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## **Children as Business: Karamojong Child Beggars in Kampala and the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019**

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# CHILDREN AS BUSINESS

Karamojong Child Beggars in Kampala and the KCCA  
Child Protection Ordinance 2019

Thesis  
Master African Studies  
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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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Uganda is dealing with high incidence of street children, especially in Kampala, where 10,000 to 20,000 street children live their lives.<sup>1</sup> Numerous institutions, government organs and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have already taken measures in the past to try to reduce the amount of street children in Kampala and increase the overall welfare of these identified children. In 2019, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) designed the Child Protection ordinance that specifically targets the flow of children from rural areas to the urban area of Kampala and the people who are benefitting from children begging on the streets. This Ordinance is in draft format while it has been approved by the KCCA, and at the time of data collection for this research it was awaiting the Attorney General's approval into law. Even though not many official documents explaining the law are available, Ugandan media gave it a lot of attention in 2019. For example, there is a provision that anybody giving money or food to street children can be fined Shs 40,000, which is about €10, or sentenced to not more than six months imprisonment after the law has been implemented.<sup>2</sup> In the media, a connection has been made between the high amount of street children in Kampala and children who are being brought from Karamoja to Kampala to beg for money.

The news channel NBS for instance, expressed that the KCCA has undertaken continuous efforts to remove street children from the streets in Kampala, without the desired effects. According to the KCCA, these kids are drawn back to the streets because of the money they can earn by begging. Besides that, many children are trafficked and coming from rural areas to Kampala, especially from the area Karamoja. On the streets, these children are exposed to criminal activities and diseases.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the law is designed to protect children from engaging in any harmful activities and control the inflow of street children into the city.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the KCCA has expressed that street children destroy the city's infrastructure, which is another motivation of the KCCA to implement this law. The NBS noted that not many people are aware of the existence of the law and therefore feels responsible to educate the public about it.<sup>5</sup>

Karamoja is an area in Uganda with high poverty and unemployment rates. Many children from Karamoja migrate to urban areas with the hope for a better future, and are thus vulnerable to exploitation and criminal activities. Besides that, children from families living in poverty are often sold to intermediaries,

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<sup>1</sup> M.F. Bwambale, P Bukuluki, C.A Moyer, and B.H.W van den Borne, "Demographic and Behavioural Drivers of Intra-Urban Mobility of Migrant Street Children and Youth in Kampala, Uganda," *PloS One* 16, no. 2 (2021): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247156>.

<sup>2</sup> KCCA Passes Child Protection Ordinance," *NBS Up and About*, accessed December 12 2021. [KCCA Passes Child Protection Ordinance | NBS Up and About - YouTube](#).

<sup>3</sup> KCCA Passes Child Protection Ordinance," *NBS Up and About*, accessed December 12 2021. [KCCA Passes Child Protection Ordinance | NBS Up and About - YouTube](#).

<sup>4</sup> Muhamadi Matovu, "Nakiwala: "Lack of Money Hampering Efforts to Resettle Children," *Nile Post* April 17, 2021. [Nakiwala: "Lack of money hampering efforts to resettle street children" - Nile Post](#).

<sup>5</sup> "KCCA Passes Child Protection Ordinance," *NBS Up and About*, accessed December 12 2021. [KCCA Passes Child Protection Ordinance | NBS Up and About - YouTube](#).

promising them a better future for their children and money to send home in the form of remittances.<sup>6</sup> But the law raises several questions with regards to its effectiveness. How realistic is it for the government to stop people from migrating from rural areas to urban areas? And are the implications of flouting the law enough to stop the suspected aspect of human trafficking? In order to unfold the complex structures behind street children in Kampala coming from Karamoja, this research aims to identify different perceptions on how effective the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 is and how best it can be implemented for improving the lives of the affected children and reduce the amount of street children begging in Kampala. The study aims to show multiple perspectives and ideas on how governmental institutions may successfully intervene in the problem of street children, as well as unintended consequences that are emerging in Kampala. It is important to note that there are many different street children in the city with many different backgrounds, but due to the scope of this research and the aim of the law, this research has a focus on street children who have migrated or are trafficked from Karamoja. Even though not all media directly connect the ordinance to the trafficking of Karamojong children, the public debate and interviews have shown that it is a returning topic amongst society. The debate around human trafficking and voluntary movement has been recognised and therefore functions as a framework for this thesis.

## Problem statement

Little or no academic systematic research has been conducted on the efficacy of a law like the Child Protection Ordinance 2019 in relation to street children. It has a complex setting of the mix of migration motivations and realities from rural areas, which has yielded realistic considerations of references to normal migration and human/child trafficking. This research can combine two big debates in academia: firstly, on the difference between child trafficking and migration in the African context (the complexity of child fostering in African societies, which metamorphosise from child migration into trafficking – see ILO 2007<sup>7</sup>); and secondly at policy levels, what the most effective government strategy can be to solve the problem of begging street children (an observable outcome of child fostering as well as child trafficking). Moreover, unique about this research is that the Ordinance is still a draft law yet it's provisions are being implemented and can therefore unfold different perspectives from involved actors and hereby show social perceptions on the matter. Furthermore, even though this research is centred around a law, the research is not about legal analysis and it will not result in a legal analyses. Rather a multi-disciplinary approach is adopted borrowing from branches of migration studies, history, sociology and sometimes public policy in governance.

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<sup>6</sup> Godfrey Olukya, "Rising Child Trafficking, Sex Abuse Concern Uganda Officials" *Anadolu Agency* September 22, 2021. [Rising child trafficking, sex abuse concern Uganda officials \(aa.com.tr\)](https://www.aa.com.tr).

<sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization, 96th Session. (2007). General Survey Concerning the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and The Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), Report III (Part 1B), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (articles 19, 22 and 35 of the Constitution) (p. 39). International Labour Office, Geneva.  
International Labour Organization. (2007). Stopping Forced Labour: Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Report I (B) (pp. 12 & 13). ILO Geneva.

## Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to identify, highlight and critically examine the different perceptions on how effective the KCCA Kampala Child Protection Ordinance 2019 can be for solving the problem of street children of Karamoja origin in Kampala. This involves four sub-objectives:

1. To identify the drivers of the problem (direct and indirect)
2. To highlight the desired effects of the law
3. To critically examine the factors of effectiveness (in both academic literature and social perceptions)
4. To evaluate the implications of the ordinance and thus comprehend the social perceptions on the future effectiveness of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019

These research objectives lead into the following research question:

**“In what ways are the containment of the incidence of street children in Kampala and improving the wellbeing of these children guaranteed in the current design of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019? What do the public perceive as critical elements of success or otherwise in the implementation process?”**

## Research Design and Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach in order to understand different subjective experiences and opinions on the Karamojong children in Kampala and the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019. It aimed to gain an in-depth contextual understanding of the reasons why children migrate or are trafficked from Karamoja to Kampala, which could best be executed through qualitative research methods. Field research was conducted in Katwe area of Kampala Uganda in February-April 2022, using a case study research design, focussing on the specific KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019. The data collection methods used in this research are semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The group of participants in these methods is diverse, as it targeted different players involved in the topic. Institutional participants have been chosen because of their link with the Karamojong children living in Kampala and the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance, and the diverse perspectives that this brings to the research. Before every interview, verbal consent was acquired of the interviewees. In light of ethical considerations, children were not interviewed for this thesis. Furthermore, in order to ensure safety of all participants, the participants in this research have been anonymised and names have been changed for this purpose. A range of academic literature were accessed for secondary data/information, and a media analysis has been conducted in order to gain more insight in the (public) debate. The data that has been gathered throughout the fieldwork is safely stored. In order to guarantee the safety and anonymity of the participants, few demographic characteristics of the interviewees have been used in writing to refer to the participant. Comparative and thematic analyses have been conducted in the analysis of the data.



## Limitations of the study

A few limitations of the study have to be acknowledged. First of all, I have done fieldwork in Uganda with the consciousness associated with my presence as a white person. During interviews in the slums of Katwe this might have influenced the answers that I have gotten from the women I interviewed.

Reflecting on my role as a researcher was very important during the research in the field and during the process of analysing all data. I crosschecked all interviews that I held with experts in order to minimise and identify aspects of interviews that might have been influenced by my role as a researcher – sometimes this may happen if a question appear to be a leading-question that may generate standard responses or evoke partiality. Self-reflection of my role is also an important aspect in the observations that I have done. For instance, while observing Karamojong children begging on the streets or in traffic, the children tended to come to me first to ask for money. I aimed to counter this by making observations from a distance and asking my Ugandan guides and duty-bearers or care-givers of children about their observations of the children under their care.

Furthermore, due to insecurity in the Karamoja region at the time of the field research, I was frequently advised not to travel to the Napak district by local experts, and I was discouraged to travel by the Dutch Embassy in Kampala. Even though the geographical focus of this research is Kampala, it could have been enriching to the research to have still acquired data from Napak as an essential part of my thesis. However, I countered this limitation by talking to experts on the region about the past and current situations, triangulating such information in the interviews with women of Karamojong origin that were living in Katwe, and by actively following the local news to inform my observations.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

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The aim of this literature review is to assess academic literature that has been written on the topic towards gaining a better understanding of the wider origins and drivers of the existence of street children and the problem that they face. Documented knowledge are thus collected and assessed on the differences between migration and human trafficking in this issue of street children, showcase what works in solving their problematic occurrence in different national jurisdictions, and identify stressors that are working against solutions in other climes. The implications are two-fold: firstly to help design conceptual approaches to the design of this study, and secondly identify research gaps to focus on, so as to further contribute to the academic literature and debate. At this stage, some important concepts include child fostering, human trafficking, mixed migration, street children, child welfare policy, and the like.

In order to conduct research on a government policy involving street children, it is important to comprehend what different authors mention about the definition of the term 'street children', and what differences can be made within the heterogeneous group of street children. Many authors thereby analysed the causes behind why children end up living on the streets.

### Definitions of street children

Munene and Nambi categorise street children in two groups: full-time street children and part-time street children. This distinction is made by many authors researching in this field. The first group refers to street children who live and work on the streets. The latter group contains children who only work on the streets, and live somewhere else.<sup>8</sup> This distinction is also made by Biggeri and Anich, who use two other terms to refer to street children. Children *of* the street refer to the full-time street children, whereas children *on* the street refer to the part-time street children.<sup>9</sup> Several reasons were established as to why children come to the streets, both full-time and part-time, related to the family situation of the child. These reasons are: poverty in the family home, a family situation that involves an aggressive step-parent and a single-parent household in which the parent experiences difficulties in parenting. These factors are also often interconnected, causing the child to go full- or part-time to the streets.<sup>10</sup>

According to Bwambale et al., there is no legal definition in Uganda for the term 'street child'. Statistical estimations also range between 10,000 and 20,000 street children in Uganda, whereas Kampala has the highest concentration of street children. The authors argue that understanding intra-urban mobility of

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<sup>8</sup> J. C Munene, and Janet Nambi, "Understanding and Helping Street Children in Uganda," *Community Development Journal* 31, no. 4 (1996): 345.

