INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE LEGAL NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH

VIEW FROM THE STREET
Dynamo International – Street Workers Network

Dynamo International coordinates the International Network of Social Street Workers, active in the field with people (children, youth, adults) in street situation.

The Network currently consists of 50 national platforms of street workers from Southern and Northern countries. As a real solidarity network, it is acknowledged as a European Network fighting against poverty. It promotes the exchange of best practices, training actions and giving voice to the key players in this field, by calling on political authorities and other bodies to fight against exclusion and inequalities.

Members (50) : Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Colombia, Congo Brazzaville, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Italy, Mali, Martinique, Mauritania, México, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, United Kingdom, USA and Vietnam.
To encourage and support the networking and coordination of street workers in each country in order to generate national and international solidarity between key stakeholders in this field to promote equality, empowerment, human rights protection of people in street situation.

To promote street work, its specificities and its recognition.

Engaging governments to build sustainable and structural responses against the problems faced by street people around the world.

Strengthen the skills and capabilities of street workers in developing and professionalizing street work through:

- The creation of educational tools produced via the exchange of best practices and information provided by the street workers from different national platforms.

- The organization of training, seminars and international meetings, in collaboration with the Street Work Training Institute

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International Initiative on the Legal Needs of Street Youth

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE LEGAL NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH

Street Workers Network

VIEW FROM THE STREET

NETWORKING AND COORDINATION OF SOCIAL STREET WORKERS IN THE WORLD

50 members over the world

Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Colombia, Congo Brazzaville, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Italy, Mali, Martinique, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, United Kingdom, USA and Vietnam.
I. Vision

- **For people in street situation**
  - Rights **guaranteed**
  - Society that protects them and **actively** supports their development
  - Without **discrimination**

- **For social street workers**
  - Official professional **status**
  - Integration of street work in **public policies** (national, regional, and international level)

II. Values

- Cooperation
- **Citizen participation**
- Respect
- **Responsibility**
- Social justice
- **Solidarity**
- Otherness
- Diversity
III. OBJECTIVES

- **NETWORKING**
  Generate national and international solidarity

- **PROMOTING SOCIAL STREET WORK**
  Recognition

- **ADVOCACY IN ENGAGING GOVERNMENTS**
  Build sustainable and structural responses

- **STRENGTHENING SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES**
  - International meetings (exchanges of best practices)
  - Educational and methodological tools (« Bottom up » process)
  - Trainings (Street Work Training Institute)

IV. CARTOGRAPHY

- **National Platform**: 50
- **Organizations and public services**: 1547
- **Social street workers**: 11,641

Over **1 million** people living in the street accompanied directly
Reach indirectly more than **2 million** by their actions
V. EDUCATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

And more on www.socialstreetwork.org
Introduction

I am happy to say and privileged to say I have been sent by children and youth living on the streets of Dar es Salaam the largest City in Tanzania. It is a great moment to bring the voice of the voiceless, vulnerable youth. More often no one has time to listen to them or wants them. In Dar es Salaam they are often seen as vermin on the streets so who would want to talk to them much less listen to them. Many of you have come from afar, and many of you have not been to Africa so it is my pleasure to share their stories, their dreams, and their hopes for the future and their fears. Most governments have legislation to protect children but in fact street children are not among those children when it comes to implementation of such legislation. They are left out! Census is taken but they are not counted as if they don’t matter to anybody. Strategies and plans are prepared by government authorities but street children in most cases are not captured by those plans. Budgets are made that do not incorporate street youth and children.

Dogodogo Centre Street Children Trust realized that there is a big gap between the existing legislation and what happens to children living on the streets in reality. Dogodogo founded in 1992 has been working for the interests of children and youth living on the streets. One of the major approaches that Dogodogo has pioneered has been creating literacy and life skills for children living on the streets.

Education

When addressing UN some few years back, Malala the valiant Pakistani girl who is most probably known to most of you said: “Let’s pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution”. In 2010 Dogodogo Centre in Dar es Salaam had to close down first, the vibrant drop-in center where more than 3,000 children found
refuge over 20 years. Then the second fatality was the street children’s home for 60 boys who went to school and prepared themselves for reintegration back into their families and communities. This happened because of lack of funds. Most Development Partners or Donors said they fund advocacy programs and not service delivery forgetting that children are already on the streets and cannot wait for advocacy to take its right course of action. Malala did not talk of advocacy when she addressed the UN on her 16th birthday. She said education for children is the only solution. Truly advocacy is important but we should not forget that as we advocate for better opportunities now and in the future, children are already on the streets, living on the streets and education is their only remaining hope for a bright future. Gabriela Mistral a Founder of UNICEF and a Chilean Poet poignantly wrote:

“The Child’s Name is Today”
We are guilty of many errors and faults,
But our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life.
Many things we need can wait, The Child cannot.
Right now is the time bones are being formed,
Blood is being made, senses are being developed.
To the Child we cannot answer “Tomorrow,”
The Child’s name is Today.

