

The Situation of Street Children in Zimbabwe: A  
Violation of the United Nations Convention on the  
Rights of the Child (1989)

Thesis submitted for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the

University of Leicester

by

Markim Wakatama

School of Social Work University of Leicester

September 2007

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to all the street and working children in Zimbabwe whose rights are being violated on a daily basis by parents, relatives, guardians, the police and other individuals in their communities.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This study would not have been possible without the, assistance and dedication of many people. I am greatly indebted to my friend Eric Adams who assisted me to secure a scholarship from the Cadbury Trust. I also thank him for all the material and moral support that he has given me during the period of my study at the University of Leicester. Special appreciation and gratitude is owed to the Cadbury Trust in Birmingham for making it possible for me to study at the University of Leicester. I would also want to thank the George Bell Trust for assisting me financially during the last stages of my study. Sincere thanks to my supervisor, Dr.Kwame Owusu-Bempah for his creativity, analytical mind, practical sense and the encouragement that he offered me during the period of this study.

To my colleagues in the PhD group, Mamadoo Sala, Tim Clark and the late Lovemore Mandizha, I say thank you for sharing wisdom and experience with me, and also providing an environment in which many diverse ideas were explored, challenged and developed. A special note of thanks goes to Dr. Linda Dube, my niece Ella Wakatama Alfrey and my daughter Gladys for their assistance in other ways.

Appreciation is also extended to the staff and heads of the non-governmental organisations that work with street children for allowing me access to street children who attend their day centres. I am also greatly indebted to all the street children who participated in this study for sharing with me their personal stories of the social injustices that they have experienced in the streets.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the situation of street children in Zimbabwe with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). It examined the services that have been provided to meet street children's needs and safeguard their rights.

There is a dearth of literature focusing on street children in Zimbabwe. The available literature is descriptive; it contributes very little towards understanding of the problem and needs of street children. It does not provide a useful framework for formulating policy and designing interventions or practices with the children. Models being used by some non-governmental organizations derive mainly from studies conducted in Latin America and other developing countries like India, Kenya and South Africa.

This study draws, mainly on literature from Latin America and other studies outside of Zimbabwe. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from street children and service providers, using a triangulation of methods. Ethnography was particularly useful as it allowed the project to adopt a child-centered approach. Interviews and group discussions were conducted with service providers. Documents from non-governmental organizations helped to understand their work with the street children.

A breakdown of the extended family unit, poverty, HIV/AIDS, corruption and land reform have hindered the protection of children's rights as prescribed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Zimbabwe has no mechanisms in place to enforce them. Although a range of difficulties plague projects for street children, some projects have succeeded in improving the well-being of some street children.

Zimbabwe is violating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It should seriously and urgently consider re-deploying its '*welfare*' departments into '*development*' departments for it to realize the rights of street children.

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>pages</b>
<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Research questions	1
Who are these children?	2
Background of the study	11
The problem	15
Justification for the study	16
Structure of the study	19
 <b>Chapter two</b>	 <b>21</b>
<b>Historical and political context: an overview</b>	
Introduction	21
Physical setting	21
The people	21
White dominance	22
Unilateral declaration of independence	22
Black African Opposition	23
Lancaster House talks	24
Zimbabwe under Mugabe	25
Opposition parties	25
Central government	26
Local government	27
Traditional authorities	30
The economy	30
Demographics and social characteristics of children	31
Health	33

Education before independence	33
Education after independence	34
Child Welfare practice	37
Child Protection and Adoption Act (1989)	37
Child welfare programme	38
HIV/AIDS	39
Composition and functions of the child welfare forum	39
National orphan care policy	41
Strategies and interventions	44

## **Chapter three: 48**

### **Literature review**

Introduction	48
Literature search process	48
What is childhood?	49
Changing concepts in the literature: street children	53
Studies on street children	57
Historical background	64
Causes of the problem	68
Rapid urbanisation	68
Dysfunctional families	69
Poverty	70
The school system	71
Abuse and neglect	71
Inadequate housing	72
Their characteristics	74
Their numbers	74
Their health	75
Their mental health	77
Their sexual health	78

Drug misuse	79
Delinquency	80
Street girls	82
Coping strategies	85
Perceptions and reactions	87
Intervention strategies	92
Macro programmes: changing social attitudes	93
Micro programmes: Adapting to individual differences	94
The correctional/Institutionalisation model	95
The rehabilitation model	96
Street education	98
Child participation	99
Working together	100
Staffing issues	100
Symbolic Interactionism	102
Conclusion	103

## **Chapter four** **107**

### **Methodology**

Introduction	107
Purpose of the study	107
The approach	108
Gaining Access	110
Informed consent	112
Pilot study	112
The sample	113
Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods	115
Data generating techniques	116
Interviews	116
Observations	118

Group discussions	119
Case files	121
Content analysis	121
Methods of data analysis	122

## **Chapter five** **124**

### **Quantitative findings**

Introduction	124
Summary of findings	124
Their ages	124
Their categories	125
Family characteristics	126
Family homes	127
Children's nationalities	127
Their education	129
Health problems	130
Reasons for leaving home	131
Birth certificates	132
Reunification	132
Their survival	133
Economic activities	134
In conflict with the law	134
Problems faced by girls	135
Discussions	135
Conclusion	150



## **Chapter six**

### **Qualitative findings**

**154**

Related terms	154
Circumstances of street girls	157
Sleeping conditions	158
Knowledge of AIDS and STDs	159
Unprotected sex	160
Substance misuse	162
Reasons for being on the streets	163
Their stories	164
Leaving home	169
Conducting economic activities	171
The beggars	171
The vendors	173
The car minders	174
Attitudes of some motorists	176
Guarding commuter buses	178
Pimping	179
Working for the police	180
How they perceive their activities	182
Police harassment	185
Knowledge of their rights	186
Their expressed needs	187
Their recreation	188
How they are perceived	189
Status offenders	192
Policy	193
Reasons for rounding them up	194
Places of safety	198
Policy changes	200

Service providers	203
The Presbyterian Church	204
The Just Children Foundation	204
Thuthuka	205
Streets Ahead	207
The Bulawayo task force	213
Missions and visions	213

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

**215**

Introduction	215
Further research	233
Recommendations	234

## **References**

**238**

### **Tables**

#### **Chapter 2**

Socio-economic environment of children (Basic facts)	
Table 2.1	32

#### **Chapter Five**

Proportion of sample by age	
Table 5.2	124
The children by category	
Table 5.3	125
Family characteristics	
Table 5.4	126
Street children's family homes	
Table 5.5	127
Proportion of street children by nationality	
Table 5.6	127
Street children's education levels	
Table 5.7	129
Their health problems	
Table 5.8	130
Reasons for leaving home.	
Table 5.9	131
Birth certificates	
Table 5.10	132
Reunification with families	
Table 5.11	132

Sources of food Table 5.12	133
Economic activities Table 5.13	134
In conflict with the law Table 5.14	134
Problems faced by street girls Table 5.15	135
Services for street children Table 5.16	203

## **Illustrations**

### **Chapter One**

Related and collective terms of street children Figure 1.1	5
---	---

### **Chapter Two**

The government system in Zimbabwe Figure 1.2	29
---	----

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix One 253**

Interview schedule for street children

### **Appendix Two 262**

Interview schedule for service providers



# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

Children are important assets of any nation, they are the future citizens. The destiny of a country depends directly on how its children are nurtured to fulfill the requirements of its society (Bhargava 2003: 23).