<sup>9</sup> Mario Biggeri, and Rudolf Anich, "The Deprivation of Street Children in Kampala : Can the Capability Approach and Participatory Methods Unlock a New Perspective in Research and Decision Making ?" *Mondes en développement* n° 146, no. 2 (2009): 78. <https://doi.org/10.3917/med.146.0073>.

<sup>10</sup> J. C Munene, and Janet Nambi, "Understanding and Helping Street Children in Uganda," *Community Development Journal* 31, no. 4 (1996): 347.

street children is vital when designing policies to improve the wellbeing of street children.<sup>11</sup> Their research concludes that mobility of street children is linked to gender, where male and older street children are more mobile than female and younger street children. They argue that the intra-urban mobility of street children should be taken into account and managed by urban programmes, in which the interest of the child should play a big role. Besides that, policies should tackle gender related issues, for example, girls are more vulnerable to becoming involved in sex work, and the authors propose introducing cheap housing possibilities for the children, regulate sex work and develop interventions to keep street children safe from any form of violence.<sup>12</sup>

Anyuru points out that the term 'street children' have a negative connotation in many societies, even though it is widely agreed upon that these young people live in poor living conditions. In Luganda, the term '*Muyaaye*' is often used to refer to street children, which means 'out of control'. According to Anyuru, this is related to the traditional understanding that a child must comply with the wishes of its parents, while disregarding their own wishes and beliefs. Even though a lot of children go to the streets because of the parents' wishes, this is often ignored in the societal view on street children.<sup>13</sup> However, he does note that many street children do not feel that the term 'street child' is offensive, but rather say that this is an exact explanation of their situation. Anyuru differentiates between street children who originate from the city, and street children who have migrated from rural areas. When families live in poor living conditions in rural areas, it is seen as a good way to cope with economic difficulties by having a child working in the city. These children often experience difficulties to adapt to the city environment while having to deal with fears of being separated from their families.<sup>14</sup>

## Causes of street children

The drivers behind intra-urban mobility of migrant street children and youth have been studied by Bwambale et al.,. The income earned throughout a day, whether a child is involved in sex work, one's gender and the feeling of safety are factors in the movement of street children through a city.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the study has shown that street children live under 'street uncles', and landlords who ask for rent of their stay in a public space. The authors conclude their research with the observation that the government of Uganda and the KCCA should design policies in the urban planning of Kampala that are targeting the well-being of the children, which would include safer and cheaper housing options and

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<sup>11</sup> M.F. Bwambale, P Bukuluki, C.A Moyer, and B.H.W van den Borne, "Demographic and Behavioural Drivers of Intra-Urban Mobility of Migrant Street Children and Youth in Kampala, Uganda," *PloS One* 16, no. 2 (2021): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247156>

<sup>12</sup> M.F. Bwambale, P Bukuluki, C.A Moyer, and B.H.W van den Borne, "Demographic and Behavioural Drivers of Intra-Urban Mobility of Migrant Street Children and Youth in Kampala, Uganda," *PloS One* 16, no. 2 (2021): 12. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247156>.

<sup>13</sup> M.A. Anyuru, "Uganda's Street Children," *Africa Insight* 26, no. 3 (1996): 268.

<sup>14</sup> M.A. Anyuru, "Uganda's Street Children," *Africa Insight* 26, no. 3 (1996): 268-269.

<sup>15</sup> M.F. Bwambale, P Bukuluki, C.A Moyer, and B.H.W van den Borne, "Demographic and Behavioural Drivers of Intra-Urban Mobility of Migrant Street Children and Youth in Kampala, Uganda," *PloS One* 16, no. 2 (2021): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247156>.

policies to keep the children safe from any form of violence on the streets. This includes regulation the sex work, in order to prevent sexual exploitation from children.<sup>16</sup>

Also, in a study of the International Labour Organization (ILO), three main push factors resulting in child trafficking in Uganda were identified: HIV/AIDS, poverty and conflict and wars. The factor 'poverty' is most relevant for the situation in Karamoja, and relates to a practice where some poor African families send their children to urban areas in order to earn money. This is seen as a form of child fostering and is now often used by traffickers. According to this research, the old-standing tradition complicates implementing effective policies to end trafficking.<sup>17</sup> Important to note is that the authors do acknowledge in their research that not all children moving from rural areas to urban areas are trafficked and move independently to earn money somewhere else. This acknowledgement can be linked to the argument of Hashim and Thorsen, which will be elaborated on later in this literature review.

## Mobility, Migration and Human Trafficking

The book 'Child Migration in Africa', written by Iman Hashim and Dorte Thorsen, shows that the difference between child migration and child trafficking is often difficult to establish. An old practice of parents living in poverty who ask family or friends to look after their kids, is now often used by traffickers to trick parents into releasing or selling their children on the promise of a better future.<sup>18</sup> This type of regular or modified child fostering have been recorded in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria already.<sup>19</sup> Child fostering is not a new practice among African families. This relates to the debate of who can be seen as a kid's parents; not all children live and are raised by their birth parents.

Some scholars note that the universalised idea of childhood can be problematic when drafting interventions and approaches for children in different areas, since childhood should be contextualised and is experienced differently by every individual.<sup>20</sup> They argue that it is important to analyse the role of the children in the decision-making process about their migration in order to comprehend their migration in a way that realistically portrays them. These scholars have particularly established that a lot of literature on migration of children lacks an understanding of the perspective of the children themselves in what role they play in their own movement. They argue that this is partially due to an ignorant stance of legal institutes, visible in for instance the Palermo Protocol. This protocol states the difference between

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<sup>16</sup> M.F. Bwambale, P Bukuluki, C.A Moyer, and B.H.W van den Borne, "Demographic and Behavioural Drivers of Intra-Urban Mobility of Migrant Street Children and Youth in Kampala, Uganda," *PLoS One* 16, no. 2 (2021): 12. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247156>.

<sup>17</sup> International Labour Organization, "Rapid Assessment Report in Trafficking of Children into Worst Forms of Child Labour, Including Child Soldiers in Uganda," International Labour Organization, February 2007: 8.

<sup>18</sup> Iman Hashim, and Dorte Thorsen, and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, *Child Migration in Africa*. London ; New York : Uppsala, Sweden : New York: Zed Books ; In association with the Nordic Africa Institute ; Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 14.

<sup>19</sup> See Pauline Aweto, Akinyinka Akinyoade and Francesco Carchedi. *Human Trafficking in Nigeria 1960-2020: Pattern, People, Purpose, and Places* (2022, in print)

<sup>20</sup> Iman Hashim, and Dorte Thorsen, and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, *Child Migration in Africa*. London ; New York : Uppsala, Sweden : New York: Zed Books ; In association with the Nordic Africa Institute ; Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 114.

smuggling and trafficking, in which the main difference lies in consent. Smuggling is based on consent of an individual, whereas trafficking is conducted with the use of any form of force. Article 3 in the Palermo Protocol, however, notes that consent of any persons under the age of eighteen is insignificant if the movement of these children leads to exploitation. Practically therefore, children are vulnerable. The vulnerability concept can be used as the lens for analysing the limitation posed to individuals, groups or the society occasioned by the lack of power, resources and other attributes needed to protect their own interest. Children's realities signposts a coexistence of their vulnerabilities and what can be portrayed as their agencies. From a rights perspective, the reality of many children lives therefore warrants more nuanced analysis. Some studies have used the concepts of child agency and vulnerability "to analyse the child-adult partnership for begging highlighting the conditions and the circumstances under which the children become involved."<sup>21</sup> This is related to the idea that children are unable of own decision-making, therefore, according to Hashim and Thorsen, immediately linking 'children' to 'victims'. This brings them to the argument of Hopkins and Hill, that the term 'separated children' brings up the image of children without agency, even though some children have made the decision to migrate themselves. This contrasts, according to Hashim and Thorsen, with the idea of children's agency in a lot of African societies in which children are from a young age already viewed as persons with agency.<sup>22</sup> Their research shows furthermore, that children in West-African countries are often expected at a young age to generate an income. This is often difficult for young people in rural areas and therefore many of them decide, often with approval from their families, to migrate to urban areas.<sup>23</sup>

The research of Hashim and Thorsen shows that children have different reasons to migrate and that these circumstances should be carefully contextualised. This argument complements the research of Busza et al., who have found in their research in Mali and Cambodia that many (non-)governmental interventions with the aim to prevent people from human trafficking misjudge the cultural context of migration. This misunderstanding affects all migrants and measures do not distinguish between migrants and trafficked people. In their research on child migrants in Mali, the authors have found that out of their 1000 respondents, only four children were actually victims of abuse and exploitation. The other respondents voluntarily wanted to migrate abroad, looking for work and new experiences. These migrants often depend on intermediaries, helping them throughout their journey.<sup>24</sup> According to Busza et al., these intermediaries could protect the children from harmful situations. Therefore, they argue, the governmental interventions that have been implemented against human trafficking are complicating the migrants' journeys, making the migration more dangerous. This is due to the lack of understanding of the cultural context behind movements of the children. Legal measures against human trafficking have as an effect that government officials are unable to distinguish between a trafficker and an intermediary who facilitates the journey of a migrant in a safe way. The authors argue that sensational media around the concept of 'human trafficking' should not play a role the interventions of government institutions, which requires a more in depth understanding of the issues that these migrants face. Busza et al. propose

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<sup>21</sup> Wedadu Sayibu, *In Search of Survival? Exploring the Experiences of Children in Child-Adult Partnerships for Begging in Tamale, Ghana*. MA Research Paper, IISS Den Haag, 2013: 8

<sup>22</sup> Iman Hashim, and Dorte Thorsen, and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, *Child Migration in Africa*. London ; New York : Uppsala, Sweden : New York: Zed Books ; In association with the Nordic Africa Institute ; Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 17-18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>24</sup> Joanna Busza, Sarah Castle, and Aisse Diarra, "Trafficking and Health: Attempts to Prevent Trafficking Are Increasing the Problems of Those Who Migrate Voluntarily," *British Medical Journal* 328, no. 7452 (2004): 1369.

facilitating safe migration, offering services to migrants and documentation of cases of abuse and exploitation, so that living and labour conditions can be improved.<sup>25</sup>

## Effective Policies

In this subsection, literature is assessed on the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of bodies involved in policymaking processes related to children's migration.

