



No One Home: Village Narratives Regarding Street Children in Western Kenya

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BACKGROUND

Orphaned Youth in Kenya

- Kenyan youth **orphaned** by parental illness and death, shortage of resources, neglect and abuse (“Vijana Wetu,” forthcoming)
- Orphans traditionally cared for by extended family and supported by community (Nyambedha 2003)
- Support systems for orphans weakened by AIDS epidemic (Nyambedha 2003)
- Little research on connection between changing support systems and **street youth**

Study Location

- Kisumu, Kenya
 - Urban center (population: 390,000)
 - Funerals are large community events with music and food that serve as a gathering place for youth (Njue et al, 2009)
- Luanda District
 - Rural communities
 - High rates of HIV and orphanhood
 - Youth travel from rural villages (**sending communities**) to urban Kisumu (“Vijana Wetu,” forthcoming)

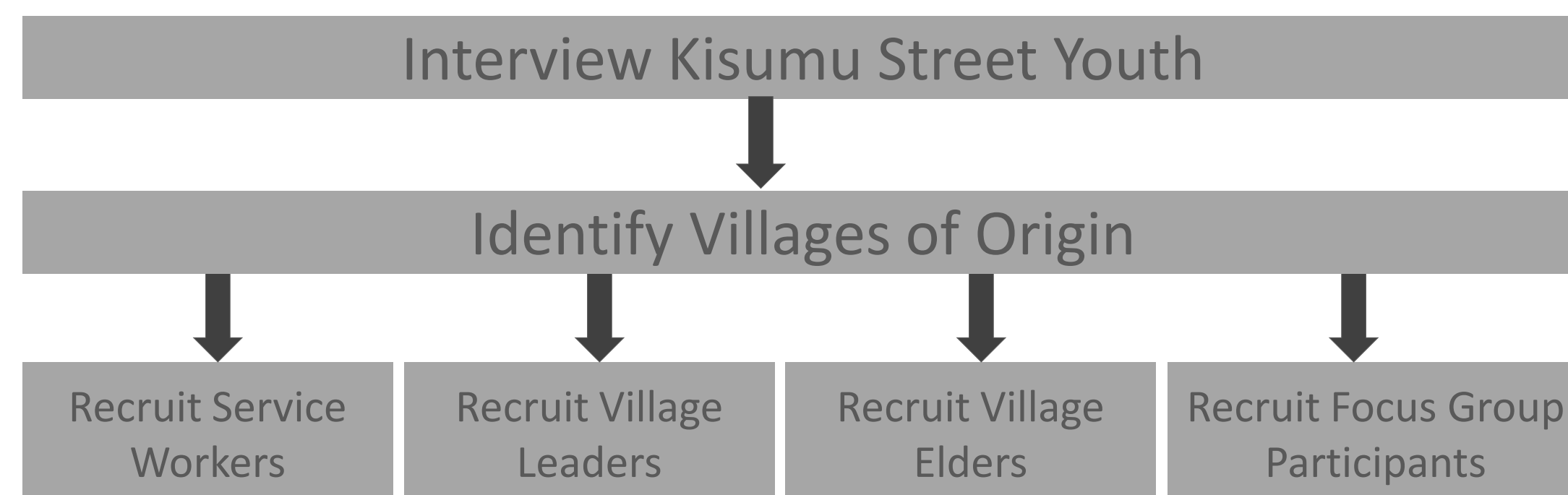
OBJECTIVE

Quantitatively describe how members of sending communities understand the phenomena of street youth.

METHODS

Study recruitment:

- Interviewed 5 Kisumu street youth: identified 4 sending communities
- Recruited 69 informants from sending communities