This study adds knowledge and understanding to the current situation of street children in Zimbabwe and the services that have been put in place to assist them with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989.

The goal of the study was not specifically to test the veracity of the accounts that came from street children and key informants in Zimbabwe but, to understand the meaning of events, situations, and actions they were involved, with and of the testimonies that they gave of their lives and experiences in the streets. Following Swart, the main objective of the study was to find out how the children can be “categorised in relation to the society in a way which adequately reflects both their world views and relationships with the wider society” (Swart, 1988b: 60).

### **Research questions**

In order to achieve its overall aims the study asked the following research questions:

- ❖ Who are these children in Zimbabwe? (Their backgrounds, categories, families and communities).
- ❖ Why are they on the streets?
- ❖ How do they survive on the streets?
- ❖ What problems/risks do they face on the streets?
- ❖ What policies are in place in Zimbabwe for the rehabilitation of street children?
- ❖ What services are in place to help these children?
- ❖ What are their rights?
- ❖ Which of their rights are not being protected, and why are they not being protected?

### **Who are these children?**

Who are the real street children? The crucial point is that they all are. Are the street children free spirits, children and adolescents who have chosen to avoid familial strife, rules and other demands of everyday life? Are they adventurers, the courageous, who take the world for an idea, a fortune or for the simple hell of it? Are they the troubled who can't "cope", or the healthy in a bad family situation, or are they precocious youth, adult like who have outgrown their "stifling" lives? Are they in rebellion or in revolt? Are they pathological? Should we envy their seeming freedom? Should we cry at their obvious exhaustion? Who are these kids and what should be our response to them as individuals, small groups and as a population (Baizerman, 1989:12 in *The Who, Why and How of Street Children*, 1993).

The term “street children” was first used by Henry Mayhew in 1851 when he wrote his “London Labour and the London Poor,” although it only came into general use following the United Nations year of the child in 1979. Prior to this, street children were referred to as homeless, abandoned or runaways.

The most commonly used definition today comes from UNICEF (Lusk, 1989) and distinguishes two groups: “children on the streets,” and “children of the streets.” This distinction derived largely from experiences with street children in Latin America (Ennew, 1994). When researchers speak of children “on the streets” they are referring to those children who spend much of their time in the street environment, often working. Their focus in life is still the home. A few attend school, most return home at the end of each working day and still have a sense of belonging to the community in which their family home is situated. A large majority of them maintain some continuing relationship with their families (Swart-Kruger and Donald 1994; Muchinni, 1994).

These are the children whose family support-base has been increasingly weakened and, so must share responsibility for family survival by working on the city streets and market places. The home ceases to be the locus of education or socialization, play, and daily life. Family relationships may be deteriorating, but they certainly exist (Tacon, 1985 in Ennew, 1994). Many will send some of their spare income to their families. In some cases, they may not be permitted access to their house until an income quota has been met (Lusk et al., 1989).



Children “of the streets” are those for whom the streets have become a home; it is their primary environment for working, playing, sleeping and growing up. They are a much smaller in number, and are socialized outside the school and the family. They have a few conventional contacts with adults, and are often described as being positively adapted and entrepreneurial, despite their difficult conditions (Aptekar, 1988a).

Most authors define street children according to just two characteristics: presence in the street, and a lack of contact with the family.

Street children are those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word: i.e. unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults (Inter-NGO Programme, 1983 in Ennew1994:14).

The last part of this definition (protection, supervision or direction from responsible adult) appears to reflect society’s perception of a child as someone who must be within boundaries defined by adults. It might be possible that more and more parents are unable to adequately protect, supervise, direct or, indeed, provide for their children. This often results in children caring for themselves, or assuming parental roles.

The UNICEF definition which uses the degree of family contact to distinguish two categories of street children is limiting and, as such, less helpful to organizations

that work with street children. Project workers in other parts of the world have found it difficult to apply the UNICEF distinction. In a country like India, some children sleep on the pavements with families. “Where do such street children fit into the picture?” (Ennew, 1994:16)

Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) suggest that a pragmatic solution to the problem of identification is to ask the children themselves, as these children have some common terms which they use to describe themselves. For example, they call themselves “strollers” in Cape Town (Scharf et al., 1986); “Malalapipe” (those who sleep in storm water drains) in Johannesburg, South Africa (Swart, 1990); “Magunduru” (those who sleep anywhere) in Harare, Zimbabwe (Dube, 1999) and “Chokota” in Kenya (The Ford foundation Report, 1991) Figure1.1.

**Fig.1.1 “STREET CHILDREN”: RELATED AND COLLECTIVE TERMS**

**RELATED TERMS**

Truant	347BC	“avoiding the law like truant children” Plato, Republic (548)	
	13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	[Sturdy beggars and idle rogues]	
	15 <sup>th</sup> cent.	[Pupils absent from school without leave]	
	1708	‘A heedless troop of wanton boys...In idle pastime truanting the day (Boileau)	
Ragamuffin	1383	[A ragged, dirty, disreputable man or boy]	
	1581	...who care not how like slovens and ragamuffins they are’	
Urchin	1530	[a part mischievous, or roguish youngster; a brat]	
	1839	‘the gutter urchins’	
Runaway	1548	‘a runaway minor (Patten)	
	1851	Henry Mayhew talks of ‘runaway street-boys’ as distinct from his street children ‘. (1851 :463)	
	1861	‘20 of the elder girls ( some of them runaways), who have been restored to their home’ (Commons Report on the Education of Destitute Children 1861; 16)	
	1904	‘Orphans, deserted children, and runaways, who live by	

begging and stealing' (Montague 1904:47)  
Recent usage was marked by the U.S. Senate Runaway Youth Act.