Children who are unfamiliar with the environment they are moving to, have more difficulties to integrate in their new living situation in South Africa.<sup>26</sup> This complements the argument of Hashim and Thorsen, stating that children should be involved in decision-making about their migration, which could stimulate conversation about how children's rights can be protected between different parties. Besides that, continued contact with family can play a big role in the effectiveness of policies and re-integrating children in their communities.<sup>27</sup>

The research of Gao et al. on Chinese government policies on street children shows that poverty and family issues are two main factors in causing children to become street children. Many of the street children in China have ran away from home, but some have been sold to traffickers with the promise of making money and then are sent to big cities. Even though much research showed that only a small amount of the children in big cities were trafficked, a citizen campaign organised by the government showed that many children were either abducted or controlled by criminal groups in begging for money. This led to the campaign *sending street children back home* in 2011 and knew three phases. One of these phases can be compared to the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019, in which law enforcement officers were directed to areas with a high concentration of street children and searched for children begging alongside adults. These guardians were 'educated' by dialogue and people who forced children into street begging were punished with a criminal penalty. This strategy included sending children back to their former homes. Their research shows that distinguishing between children running away from home and abducted children is important in the process of developing policies.<sup>28</sup> Abducted children need a different approach than children who ran away from home because of violence or other factors.<sup>29</sup> This shows that there are many different ideas about how street children in cities should be handled and how government policies should look like.

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<sup>25</sup> Joanna Busza, Sarah Castle, and Aisse Diarra, "Trafficking and Health: Attempts to Prevent Trafficking Are Increasing the Problems of Those Who Migrate Voluntarily," *British Medical Journal* 328, no. 7452 (2004): 1370-1371.

<sup>26</sup> L. Young, and N Ansell, "Young AIDS Migrants in Southern Africa: Policy Implications for Empowering Children., *AIDS Care* 15, no. 3 (2003): 340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0954012031000105397>

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>28</sup> Yunjiao Gao, Sally Atkinson-Sheppard, Yanping Yu, and Guibin Xiong, "A Review of the National Policies on Street Children in China," *Children and Youth Services Review* 93 (2018): 82-83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2018.07.009>.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Munene and Nambi identified three intervention strategies in order to improve the lives of street children. The first strategy is the institutionalised approach, with two categories: *Phased Resettlement* and *Full Institutionalisation*. In the first category, children are taught different skills that they need to live in the society and are prepared to re-integrate in their community. *Full Institutionalisation* is rather expecting the child to fully embrace the institution as their new home. The second intervention is the *Community-Based* approach, which is based upon the resources of the community in order to help street children. The final approach is the *Integrated* approach, which focuses on all actors involved in the problem of street children and thereby targets all elements of the problem.<sup>30</sup>

Related to the *Integrated* approach, as suggested by Munene and Nambi, is the argument made by Rapatsa. He argues in his research on child economic exploitation and government legislations that it is important in the process of eradicating child exploitation to prosecute perpetrators. However, he notes, that is not enough and legal frameworks should also address the sources of the problem, such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and unemployment.<sup>31</sup> He argues thereby, that it is vital to do this by national and international efforts. He points out a problem in this regard, which is the political unwillingness to develop policies to address potential future perpetrators and the sources of the problem.<sup>32</sup>

## Case study: Almajiri in Nigeria

In Nigeria, examples of domestic trafficking from rural areas to the cities, which can be related to cases of forced labour are observed. Mostly women and children become victims of these practices, which are visible in for instance domestic help, child beggars and market work. Especially in Northern Nigeria, the children beggars are not a homogenous unit; among them are Almajiri boys who had been sent to Islamic schools for religious education. It has been noted that some of their teachers use the children to beg for alms at regular intervals. Akinyoade argues that this type of human trafficking can be deducted from traditional child fostering in African societies, where family members would take care of each other's children. This has adapted to a network of intermediaries who connect children from rural areas in exchange for money to non-related adults in cities. This phenomenon of trafficking is often denied and otherwise mostly comes with reasons of justification for the trafficking and exploitation.<sup>33</sup>

But who are these traffickers? Akinyoade refers to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to demonstrate that traffickers could be total strangers of the victims and are already involved in a criminal network, but the traffickers could also be relatives, friends or other everyday people. Akinyoade gives the example of domestic workers, who can be held in the homes of diplomats for domestic work

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<sup>30</sup> J. C Munene, and Janet Nambi, "Understanding and Helping Street Children in Uganda," *Community Development Journal* 31, no. 4 (1996): 347-348.

<sup>31</sup> Mashele Rapatsa, "Understanding Trends in the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the State's Legal Responses: a Descriptive Analysis," *Juridical Tribune* 7, no. Special (2017): 194.

<sup>32</sup> Mashele Rapatsa, "Understanding Trends in the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the State's Legal Responses: a Descriptive Analysis," *Juridical Tribune* 7, no. Special (2017): 198.

<sup>33</sup> Akinyoade, Akinyinka. "Forced Labour in Nigeria." May 2012, 5-6.

and therefore involved in forced labour.<sup>34</sup> This case study can help to grasp an understanding about similar underlying structures that are present in the movement of Karamojong children to Kampala.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, one can distinguish between two type of street children: full-time street children and part-time street children. In the wide range of literature on the topic of street children, some reoccurring factors are mentioned as causes for a high rate of street children. These causes are poverty, HIV/AIDS, family issues and unemployment. The literature also shows that it is important to distinguish between children who became victim of child trafficking and children who voluntarily migrated to urban areas, when it comes to research on street children originating from rural areas. Furthermore, it has to be acknowledged that in many old African traditions it is common for families living in poverty to send their children away with other relatives or acquaintances, in order to earn some extra money and as a fostering arrangement. This habit often abused by human traffickers, making it complicated to distinguish between migration and human trafficking. As for possible solutions that are offered throughout the literature by different authors, many factors are mentioned that would be important in drafting effective government policies on the reduction of street children. Whereas some authors stress the importance of a full understanding of migration and the notion of 'childhood' in different cultures, others emphasize tracking down and prosecuting perpetrators. Another strategy that has been mentioned is taking children into institutions to re-educate them with the purpose of sending them back to their hometowns.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The main concept in this study is the concept of street children. The following definition will be enhanced in this study: "Any individual under the age of 18, for whom the street has become their main place of living and/or source of livelihood."<sup>35</sup>

In this research, the theories on children's mobility, adapted from the book of Hashim and Thorsen will play an important role. This is due to the relevance it has for the research in the contextualisation of childhood, children's agency in migration and the explanation of old traditions of families in poor conditions to send children away to earn money. These ideas will be used as a foundation of the research, in order to contextualise the situation in Karamoja and the movement of children to Kampala.

Moreover, the theoretical framework will be established from the existing theories on how a government can effectively reduce the amount of children in a city and improve the overall wellbeing of these children. Resulting from the literature review, the following scheme has been drafted as a preliminary basis of the research (see figure 1). This framework will be used as a starting point to test the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 on its future effectiveness. Furthermore, the ontological model of the rhizome by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and clinical psychoanalyst Félix Guattari will play an important role

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>35</sup>M.F. Bwambale, P Bukuluki, C.A Moyer, and B.H.W van den Borne, "Demographic and Behavioural Drivers of Intra-Urban Mobility of Migrant Street Children and Youth in Kampala, Uganda," *PloS One* 16, no. 2 (2021): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247156>



in this thesis. The rhizome can best be understood through the contradiction with the Western ontological model of a tree. In this model, the root is the basis for all new branches that grow, thus representing a hierarchical system. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of multiplicity cannot be explained alone through the tree model and politically, state dominance is central because of the root. The rhizome, contradictory, has no root or source that causes all growth within the system. All singular entry points are connected to one another, whereas a broken point will not result in a collapse in the system, but rather repair itself by forming new connections. This ontological model can shift away the attention from state power and dominance, whereas it is not central in the rhizome and can therefore be liberating.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Rhizome," The Chicago School of Media Theory, [rhizome | The Chicago School of Media Theory \(uchicago.edu\)](http://rhizome.chicagoschoolmedia.org/).

## Chapter 3: City life in Katwe

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Before being able to discuss the applicability of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance and different perspectives on it, it is important to grasp an understanding of the community that the ordinance is targeting. Many Karamojong children who are begging on the streets of Kampala live in Katwe, a slum in Kampala.

Katwe was established in the 1980s, and the land is owned by the local catholic church.<sup>37</sup> About 75,000 people are living in Katwe, which creates a population density of 150,000 people per square mile. This is incredibly high which can be seen from a comparison to the Upper East Side neighbourhood in Manhattan, which is with 119,000 people per square mile already a very dense area. The homes in which people live in Katwe are small, with an average of five people living in one house. Katwe can be seen as an informal settlement in Kampala, which creates the necessity for its community to create its own networks in the area. These networks have to allow access to basic needs like sanitation facilities, housing and water. Exemplary is the existing water network in Katwe was created by the local community since this was not supplied by the city of Kampala at the time of establishment of Katwe. As the growing population in Katwe demanded for water supply, the inhabitants connected pipelines to the official water network of the city in order to flow water into the slum. These networks and the accessibility of basic needs grew into bigger systems that connected to each other, which makes Katwe a more habitable place.<sup>38</sup> Nowadays, Katwe also is the place where many Karamojong people live their lives. This includes the Karamojong children begging on the streets of Kampala.

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<sup>37</sup> Chad Bailey, "The Spaces In-Between: Learning From Kampala's Slums," ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Chad Bailey, "The Spaces In-Between: Learning From Kampala's Slums," ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015, 7.

## Diary during my research - First impressions of Karamojong community in Katwe, Kampala



(Photograph by male NGO worker, 2022.)

