



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION
- Young people's trajectories from home to street
to reintegration in the Kagera region, Tanzania

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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ABSTRACT

Title: From exclusion to inclusion – Young people's trajectories from home to street to reintegration in the Kagera region, Tanzania

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This thesis examines what causes children and young people to leave their homes, how they experience their situation on the streets and as domestic workers, and what facilitates them to reintegrate into their local community. A mixed methods approach was used, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Three sub-studies were conducted comprising of focus group discussions, individual interviews and a cross-sectional survey with children and young people in the Kagera region of Tanzania, who had left their homes for a life on the streets or domestic work and had reintegrated into their local community after receiving support from a local organisation. The theoretical framework consists of life course perspective, agency, resilience and social capital.

The findings revealed that orphanhood and mistreatment were the main reasons for leaving home, that few children had lived with their parents before they left home and that leaving home was a complex process, often lasting several years. The children were subjected to more emotional violence compared to the average child in Tanzania. They also had low quality of life and self-rated health.

Life on the streets was very violent and the children experienced severe discrimination with no opportunity to access their basic needs and rights. The situation of those employed as domestic workers depended on whom they worked for, but they generally faced long working hours, demanding tasks and were denied schooling.

The reintegration trajectory can be described as a move from a position of social exclusion to inclusion. The results show a step-wise process initially characterized by ambivalence and setbacks. The development of self-reliance, agency, resilience, individual and collective capital constitutes a part of this process. Young people who have lived on the streets can successfully reintegrate into their local community when given adequate support.

Their quality of life and self-rated health were significantly better after reintegration compared to before they left their homes and the level of violence in their life was also significantly lower. The young people developed social capital in terms of membership of social groups, making friends and having reciprocal relations where they had people both to turn to and who turned to them for assistance. However, structural issues such as poverty and violence continued to play a role in their overall quality of life.

The results highlight the importance of early interventions and the vital role of social welfare organisations in assisting young people during the transition from the streets to reintegrating into the community. However, the strategies need to be individualised and adapted before the young people finally settle into the community.

The community plays a crucial role in reintegration. Social welfare services and community based work should complement each other and not function as parallel systems. The factor most strongly associated with good quality of life was having others who turned to them for assistance, highlighting the importance of reciprocal relations and making use of the young people's skills and competencies.