- Child & adolescent sexuality according to the community
  - Children became sexual early (9-14 years-old for girls and 12-14 years old for boys)
  - Sexuality was considered as an absolutely taboo subject within families especially for girls
  - Young people deplored that they have not been sufficiently warned about risky behaviors

Violence is extremely common in Nairobi slums & affects adolescent sexual relationships full force.
Main Elements of Vulnerability to Sexual Violence for Children

It is due to poverty when parents can’t provide the basic needs like food to their children, these children go out to search for food and if they come across a man who promises to offer food, they just follow him.”

Women, Paradise village, Makadara District

- Social context of extreme poverty
  - Early marriage
  - Child labor and prostitution
  - Promiscuity within households

Factors Driving Sexual Violence in % of Responses

- Early marriage
- Child labor and prostitution
- Promiscuity within households
- Social context of extreme poverty
MAIN ELEMENTS OF VULNERABILITY TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE FOR CHILDREN

- Breakdown of traditional family structure
  - Frequently seen as linked to violence
  - Children and adolescents often don’t confide in adults
  - Abuse by step-parents
  - If victims show no physical harm, medical care is typically not sought

"When parents get into the habit of sending their children at night, know that they are risking their children; they may or may not come back. They can be caught and locked in houses by boys and raped so we should stop sending them at night in this village”

(Young women, Gitarimarigo village, Njiru District)

“Like my neighbor after his wife died he got remarried. Now this woman beats up the children up to the point of almost killing them.

I’ve tried stopping her with no success.”

(Women, Paradise Village, Makadara District)
CONCLUSION: MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MSF PROGRAM

Increasing referrals of sexually-abused children to the MSF clinic will require

- Awareness-raising activities
  - Target specific public institutions
  - Focus on sensitive avenues
  - Make more use of resources within communities

- Case detection and access to care
  - Implementing a systematic screening
  - Integrating sexual violence care into the public health system
  - Improving the anonymity and the reception

- Field partner network
Further Research

- Evaluate how many people are currently charged with rape in Kenya to better understand recidivism, and offer psychological support to repeat offenders, especially minors.

- Conduct a more detailed analysis of where victims are assaulted and of victims’ work activities.

- Collect information on the prevalence of sexual violence in other neighborhoods, as well as in the countryside, where no local actors exist to help the victims.
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  - The logistics team

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Questions?

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