

From street children to street gangsters in african big cities: what future for youth?

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Abstract: A survey of 400 street gangsters called *kuluna* in the DR Congo has revealed that 400 of them (100%) used to be street children locally called *Chègués*. Only, 360 (90%) were not educated; 33 attended the primary school (8.25%); only 7 reached the second year of the secondary school (1.75%); 362 got single mothers (90.5%) and 38 were orphans (9.5%). This figure Shows how urban insecurity is linked to poor youth education, especially from the family. Indeed, from 660 street children or *chègués*, 560 of them did not go to schools (84.85%) ; 80 went to primary school (12.12%) ; only 20 reached the second year of the secondary school (3.03%) ; 90% got single mothers and 66 were orphans (10%). This paper is to remind our responsibility in the society degradation. Providing good education of children is an excellent investment for the future.

It is why we all (parents, adults, government, private sector, NGO, churches, etc.) should be active partners for the youth education. It is surprising that all *kuluna* are former *chègués*. Recycling these youths should start from street children (*chègués*) instead of from street bandits or *kuluna* as it is ongoing.

Keywords: Banditry, *kuluna*, *chègué*, insecurity, gangsters, Kinshasa, Service National

Introduction

Big cities are in most cases generating new social behavior. Social classes are constantly increasing. In the 1970s, nobody was talking about *kuluna* and *chègué*. The common banditism was based on robbery and sometimes on gun attacks of big fishes (bosses). In the 1980 -1990s, the Django phenomenon appeared and some people were killed by these bandits.

Since 1996 up-to-day, a new social class is born : street children (*chègués*) and street bandits (*kuluna*). This is a devastating situation and families are complaining on violence. We are all responsible of this situation.

Most of societies have urban violence. Youth violence is due to many reasons. Indeed, in USA, poverty and racism are the main causes of juvenile violence. In France, urban violence is also due to social discrimination ; while in Africa, especially in D R Congo, violence is linked to survivorship or food seeking (RTNC, 2021 ; Musibono, 2018 ; Cespedes , 2005 ; Body-Gendrot,1998 ; Lagrange, 1998). In some cases, violence is due particular events such as sport, army or police striking, etc. In this paper, we focus on youth violence as the social mismanagement. Social networks are also promoting violence and toxic policies (Musibono, 2018 ; Luyeye, 2017 ; Dekane, 2016;Raufer & Bauer, 2003 ; Roché, 2001).

Study location

Our study was carried out in Kinshasa, the capital city of the D R Congo. A city of 9,965 km² with 15 millions inhabitants. It is divided into 4 Districts, 24 municipalities and 326 residential areas (R.A.), as follows:

Lukunga District with 7 municipalities, 80 residential areas (R.A.) and a surface area of 647.4km²;

1. Ngaliema with 21 residential areas and 224.30 km²;
2. Kintambo with 8 residential areas and 2.72 km²
3. Barumbu with 9 R.A. and 7.72 km²;
4. Kinshasa with 7 R.A. and 2.87 km²;
5. Lingwala with 9 R.A. and 2.88 km²;
6. Mont- Ngafula with 16 R.A. and 358.92 km².
7. Gombe with 5 R.A. and 29.33 km²

Funa district with 85 R.A and 56 km²;

1. Selembao municipality with 7 municipalities, 18 R.A and 23.18km²;
2. Bandalungwa, 7 R.A. and 6.82 km²;
3. Kasa-Vubu, 7 R.A. and 5.04 km²;
4. Kalamu, 18 R.A. and 6.64 km²;

5. Ngiri-Ngiri 8 R.A. and 3.40 km²;
6. Bumbu, 14 R.A. and 5.30 km²;
7. Makala, 14 R.A. and 5.60 km².

Mont Amba District with 5 municipalities, 62 R.A. and 75.5 km²

1. Lemba, 15 R.A. and 23.7 km²;
2. Ngaba, 6 R.A. and 4,00km²;
3. Limete 14 R.A. and 67,60 km²;
4. Matete, 13 R.A. and 4,86 km²;
5. Kisenso, 14 R.A. and 16.6km².

Tshangu, with 5 municipalities, 99 R.A. and 9186.6 km²

1. N'djili, 13 R.A. and 11 ?40 km²;
2. Masina, 21 R.A. and 69.73 km²;
3. Kimbanseke, 30 R.A. and 237.78 km²;
4. N'sele, 16 R.A. and 898.79 km²;
5. Maluku, 19 and 7,948.80 km².

The following map shows Kinshasa city and its municipalities.



Source: Googlemaps (www.google.com; 23/06/2022)/
Poor residential áreas without electricity are home of *kuluna*.