*I'm waiting on the busy street, watching the area that I will enter in a moment from above. I came with Bonnie, an ex-street child who knows the slums. Boda's passing by, children playing, a man walks towards me. He starts screaming, walking faster and faster. Then I realise he's running directly at me, holding something in his hand. Stuck between the traffic and the sewerage at the side of the road. The man scratches me with something, it hurts, I touch my arm. See a half-eaten chicken bone in his hand. Bonnie pushes him away from me, the man starts laughing loudly. We continue walking. A direct confrontation with the use of drugs in Katwe. Then the two other men, Allan and Martin, arrive.*

*We walk a small ally down, through the dirt. It's a low area of the city, the sewerage system of Kampala. We enter a big space, many people are around. It gives me the feeling of a village centre, a small community. Women are cleaning the intestines of chickens and cooking chicken heads in big pots. We walk further, I smell a combination of garbage, poop and animals. Smoke from the fires comes my way, many children are running. Some are sitting on the floor, most people I see are women and children. Some women are pregnant, others are feeding their babies or doing laundry. There is a lot of screaming, and curiosity about my visit. Others are in their own world, under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Everyone is friendly, I feel welcomed, have small conversations. Around there are many small houses, made out of clay and roof sheets. Laundry is hanging to dry, the rooms are dark. We move away from the main square, led by a woman, she wants to show me her house. The allies are small and difficult to access, there is a lot of mud and garbage. The area is big, way bigger than I could see from the main street. At the horizon I can see the business district of Kampala, high buildings rising into the sky. The contrast is huge. I'm welcomed into the woman's house, she is amazed when I talk to her in Kiswahili. I feel welcomed, the language connects. She hands me her baby, explains there is around ten women and children sleeping here. I look around, some pots are stacked in the corner and there are blankets on the floor. The place is not bigger than 10 m2.*



(Photograph by Male NGO worker, 2022.)

*After a chat we move back to the main square, it got busier. Women and children are returning after working at the market or begging on the streets. Many women approach me, asking for help. Everywhere around*

*me, small fights break out. Kicking and screaming, many people laugh. Instantly, the lady next to me pushes another woman and I'm being pulled outside. In the fuzz, liquid from the big pot with chicken intestines splashes on my body and the woman who started to push jumps up and down in the mud. She starts screaming, undressing her highly pregnant body. After seconds, she's completely naked and forms the centre of attention. Some children start to cry, men come out of the houses. I'm being dragged further away from the scene, someone screaming in my ear that we have to get out. Kids are clamping themselves to my legs, I'm trying to manoeuvre to the direction where I came from. Before I realise, I'm back on the main street.*

*Boda's passing by, children playing, the city continues. I walk up the road, catch a boda home. My mind is still in Katwe, the boda passes the Karamojong children begging in traffic. This was my first encounter with the Karamojong behind the scenes, sketching their lives in Kampala. Many visits followed, stories were shared by women, opening up to me. I was welcomed in a space where the Karamojong form their community, closed off from the rest of Kampala. A place where I could relate theory, policies and social perceptions to the daily lives of the children I am researching.*

*After coming home, I needed to write this down, remember the first impressions. The smell, sounds, emotions of the people I met. And every time I went back, these impressions changed. I felt more comfortable every time I would return, but also started recognising the ethos in the community from the moment when I would enter. My role as a researcher differed at times, I would also become more aware of my role. These visits gave my research a story throughout the three months of my stay. Theory became practice, government policies came alive and different realities came together.*



*(Chris Harris, photograph, 2022.)*

## Interviews with Karamojong women in Katwe

During the fieldwork in Kampala, seven women were interviewed about their life in Katwe and their past migration from Karamoja to Kampala. The first interview has been conducted with Ellen, the only woman who spoke English. During the following interviews, she acted as translator. Ellen came to Kampala from Karamoja four years ago, because of a lack of food and water in her home town and the current conflict.

The interviews took place in Katwe, in the main area where many Karamojong live together. My visit was enabled by contacts at a local NGO, an organisation that is working with Karamojong women and children in Katwe and in Karamoja. They organise weekly activities in a training centre in Katwe financed by the organisation. The activities range from yoga sessions to vocational education. Furthermore, they aim to resettle women and children back to Karamoja and guide them to resettle in their communities and start their own business. While analysing the interviews, some overarching themes were recognised in the responses from the women who were interviewed. This chapter aims to give an understanding of the different aspects of life in Katwe, where many of the Karamojong children live, who are daily begging on the streets of Kampala and are targeted by the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019.

## Housing and Rent in Katwe

The houses in Katwe are made from bricks, which are made by shaping the clay soil into brick forms and burning these until hardened through firing wood underneath a pile of bricks. Furthermore, many houses also contain roof sheets made of metal, which are also used to make doors and other parts of the houses. Important to note is that the houses are rented out by units rather than per house – and the unit does not have a designated purpose. A unit can be used as house, supermarket or shop. As the houses do not have sanitation facilities inside, most people share public bathrooms per area in Katwe. This also applies to cooking and washing the laundry, which happens outside of people's homes.<sup>39</sup> One of the reasons why the houses do not have sanitation facilities inside, is that water does not flow into the slum and its houses. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the city initially did not provide water to the area. Nowadays, the city flows water to a certain point in the slum, where people can come collect water by using jerry cans, which they are charged for by the property owner of the place where the water is piped to. There are also taps where people can collect water for free, however these places are often contaminated.<sup>40</sup>

Even though Katwe knows an average of five people per house, the area in which the Karamojong community lives together is a compound in which about thirty to forty people sleep together. Sanitary facilities are scarce and most people sleep on mattresses and blankets on the floors. The area is owned by the Buganda kingdom, and therefore all the inhabitants pay rent to the king. This however does not go per month, but everyone pays rent per night.<sup>41</sup> This is about 1,000 Ug shillings per night, about €0.25, which Ellen elaborates on during her interview:

*“Rent, we sleep the same house, many people. We sleep like a camp. In some houses like 100 people they sleep one room.” (Ellen)<sup>42</sup>*

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<sup>39</sup> Chad Bailey, “The Spaces In-Between: Learning From Kampala's Slums,” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Chad Bailey, “The Spaces In-Between: Learning From Kampala's Slums,” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Interviews with Karamojong women living in Katwe, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Ellen, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

As can be read in the anecdote above, the living standards in Katwe are very low. Many people live in a small space together, where most children are struggling with diseases like cholera, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis. Regular conflicts break out because of alcoholism, frustration and disagreements.<sup>43</sup>

## Language barrier

Many Karamojong people speak Ngakarimojong, a Nilotic language. Most of them do not speak English or Luganda, the languages pre-dominantly spoken in Kampala, when arriving in the city. This causes them to all live together in one area and widens the gap between them and other Ugandans, thus complicating integrating in the city. However, some children begging on the streets are learning some Luganda and English, due to their daily interactions with by-passers.

## Work

The Karamojong women and children in Kampala do not only beg on the streets for a living. Out of the conducted interviews and observations it can be concluded that a big part of their lives is situated at the market of Kisenyi, another slum area in Kampala. While driving through the area, one can find many Karamojong women and children working at the market. Many of them are collecting fallen seeds from the ground, or sit by the market stands cleaning the seeds and other market products. Others are helping to clean the trucks that have just arrived and are unloading their products. In return they receive a few thousand Ugandan shillings per day, which is a few dollars. This money allows them to buy some food and pay for their rent at the end of the day. They can easily be recognised by the colourful skirts of knee-length they wear, often walking on bare feet and multiple piercings in their ears. The importance of clothing within the community becomes clear through an interview with two ex-street children, who are now working for an NGO that aims to structurally improve the lives of street children.<sup>44</sup>

## Begging

Most children begging on the streets have been told to do so by adults, often the women in their community. Some mothers use their own children for begging/alms collection purposes, but it is also a habit for women to rent children for a day from other women to ensure an income. Many children who are seen with women on the streets, are not accompanied by their biological mothers. Rather, the children are borrowed for a day to earn some money, which part of it is at the end of the day given to the mother.<sup>45</sup>

According to a probation and social welfare officer of the Kampala district at the KCCA, the women in the slums can hire babies from mothers for a whole day for around 5,000 shillings. This can create extra income for the person while begging. He is also aware of the living situations of the women in Katwe, where he refers to the living conditions as a bad situation. He believes that the rent these women pay is to traffickers.<sup>46</sup>

However, during the interviews with women living in Katwe, it becomes clear that not everyone feels comfortable with the habit of begging on the streets. Ellen sheds more light on the issue of begging in relation to the social stigma she experiences:

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Karamojong women living in Katwe, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with NGO workers, interview by author, Kampala, February 29, 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Simon Bird and Simon Lokai, *Karamoja City Warriors*, 29 Dec. 2014, <https://documentaryheaven.com/karamoja-city-warriors/>. Accessed 24 June 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with probation and welfare officer KCCA, interview by author, Kampala, March 24, 2022.



*Yes it is difficult because if you come here just you start begging. Like others like us we don't like begging. You are just ashaming people but because of this and the other people, even though we tell them 'don't beg', they just do. They say if you want us to stop begging, you take food in Karamoja, we won't come here to beg. (Ellen)<sup>47</sup>*

## Discrimination and social stigmatisation

There is a change in speech present during questions about their place in Kampala as Karamojong women. During the interviews with these women, but also in other interviews with involved parties in the topic, it became apparent that there is a social stigma and even discriminatory aspects present in society about the Karamojong tribe. About the feeling of disconnection and discrimination, Ellen said the following:

*"Okay Katwe we live as Ugandans. But uh this tribe in Kampala also. Sometimes we get to, they can abuse you; people you Karamojongs, go back to your land, what are you doing in Kampala?" (Ellen)<sup>48</sup>*

The KCCA Child Protection Ordinance is specifically targeting Karamojong children, which led to frustration with Vicky:

*"One thing let me ask you there are Karamojong only they are begging and even there are other tribes that are begging, like Lubas they are begging. They are not only Karamojongs. ... All of them they are begging. They put like they are Muslim, but also they are beg, they're not only Karamojong." (Vicky)<sup>49</sup>*

A male interviewee, 28 years old, from the Central Region, said during the interview that there are stereotypes of people from the north, for instance that they do jobs with a low social status like security guards. Especially the Karamojong tribe is looked down upon in society. This also comes back in comedy shows, although he does acknowledge that stereotypes about tribes in general is perceived as funny.

In order to establish whether the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance can decrease the amount of Karamojong children begging on the streets of Kampala, it is important to determine the reasons behind why these people are in Kampala. How did they get there? And why? This will be presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ellen, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Ellen, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Vicky, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

## Chapter 4: Movement and Motivations

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In this chapter, the different factors and motivations behind the stay of the Karamojong women and children are discussed. The chapter is divided in subsections, categorising the different motivations for movement that have come out of the analysis of the qualitative data that was collected for this research. The interviews with Karamojong women living in Katwe were leading for this chapter, whereas it is important to note that none of them recognised human trafficking, but rather stressed that they moved voluntarily to Kampala. The factors that have been categorised as push and pull factors in this movement have been used as a basis for this chapter, with interviews with other participants as addition.