Following the closure of the Drop in Center and the Home Dogodogo embarked on offering an education to street children through a “Mobile Education” project. This has several advantages to street children as it provides a platform for counseling, first aid, life skills and time for sports alike. In all it helps restore their dignity and participation in the community. They as well gain some literacy and math skills.

Health
Children living on the streets have no family connection. Family is a word most of us can relate to, however in my experience I have met children who have lived on the street since they were as young as 4 years old. Few have had normal relations with a woman yet most have mothers and sisters somewhere. Many have lost their roots hence their identity. When a vulnerable child falls sick they have no one to go to. Health facilities have no room for children who are alone on the streets to get treatment.
Politicians will always say nobody should die because they have no medical care but as a matter of fact street children die.

In the nearly 25 years’ experience of Dogodogo Center the staff have always been aware of the sodomizing of street boys especially by various security personnel that Inhabit the streets as nearly every building has its own night watch. Sodomy is used by older boys to control younger boys. What is alarming today in Dar es Salaam is the growth of brothels where expatriate Indian and Malaysian women are training vulnerable youth and children on how to service men. These brothels are owned by big shots and so the police turn a blind eye. I have been escorted by the children to various houses in town to see for myself what goes on in premises which appear to be regular homes from the outside. Some of the children themselves know the story but to whom should they tell? In this era of HIV/AIDS how can they avoid being victims when adults in the community become predators? To ease some of the stress with the children I have taught them reflexology and this healing message has become a healthy way for the youth and children to interact with one another.

Security
Ask any street child in Dar es Salaam to tell you what they hate most or fear on the streets? Most of them boys and girls alike will tell you it is the Police and the City militia that they fear the most. None of them will mention food, clothes or shelter as their greatest challenge! Security is crucial to children on the streets. They are criminalized by being on the streets, always under the pretext of loitering. Street children have no Identity cards which is true of the vast majority of Tanzanians! What is the definition of loitering anyway and how can children on the streets avoid being loiterers? Children on the streets are powerless and it is this fact that puts them at the risk of being targets of law enforcers. Unfortunately the police do not just enforce the laws, they also break the laws through child abuse. They often steal the monies that the youth and children manage to collect plus their prized possession of a cell phone. Dogodogo has run seminars with the Police and has found that this is a transformative experience for the
police when they hear their stories and hear their successes. Even police need education.

Community
Street children are seen by the community as hooligans or ruffians and are to be avoided. Some see vulnerable children as orphans the result of their parents misconduct as they died of HIV/AIDS. Consequently they are not given the opportunity to live and act as children. The vulnerable youth are always mistaken for petty thieves and people who cannot be trusted. Children over time begin to identify with the projections of the community loosing in the process their self dignity. This in general affects their self esteem even after being reintegrated back into the community.

Recently a street child who was part of my mobile class under a tree stole a tap from one man’s compound in order to sell it to get food. This boy is the product from a relationship between a father and daughter. From birth this boy was an outcast. He was sent far away to relatives who could not accept him. The community seemed to know his history and even in school he was ostracized. He felt he had no other option but to go to the streets to find his future. The old man suspected that the tap was stolen by a street boy. He was aware of a group of such children who gathered nearby under a large tree. Enraged at the loss of his water tap he found the group he had observed under the tree. He accused the teacher for keeping thieves. It took several days and a return visit by the “thief of his water tap” to soften his heart. The teacher made the first approach and explained the history of the boy who had taken his water tap. The boy was allowed to approach and ask forgiveness. The old man was so touched by the boy and his story that he found a place for the boys to sleep securely at night and gave them some small monies in exchange for chores around his compound. And we see here how whole communities need to be educated about the vulnerable children in their midst seeking only to survive. Communities when educated and informed on the plight of vulnerable children can make the children thrive.
Conclusion
This International Summit has its focus on children, youth and law. I traveled the Google road in search of a way that law could possibly empower vulnerable youth much less enable them to thrive. The most amusing definition that Google provided was that law was by the Marxist definition a tool of oppression used by capitalists to oppress the proletariat. Sometimes when I am on the streets with our youth and children I can experience the law as a tool of oppression. Let us hope during these hours that we can breathe life into law that provides care for our most vulnerable children around the world.