

INTRODUCTION

Many people in the world live without having a regular access to food, a shelter, education and medical care. Many are children. Many of them are both street children and other categories of neglected children.

I will analyse the issue of these children in need of care and protection in Kenya with a particular focus on the so called Street Children.

I've decided to conduct this research in order to find out more about root causes of street children problem and appropriate approaches to address it.

I collected data especially during my internship in Kenya. I've spent the great part of it in Nyahururu at St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate, working in the Community Programme for Children in Need (CPCN) which aims to improve the situation of needy children through awareness campaigns and psychological support to potential street children and their families. Moreover, I've also moved a bit around the country in order to collect data from different places.

I've chosen St. Martin CSA as a case study mainly because I knew, from readings and experiences of people who had already visited it, that its predominant feature is the community participation, as it's expressed by the motto "Only through community".

The initial hypothesis I had in mind it was that the way of community participation was the one to follow to create successful solution for street children, therefore I wanted to conduct a field work to prove my idea and St. Martin CPCN seemed the right place.

I took contacts with Fondazione Fontana, which is the Italian partner of St. Martin, and is situated in Padova. Through them I get to know more details about St. Martin and I could arrange the internship, after we had agreed together an Internship Programme.

I've been in Kenya from the 16th of September 2013 to 25th of November 2013. In the first week at St. Martin I've been introduced to the different programmes and from the second week I've been working in the Community Programme for Children in Need and its coordinator, Simon Maina, has been my internship tutor.

Objectives

My overall goal is to understand what are some requirements that a program for street and needy children must have to be effective and sustainable. The internship in the "Children in Need" programme of Saint Martin has been a case study of my research for this purpose. I also aim to understand which is the role played by the "local dimension" in street children issue.

Before starting the work I've set some specific objectives and activities to achieve them. I could achieve the planned objectives sticking pretty much to the plan.

I wanted to analyse strength and weaknesses of the programme dividing the work in three phases, as follow.

Phase 1: Analysis of the context and guidelines of the project.

In this phase, I had gathered information to understand:

- Background;
- Who are the street children; causes and effects of life on the street;
- Beside the street children, what are the other background situations of the children in need;
- General structure of the project (objectives, beneficiaries, stakeholders, activities, expected results);
- Which are the other programs for street and needy children in the territory?
What are the relations of the St. Martin with them?

Phase 2: Qualitative analysis of the programme.

At this stage I have tried to understand:

- What are the perceived needs from the children? Does the program suit them?
- Does the program provide children with prospects for the future, or rather with an immediate help? And in what way?
- Is there any mechanism to make the centre for street and needy children self-sustainable in the medium term?
- What is being done to enhance the children and give them the opportunity to be a resource for their community now and in the future?

Phase 3: Evaluation and considerations.

At this stage I've gathered the collected data, I have checked if they were enough to answer to my questions and I have summarized them in a conclusive assessment according to the following criteria:

- Efficacy: does the project meet the perceived needs of street and needy children?
- Sustainability: Is the programme sustainable over time? Does it involve the community? Does it have the prerequisites to be self-sustainable (here I refer to self-sustainability under two perspectives: economic – can the project be economically independent from external aid in the middle term?- and social – can the project be totally “absorbed” by the community in the middle term, training people in the community to be the new staff of the project in the future and creating the interest for this role?)?
- Relevance: Is the logical framework of the project consistent and logic? Is the project consistent with the context? Is there any collaboration between this programme and similar programs in the area ?
- Possible solutions to problems or improvements that can be made to the program (synthesis of ideas gathered from the local community, the beneficiaries of the program, etc.).

Moreover, while I was conducting the field work I've realised an interesting perspective from which I could analyse the problem. I started wondering how the geographical characteristics and urban dimension of a certain place influence the problem of street children. Therefore, I've introduced in my schedule to conduct field work also in Maralal, Nakuru and Nairobi for collecting data to answer this question.