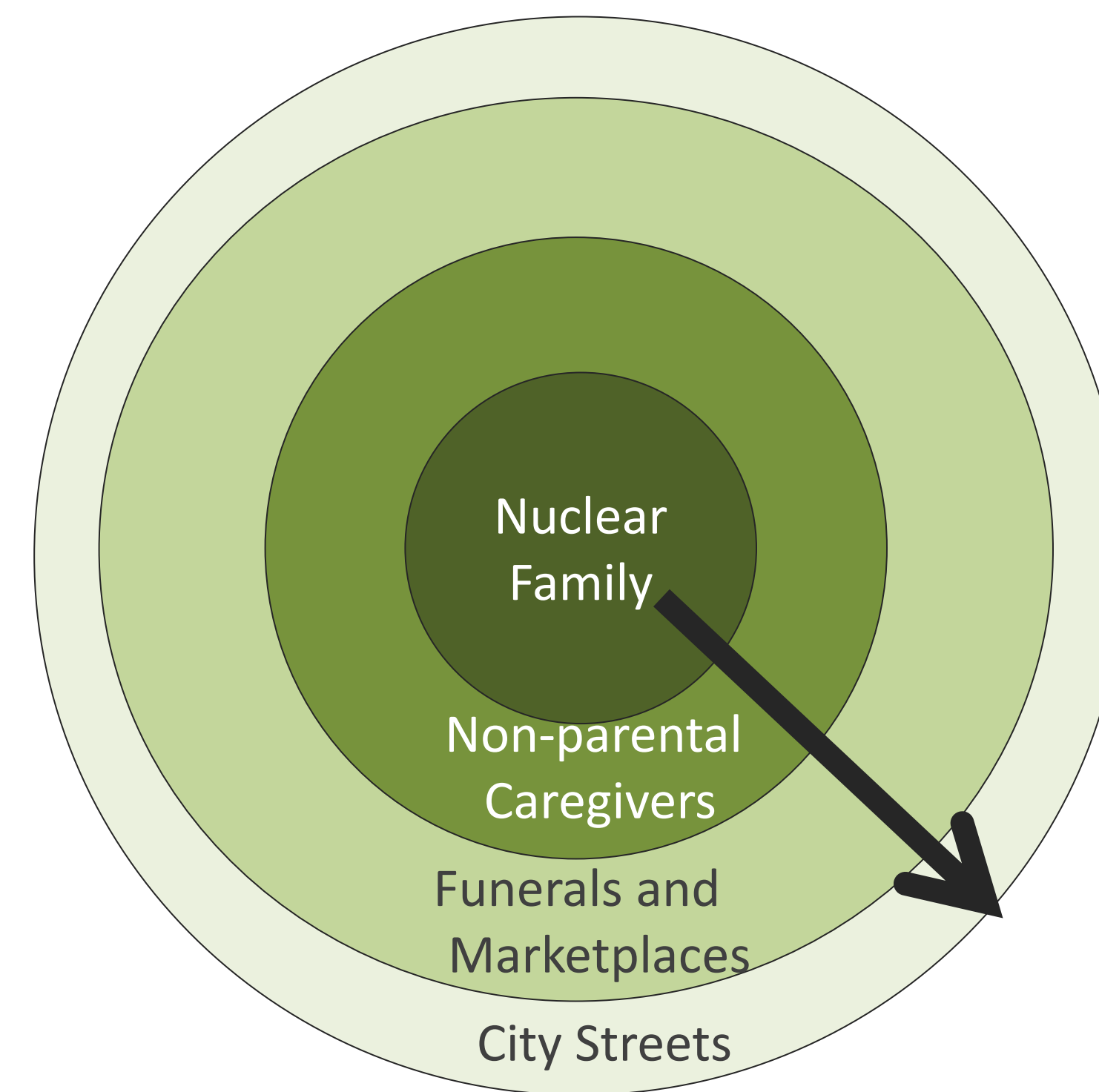
Data collection:

- 21 in-depth, semi-structured interviews
- 5 focus groups (1 per village + key informant FG)
- Domains include challenges for youth in community and perception of street youth

Analysis:

- Grounded theory approach
 - Interviews coded
 - Summarized interview trends in memos
 - Reoccurring themes identified and used to generate models

FINDINGS



The Path to the Street

- Community members no longer share responsibility for orphans
- “So long as it’s not their child who is being affected, no one will want to do anything about it. In fact if they see that child near their children, they will chase him away because they view him as a bad boy who might steal from them or influence their children.”
- Assistant chief

- Weakening of communal support system has pushed orphans to the street
- “Nowadays is not like in the olden days where the community could come together and take in orphans. The economic life of people here is so difficult that adding another mouth to feed is strenuous. The orphaned children are just left on their own. When it becomes too hard for them, they will move out of their homes and end up in Luanda to beg for food.”
- Local children’s officer
- Street youth considered “problem” of aid workers and policemen
- “The community does not believe that the solution must come from them; they believe that the solution must come from me and you.”
- Street and family coordinator for non-profit in Luanda

CONCLUSIONS

- Compromised support system for orphans relates directly to phenomena of street youth
- Village adults not held responsible for street youth
 - Resources scarce
 - Cultural shift away from communal care
- Street youth no longer considered part of home communities

IMPLICATIONS

Findings suggest need for:

- Interventions that stress street youth’s connection to sending communities
- Economic interventions to alleviate pressure on communal support system
- Enforcement of UN Convention of Rights of the Child

LIMITATIONS

- Small number of informants from small number of villages
- Informants not themselves street youth
- Views of village leaders may not represent those of community



THANKS TO

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	FACTORS PUSHING YOUTH TO THE STREET	ADULTS CONSIDERED RESPONSIBLE FOR STREET YOUTH
PATH TO THE STREET	Nuclear family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poverty and food instability •Illness and death of parents •Domestic disputes: child and spousal abuse 	Nuclear family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parents (basic needs) •Broader community (mentorship)
	Non-parental caregivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poverty and food instability •Abuse and neglect 	Non-parental caregivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Relatives (basic needs) •Broader community (mentorship)
	Funerals and marketplaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Free food and employment •Social networks/peers 	Funerals and marketplaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Guardians (monitor) •Market police (bar child labor) •Vendors (bar child labor)
	On the street (barriers to re-entry): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of resources •Stigma •Social network/peers •Drug use •Issues at home 	On the street: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Police (law enforcement and discipline) •Non-profit workers (basic needs and interventions)