First of all, the reasons for migration were similar, mentioned by all women. These reasons were scarcity of food, drought, poverty and conflict. Ellen explained the following about her reasons to come to Kampala:

*“I came to Kampala, we have, in Karamoja we have no food. There is a war in Karamoja, they’re killing people. There is a dry season, even drinking water there is not in Karamoja. Now we decide to come to Kampala. Even though you gonna pick something to eat and then you looking to survive.” (Ellen)<sup>50</sup>*

It became evident that the Karamojong women living in Katwe did not have one singular motivation to move to Kampala, but there were more interconnected reasonings behind it. Another valuable conclusion that could be drawn from the interviews, is that all seven women indicated they would like to return to Karamoja if there is sufficient food, income opportunity and safety.<sup>51</sup>

### Narratives about city life – chain migration

Most of the women came together in groups to Kampala. Throughout the interviews it became clear that many children come together with their parents or relatives. However, after follow-up questions it was also acknowledged that there is a group of children coming to Kampala alone. This is where the stories of friends about life in Kampala play a big role in the decision of children to move towards the city. Karamojong children and adults in Kampala tell their friends and relatives that are in the village about life in Kampala and the opportunity to earn money there. This incentivises others to also move towards Kampala, sometimes funded by the earnings of other Karamojong in the city.

The reason why the stories are incentivising others to also migrate even though the circumstances in which the Karamojong live in Katwe are bad; any indication of desire to want to go back to Karamoja is affected by feelings of shame and pride. In an interview with a Western woman running an NGO and working with street children it became apparent that while the Karamojong adults and children travel to the region for visits, they feel obliged to bring money and food for their relatives. This is expected of them, because living in the city comes with the image of welfare. Besides that, these people are also afraid to disappoint their social circle and can be ashamed of their actual situation which leads them to glorify their life in the stories they tell back home. This then leads to more people wanting to migrate towards Kampala and a vicious cycle of storytelling about life in the city.<sup>52</sup>

The importance of narratives about the city in the movement of Karamojong people to Kampala became apparent in other interviews as well. A political scientist, born and raised in Karamoja, referred to this as a

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ellen, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Interviews with Karamojong women living in Katwe, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with female NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, March 2, 2022.



chain; one person passing on information lures the next person. In the end of the chain, there is a group of relatives who are engaged. This would apply to the movement of children from Karamoja to Kampala; positive stories about life in Kampala convinces others to migrate as well.<sup>53</sup>

This can be related to the literature of Dimova and Wolff, who have researched the role of remittances in chain migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have found that remittances received by recipients can lead to chain migration, whereas the capital received leads to interest in migration.<sup>54</sup>

The money that is sent home by Karamojong women can therefore also function as a pull factor in the decision-making process of other people to migrate from Karamoja to Kampala. This also goes for remittances in the form of food that the political scientist referred to during the interview. The wheat that people from Kampala don't eat, is carefully cleaned and packed by Karamojong in Kampala. They send these packages back home, because of the starvation family members and friends are experiencing. When a young woman travels with the packages to Karamoja, she dresses well and aims to look clean to portray a good and wealthy image. The Karamojong women look urbanised when they travel back to their village in Karamoja. It is attractive for other girls and their parents and can therefore add onto the pulling role that Kampala has in the process of migration.

When asked about how the children travel, it became clear that some children travel alone, sometimes even without their parents knowing, and other come together with their parents. The children travelling alone, hide under the busses:

*"There are others who came alone without their parents. They enter under the chairs of the busses things like there. When the conductor is still busy, they enter down and they reach after Kampala. But others they come with their parents." (Ruth)<sup>55</sup>*

This can be related to the following connection that was seen in the conducted interviews: all women expressed that they would like to go back to Karamoja, but will not move back to their place of origin for now. There are two factors that come into play in this migration decision: safety and transportation. All have noted that they do not have the financial means now to pay for transport back to Karamoja from Kampala, even though most were aware of a rehabilitation programme that the KCCA offers. In a later chapter there will be elaborated on this policy.<sup>56</sup>

## Conflict in Karamoja

Besides the practical side of migrating back to Karamoja, the existing doubts and worries about the security situation in the region play the biggest part in their decision to stay in Kampala and not return to their village in Karamoja. This security is related to the current conflict and the fear of being shot while in Karamoja. The circumstances under which some women migrated, whereas family members were shot dead leading to the decision to run to Kampala, can play a big role in this fear. But also the food insecurity as a result of drought and cattle raiding by other Karamojong from Kenya and South Sudan are a factor in the experienced insecurity.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with a political scientist, interview by author, Kampala, April 11, 2022.

<sup>54</sup> Ralitza Dimova and François-Charles Wolff, "Remittances and Chain Migration: Longitudinal Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina," *The Journal of Development Studies* 51, no. 5 (2015): 554–568. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2014.984898>.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Ruth, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Interviews with Karamojong women living in Katwe, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

The Ugandan government has been disarming the Karamojong people in the armed conflicts between the Karamojong tribe in Kenya and Uganda. A male NGO worker however argues that this has escalated the situation even more, because the Ugandan government has been disarming and the Kenyan government is not doing so on the other side of the border, thus making it an unfair process at the sub-regional level. This is leading to more deaths of cattle farmers, causing the desire to leave the area out of fear.<sup>57</sup>

## Poverty and food insecurity at home

Moreover, the insecurity about generating an income is a big factor in the decision not to move back to Karamoja now. All have indicated that the provision of a job or capital to start an individual business by the government would incentive them to move to Karamoja and to also stay there permanently. The poverty was linked to drought and food insecurity in the region. Because of a lack of job opportunities, and thus of an income, most women felt forced to leave Karamoja and search for a better life in Kampala. Another push factor that has been identified in correlation to this is drought in the region. This complicates agriculture and limits access to drinking water.

Even though poverty was mentioned as one of the biggest factors in moving from Karamoja to Kampala by the women, some interviewees had a different perspective about the role of poverty in the issue. Culturally, the concept of poverty is subjective. The possession of cattle in Karamoja is seen as a sign of richness, whereas other Ugandans might perceive Karamojong people as poor, even though they might not agree themselves. However, an important point raised by a community psychologist, working with children:

*“One wouldn’t leave their home if one feels comfortable there.” (female community psychologist)<sup>58</sup>*

One wouldn’t know what Kampala is like without anyone telling them about it, so there must be an external force persuading people to come from Karamoja to Kampala. This also must be a viable explanation given the fact that the amount of Karamojong people in Kampala has significantly increased the past years.

Important to note is that all the women who were interviewed through the data collection period of this research are involved with the NGO and its projects. This indicates that their view on vocational education and the necessity of starting a business themselves in order to sustain a living for themselves in order to go back to Karamoja might have been influenced by the ideas of the NGO. Even though it is very likely that the women have a deeper desire to return to Karamoja, the selection of research participants and their answers to the questions in this respect do not have to represent the feelings and ideas of the whole community. Furthermore, the provision of vocational education for these women might not lead to them migrating back to Karamoja but rather incentivise them to stay in Kampala to start a business.

## The wish to return to Karamoja

So, if the life in Kampala turns out to about surviving as well, why do these people then stay in Kampala? A lack of transportation to go back to Karamoja is not the only reason why the women stay in Kampala despite their wish to go back to Karamoja. Many women had the illusion that coming to the city would make them prosperous and successful. But in reality they found many challenges and they simply have to

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with male NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, March 8, 2022.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with community psychologist, interview by author, Kampala, March 15, 2022.

survive. If they would return to Karamoja, they would come back empty handed, which would be regarded as a failure, so they stay around. There are only a few women who regardless go back.

Moreover the life on the streets as a street beggar is still less bad than their former life in Karamoja, which was unbearable for some people. This can be related to the disarmament in the region, which led to even more migration towards Kampala. Life on the streets of Kampala is regarded as safer than living in Karamoja. However, the cattle raiding that has started in 2019 might be a reason for people to move back to Karamoja, mostly women and children. In towns and along highways it is relatively safe, only pastoralists are in danger.<sup>59</sup>

The answers and anecdotes from the women living in Katwe already show some factors that have motivated them and Karamojong children to move to Kampala. Food insecurity because of drought that makes agriculture difficult, cattle raiding with armed conflicts and poverty have shown to have played a big role in these people's decisions to move. This has gone hand in hand with narratives in Karamoja about Kampala as a place where one can easily earn money to survive. Important to note is that these reasons are not to be seen independently from each other, but rather as a network of linkages. These factors also come back in other interviews, along with other insights about underlying structures of this movement. These aspects significantly show signs of voluntary migration. However, in the media, in the general public debate and in an interview with the KCCA it becomes evident that there is human trafficking involved in the Karamojong child beggars. Where does this difference come from? The following chapter will dive deeper in the topic, relating it to theory.

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with a political scientist, interview by author, Kampala, April 11, 2022.

## Chapter 5: Voluntary Migration vs. Human Trafficking vs. Child Fostering

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In order to discuss the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 and its effectiveness as a solution to the problem it is important to first understand the root systematic behind the movement of these children from Karamoja to Kampala. The terms that are used in explanations of this movement affect the solutions and its social implications. If a child moves from point A to point B, the explanation that is given for this movement and the terms that are related to that explanation can have great impact on the social view on the movement, problems that may arise and solutions that are proposed.

Throughout this research, it became clear that the social perceptions on the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance and its effectiveness were connected to what root cause of the problem the participant was convinced about. Therefore, the debate of child trafficking versus child migration plays an important role in this thesis. Practice meets theory, which will lead to an answer on the research question. Even though the human trafficking was not recognised by any of the women, the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance is based upon the assumption that many children begging on the streets are trafficked from Karamoja to Kampala for the purpose of earning money through begging in the city. The data that was collected for the purpose of this research shows that there are different perspectives on the debate whether there is human trafficking involved in the issue and multiple layers were uncovered.

An important relationship that could be defined by analysing the interviews that were held with women living in Katwe, is that child trafficking from Karamoja to Kampala is not recognised by any of the women. This could be explained by a number of possible reasons:

1. Human trafficking is not a central underlying factor, or;
2. The women do not feel comfortable speaking about it out of fear, or;
3. The women do not recognise child trafficking as such because of a different definition and conceptual framework.

During the fieldwork, due to limited time, it was not possible to determine the reason for it. The third point mentioned above relates to a wider debate on the definition of human trafficking, voluntary movement and foster care, which will be elaborated on in this chapter.