Walf	1624 1857	[an un owned or neglected child] 'to gather up the waifs and strays that are bound in the byeways'
Black-guard	1683	'a sort of vicious, idle and masterless boys and rogues, Commonly called the BLACK-GUARD, with divers other lewd and loose fellows vagabonds, vagrants, and wandering men and women ( <u>in</u> Farmer 1965)
Street Arab	1848	Gutherie [a homeless vagrant (usu. a child) living in the streets]
Street-boy	1854	'I was a ragged street boy' Dickens [a homeless or neglected boy/ girl who lives chiefly on the streets]
Street girl	1904	
Gamin	1840	[a street Arab] orig. French

### **COLLECTIVE TERMS**

Ragged children	1844	coined by S.R. Stacey (RSU 1894:35)
Perishing and dangerous classes	1851	proposed by Marry Carpenter (1851:2)
Destitute and neglected	1861	House of Commons Select Committee Report
Morally abandoned	1889	French legislature
Substratum	1904	proposed by Huxley (Montague 1904:397)
Homeless children	1950	UNESCO (1950a)
Vagrant Children 'In need of care and attention'	1951	UNESCO (1951) 20 <sup>th</sup> century legislative euphemism

### **CONTEMPORARY WESTERN EUROPEAN TERMINOLOGIES: EXAMPLES**

L' enfance en marche'	France
Ninos caminando	Spain
Kinder in der Strasse	Germany
Gaiato	Portugal
Scugnizzo (spinning top)	Italy. Naples
Crusties	Britain, Bristol

### **CONTEMPORARY THIRD WORLD TERMINOLOGIES: EXAMPLES**

Poussins (chicks) and Moustique (mosquitoes)	Cameroons
Pajaro fruteri (fruit birds)	Peru
Gamin	Colombia
Saligoman (nasty gamin)	Rwanda
Moineaux (sparrows)	Zaire
Parking-boys	Nairobi
Malunde (person of the street)	Johannesburg
Malalapipe (those who sleep in the pipes)	Zulu, orig, circa 1950s (Swart 1988c.:232)
Sadak Chhap (stamp of the street)	India, Bombay

(Quotes and definitions are from The Oxford English Dictionary unless otherwise stated)

Source: Williams, C.: Street Children and Education: A Comparative Study of European and Third World Approaches (1999).

Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) point out that once the term used by the children has been discovered, children who do not know it or those who strongly refuse to be labeled with it, are unlikely to be street children. Glauser, (1990) who started a Street School in Asuncion in Latin America, claims that he had a lot of problems with the UNICEF definition, even though it was first formulated in South America. He admits that sometimes the distinction only worked at an instinctive level and on a day-to-day basis. It was difficult for him to distinguish two clear categories of street children. He asks how to categorize children who go home during the weekends and live in the streets during the weekdays, or those who only live on the streets in warm summer weather. Some children whom he thought of as “on the streets” actually stayed from home for long periods. Others “of the streets” may not be there continuously. It could be that they were in prison or in some institution and sometimes went home for a spell. Others were not “of the street,” but lived with an unrelated person rather than their families. He observed that child prostitutes and those running away from domestic services resorted to the streets, but they were not in either category. Thus, Glauser prefers the term “street children” as the generic term to refer to a group of children with special relationship to the street. This separates them from other children with a different kind of relationship with their families. He stresses the importance of unpacking the hidden assumptions in the way we use the words

“family “, “child”, “home” and “street” (Glauser, 1990:140).

Many family forms have existed and continue to exist. These are guided by a variety of principles as well as a variety of relations between parents, children husbands and wives. All family structures allow social life to continue. They also foster relationships with blood relatives and unrelated members of the community. In a small-scale or collective community, any member, related or unrelated, may give care to a child. Researchers and project workers working with street children normally refer to biological parents when they talk about the families of these children. However, the significant family reference point for these children may be not only the mother or the father; step parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents are, often, all capable and willing to provide a home for the child.

UNICEF’s distinction is based on the assumption that when children are secure in families, the home is the centre for play, culture and family life. This is a western middle-class conception of the family. It ignores the experience of family life in the shanty towns and highly populated slums where children spend most of their time on the streets. For most human history, socialization and family relations have taken place, to a very large extent, outside houses, and in urban areas, this means in the streets. In much of the world today, it is common to find children playing on the streets .These are not street children. The basic assumption hidden in the term “street” when used in the context of street children

is that it refers to the many open spaces in most cities. Such places include avenues, boulevards, shopping malls, railway stations and bus stations. These are all modern spaces where children are not expected to inhabit, or where nobody should sleep. Therefore, a street child is not just a child on any street but a child out of place, on thoroughfares that are intended for circulation of pedestrians and traffic (Ennew and Connolly, 1996).

It is generally agreed that one of the outstanding characteristics of street children is the diversity of their lives. (Aptekar, 1988a; Ennew and Connolly, 1996; Lucchini, 1996b). Being a street child corresponds neither to a clearly delimited social category nor to a perfectly homogenous psychological unity. This quote from *Summing Up* reveals this diversity:

Some are sent into the streets by their parents to help support their families. Some have no parents. Others have taken the momentous decision of leaving home because of parental abuse. Some live from petty crime: others earn an honest living in the informal sector. Some are abandoned. Others are simply lost and cannot find their parent (Summing Up, 1990:10 - 11).

I am inclined to agree with Pattison (Undated) who suggests that, instead of focusing exclusively on the degree of family contact, it may be more helpful to focus on the degree of vulnerability of the child. Underlying such a shift of focus would be the recognition that street children are only a part of a larger group of vulnerable urban children who are sometimes referred to as "children in

especially difficult circumstances” by UNICEF. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children (1990) refers to this larger group as disadvantaged children.

The number of children “of the street” is by far smaller than the number of children “on the streets”. If we continue to define children “on the streets” as street children, this may result in producing inappropriate interventions such as providing shelter to children who have a home to return to. Street children are not necessarily more vulnerable than the other groups of children (Pattison, Undated). Broadening the perspective to encompass the vulnerable urban child is advantageous because children are allowed to define themselves and their needs. It also provides NGOs and others who work with street children an appropriate focus for intervention. In other words, this broader perspective ensures that interventions are individualized.

In 1988, the Government of Brazil and UNICEF conducted a joint study which found that the majority of street children were neither homeless nor delinquent. They urged that this social problem should be redefined as one primarily of unprotected working children. As a result, social researchers in Brazil are now making efforts to steer the public and the media away from the blanket use of the term “street children” for all urban children working out in the open (Chatterjee, 1992:23). The term, street children, is used in this study to describe children who live and work on the streets.

## **Background of the study**

Since the 1980's the theme of children's rights has emerged globally, reflecting growing concerns about "the impact on children of dramatic economic and social change, and shifting perspectives on children and childhood" (Qvortrup et al., 1994, cited in Ruxton, 2001:65). As a result a number of concerned states in the United Nations resolved to draft the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) after a decade of international debate devoted to the meaning of children's rights. It was largely countries of the northern hemisphere, which participated in drafting this important document (Ennew, 1994). The United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted it on 20 November 1989, and has now been ratified by 191 countries. The Convention places children of the world squarely at the forefront of the worldwide movement for human rights and social justice. It seeks to alter the landscape for children by making explicit the vital roles to be played by those member states which are signatories, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, communities, parents and children themselves in realizing these rights (UNICEF, 2000). Furthermore, the convention does not only give directions to the practices of those that make and implement such laws, but it is also a guide to parents, the police and all those that work and have responsibility for the care of children. The Convention urges governments to educate the public, including children, about the principles of these rights.

Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child spell out the



rights of all children and these are seen as indivisible. They cover the fields of civil rights and liberties; family environment and alternative care; health, welfare, education and leisure. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child constitutes a comprehensive document; it combines economic, social and cultural rights with political and civil rights (Save the Children U.K., 2002).

This statement of children's rights gives these rights the force of international law and creates an atmosphere of freedom, dignity and justice. The Convention is not only a document expressing good intent, but also a kind of soft law and encourages nations to draw upon its principles in developing laws, policies and institutions which aim to promote children's rights. In 1990, for example, the member states of the Organization of African Unity drafted their own Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and since then some African countries have used it in conjunction with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In September 1990, after the adoption of the Convention by the United General Assembly, Heads of States and governments, including President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, gathered at the World Summit for Children in New York City to endorse this treaty. It was at this Summit that these world leaders and others also made a joint commitment and came up with an ambitious plan to achieve twenty-seven goals by the closing decade of the 20th century. Seven of these goals were considered to be major, and to be accomplished by the year 2000. The seventh major goal seeks to improve the protection of children in

especially difficult circumstances. (CEDCs) A supporting goal requires member states to also tackle the root causes leading to such situations. Many countries have subsequently articulated in policy form National Programmes of Action (N P As) so as to reach these goals (Maggie, 1993). The participating world leaders stated:

The well-being of children requires political action at the highest level. We are determined to take that action. We are ourselves making a solemn commitment to give priority to the rights of children (UNCEF, 2000:16).

By ratifying the U N Convention the government of Zimbabwe signified its intention to comply with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and agreed to be bound by it. Thus, it is required to report to a United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on progress towards implementation, initially within two years and subsequently every five years. The first report to the Geneva Committee monitoring the implementation of the CRC was submitted in early 1996, the second is still pending and long overdue (Makamure and Muzuva, 2000).

The report of the U N Secretary General entitled “We the Children” shows that some member states have made significant progress towards meeting the goals set by the Convention. It admits, however, that these achievements and gains have not been even. The report reveals that a brighter future for all children has proved elusive, that overall gains have fallen short of national obligation and international commitments. It points out that there are many hurdles which still

remain to be overcome, mainly in developing countries where there has been a lack of political action and political will to pass supportive legislation that will guarantee the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances (UNCEF, 2000).

Although the government of Zimbabwe has ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, passed supportive legislation to protect children, and committed itself and civic groups to put children in the forefront of development issues, no major improvements in the welfare of children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDCs) have been noticed.

According to Makamure and Muzuva (2000) these children need a comprehensive response. The numbers of children in difficult circumstances, whether they are from AIDS-affected families or households that are unable to cope with economic hardships from multiple sources, or in post-conflict countries or refugee camps, constitute an enormous challenge for Africa in terms of preventing an irreversible and quantum loss in human resources and potential. Makamure and Muzuva propose that this group and their families constitute the first priority group for social protection.

This is not to say that it is only the developing countries that have failed to protect this category of children. Some Western states have established a range of human rights instruments aimed at promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the child, but one still finds that the existence and rights of homeless children have not been publicly recognized. As Ruxton (1996) has observed, there is a

lack of awareness of the existing legal instruments at all levels and limited political interest, owing to the weak social position of children.

Zimbabwe is among those member states which have reneged on their obligation to uphold the rights of children in especially difficult circumstances. There is a lack of political action and political will to put in place and enforce legislation that will guarantee the protection of these vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The circumstances of these children, wherever they are found, highlight the relevance that the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child has for children.

### **The problem**

Along with the general concern for the rights and welfare of children is another growing international concern about the increasing number of street and working children in both developed and developing countries. Concern about these children and the broader category of children in especially difficult Circumstances (CEDCs) was particularly highlighted by UNICEF in the 1980s. Peter Tacon, (1985) pioneered advocacy within UNICEF on behalf of street children in Latin America and in Namibia. He expressed professional concern regarding the growing numbers of children surviving on the streets, in socially, psychologically and physically damaging environments.

The problem of street children is a global problem and is not unique to one nation or one continent.

The spectacle of children on the street plying variety legal-and-not-so legal trades has recently gained worldwide attention. In many cities of Latin America, Africa and Asia, their presence is ubiquitous (Black 1993:7).

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights has estimated that by the end of this century there will be almost 250 million more urban children in the five to 19 year old range cohort than there were in the mid 1980's, and that more than 90% of these will be living in developing nations. It is likely that many of these children will live on the streets.

The issue of street children in Zimbabwe started in the late 1980s after the country regained its independence. It was the boys who were largely seen roaming the streets but in the late 90s, and in the early 2000s girls became more visible in the streets. The problem has continued to grow, raising concern amongst international organizations, community leaders, professionals, the business sector and the government.

### **Justification for the study**

There is therefore a need for studies to continue debating and highlighting the critical issues surrounding the phenomenon of street children in Zimbabwe. In the year 1995 the director of social services in the department of Welfare Social Services admitted that there was a break down of the child-care system in Zimbabwe. Too little was known about their families and community backgrounds and that it was not clear to what extent the phenomenon of street children

manifested itself in Zimbabwe. At a conference on street children that was held in 1995 at the University of Zimbabwe, it was pointed out that the term “street children” did not exist in the legal provisions for children in Zimbabwe. This perception shows clearly that the government of Zimbabwe has not truly recognized the existence of the phenomenon of street children, let alone their needs and rights. Put plainly there has not been a genuine attempt or desire on the part of the Zimbabwean government and society at large to define who these children are. There have, however, been a few studies which have approached the issue from the children’s perspectives. Some of these studies have also not examined the communities from which the children come. There is still a need for research that moves beyond the descriptive level (Dube, 1999).

The fourth Innocent Global Seminar on Working and Street Children was held in Florence in 1993. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) invited 34 representatives from international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments to participate in that conference. It was recommended that there was a need to develop research that will contribute to development of policy programmes and services for street children.

To be practically helpful, such research must be a collaborative venture. Researchers must disseminate their findings not just among other researchers elsewhere, but, rather, as widely as possible. Additionally, they must assume a responsibility for defining a collaborative role with policy-makers and program

administrators.

Black (1993: 26) has suggested that:

An analysis of the situation of street children should be seen as an on going activity. It must never be regarded as finished business and set aside but should be regarded as a set of dynamic informational parameters requiring revision as programmes advanced.