Material

This study is focused on desperate youths, poorly educated, jobless, former Street children from 33 residential áreas (10%). A total of 660 street children (*chêgués*) and 400 *bandits* (*kuluna*) randomly selected was investigated. We investigated some pólce dungeon randomly selected in above residential áreas.

Methods

In this study, we used direct observation and a specific questionnaire to jailed youths on the residential areas, the level of education, family status and the reason of violence. To avoid frustration, we did not ask the names of respondents.

Result and discussion are reported in Tables 1 & 2 below.

Tableau 1 Education level, family status of street children (or Chègués) in Kinshasa (N= 660)

Education level	Number reported	Purcentage (%)	observation
No education level	560	84.85	Most of chèque did not attend schools.
Primary school	80	12.12	12.12% went to the primary school.
Secondary school	20	3.03	Only 3.03% attended the second year of the secondary school.
High education (tertiary level)	0	0	No Street child got a State diploma
Married parents	0	0	No legally married parents
Divorced	0	0	Of course, no wedding upstream, no divorce downstream.
Single mothers	594	90	Most of chèque have single parent (i.e. mother).
Orphans	66	10	10% of orphans, usually accused as wizards.

According to their answers, all street children (chègués) live on street begging and people generosity. This means that they depend on social generosity. They do not have any hope for a better future.

The following Table 2 gives the profile of street gangsters (bandits) or kuluna in Kinshasa (N= 400).

Table2- Education background level and family status of kuluna (N=400)

Education level	Number of individuals	Purcentage (%)	observation
No level (never attend school)	360	90	Most of kuluna did not go to school
Fundamental school	33	8.25	8.25% attended the basic school
Two years of secondary only	7	1.75	Only 1.75% reached the second year of secondary school
No high education	0	0	No State diploma
No married parents	0	0	As for street children, kuluna are from illegal unions.
Divorced	0	0	No marriage, no divorce of course.
Signle parents	362	90.5	As for chèque, most of kuluna are from irresponsible sexuality.
Orphans	38	9.5	Orphans represent 9.5%. They have to look for food by using their muscles, even weapons.
As former Street children	400	100	All kuluna used to be street children (100%).

Results reported in Tables 1 and 2 show similar trends.

Table1 and Table2 data are summarized in the following Table3

Table3- Summary of Table1 and Table2 data related to chèque and Kuluna

Table3- Summary data on street children chèque and on kuluna (bandits)

Education level	Chèque in %	Kuluna in %	Difference In %	Observations
No level (never attend school)	84.85	90	5.15	Street children or chèque and Kuluna (Street bandits) have the same background.

				Indeed, 100% of Kuluna are former chéqués.
Fundamental school	12.12	8.25	3.87	
Two years of secondary only	3.03	1.75	1.28	
No high education	0	0	0	
No married parents	0	0	0	
Divorced	0	0	0	
Single parents	90	90.5	0.5	
Orphans	10	9.5	0.5	
As former Street children	XXXXX	100	NA	

The lesson learned is that all Kuluna are former street children or Chéqués.

How should the society give the second chance to kuluna ?

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), *kuluna*, or street bandit groups, are socially recycled through the public institution called SERVICE NATIONAL (SN). This presidential initiative created by the later President Laurent Kabila, neglected by Joseph, is actually resumed and strengthened by the President Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo. Kulunas are professionally recycled at Kaniama-Kasese Centre (Haut-Lomami Province) where they learn some jobs such as agriculture, masonry, carpentry, mechanic, etc. Thousands of kuluna countrywide are actually under training. At the end of the training, boxes of tools are given to recycled kuluna to start their new life. It is a successful strategy. However, my suggestion is that it starts earlier at street children (chéqués) level to avoid banditry and insecurity. It is a real success case.

Discussion

Urban violence and youth crimes are key indicators of social vulnerability. Indeed, poverty and discrimination are the main causes of urban juvenile criminality (Musibono, 2017 op.cit ; Wacquant, 2006 ; Trémintin, 2004).

Conclusion and recommendation

This exploratory study has revealed the following :

Street children living on begging are potential kuluna (bandits) countrywide.

Kuluna use violence to daily survive. They use their muscles, various weapons to get food.

Both chéqués and kuluna did not attend schools (84.85% and 90.0%, respectively), have single parents (90% and 90.5% ,respectively),

Most of kuluna are former street kids (100%).

Social recycling through job training by the Service National is a good example of sustainable solution.

We recommend that instead of recycling kuluna, SN works with street children upstream. This will stop the urban blood banditry downstream.

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