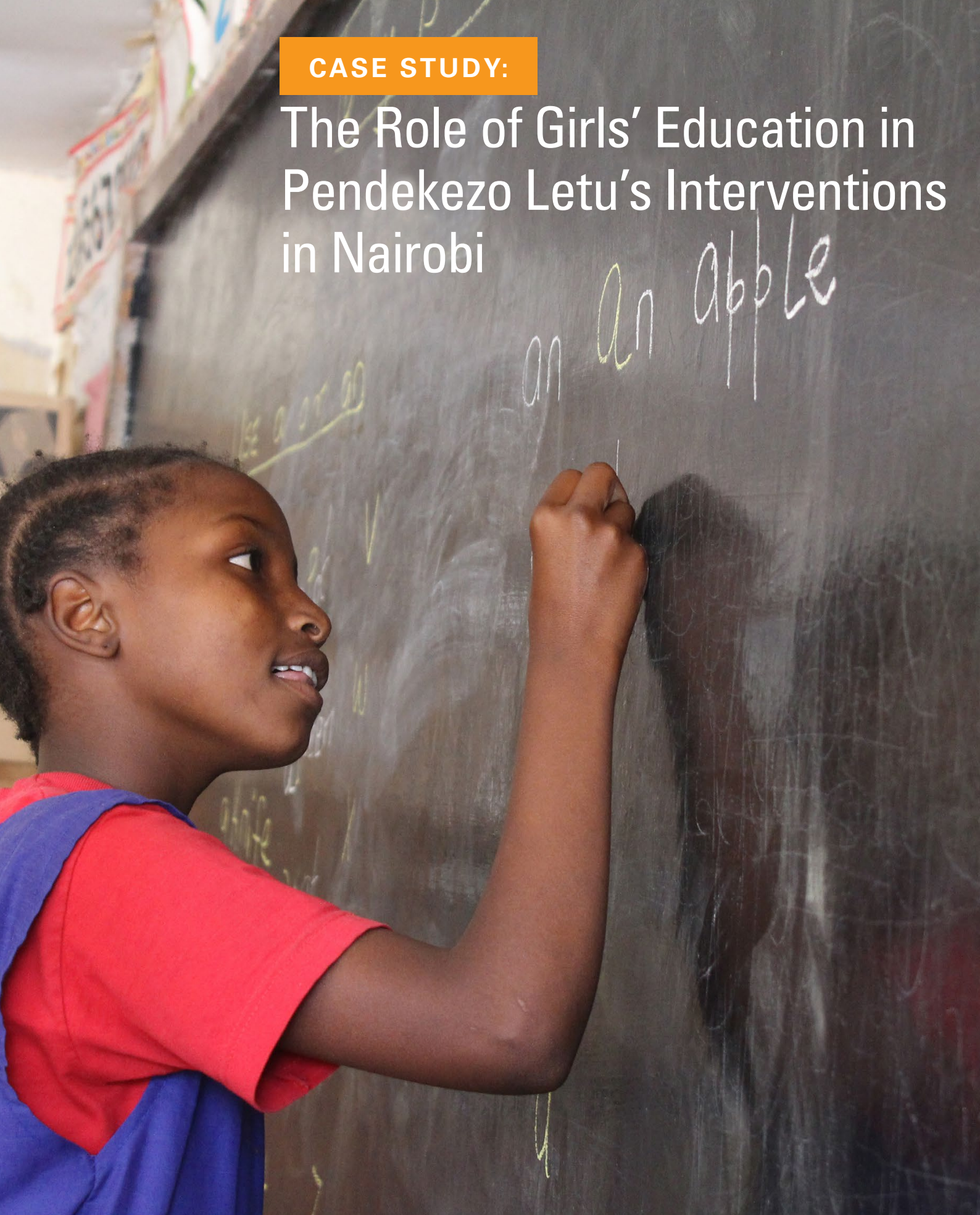

CASE STUDY:

The Role of Girls' Education in Pendekezo Letu's Interventions in Nairobi

By Vicky Johnson, Laura Johnson, Allan Kiwanuka, Boniface Okari Magati and David Walker

UNGEI United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
University of Brighton
ChildHope Inspired by children; challenging injustice
Pendekezo Letu
ODI

CASE STUDY:

The Role of Girls' Education in Pendekezo Letu's Interventions in Nairobi

By Dr. Vicky Johnson (University of Brighton, Education Research Centre), Laura Johnson and Allan Kiwanuka (ChildHope UK), Boniface Okari Magati (Pendekezo Letu), and David Walker (Overseas Development Institute)

KEY FINDINGS:

- Pendekezo Letu's (PKL) intervention is highly successful in reintegrating into education street-connected girls that have some support from their caregivers, usually adult female members of their families.
- The success of the intervention relies on a combination of behavioural change activities promoting the positive well-being of girls at an individual level, as well as economic strengthening for families.
- The PKL case study demonstrates the success of significant community involvement through the development of community-based child protection committees, undercutting myths concerning the unwillingness of community actors to engage in the protection of street children.
- Pendekezo Letu's work with government agencies has been a positive experience and may lay the foundation for developing a more comprehensive child protection system linking alternative education, community child protection mechanisms and street children.
- The intervention is less successful for girls facing high levels of risk, including drugs, alcoholism and extreme abuse. This suggests that more intensive interventions are needed to support those most at risk.

Introduction

Extreme poverty, increased rates of HIV, and high numbers of single (often female) headed households has forced many children and young people to live and work in the informal settlements in Nairobi. The most recent head-count in Nairobi estimates that there are more than 60,000 children living and working on the streets (Cottrell-Boyce 2010). In order to find food for survival, many of these children drop out of school and work on rubbish dumps where they face extremely dangerous and hazardous conditions on a daily basis. The target settlements are marked by high levels of violence, crime, deprivation, unemployment, and gender inequality. The rights of children and young people, particularly girls, are paid very little attention in the context of broader policy and development interventions. Girls become vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, and exploitation. Without an education, or relevant skills for employment, these girls

lack opportunities and life chances beyond their current situations.

Pendekezo Letu (PKL) works to strengthen the entire environment in which street girls exist: the legal system, community structures, schools, families and the girls themselves. Their programmes are based in Nairobi and respond to the needs of girls living and working on the streets in Nairobi. PKL has continuously adapted their approach over the past 17 years and has successfully reintegrated 1,456 girls into education whilst also strengthening their families so that they support their children's education and improve their life chances.

This report sets out the findings of research into the longer-term impact of PKL's holistic programme on the lives of street girls. The findings will ensure that PKL's programming is informed by the experiences, challenges, and successes of street-connected children, and will enable PKL to identify aspects of the programme that can be scaled up to improve impact.

The results will also contribute to a better understanding of best practices in working with street-connected girls. The findings will be disseminated nationally and internationally to inform policy, practice and academic discourse on working with marginalised and street-connected children. Best practices and methodologies will also be shared with ChildHope's partners and by the University of Brighton and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in academic and practitioner discourses worldwide.

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Intervention

Pendekezo Letu aims to see "a reduction in the number of children living and working on or at risk of going to the street in Nairobi, and to ensure they fully enjoy their rights and live in safe and caring families and communities" (PKL Theory of Change). The programme aims to ensure that children complete their educations, secure dignified and sustainable livelihoods in the long-term, and realize their full potential in life.

To realize this goal the PKL programme has three outcomes:

1. Parents and caregivers of street-connected girls are willing and able to care for and protect their children.
2. Former street-connected girls are successfully reintegrated into their communities and access formal education.
3. Street-connected girls are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation through strengthened community-based child protection structures and improvements to the juvenile justice system.

Support to girls and their families living and working on the streets of Nairobi: Each year PKL's team of social workers conducts outreach to identify 100 girls that are living and working on the streets and rubbish dumps of Nairobi. Many of the girls selected for PKL's programme have behavioural difficulties and suffer from trauma resulting from physical or sexual abuse or the death of a close family member. With consent from their caregivers, these girls are enrolled into a 10 month rehabilitation programme which prepares the girls for reintegration back into their families, communities, and formal education.

Within the rehabilitation centre, the girls are provided with psycho-social support, counselling, life skills (focusing on

personal hygiene, peer-to-peer relations, self-awareness, rights, and responsibilities) and compensatory education. The girls are split into 3 classes according to their educational level, rather than their age, and in-house teachers are employed to facilitate the programme. PKL provides additional activities such as computer classes and cooking classes. The girls live together in one large dormitory split into 10 sub-groups, each of which appoint a "leader" who is responsible for the group and reporting any issues or concerns to the housemother.