This reinforces the need to continue debating and highlighting the critical issues surrounding the phenomenon of street children in Zimbabwe. Other developing countries, such as Brazil, Columbia, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Kenya, and South Africa have started to develop new models of intervention which are based on accepted theories that have been developed to assist in dealing with this social problem. Understanding these theories and models and learning from those who have addressed the problem will help us to rethink and further develop knowledge to better inform policy-makers, resource holders and practitioners in their efforts to create a safer, healthier and more congenial social, physical and moral environment for all children in Zimbabwe.

All of us are at a laboratory stage to our approach to the street children problem. We need to listen to one another, exchange experiences and critically evaluate our approaches ready to change if necessary (Dallape, 1987: 16).

The present study accepts Black's (1993) and Dallape's (1987) counsel. It is an analysis and synthesis of the author's own data and published and unpublished research and reports on the phenomenon of street children in Zimbabwe. The study attempted to bridge gaps in our knowledge of and practice with street children empirically, through field-work.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The general aims and the questions which it explored are stated in chapter one. This chapter provides and discusses also definitions of street children. The implications of the definitions are discussed.

In chapter two, I look at the political history of Zimbabwe and discuss the current political system of the country. Issues pertaining to the socio-economic situation of the country are also discussed. Some information on the child welfare system in Zimbabwe is then presented.

Chapter three reviews the international literature on street children. Much of the literature relates to street children in Latin America. This chapter also briefly explores the problem of street children in Zimbabwe and places it in the context of the historical development of the country. Models of intervention and strategies currently being used in Latin America and other developing countries are also discussed.



In chapter four, I describe the general approach that I used to collect data. Issues pertaining to sampling, gaining access, consent and confidentiality are dealt with here, so are methodological issues. Analyses of both the quantitative data and the qualitative data are given. The two sets of data which were generated by this study are presented in chapter five and six. Chapter seven presents the conclusion and recommendations.

## **Chapter two**

### **Zimbabwe: Historical and political context-an overview**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter looks at the political history of Zimbabwe and provides information on the current political and socio-economic situation. It also considers some of the policies on the education and welfare of children in Zimbabwe.

#### **Physical setting**

The country is land locked in Southern Africa and covers 390,580 square kilometres land. Zimbabwe borders with the republic of South Africa to the south, Mozambique to the east, Zambia to the northwest, and Botswana to the southwest. About one-half retains patch tree cover on grazing land. Less than one-tenth of the area is under closed canopy forest or plantation. About 33.3 million hectares of Zimbabwe's surface area can be used for grazing purposes. The remaining 6 million hectares have been reserved for national parks, wild life reserves, and urban settlements.

#### **The people**

About 2,000 years ago, Iron Age Bantu speaking peoples started immigrating into this area. Among them were the ancestors of the Shona (or Mashona) who today account for about 80% of the country's population. This Shona speaking state established trade ties with Muslim Merchants on the Indian Ocean coast

around the early tenth century. The state traded in ivory, gold and copper for cloth, glass and guns. It ceased to be the leading Shona state when it was conquered by the disciplined armies of another Bantu people, the Ndebele (or Matebele) who were led by Lobengula, the Ndebele king, who settled in Matabeleland. Today, the Matabele make up 18% of the population of the country. According to the United Nations World Health Organization, the life expectancy for men is 37 years and the life expectancy for women is 34 years of age, the lowest in 2006 (World Health Organization Report, 2006, in the Herald February 2007).

### **White dominance**

In 1889, the British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes led the British South African Company, which conquered the territory and promoted the colonisation of the region and its land, labour, and mineral resources. The whole region was named Southern Rhodesia in honour of Cecil John Rhodes. In 1896 the Shona and the Ndebele staged unsuccessful revolts against the white colonialists' encroachment on their native lands. Although Southern Rhodesia was a British colony, from the outset, in practice it was a quasi-dominion enjoying virtual self-government by its white minority.

### **Unilateral declaration of independence (UDI)**

As African majority governments assumed control in neighbouring Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the extreme white minority government, led by Ian

Douglas Smith supported by South Africa declared unilateral independence in 1965. The Smith Government declared a state of emergency in 1965. In order to firmly establish the unilateral declaration of Independence (UDI), laws that allowed for detention without trial, banned meetings and curtailed political activity were enacted (Human Development Report, 1998). In 1969 Rhodesia declared itself a republic and adopted a new constitution with a white majority representation in a two-chamber legislature.

The then British Government called the declaration an act of rebellion, against the crown. It responded by imposing bilateral economic sanctions and sponsored mandatory economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations in 1966. The British Government hoped that it had adopted enough measures, which would bring about a return to constitutional government, but they did not. Instead they strengthened economic and political relationships between the Rhodesian government and the Apartheid South African Government. Although the United Kingdom called the declaration an act of rebellion, against the crown, it never re-established control by force. "Harold Wilson's Labour Government, refused to intervene against kith and kin" (Thomas, 2001).

### **Black African opposition**

The major challenge to white rule came from the two dominant African nationalist parties, the Zimbabwe African Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). After limited guerrilla campaigns in the 1970s, the war gathered

momentum after 1972. They began to organise guerrilla activities outside the country. Many young persons who were abducted by the African Nationalists from secondary schools and villages in the country were among those who fought against the Rhodesian security forces. The liberation war displaced many families. They abandoned their rural homes and headed for the urban areas in search of safety.

### **Lancaster house talks**

There was a series of failed negotiations between the Rhodesian government, the British government and the African Nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s. But an increasing array of economic problems facing the Rhodesian economy, coupled with the changing Southern African political environment in the late 1970s, led to a British sponsored settlement talks at Lancaster House in 1979. The Lancaster House (London) Conference of 1979 laid down the British terms for the legal independence of Rhodesia. According to Thomas, (2001) some of these terms crippled the early years of the independence of Zimbabwe. He states:

For the future majority (black) government the most crippling of these terms was that all white farmers who so wished were entitled to hold onto their monstrous estates (averaging 5-10 square miles), at least for ten years. British aid was available for voluntary sales only: the so-called “willing seller, willing buyer principle. “In fact the deal further punished the oppressed, and rewarded racism and exploitation. The terms were only accepted by the guerrilla leaders, Mugabe and Nkomo, with private

assurances from British officials that after the expiration of the agreement, funds for land reform would be adequate and unconditional. The assurances being private have been quietly forgotten (Thomas, 2000:10).

### **Zimbabwe under Mugabe**

In February 1980, The Zimbabwe African Union (ZANU), led by Robert Mugabe, won a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections which were conducted by the British Government. Robert Mugabe has been the president of Zimbabwe since then. As a matter of law Zimbabwe is a democratically governed independent nation with other different parties being able to contest elected positions at the national level. In practice, however, Zimbabwe resembles a one party-state, as the ruling party has never experienced significant losses at the polls, but there are signs that this may be changing.