### Human trafficking?

Interestingly, Karamojong children are not the only ones present in Kampala. Many Karamojong children have been located in cities like Mbale, Soroti, Tororo, Kiganga and Jinja. However in these cities, the children do not beg but rather work like other street connected children. They clean shops, help offloading trucks and carry small loads for an earning. Why is Kampala then the only city where these children beg? That is something that remains unclear. One theory proposed by a political scientist, who was born and raised in Karamoja, is that not all kids come straight from Kampala, but first travel to other cities. Then they would hear that in Kampala one can make more money and there are higher incomes, which could explain the begging.

Another possible explanation that can be given for this difference would indicate human trafficking, where the traffickers bring the children straight to Kampala to beg.<sup>60</sup> The political scientist zoomed in on the geographical area that the children are coming from. Most of the Karamojong children in Kampala are

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with political scientist, interview by author, Kampala, April 11, 2022.

from the Napak district. The district knows a major highway, which leads directly to Kampala with busses. However, there are multiple highways in Karamoja and even within Napak there are several sub-counties, whereas most children only come from four of them.<sup>61</sup> This unravels a related question: why are the children that are begging coming from such a specific geographical location within Karamoja? A driver of the KCCA who was interviewed for the purpose of this research, claims that this is because these sub-counties know markets ‘where one can buy children’, which would explain the presence of these children in Kampala.<sup>62</sup>

This practice was also referred to by the probation and social welfare officer at KCCA. He tells the anecdote of a journalist who went to Karamoja with 50,000 Ug shilling, which is about €12,50, in order to see how the human trafficking would work in practice. He encountered a woman, who was willing to sell two of her children to him. Others are convinced that there is better education in Kampala for their children, but then the children are forced to beg for money. Some children are also sexually exploited in bars or brothels. He does acknowledge that he explains the movement of family members who bring children with the motivation of earning money by begging to Kampala as human trafficking as well. However, he is convinced that there are also human traffickers active in Kampala, who can order children by a phone call. Some have been prosecuted and are currently serving their sentences. Coming back to the geographical categorisation of the child beggars in Kampala, the probation and social welfare officer at the KCCA argues that the human traffickers only take Karamojong children to beg is because the Karamojong people are complaining that there are not enough resources in the region and the weather is bad.<sup>63</sup>

A male NGO worker, spending time weekly with Karamojong women and children in Katwe, and involved with local community leaders in Karamoja, argues that he knows of cases where children were brought to Kampala. However, he would not define it as child trafficking, but rather as child labour exploitation. He then argues that he does notice child trafficking in and around Kampala. These cases of children disappearing while begging on the streets can be led to unlawful adoption, where couples pay someone to steal a child from the streets. Another criminal activity he refers to is illegal organ transplantation, where some children are taken from the streets to harvest their organs for the black market.<sup>64</sup>

## Child foster care

As referred to in the literature review, child foster care is a tradition that dates back to generations. When people live in poverty, family members and acquaintances take care of each other’s children. It is not only about poverty; child fostering also includes living with other family members that have experienced childlessness; those seeking opportunities for education of their wards; and sometimes to instil better discipline into the fostered child. Child fostering is portrayed in a documentary on the lives of Karamojong children in Kampala. When someone in Karamoja decides to go to Kampala, other women are asking to take their children to and provide them with food.<sup>65</sup> This practice might go hand in hand with the optimistic narratives about city life as discussed earlier, or, for the optimisation of families economic resources. These are cases that the KCCA would refer to as human trafficking, as one is bringing a child to Kampala with the purpose to beg. However, is this a realistic explanation?

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with political scientist, interview by author, Kampala, April 11, 2022.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with female NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, February 23, 2022.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with probation and welfare officer, interview by author, Kampala, March 24, 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with male NGO worker, Kampala, March 8, 2022.

<sup>65</sup> Simon Bird and Simon Lokai, *Karamoja City Warriors*, 29 Dec. 2014, <https://documentaryheaven.com/karamoja-city-warriors/>. Accessed 24 June 2022.

Amongst the interviewed women, there was one woman who has personally experienced foster care by her aunt, leading her to end up in Kampala:

*“Why she came to Kampala was the mother left her with her auntie. Now the auntie was having kids, she started disturbing her, beating her and everything. Chasing her to home. Now she decided just stay. She wanted to go back Karamoja but she decided let me just go back to Kampala because there you can live my own life.” (Lauren)<sup>66</sup>*

Lauren explained that her aunt took care of her since her mother did not have the financial means to take care of her daughter. She was brought to Kampala, but got on bad terms with her aunt.

This is related to the explanation of a male NGO worker, who has lived on the streets of Kampala as a child himself, who points to poverty in Karamoja as the main reason for misconceptions about city life and the dubious travel of children to Kampala. Families in Karamoja are being told that their kids can work and earn an income, so they send them to the city with a middleman. But rather than referring to this middleman as a trafficker, one can also refer to this practice as a way for people to take care of each other and their children. This aligns with the stories of women who have moved voluntarily to Kampala, in search of a better life.

## Human trafficking – a Western discourse?

As there are many stories about women and children migrating voluntarily from Karamoja to Kampala, ending up begging on the streets, it is remarkable that the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 specifically acts upon the issue with the assumption that these children are victims of human trafficking. Where does this come from? Is it a discourse? Or rather a combination of both, there are traffickers active and voluntary migration is happening at the same time? Some interviewees argued that Western concepts are adopted in African society in order to get funding for projects, even though these concepts might not be applicable in certain situations.<sup>67</sup>

This is something that relates to research of Julia O’Connell Davidson, in which the author refers to the general story of sexual abuse of children showcasing a wider discourse in Western liberal society. The story that is being told, is one in which child abusers are almost everywhere and often happens as a result of child trafficking. However, she asks the question whether this is a realistic explanation to the movement that is visible or whether there is a hidden interest behind the story. She thereby argues that many human rights activists regard people who end up in forced labour or abusive situations as victims of trafficking, disregarding how they ended up in these situations.<sup>68</sup>

Even though it became apparent in many interviews that some children move to Kampala alone, sometimes even without the consent of their parents, this is not always considered as an autonomous motivation. According to the United Nations (UN) Trafficking Protocol, it is irrelevant whether children consented to their own movement if they are moved with the purpose of exploitation, and is the situation always regarded as trafficking.<sup>69</sup> The UN Protocol defines, amongst other things, forced marriage, stealing,

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Lauren, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with female NGO worker, interview by author, February 22, 2022.

<sup>68</sup> Julia O’Connell Davidson, “Telling Tales: Child Migration and Child Trafficking,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 37, no. 12 (2013): 1071. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.10.012.1072>.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 1071.

organ trafficking, prostitution and begging as exploitation. However, this especially becomes complicated when one discusses this definition of exploitation, which is not a universal term and can be explained differently in other cultural, economic and political contexts. When analysing child fostering agreements, legal and illegal, it is complicated to define this as trafficking since the child fostering might as well improve the overall wellbeing of the child.

This also relates to opinions about how much a child culturally is allowed to work and how the power relation between adults and children look like. When child prostitution is not involved in a case, it becomes almost impossible to determine whether a child is victim of trafficking or not.<sup>70</sup> This comes back to the role and meaning of the child in society. When it comes to migration of children, the child is often perceived as one who is unable to make autonomous decisions and does not have agency.<sup>71</sup> The article of Davidson can be linked to the responses of some interviewees about different motivations behind the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019.

## Helping ‘street children’ – what does that mean?

According to a male NGO worker working daily with Karamojong children in Kampala, the interests of the ministry of gender and the KCCA have played a huge role in why the ordinance was drafted. As much of the funding comes from international organisations, like UNICEF and USAID, the ordinance is drafted for accountability of the incoming funds but are actually focussed on their own interests. He refers to his own invitation to a meeting about the ordinance to discuss the content of it, but when he attended he noticed that it was just meant to present the law and not actually be part of the discussion. This has increased the feeling that the ordinance only fulfils the role of looking after the government’s interests. He blames this on the independence that all government bodies have in their work and therefore can act upon their own interests. Besides that, he claims that the presence of minerals in Karamoja have increased the interests of the government and private companies to be present in the region, where the government would be diverting the population through the narrative of human trafficking. An article on the website of the Ugandan parliament even goes further than this accusation about the role of individual interests in the drafting of laws. The article shows the opinion of Bokora county MP. John Bosco Ngoya, who argues that not only parents are abusing their children to make money, but also NGOs are making money under the umbrella of helping street children.<sup>72</sup>

## Definition of street children

The debate about the use of terms in this issue can be widened by looking at the term street children in general. As the KCCA and the media often refer to Karamojong children as street children, not all interviewees agreed with using that term.

A female community psychologist who was interviewed for the purpose of this thesis, was shedding light on the psychological aspects of Karamojong children in Kampala and street children in general. She noted that the definition of a child in Western society is being used to tackle problems in Uganda as now with the Karamojong children, whereas that does not align with the reality.

The debate about the definition of human trafficking and voluntary migration lies in a grey area, with big implications for policies and solutions. According to a male participant, an ex-street child working with

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<sup>70</sup> Julia O’Connell Davidson, “Telling Tales: Child Migration and Child Trafficking,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 37, no. 12 (2013): 1072. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.10.012.1072>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1076.

<sup>72</sup> “Karamoja MPs want gov’t to clampdown child traffickers,” Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, posted on November 30, 2021, [Karamoja MPs want gov’t to clampdown child traffickers | Parliament of Uganda](#).

street children in his own NGO, parents in Karamoja are being lied to about what their children can do in the cities to earn money, therefore consenting to something else than what is actually going to happen with the child. He compared it to illegal organ trafficking, where people living in poverty are approached with the proposal to work in the Middle East. As most of these people are undocumented, the company provides a passport for them and arranges the flight. Once there, many families lose contact and at one point hear that the person passed away. In fact, they are killed for their organs which are then sold on the black market. According to the participant, this also happens to children sometimes. Even though the topic is not in first instance related to the child beggars in Kampala, the underlying structures are similar: people living in poverty are promised work, migrate based on aspirations for the future and are not aware of the risks involved.<sup>73</sup>

All participants were asked the same question: what is the difference between human trafficking and migration? They answered that human trafficking is involuntarily, that is where the important distinction lies. This shows the complexity of the issue. The probation and social welfare officer of the KCCA who was interviewed for this research refers to the children as street-connected children. He argues that many children living in the slums are thieves, snatching people's phones and laptops. In contradiction, the children who are begging for money don't steal. He notes that most children begging are girls, because most people feel sorry for young girls and thus that brings most income.