This entire package of care for 100 girls costs PKL approximately £45,000 per year. This cost includes all centre-based staff salaries, food, medical care, and teaching materials for the children. To support 100 girls into education and pay for school fees, uniforms, books and stationery for 1 year, it costs PKL approximately £12,000. According to the needs of the caregivers in the project, they are supported with either vocational training or business loans. Last year approximately £21,000 was spent on this.

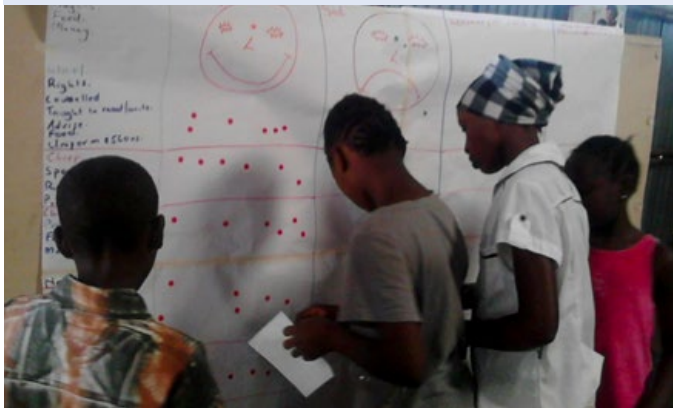
When girls enrol in the rehabilitation centre, PKL social workers simultaneously start work with the girls' families to address the root causes of the girls living and working on the street. Experience has shown that this is often an inter-generational cycle and that addressing the socio-economic situation of the family is critical to producing change. Consequently, PKL offer an economic empowerment programme to parents and caregivers which includes vocational training and business loans. PKL supports 200 siblings, both male and female, each year through enrolment into formal schools and vocational training. In line with PKL's holistic approach, they also provide psycho-social support, parenting skills training, food supplements, and health care referrals, as well as access to support groups for family members living with HIV.

After completing the 10 month programme, the girls are reunited with their families or caregivers and enrolled into formal schools. PKL pays for the girls' first year school fees, with the agreement that parents or caregivers gradually take over this responsibility. As an incentive, parents and caregivers who have successfully re-paid their first loan can apply for a second, higher loan in order to develop their businesses further. Success is judged on whether the loan has resulted in positive changes in parental care for the girl rather than only on their success in repaying the loan itself. For example, the parent is contributing to school fees and providing clothing and nutritious meals.

Improving retention and attainment rates in schools: PKL trains teachers in target locations on child rights, child protection, and positive discipline techniques in order to improve teaching and reduce the use of corporal punishment. Social workers chart progress in these areas and gain feedback on changes from both teachers and pupils. Empowerment and participation is a key feature of the PKL methodology, so PKL also trains peer educators in each school and then supports them to establish children's clubs. These children's clubs promote the rights of children within the school by raising awareness of child rights and reporting identified cases of abuse.

In addition, PKL participates in advocacy forums to lobby the government for improvements in the quality of education and for free, accessible secondary education for all.

Strengthening community structures: In 2012, PKL mobilized and trained community members, including community leaders, teachers, police, and parents, to establish a community-based child protection committee (CPC) in Korogocho, one of Nairobi's slums in which PKL operates. This CPC is responsible for identifying cases of child abuse within the community and referring these cases on to appropriate agencies for support, such as police departments, health centres, or other non-governmental organisations. Training themes include child rights, child protection, and positive discipline.



Data collection with children

The CPC model has proven to be extremely effective, with more than 150 cases of child abuse identified and referred over the past year. The individual needs of the children and their caregivers were identified and referrals resulted in the provision of a wide range of services including counselling, medical treatment, school enrolment, and legal aid representation. CPC followed through on all cases to ensure that appropriate support was provided.

In 2015 and 2016, PKL plans to establish 3 new CPCs in other target locations to scale up community-based child protection interventions. PKL will continue to support the existing CPC with refresher training and ongoing monitoring.

Strengthening the juvenile justice system: Children in conflict with the law are provided with legal representation through PKL's legal officer and agreements with law firms for pro bono representation. PKL social workers also support these children to reintegrate into their families and communities. When possible, PKL facilitates access to education or vocational training.