### **Opposition parties**

Opposition parties in Zimbabwe have been too small, weak and divided to be effective in parliament or to challenge the ruling party at the polls. Their political agenda have tended to be vague or indistinguishable from the agenda of ZANU-PF. As state funding for political parties is tied to electoral success, only ZANU-PF has been receiving the state funding. Nonetheless, a few political parties have acquired momentum at various times and around various issues, though none have been able to sustain this momentum for any extended period. In 1999, a new party came into being. It is the Movement for Democratic Change

(MDC) with Mr Morgan Tsvangirayi as its president. The MDC is the only party that has ever posed serious challenge to the ruling party (ZANU PF). President Robert Mugabe's government started to become unpopular on the grounds of human rights abuses and the steady collapse of the economy, resulting in job losses, food shortages and growing poverty. Shaw (2003:76) comments on this state of affairs:

By 1999, Mugabe and his party were faced with escalating unpopularity, a seriously deteriorating economic situation and rising political opposition, all of which came to a head when voters rejected a new, government sponsored constitution in a February 2000 referendum.

In June 2000, parliamentary elections were held in Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF narrowly fought off a challenge from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

### **Central government**

Zimbabwe is a unitary state governed by a unicameral (with a single legislative chamber) parliament that has the power to make, amend and repeal legislation. Members of the executive branch introduce all bills. There are 150 members in the house of assembly. Of these, 120 are elected members representing geographical constituencies and 30 are appointed by the President 12 directly, 10 as traditional chiefs, and 8 as provincial governors sitting ex-officio. There has been an increase in female parliamentarians with every election but it remains

low. The President heads the Executive Branch, and is also head of State. He is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. He is elected directly. The work of the President, his cabinet, and the various ministries is to implement the laws promulgated by the legislature.

The judiciary has the role of adjudicating legal disputes, including disputes about the interpretation of legislative acts. The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal in civil and criminal matters as well as the court of first instance in constitutional matters. The High Court, also an appellate court, deals *inter alia*, with the guardianship of minors, the dissolution of marriages solemnised under the Marriage Act, and the dispositions of estates. The Magistrates' Court has jurisdiction over family matters and juvenile Courts operating at Magistrates level have jurisdiction over juvenile justice. The chiefs' courts exist alongside common law courts, resulting in a duality of judgements and legal traditions and the need to press for protections on two fronts. In customary law the chiefs and headmen who adjudicate matters are virtually all men (UNICEF, 1999).

### **Local government**

Though it is a unitary state, the country is administratively divided into eight provinces. A Provincial Governor, who is appointed by the President and sits ex-officio as a Member of Parliament, and whose responsibilities include chairing the Provincial Council (PC), heads each province. Their role is promoting the central activities of the various ministries in the province, co-ordinating the



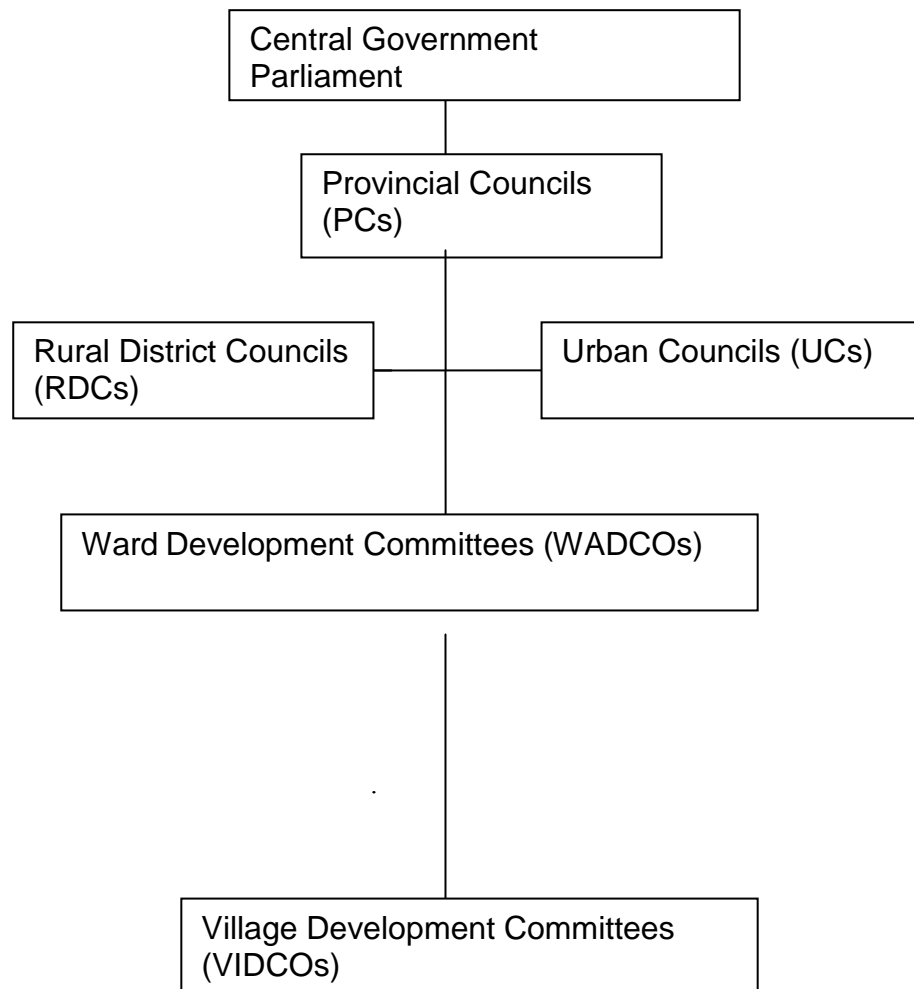
preparation of development plans, and monitoring their implementation. Harare, the capital, and Bulawayo, the second largest city, are also considered provinces, but they are administered like urban local authorities.

Rural district councils and urban councils are the most important levels of government for implementing development programmes in Zimbabwe. There are 57 rural districts which are further subdivided into wards. The wards are themselves subdivided into villages. Since 1996, Zimbabwe has moved towards decentralising government activities to the rural councils. Two different kinds of decentralisation are possible. One involves merely deconcentrating ministerial staff in Harare by devolving their responsibilities to ministry staff in the field. The other involves sharing ministerial powers with local authorities that have their own identities and priorities. In this model, local councils would become responsible for schools and health facilities, as well controlling revenues and expenditures in those areas.

At present, rural district councils co-ordinate development projects through Rural District Development Committees (RDDCs). Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) operate below the RDDCs as agents of development and administration. The heads of the development committees are democratically elected, with head of the VIDCO representing the village at the ward level, while the head of the WADCO represents the ward at the district level, sitting ex-officio on the RDDC. On both

WADCOS and VIDCOS at least one of the seven members must be a woman.