Whether the issue is caused by human trafficking or migration, it is still evident that the KCCA aims to eradicate all children begging on the streets of Kampala. The next chapter will follow upon this discussion while relating it to the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 as a case study.

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with a male NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, February 24, 2022.



## Chapter 6: Case Study - KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 and solutions

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In this chapter, the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance will be discussed through different lenses and perceptions on its future effectiveness.

### KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019

The central policy that has been analysed in this thesis is the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019. In previous chapters the motivations behind migration of Karamojong women and children from Karamoja to Kampala have been discussed, as well as the debate around human trafficking, voluntary migration and child fostering in relation to the topic. This will now be applied to the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 in a case study design. Recently in 2022, the Child Protection Ordinance 2019 was renamed Child Protection Ordinance 2022. It bears the same characteristics, and the main reason for renaming was because the 2019 Ordinance became approved by the Attorney-General, giving it a legal green light for implementation. The preceding analyses in this study showed us how the draft was being implemented prior to the Attorney-General's approval. The ordinance criminalises not only begging on the streets, but also tackles other hazardous labour activities in which children are involved:

“Known as the Kampala Capital City Child Protection Ordinance 2022, the law criminalises children loitering in public places, begging or soliciting, vending or hawking and bans the sale of alcohol and drugs to children. Anybody who contravenes with the law will be imprisoned for six months or pay a fine of two currency points (about sh40,000). A currency point is equivalent to sh20,000.”<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, the law also prohibits children from being engaged in labour activities and other work that leads to the inability of the child to attend education.<sup>75</sup>

### Street rescues KCCA

Before the drafting of the ordinance, the KCCA already had a policy in place to deal with the begging children on the streets of Kampala. A few times per year, the KCCA performs so called ‘street rescues’, consisting of taking Karamojong children off the streets at an unannounced time and driving them back to Karamoja for a rehabilitation program. The KCCA aims to remove at least 400 children from the streets of Kampala every year. After collecting the children, they are brought to Kobulin Youth Skills Center in Napak district, which is a government facility. They stay in the rehabilitation facility for at least two months, and are then resettled with their parents. The KCCA facilitates education, though some of the rescued children find a way return to Kampala again. According to the probation and social welfare officer of the KCCA who was interviewed for the purpose of this thesis, the reason for the policy difference between Karamojong children and other groups of street children in Kampala is that the KCCA could identify the origin of the children through mere physical observation. It is more difficult to determine the origin of many of the other street children though they are also easily recognised based on addiction to drugs, thereby need a different approach. Their rehabilitation process needs to, for instance, involve rehabilitation from the drugs. Therefore, the other children groups are handled separately by the KCCA.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> “KCCA LAUNCHES LAW AIMED AT PROTECTING CHILDREN”, *Kampala Capital City Authority*, June 8, 2022, [KCCA LAUNCHES LAW AIMED AT PROTECTING CHILDREN -KCCA | For a better City](#).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>76</sup> Interview with probation and social welfare officer KCCA, interview by author, Kampala, March 24, 2022.

The media play an important role in the KCCA street rescues. Before every action, the media is informed in order to get publicity. The aim is for the public to know what efforts the KCCA is taking and that people see the children are treated well. There is however also some discomfort and distrust from some interviewees about the role of the media.<sup>77</sup> A female NGO worker expressed her concerns about the funding of the street rescues of the KCCA. Every time there are just a small percentage of the children rehabilitated and sent back to Karamoja; it does not compensate for the continuing inflow. Why do they not undertake an enormous action, so that all children are taken to Karamoja? Is this just to show the world that the funding is being used, while the rest of the money is going somewhere else?<sup>78</sup> This is a concern that is recognised by more participants of this study, however it has to be acknowledged that the limited funding might not allow for greater street rescues. The probation and welfare officer at KCCA who was interviewed for the purpose of this research does express that it is wished for to continue the street rescues, even though its biggest challenge is to find funding. The budget for the street rescues are determined by the government, and also NGOs fund part of the rescues. He argues that the limited budget is caused by other priorities of the government. Therefore it is a wish of the KCCA to find a way to eradicate the problem with little financial means.

Interestingly, there have also been concerns from Members of Parliament from the Karamoja region. Firstly, they argue that the street rescues can be traumatising for the children and the KCCA should therefore stop this practice.<sup>79</sup> That is also something that has been argued by a community psychologist who was interviewed for this research.<sup>80</sup> Another existing concern is that many of these children were born in Kampala and can thus not easily integrate back in Karamoja. A rehabilitation program in Kampala might be a more convenient solution for these children. Moreover, the Members of Parliament who have expressed doubts about the street rescue, also argued that many children have gone missing from government facilities and that no one really cares about that.<sup>81</sup> This can be linked to the observations of a female NGO worker, who has expressed her suspicions that social workers at these government facilities are also involved in the movement of these children back to Kampala.<sup>82</sup> Though these concerns exist, it is also evident that many inhabitants of Kampala are happy with the street rescues, expressing their joy on social media and to the probation and welfare officer in person.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, the KCCA had implemented the rehabilitation program for some time already; the persistence of the problem necessitated the drafting of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019. According to the probation and welfare officer of the KCCA, the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance was drafted to compliment the deficiencies of the street rescues.<sup>84</sup> This can also be explained through the different aims of the policies. Whereas the rehabilitation program does not specifically target human trafficking, the ordinance does.

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with probation and social welfare officer KCCA, interview by author, Kampala, March 24, 2022.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with a female NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, February 23, 2022.

<sup>79</sup> "Karamoja MPs want gov't to clampdown child traffickers," Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, posted on November 30, 2021, [Karamoja MPs want gov't to clampdown child traffickers | Parliament of Uganda](#).

<sup>80</sup> Interview with community psychologist, interview by author, Kampala, March 15, 2022.

<sup>81</sup> "Karamoja MPs want gov't to clampdown child traffickers," Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, posted on November 30, 2021, [Karamoja MPs want gov't to clampdown child traffickers | Parliament of Uganda](#).

<sup>82</sup> Interview with a female NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, February 23, 2022.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with probation and social welfare officer KCCA, interview by author, Kampala, March 24, 2022.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.,

## The Ordinance: a future success or failure?

In this subsection, the overall view of three groups involved in the topic on the future effectiveness of this ordinance will be discussed. These groups are: the interviewed Karamojong women in Katwe, the KCCA and NGOs.

### The women in Katwe

After analysing the interview with Karamojong women living in Katwe, a few overarching concerns about the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 came up. First of all, none of the women were aware of the existence of the ordinance. They did point out that existing problems in Karamoja as poverty, lack of job opportunity and conflict were factors that are at the root of movement of Karamojong women and children to Kampala. As such, they would conclude that the ordinance would not be effective in improving the lives of these people, since the situation in Karamoja is not dealt with. It was unclear to determine whether it would incentivise them to stop begging on the streets with children. However, the search for an income to survive would continue regardless of the ordinance. This means that if the ordinance would indeed eradicate all begging on the streets of Kampala by Karamojong children, there are still numerous situations in which these children can be involved, including hazardous situations.

All Karamojong women in Katwe who have been interviewed do not feel like the government plays a role in their lives. The tone of the voice of the interviewees goes down, giving a sad and alone impression. When asked what role they want the government to play, they answer that they feel the need for food and a job to sustain themselves. Some women did mention the United Nations as a helpful actor in their situation in Karamoja, also indicating that since the stop of the UN Mission in Karamoja, the help has stopped.<sup>85</sup> This is related to an overall feeling of distrust towards the government and its policies. A conclusion that can be drawn from this outcome, is that there must be more trust towards the KCCA and the government in general for policies to succeed, which may also account for with the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance.

The Karamojong people working and begging in Kampala would also deal with questions about their identity and feeling of belonging.<sup>86</sup> There is limited possibility to find a formal job, send children to school and build a stable home. This would create a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape, and again widens the gap in society. Also the Karamojong women in Katwe have indicated that they miss an opportunity to start their own business and earn an income. However, the urgency of begging for an income is stressed by Vicky. When asked about her opinion on the ordinance, she answered:

*“It’s not good. Because people they would suffer, they die. If they stop that, let them bring something for us to eat and something to do, business, then we leave. Even the kids, yes they need money.” (Vicky)<sup>87</sup>*

This quote indicates the begging as primary income for many of the Karamojong women and children living in Katwe and therefore as primary source for food consumption. It also shows the wish of the women to start their own business in Karamoja to sustain for themselves and not have the tendency to move back to Kampala again.

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with Karamojong woman living in Katwe, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with a community psychologist, interview by author, Kampala, March 15, 2022.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Vicky, interview by author, Kampala, February 25, 2022.

## Kampala Capital City Authority

According to the probation and welfare officer of the KCCA, the aim of the ordinance is to punish the people who are giving the money or food to these children, and are thus encouraging these children to continue begging. But up till the time of study, there was no record of arrest/punishment of alms givers. When it comes to the reasoning behind the policy, it becomes clear that many people, inhabitants of the city and visitors, feel uncomfortable that the Karamojong children are begging. According to the probation and welfare officer of the KCCA it is a very bad sight, and the children are ruining the city's infrastructure and the grasses. When the KCCA puts effort in making the city prettier with flowers and this is then getting ruined by the children. Also, the probation and welfare officer indicated that many people are bothered by the Karamojong children on the streets, because they can be rude or even spit when they do not receive money. By implementing this policy, the desired effect is that the incentive for these children to beg is taken away and thus the city will become one without the social menace of begging street children. This would lead to less trafficking and nuisance of children on the streets. With that reasoning, the ordinance could be seen as an effective policy against the trafficking of Karamojong children with the result of exploitation through begging. As was indicated earlier, the probation and welfare officer at KCCA argued that there is too little funding for addressing the problem. He mentioned that the issue is not high enough on the political agenda in order to implement other policies, which would cost the government a lot of resources.<sup>88</sup>

## NGOs

An NGO that was interviewed for the purpose of this research is collaborating with the KCCA in the so called 'street rescues', views the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 as a successful policy, under the condition that it is implemented correctly. However, the analysed answers of the respondents who were linked to NGOs show that there is a feeling of disconnection between the practical field and the policy makers at the KCCA and are thus less optimistic about the ordinance. Though the probation and welfare officer at the KCCA argued that this has been a main priority of the KCCA, the overall impression of NGOs has been different. According to most NGOs that have been involved in this research, this leads to the expectation that the ordinance will not be effective as it is not tackling the root causes of the problem, due to a disconnect between the ground and the policy making processes. Local and national involvement would be essential in order for a policy to be effective.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, an overall image was sketched that there is a lack of communication between NGOs working with this group of children. Creating a network of NGOs would allow a greater role for NGOs in improving the living situation and overall wellbeing of the Karamojong children in Kampala, but also in rehabilitation processes. This could stimulate more long-term solutions rather than short-term focussed projects, which would be an addition to the ordinance.