At a government level, PKL trains the juvenile justice department on child rights and child protection and supports them to develop referral systems for children under their care. PKL also participates in advocacy forums to lobby the government to increase the budget and resources available within the juvenile justice system.

Impact

The aim of this research was to assess child protection interventions, including rehabilitation and integration of street-connected girls into education to help them to achieve positive futures.

The following specific research questions were developed:

- What are the life histories and pathways that led the girls onto the streets and what are their educational trajectories?
- How have the rehabilitation and reintegration interventions of PKL helped vulnerable girls access and sustain an educational path that is relevant to their lives?
- How can PKL interventions be improved, replicated, and used to inform broader policy and practice in Nairobi?

Methodology

The research was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved analysing previous monitoring and evaluation reports and jointly developing the framework for research for the following phases. A team of 15 Kenyan researchers trained in qualitative, child-focused research methods carried out the second and third phases. More than 200 marginalised girls were consulted in focus group discussions. Detailed case studies were developed on 48 of these girls using interviews with the girls, their families, and a range of

Training of research team and identification of PAR methods

local stakeholders. The case studies featured 19 girls who had been supported by PKL, 9 girls who had dropped out of the PKL programme and school, and 20 street-connected children who had not been supported at all.

The case studies were analysed by the research team to pull out key themes and to understand the type of support that had helped the street-connected girls access education and improved their well-being and that of their families. The team also looked at the vulnerabilities and different types of risks the girls faced and how this affected the longer term impact of the intervention, and whether different strategies needed to be considered.

Findings

What are the life histories and pathways which led the girls onto the streets and what are their educational trajectories?

The following are issues that street connected girls raised as driving forces in their journeys to the street, their description of their experiences while living and working on the street, and why they had not been able to attend school. These issues varied to some extent between the slum areas but many of the root causes, perpetrators, and resulting issues were recurring:

- **Driving forces leading to the street:** Poverty, dysfunctional families, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, alcoholism, and drug abuse (both their own and their caregivers'), child labour, orphans moving from house to house, discrimination from community members and within families, domestic violence, and harsh parenting.
- **Experience on the street:** Poverty, lack of food, stigma and discrimination (particularly lacking a sense of belonging), violence from police and city council,

hopelessness and despair, child labour, prostitution, drug trafficking, violence from peers and gangs, homelessness, alcoholism and drug abuse, and inadequate access to healthcare.

- **Reasons for school drop-out:** abusive teachers and family members (often male members of households), poverty and inability to pay school fees, child labour, homelessness, peer pressure to join gangs, alcoholism, substance misuse, and criminal activity amongst peers and in families.

How have the rehabilitation and reintegration interventions of PKL helped vulnerable girls to access and sustain an educational path that is relevant to their lives?

The table below illustrates that the majority of girls enrolled into PKL's programme over the past 5 years have successfully reintegrated into formal education.

Intake year	No. of girls enrolled into PKL Centre	No. of girls dropped out of PKL Centre	No. of girls enrolled into formal education	No. of girls dropped out of formal education
2010	100	0	100	15
2011	100	0	100	15
2012	100	1	99	7
2013	100	0	100	3
2014	100	2	98	1
TOTAL	**500**	**3**	**497**	**41**

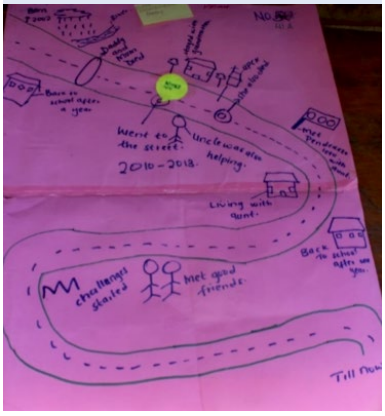
All of the 497 girls were initially enrolled into primary school and 361 have completed the primary school cycle to date. PKL continues to monitor the girls' progress in the education system; so far, 350 of these girls have enrolled into secondary school and 164 have already completed secondary education.

The reduction of school drop-outs from 2010 to 2015 may be a result of increased support to schools, including training in positive discipline and participatory teaching skills, and the establishment of child rights clubs. An evaluation of PKL's programme in 2010 concluded that the very high retention levels could also be attributed to:

a) The acquisition of new social and academic skills with the rehabilitation centre which enabled the girls to successfully adjust to school life;
b) PKL's economic support which not only resulted in improved income, but also a greater commitment from caregivers towards their children's education; and
c) The quality and frequency of PKL's home and school monitoring visits.

