

P1.10. The Impact of the Street Mother and Child Health Initiative on Street Families - Dooso Radido, Moi University, Kenya; **Rebecca Wafula**, Moi University, Kenya
E-mail: radidooso@yahoo.com; beckyneeh@yahoo.com

Background/Significance: The problem of street mothers has become so rampant with the recent increase in populations especially in the urban centers both in Africa and the Western countries. Street girls are part of our societies with needs similar to those experienced by other girls, but are more vulnerable and prone to abuse such as rape. While on the streets, they may be exploited by their male counterparts or other older males. Most end up contracting S.T.I's or some become pregnant, having to raise the children on their own. Most of them are jobless and homeless therefore have to find ways of feeding themselves and their children. More than a decade ago UNICEF estimated approximately 100 million children and adolescents are growing up in the streets of large cities (UNICEF, 1989). Increasing poverty, war, famine and disease occurring singly or in combination has substantially increased this number. The phenomenon of street children is quite prevalent in Kenya as throughout Africa and other continents. The adverse situation posed by economic deterioration has resulted in increasing family disintegration triggering off a much greater exodus of children from the rural areas to the streets of large towns. Other children are born on the streets; some come from poverty stricken families in the peri-urban slums. In Kenya alone it has been estimated that there will be 1 million children orphaned by AIDS in the beginning of this century and that most of them will end up in the street (World Bank, 1995). Following the national trend, the number of street children in Eldoret, a town with a population of about 300,000 inhabitants in the Western Kenya and the subject of this report is also increasing.

Objectives: To establish the impact of 'street mother and child health initiative' on the lives of street mothers.

Methodology: A study population of 250 participants drawn from Eldoret town was used which included street mothers who came for a free health care attention in Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital after being mobilized from the streets.

A sample size of 150 was taken. Inclusion criteria; must have had a pregnancy or a child. Data collected through interviewer administered questionnaire. Screening for STI's and other diseases was done to both mothers and their children and appropriate treatment started. The families were then linked up with known rehabilitation centers. Follow up done for minimum of two months.

Findings: Street families are facing a continuum of problems both health and economic. 90% of participants were screened with STIs, 40% had pregnancy related complication of which pregnancy related malnutrition was common. Birth related complications were reported in 10% of participants. Childhood diseases were also rampant among the interviewed population.

Follow up results showed a tremendous improvement in the health status and the general life of participants.

Knowledge Contribution: The Street mother and child health initiative should be institutionalized as a primary aspect of health care provision to the general population.

Health care providers should form more concrete collaboration with governmental and non governmental institutions providing rehabilitation services to cater fully for the needs of street family.

Recommendations: Street family mobilization programmes need to be initiated. Rehabilitation homes for street families need to be established.