

III. Methods

This report is based on information gathered in the DRC in September and October 2005 and on extensive prior and subsequent research. Two Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed ninety-one persons currently or formerly living on the streets, seventy-nine of whom were boys and girls under the age of eighteen.¹ We spoke with street children in markets, outside of homes and businesses, and in other public places in the evenings and early mornings. Working with nongovernmental organizations that assist street children, we also spoke to numerous former street children living in rehabilitation centers or who spend part of their days in open centers. During a four-week period we conducted investigations in Goma, Lubumbashi, Mbuji-Mayi, and the capital Kinshasa. Most interviews were conducted in French, Kiswahili, Tshiluba, or Lingala (with translation into French provided when a language other than French was used).

In our work, we interviewed numerous officials in the Divisions of Justice, Social Affairs, and Interior. We spoke with officers of the police and the military and representatives in the mayors' offices in several cities. In Kinshasa we met with the Minister of Social Affairs and the Special Ambassador for Children. We also spoke with officials from various United Nations agencies, including individuals in the child protection section of the U.N. Mission in the DRC (MONUC) and from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We collected information from administrators and educators at Congolese nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that work with street children. We also received information from health service providers, religious leaders, pastors, academics, human rights activists, and child welfare activists. Secondary sources from peer-reviewed published literature, NGO reports, and other materials supplemented what we gathered in the DRC. All materials cited in this report are either publicly available or on file at Human Rights Watch. The names of children quoted or described in this report have been changed to protect their identity.

¹ In this report, "child" refers to anyone under the age of eighteen. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child states: "For purpose of this present Convention, a child is every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1, adopted November 20, 1989 (entered into force September 2, 1990).