The Nairobi County Deputy Chief Advisor for Schools also pointed out that PKL had helped remove one of the major barriers to accessing education by addressing the negative attitude held by teachers towards street children (African Institute for Children's Studies 2013).

Looking across all of the case studies of street-connected girls in the research, it becomes apparent that the intervention was most effective for children who lived and worked with a close family relative, usually their mother, aunt, or grandmother. These girls benefited from some level of family support but had still suffered what the team referred to as "unintentional harm." Poverty meant they would often have to work rather than going to school and they all lacked basic access to services. Many mothers could not always provide sufficient food or adequate medical attention, or could no longer provide for their children at all due to illness, including HIV or mental health issues. Some girls had to leave their family home due to abusive behaviour from fathers or other relatives.



In these cases, the project helped both girls and their mothers by providing a separate space for the girls' rehabilitation and by working with mothers or relatives, usually female members of households, on basic health and to provide small loans for enterprises. With this support, it is more likely that these caregivers will take on the responsibility of paying school fees for the care of their child in the longer term. Data shows that 64 percent (128) of caregivers supported in 2010 – 2013 reported an increase in their household income over a one year period. Income was spent on food as reported by 98 percent of caregivers, education (48 percent), housing rent (40 percent), clothing (30 percent), medical care (30 percent), water (13 percent) and sanitation (4 percent) (African Institute for Children's Studies 2013). Caregivers attributed this increase in income to the advisory services by PKL social workers (reported by

55 percent of caregivers), group support (17 percent) and business skills training (16 percent of caregivers).

The case study below illustrates the successful pathway from the street into education through PKL's support.

Mercy, age 13, from Mathare

In school and supported by PKL

Mercy wanted to commit suicide when her mother died, but she found some happiness living with her grandmother and helping her sell vegetables. Her grandmother then died and she was separated from her two siblings and sent to live with her aunt, with whom she often quarrelled. Although some of her friends are given money by their families to buy clothes, Mercy and her aunt still have to work to get enough money for food.

Mercy and her aunt met a social worker from PKL who sent Mercy to their rehabilitation centre for 10 months where she learned basic life skills such as cleanliness, how to behave well in difficult situations, and also basic literacy and numeracy skills to return to school. She also reported learning about her basic right to education. Mercy's sister has been helped to go to school through spending 10 months at the rehabilitation centre and PKL has provided counselling and some support for her brother, who has friends who are gang members and has been in trouble with the police. After getting some help at the local mosque, he has been involved in vocational training to set up a small business washing cars and providing basic maintenance. Mercy believes that PKL helped both her and her relatives prioritise her education. She is now able to attend school despite the fact that she still has to help her aunt by selling vegetables after school and at the weekends.

How can PKL interventions be improved, replicated, and inform broader policy and practice in Nairobi?

In the cases where girls dropped out of the PKL centre and formal education, findings show that these children face additional risks and that parental support was inadequate. Risks included drugs, alcoholism, exploitative labour, prostitution, criminal activity, and extreme abuse from caregivers, peers or authority figures. Research suggests that these girls may need more personalised and targeted interventions in order to successfully reintegrate into their families and communities. These activities may include providing more guidance, counselling, and rehabilitation services for parents with substance abuse problems or addiction, or where there is abusive behaviour, particularly by fathers and adult male members of households. This may involve PKL creating a network of specialist organisations that have the capacity to address specific issues. PKL already works with lawyers to support girls and siblings in the criminal justice system, and are trialling more work on alcoholism, drug abuse, and work with fathers.

The example case study below demonstrates the complexities of street-connected girls' lives and how their needs can exceed those addressed by PKL's intervention.

Anne, aged 17, from Majengo

Dropped out of school

Anne dropped out of secondary school because she got pregnant. She said she got pregnant because her father used to chase her out of the house at night and she was forced to go to seek shelter elsewhere. Her boyfriend rejected her when she got pregnant. She faced multiple difficulties and was unable to overcome them, even with help from PKL: "Friends isolated us and abused us (calling us names), dad was abusing and beating us. We felt so isolated."

Alternative approaches are also being considered for girls who encounter relatively few risks and have some family support. PKL are currently piloting community rehabilitation initiatives to see if greater emphasis on awareness of rights and sign-posting to existing services could offer a less resource-intensive alternative to the current model. Interventions include help desks on child rights and gender violence, health camps, and conflict resolution for girls and their families facilitated by community elders, chiefs, and religious organisations.