**Figure 2.2: The government system in Zimbabwe**



Source Growing: Up in Zimbabwe UNICEF, 1999

## **Traditional authorities**

In Zimbabwe, chief's councils, chief's headmen and kraal heads constitute traditional authority. They exist as parallel self-standing structures in tension with modern structures or as co-opted or partially integrated structures. In many areas, traditional authorities continue to command great respect. They can therefore play a central role in determining the success or failure of community-based interventions. Where chief and kraal head headed committees work closely with the Village Community Workers and include representation from relevant ministries project success is generally more likely.

## **The economy**

The economy of Zimbabwe rests principally on the agricultural, mining and manufacturing sectors. Overall, agriculture provides 60% of all raw materials for industry. Also, it provides employment for some 70% of the population.

A report by the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP, 1998) states that in the 1980's post-independent Zimbabwe briefly enjoyed a period of real economic growth, with GDP increasing at the rate of 4% per annum, and the population increasing at about 3.1% per annum. This was not maintained, as post independence government policies curbed growth. UNICEF also pointed this out:

The immediate economic outlook for Zimbabwe does not appear to be good. Exogenous factors are likely to remain unfavourable for some years

to come. At the same time, political unrest continues to block needed reform. Government commitment to macroeconomic adjustment has faltered, and progress on outstanding matters such as land reform, popular participation, and improved political transparency continues to be elusive (UNICEF, 1999: 86).

### **Demographic and social characteristics of children**

The 1997 Inter Censual Demographic Survey estimated the number of children aged 5-17 at 4.44 million. More than three quarters (79%) of Zimbabwean children lived in the rural areas. In terms of sex ratio, while female in the urban areas outnumbered the males in all age cohorts, the reverse was true in the rural areas where males proportionally dominated at about 51%. Overall, slightly above three quarters (79%) of the children (5-17) were reported to be attending school. Twenty percent (20%) of children were not attending school and less than 1% was in part time school. In all the provinces, the percentage of male children in full time education ranged from 74% to 87%. Also in all the provinces the percentage of male children in part time school was less than 2%. Overall 16% of the male children were not attending school. The percentage of male children varied from 74 percent to 83 percent. Similarly to the male children the percentage of female children in part time education was less than 2 percent for all the provinces. Out of the total female children 17 percent were not attending school (Zimbabwe National Child Labour Survey Country Report, 1999). Table 2.1 provides some basic socioeconomic facts on children in the country in 1999.

**Table 2.1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT (BASIC FACTS)**

INDICATOR	VALUE	YEAR	SOURCE
Population classified as poor (below total food poverty line)	62%	1995	PASS/MoPSLSW
Estimated HIV prevalence rate among adults	9%	1990	NACP/MoHCW
Children who will have lost one or both parents by 2005	910,000	1998 estimate	NACP/MoHCW
Public expenditure on health as a % of GoZ expenditure	5.5%	1995	GoZ Budget estimate
Public expenditure on educations a 5% GoZ expenditure	10%	1996/1997	EIU

**MARTENAL AND CHILD HEALTH, AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Maternal mortality rate	283	1994	SDHS
Births with skilled assistance	51%	1996	MoHCW
Infant mortality rate	80	1998	ICDS
Low birth weigh (under 2.5kg)	11%	1994	DHS
Severe – moderate under weight, 0-3 years	14%	1988	DHS
Children 12- 23 months not immunised	20%	1994	DHS
Estimated % children born HIV- infected	9%	1997	Based on NACP data
Girls aged 19 with children or pregnant	44%	1994	DHS
Households with access to safe sanitation	32%	1998	National Sanitation
Households with access to safe water (rural)	79%	1998	National Sanitation

**EDUCATION AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Net primary school environment rate	86%	1997	MoPSLSW
Primary school completion rates	75%	1996	MoESC
Adult female literacy rate: 30-44 year olds	71%	1992	GoZ Census-CSO

Source: UNICEF, Growing Up in Zimbabwe, 1999:18

## **Health**

### *Infant Mortality*

During the first decade after independence Zimbabwe's mortality rates improved but worsened since the early 1990s. The estimated infant mortality rate (IMR) from the 1997 Inter-censual Demographic Survey (ICDS) was:

- 82 male deaths per 1000 male births
- 78 female deaths per 1000 female births

The survey report concluded that the rates were declining since the 1980s as a result of the expansion of public health programmes and improvements in both formal and public health education, the increasing trend of the 1990s is due to the high incidence and prevalence of HIV/AIDS, especially among pregnant mothers, and the rising costs of living and health care (Zimbabwe Inter-censual Report, 1997 in Makamure and Muzuva, 2000).

## **Education before independence**

During the colonial era there were two education ministries: one was for White students and the other one was for Black students. The European ministry of education (for White students) was heavily funded while the ministry of African education got very little state funding. The system had bottlenecks because a few Africans proceeded to secondary education, let alone to University. The education for the native majority was left to religious missions, whose brief was to provide skills compatible with the labour needs of the colonial economy. Hence,

imparting low level skills became standard practice; farming carpentry, brick-making, road making and domestic skills such as washing, ironing, sewing and house work was the core of native education for many years. The colonial Government's involvement in African education only began in 1920 (UNICEF, 1999).

### **Education after independence**

After Independence the Government of Zimbabwe promulgated the Education Act (1987). Derived from the Act, a number of statutory instruments have been enacted giving guidelines to improve access to education. These are summarised below.

#### *Improving access to education*

The Zimbabwean Government has strengthened partnerships with local authorities, parents, bilateral and multilateral partners in order to achieve this goal.

- Automatic promotion at both primary and secondary schools was introduced.
- Government pays salaries for all teachers on the authorised establishment.
- A tuition grant (per capita grant) is paid for each child at both primary and secondary schools.

### *Equitable development*

- Rural schools are generally given priority in terms of per capita grants, learning and teaching materials, infrastructure and assistance with furniture.
- The girl child is encouraged to attend school.
- Special attention must be given to those children with special needs.

There was a massive expansion of both formal and non-formal education soon after independence in 1980. The government spent the largest allocation of the budget on education. At independence, one of the Zimbabwean Government's main tasks was to eradicate the racial segregation which was set up by the minority white government. The Government of Zimbabwe adopted the principle of education as a fundamental human right. Primary school fees were abolished, which helped to increase the number of pupils in schools. The increased numbers of pupils in schools were accommodated in a number of ways. Many new schools were built, often in previously unserved areas, and existing schools were expanded. Less favourable teacher-pupil ratios were allowed and a large number of unqualified teachers were hired. Several expatriate teachers were also hired. Enrolment expanded from 1 236 694 pupils in 1980 to 2 120 565 in 1990. The number of primary school teachers rose from 18 483 in 1979 to 60 886 by 1990 and the number of primary schools increased by almost 50% over the 1980s, from 3 161 in 1980 to 4 565 in 1990. The gross primary school enrolment rate exceeded 100% by 1990 (UNICEF, 1994:90).



