



Aims

Moroccan Children's Trust (MCT) is a UK registered charity. Our vision is to create a safe and fulfilling environment in which vulnerable children, who would otherwise live or work on the streets, are able to thrive and grow. Our research aimed to understand more about the patterns of the children's lives, their hopes and fears, and any other factors which support or constrain them.

Methods

14 street-connected children (10 to 16 years) took part in the study which ran between April and June 2014. The qualitative study employed Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodologies, which attempted to ensure that children were seen as equals to adult researchers as well as capable individuals who are experts on their own lives.

This was the first time that a PAR approach had been employed with street-connected children in Morocco.



The study included three main activities, each conducted over multiple sessions (11 sessions in total): Photovoice, thematic drawings and mental maps. Facilitated discussion surrounding the outputs (photographs, drawings, maps) of each activity was used to explore the children's experiences and their vision for the future and to draw out key themes.

Results

Table 1. Top 5 pictures from each child in age group 10 – 13 years

Top 5 pic's	Children				
	M1	M3	M6	M10	M11
1	Drenched in water standing and posing next to an irrigation canal	Wearing his sister's taekwondo clothes and standing in front of the television	He and his parents sitting down, one on each side of him	Standing and posing alone in the dark outside	His father sitting down and holding an oud

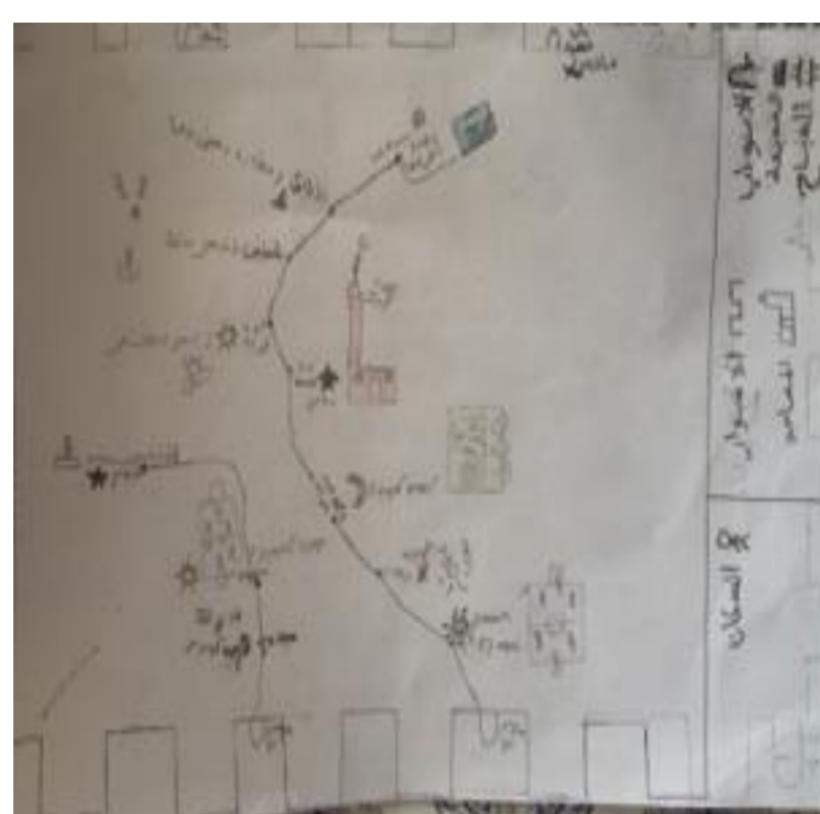


Table 2. Spaces where children do not like to go

Places where...	No. of mentions
there are mean children	3
there are kidnappers	3
there are bad people	1
the smell is intolerable	1

Table 3. Spaces where children go during the night

Places	Number of times mentioned by children
Place Assarag (large square in town centre)	3
Home	2
Park	1

Discussion

Street-connected children are viewed by many in Moroccan society as a source of problems, and a group who inevitably become involved with drugs, crime and violence. The common slang word used to refer to children on the street, 'shmekr', means 'glue-sniffer'.

The findings of this research offer a different narrative, which challenges some of these assumptions. The children who participated in this research feel constrained to spend a large part of their leisure time in the street, and are creative in using public spaces as areas in which they can pursue activities. There are other spaces to which they would like access which are closed to them. They also feel constrained by the perceived threat of 'kidnappers' and 'delinquents', also 'bad people' against whom the children define themselves. The children describe strongly traditional preferences and wishes, to stay connected with their families, to succeed in education, and to follow their religion more fully. At the same time, some of the children narrated violent episodes that included throwing rocks at each others' heads.

The children's careful choices about where they choose to play and with whom they choose to associate will help to inform the support they receive from street workers.

References

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