The same Members of Parliament who have been referred to earlier as well also expressed worries about the role of NGOs. Different NGOs would be created for the cause of earning money through these children, whereas it is seen as a business model. They even go further, by asking the government to investigate all NGOs that are working with this children, having the suspicion that some of them actually traffic the children to earn money from.<sup>90</sup> This has also been expressed by a male participant working with

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with probation and social welfare officer KCCA, interview by author, Kampala, March 24, 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with male NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, March 8, 2022.

<sup>90</sup> "Karamoja MPs want gov't to clampdown child traffickers," Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, posted on November 30, 2021, [Karamoja MPs want gov't to clampdown child traffickers | Parliament of Uganda](#).

Karamojong women and children in Katwe on a weekly basis. According to him, children are a business. Whether it is in begging, sexual exploitation or organ transplantation – children are seen as a basis for good business and thus this underlying idea complicates completely eradicating the problem.<sup>91</sup> A male participant also brought up the role of money in the workings of NGOs as well, whereas he has a more positive note about it; it should be seen as a win-win situation for everyone.<sup>92</sup>

## Mixed Migration

The ordinance focuses on a specific group of children in the city: the begging children. However, one could argue that the heterogeneity of this group has not sufficiently been taken into account while drafting the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019, now tagged 2022. As can be concluded from the literature and qualitative data that has been collected and analysed, there is not one source to be distinguished from the movement of children from Karamoja to Kampala. Rather than just push and pull factors leading to migration, suspicions of human trafficking with child foster care arrangements are intertwined in this. The design of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 gives the impression that there has been a misjudgement of the cultural context of migration. Can this also become counterproductive, as literature has shown that governmental interventions against human trafficking can also complicate and endanger the migrants' journey? This especially becomes a relevant question when second generation migrants are uprooted on the basis of looks, back to a society they have never lived nor interacted with. Migrants' identities are shaped throughout the journey, indicating even more that the heterogenous aspect of migrants is one that cannot be neglected in policy making. This shows a disconnect between the street-level and the policy making processes. Karamojong children in Kampala have come to the city with different reasons, transport and relatives. Some travelled alone, other in groups, others were escorted by relatives; and some born in Kampala. These groups need different approaches, and the problems with regards to begging and hazardous situations as a result of the migration might have to be tackled at the source as well, rather than just in the city.

Moreover, little faith in the implementation capacities of the KCCA has been shown in the data collected. If this ordinance lack comprehensive enforcement capacity, the incentive of children and other involved persons to beg on the streets will still exist since people would not stop giving money or food to these children. In order for it to become an effective law, enforcement and communication of the ordinance would be vital elements of the implementation process. Furthermore, a few respondents in the Kampala traffic that were interviewed indicated that they think it is immoral to stop people from helping these children by giving them a basic necessity as food. It would go against human values and thus an ordinance like this would also not stop them giving handouts. This has also been acknowledged by a male NGO worker:

*“If you find someone’s daughter is hungry, yeah, you give that person food. Unlike in other countries where people mind their own business so much. Here it is a collective effort, that’s how we were brought up.” (male NGO worker)<sup>93</sup>*

Most interviewees agree that the ordinance cannot solve the issue of Karamojong child beggars in Kampala, since the root causes of the movement are not dealt with. This is according to many, also not able to be done in Kampala but rather in Karamoja. By providing housing, education, healthcare and job

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with male NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, March 8, 2022.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with male participant from Central Region, Kampala, March 10, 2022.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with male NGO worker, interview by author, Kampala, March 8, 2022.

opportunities, Karamojong children would not have the urge to move to Kampala. All women who have been interviewed for this thesis expressed that if there would be a job for them in Karamoja and it is safe, they would prefer to return to Karamoja and thus would the begging of children also stop.

Another factor that has shown to play an important role in the voluntary movement of Karamojong children to Kampala is the narrative about city life. In policy making around begging on the streets of Kampala it would be important to also take this aspect of migration into account. Can this narrative be used as a way to provide safe migration? Rather than considering this as a negative development and sending people back to Karamoja, providing good living conditions in Kampala can also solve the issue of begging children on the streets of Kampala. This is exemplified by a male political scientist, who grew up in Karamoja, who told the anecdote about a boy who lived in Kampala to beg. The kid was taken off the streets by an NGO and brought to school for vocational education. However, what was neglected in the attempt to help the child even though there were good intentions, was the feeling of responsibility the child had towards his grandmother in Karamoja. While the child went to school, his grandmother died. The boy therefore felt responsible for the death of his family member, because of the dependency of his grandma on the money and food he could send home after begging on the streets.<sup>94</sup> This example shows the significance of solutions that takes the cultural context of the children into account. Migration does not have to be seen as negative or dangerous, as long as safe migration is an option and there is sufficient information provision.

Another issue that arises in correlation to the focus on human trafficking of this ordinance is that the safety of these children might not be guaranteed in the most positive scenario. What would withhold people from taking advantage of these children through other ways, in for instance illegal international adoption, illegal organ transplantation or sexual exploitation? Does this ordinance guarantee legal justiciability for these children? And if there is not sufficient funding for the rehabilitation process of these children, since the street rescues will co-exist with the ordinance, will the safety of the children be ensured throughout the process? There are indeed different views and standpoints on the matter, all with different backgrounds and discourses. The ordinance as such gives the impression that only one singular part of the targeted group will be dealt with. The KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019/2022 shows the effort of the KCCA to tackle the issue and improve the children's welfare. Even though the ordinance might show its desired effects, an addition of other policies focussed at the root causes might be essential – improving living standards in Karamoja, changing the narrative about city life and providing safe migration.

Despite the Attorney-General's 2022 approval, the comprehensiveness of the Ordinance remains unknown/has not yet being released for public consumption. Thus, the analyses contained in this thesis must be treated with caution because i relied on second-hand information from newspaper articles and the descriptions of the welfare officer interviewed at KCCA. This type of secondary reliance creates unnecessary room for misinterpretation by all stakeholders, and mis-implementation by street-level bureaucrats who may use this information gap to conduct official activities regarding street children.

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with male political scientist, interview by author, Kampala, April 11, 2022.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

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This thesis has aimed to answer the following research question: “In what ways are the containment of the incidence of street children in Kampala and improving the wellbeing of these children guaranteed in the current design of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019? What do the public perceive as critical elements of success or otherwise in the implementation process?”.

The issue is a rather complex one, where many different, interrelated, factors come into play. This could be linked to the concept ‘Rhizome’, which was referred to in the theoretical framework. There is not one cause to point at, and the mixture of human trafficking, voluntary movement and child foster care complicates directing a policy at decreasing the amount of Karamojong child beggars and improving their wellbeing. This relates to the different push and pull factors mentioned as a reason for migration – these factors are interrelated and do not depend on just one cause. The mixed migration aspect that were discovered also needs to be taken into account. In the stream of movement are migrants with differentials in life experiences, aspirations and motivations. Treating such as a homogenous band of people has implications for the success of any policy intervention. Therefore it is evident that there is not one solution possible, and the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance shall thus also not be analysed as such.

However, there are numerous doubts across society about possible effectiveness of the ordinance. There are existing doubts about the implementation and enforcement of the ordinance to begin with. If this is not done well, the ordinance will definitely not have its desired effects. Furthermore, it has been shown that there are suspicions about many other criminal activities involving children, which could fulfil a gap left for human traffickers if the ordinance successfully eradicates begging, and thus the wellbeing of the children will not improve. Moreover, it has been addressed that the root causes of voluntary movement of the Karamojong children are not taken into account in the ordinance, therefore indicating that it would not be effective. The root causes that have been mentioned throughout the interviews are poverty, conflict and limited job opportunities in the Karamoja region, in combination with cumulating narratives about a prosperous city life in Kampala.

In regards to the root causes of the Karamojong child beggars in Kampala, there are disagreements already. The explanation given for the movement of the children affects the type of policy that can effectively be implemented. It has been shown that due to these different opinions and underlying structures the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance will most likely prove to not have a great effect on decreasing the amount of Karamojong children begging on the streets of Kampala. However, this ordinance combined with a package of different policies might have an important contribution to eradicate all Karamojong child beggars in Kampala.

In order to come to a successful policy, it is vital to take into account the multiple perspectives from strata of the society that have been discussed. Different viewpoints can shed light on every part of the debate and a package of solutions and policies can be created. It has to be acknowledged that the KCCA has limited resources to tackle the issue, and it can be concluded that the inflow of migrating children cannot be stopped from Kampala alone. Additional policies should be implemented in Karamoja, which focus on for instance changing the narrative about city life, providing housing and job opportunities and deescalating the security situation in the region. The KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 does not link to all roots of the issue that it aims to tackle, which is embedded in the different views on how the Karamojong children end up begging on the streets of Kampala. The debate around whether there is human trafficking involved, the children migrate voluntarily or it is a mixture of both embedded in

traditional foster care agreements is used as a basis in this thesis to analyse the different perceptions on the ordinance.

As the Child Protection Ordinance 2019 has not yet been graduated into law, the different social perceptions on which this thesis is based are not build upon practical experience with this specific ordinance, but rather show underlying feelings, experiences and opinions about Karamojong child beggars and government policies in general. In June 2022, during the writings of this thesis, the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2022 has been introduced. This will be displayed soon according to the website of the KCCA, criminalising not only traffickers, but also people giving handouts to street children and child beggars themselves while begging on the street. This would allow the KCCA to rescue and handle the child through diversion programs, executed by the probation and social welfare officer.<sup>95</sup> The future will only tell what the exact results of the KCCA Child Protection Ordinance 2019 will be, and whether this ordinance will improve the lives of the Karamojong children in Kampala, an aim that should be at the start of each government's policy.

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<sup>95</sup> "KCCA LAUNCHES LAW AIMED AT PROTECTING CHILDREN," Kampala Capital City Authority, published June 8, 2022. [KCCA LAUNCHES LAW AIMED AT PROTECTING CHILDREN -KCCA | For a better City](#)



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