The potential of more community-based rehabilitation services is illustrated by the success of the community child protection committee piloted by PKL in Korogocho. In 2014, this CPC identified and referred more than 150 cases of child abuse to appropriate services such as health clinics, schools, and the police. Since January 2015, the same committee has identified 51 children and successfully supported the reintegration of 42 girls and boys into formal schools by working closely with their families on child rights. Only 9 children required a referral to PKL for specialist support ,such as psychosocial support, legal advice, or medical assistance, and these were usually cases where sexual abuse was present.

Lessons learned

Individual work with street-connected girls:

- PKL's interventions show that one-to-one psychosocial support, counselling, and life skills training can significantly improve educational and protection outcomes for girls with complex needs.
- PKL's programme is particularly successful for girls who have a supportive caregiver and where poverty is the main barrier to the child accessing education.
- Where girls are without a supportive family member and multiple risk factors exist, the likelihood that the child will drop out of school is increased. Successful reintegration into schools, families, and communities may require a broader spectrum of services with personalised, targeted interventions to address the complex interplay of issues in each case.
- There is great value in having a safe and separate space for vulnerable street-connected girls. Child protection systems, including social welfare offices and health centres, rarely have dedicated staff or facilities to provide shelter or support for girls at high risk.

Interventions with families:

- PKL's intervention illustrates the importance of addressing the issues facing the whole family rather than an approach focused exclusively on the individual child.
- Where girls face multiple risks and their families, including siblings (often brothers), are in conflict with the law, there needs to be corresponding emphasis on support in the criminal justice system and family counselling to change behaviour in the longer term.
- Community-based child protection committees can be successful in supporting at-risk families, as well as facilitating protective responses for individual children.

School:

- School-based child protection systems, including parent-teacher associations and child rights clubs that include girls and boys, are helpful in referring vulnerable girls to child protection services that can address issues of abuse and support the girls to remain in school.
- Linking girls to schools and vocational training opportunities after rehabilitation can strengthen the likelihood that the most vulnerable girls will actually enter and then remain in educational programs and schools.
- Providing training for teachers on child rights and positive discipline had a positive effect on pupil-teacher relationships and on children's attitudes towards school.

Community-based child protection:

- The development of community-based child protection committees and related structures is an effective way of providing a safety net for children that is managed by members of the community for members of the community and therefore has a greater chance of not only continuing beyond the lifetime of PKL's intervention, but also being more tailored and responsive to individual cases.

State and national-level actors:

- PKL provides a promising example of the connections between rehabilitative education, child protection and social protection systems which is an interface that is under-explored in development practice and thinking. For example, social protection strategies should focus on the graduation of adolescents— particularly girls— from rehabilitative education or vocational training into social protection schemes, such as cash transfer programmes, to ensure that girls' well-being and progress are maintained.
- The government could utilise new constitutional devolution to strengthen child protection systems, recognising the comprehensive model that PKL offers and continuing to engage it in the form of a model of best practice.
- Findings show that stronger coordination of local and national government structures is needed to improve services for the most marginalised children. At the local level, progress has been made through the inclusion of representatives from the police and the Children's Department in child protection committees. However,

this should be complemented by the development of referral systems at the local and national levels.

- The Ministry of Education can learn from PKL's successful approach in training teachers in positive discipline and integrate this into the national teacher training curriculum.

Cost-effectiveness:

- From a narrow child protection and public policy perspective, PKL's interventions could be considered high cost due to the resource-intensive support offered to 100 beneficiaries within the rehabilitation centre. However, the vulnerability of the girls and their families requires an intensive package of support that is directed both at the individual girl and her family. A less intensive intervention may not provide such a solid foundation for particularly vulnerable girls to reintegrate into their communities. In addition, the value-added by responding to these girls at this stage in their lives is considerable when compared to the potential array of otherwise high-risk and costly pathways that they might pursue without this early support.
- Community-based child protection structures could offer a cost-effective and sustainable alternative for girls, particularly if they are targeted early and in tandem with their family support structures. The support offered by community-based child protection committees could be scaled-up to reach more children and communities, whilst recognising the cost-effectiveness of this approach within public policy debates.

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