The provision of virtually universal access to primary education in Zimbabwe and the expansion of secondary education were tremendous achievements, but they came at a cost. The cost was a higher pupil-teacher ratio, "hot-sitting", a high number of untrained teachers, lower average availability of teaching and learning materials, and a decline in the quality of education. The expansion of real expenditure on education especially primary education was not sustained after the start of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990. "The first decade witnessed a massive expansion of the education system as an endeavour to improve access and participation. However, since 1992, following the introduction of ESAP, there has been a progressively sharp decline in the rate of literacy" (The Zimbabwe Standard, 6-12 February, 2000).

In an effort to re-finance the education sector, school fees were re-introduced in 1992 for all urban primary schools and secondary schools. Fees did not apply to rural primary schools. However, all schools, even those in the rural areas which did not charge fees, had other forms of charges, usually called a levy or building fund. There were other costs as well, such as uniforms and books. Even in rural areas where there were no fees, parents were finding it difficult to send their children to school. The cost of education to the household was thus considerable and it is believed that this factor accounts for the large number of children who are out of school. A survey conducted by the Inter-Ministerial Committee found out that 85% of the children were out of school due lack of money for school fees (Inter-Ministerial Committee, 1993b in UNICEF, 1994).

### **Child welfare practice**

Early child welfare agencies in the past (in the era of Southern Rhodesian Government) mainly focused on juvenile delinquency. Actual child welfare services were first provided by voluntary organizations such as the Women's Guild. The current Children's Act is based upon the Children's Act of the United Kingdom and South Africa. However, its implementation varies from place to place and this why countries were requesting the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Makamure and Muzuva, 2000).

Monitoring and coordination of social policy relating to child care and protection is not the responsibility of one ministry. Rather, it has been assigned to the Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health. It is the duty of these Ministries to see that all children in the country have a right to be protected. This responsibility is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), both of which the Government of Zimbabwe is a signatory.

### **Child Protection and Adoption Act (1989)**

Under the Children's protection and Adoption Act the Government of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (Department of Welfare), has the statutory responsibility to care for and protect children in the country. This Act provides for the care and protection of all the children. It gives

the Ministry of public service, the Department of Social Welfare, a statutory responsibility to implement and oversee the care and protection of children in general, and Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances in particular. The officers of the Department of Social Welfare and the police are in addition appointed as probation officers in terms of section 46 of the Children's Protection and Adoption Act. The probation officers and the police officers are designated by this Act as court officials as well as giving them the authority and responsibility to remove children from suspected situations of risk to places of safety.

### **Child welfare programme**

In order to fulfil these obligations the Department of Social Welfare has a child welfare programme whose objectives are as follows:

- To monitor the situation of all children in the country and target those who fall through the formal and informal traditional (Government and NGO provided) safety nets.
- To put in place a framework and standard of care and protection for all children and ensure that the quality of and quantity of such care and protection is maintained.
- To review child related legislation to ensure relevance of the instruments.
- To register all child centred organizations, monitor and coordinate their activities.
- To work in cooperation with all international organizations to provide

appropriate care and protection of the Zimbabwean child in and outside Zimbabwe.

## **HIV/AIDS**

The Zimbabwean society is going through a drastic demographic change as a result of its high HIV infection rates. The advent of HIV/AIDS heralded a massive increase of children needing state assistance. Towards the end of 1980, the numbers of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances began to grow. Many of these children were orphans who had lost their parents to HIV/AIDS (Makamure and Muzuva, 2000). Realising that the Children's Adoption Act did not adequately cover these children, it was deemed necessary to amend the Act in order to address the needs of these children. These led to the establishment of the Child Welfare Forum. The Child Welfare Forum is a body composed of both government ministries and nongovernmental organisations.

## **Composition and functions of the child welfare forum**

The Child Welfare Forum is constituted in the following manner: -

### *National Level*

At the national level members are drawn from various government ministries, International Private Organisations, Private Voluntary Organisations with a local profile, and Representatives from religious groupings.

### *Provincial Level*

At the provincial level members are drawn from the government departments as mentioned in the National Forum. Representatives of Local Authorities and religious groupings also attend meetings of the Provincial Child Welfare Forum.

### *District Level*

At the district level members are drawn from all child related government departments, local authorities, rural districts councils and religious representatives. Non-governmental organisations working in the district are also represented at the district level.

### *Village Level*

At the village level members are elected from the community. Government Village Community Workers, Councillors and representatives of local churches are members of the forum at the village level. Representatives of Non-governmental Organisations' workers in the area also attend meetings of the forum at this level.

The Child Welfare Forum's duty is to monitor the circumstances of children countrywide in order to identify those children who have been orphaned or abused. Monitoring is to be done at all levels. The Forum acts as a platform for networking and cooperation. Emphasis is placed on collaboration rather than competition. Adequate sharing of information among members is strongly

encouraged. Service provision is to be appropriately rationalised and such services must share any resources that are available. It attempts to ensure that those organisations which are providing services to children have received adequate training to reorient them towards orphan care and child protection issues. The forum in consultation and partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe must carry out research to update its information on the situation of orphans and other children in difficult circumstances in the country.

### **National orphan care policy**

The national orphan policy attempts to ensure that orphans are accorded all their rights as prescribed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The purpose of this policy is to promulgate a package of basic care and protection for orphans. This is an important measure, given the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the consequential high incident of orphan-hood.

Therefore the specific objectives of this policy are:-

- ❖ To reorient activities and all other development partners including the Child Welfare Forum to address the particular needs of children.
- ❖ To support existing family and community based coping mechanisms in the area of orphan care.
- ❖ To mobilise, motivate sensitise all communities in Zimbabwe to develop orphan support strategies and interventions.

- ❖ To promote the ability of orphans to access public and private resources.
- ❖ To promote research into the issues pertaining to children and ensure that appropriate training on orphan friendly strategies are provided to service providers.
- ❖ To promote the inclusion of orphans in all activities by children or for children particularly in the area of health care and education.
- ❖ To provide legal assistance and support whenever appropriate and necessary.
- ❖ To provide awareness on children's rights to all sectors of the Zimbabwean society. Particular emphasis will be placed on the rights of orphans.
- ❖ To promote the protection of orphans from abuse, neglect, sexual and economic exploitation.

The basic principles that guide this policy are:

1. The best interests of the child-Article 3 (UNCRC).Article 1V African Charter). This policy is based on the belief that in all matters pertaining to orphans, the best interest of the particular child shall prevail.
2. Survival and Development-Article 6 (UNCRC). Article V (African Charter). Every child has the right to life and by ratifying UNCRC/ACRWC the government of Zimbabwe endorsed its obligation to ensure the survival and development of all orphans.

3. Name, Nationality and Identity-Article 5 (UNCRC) Article 6 and Article XV111 (ACRWC). Every child has a right to feel the pride of being identified as a particular person by name, family and even nationality. Zimbabwe is therefore obliged to facilitate the acquisition of birth certificates by orphans. The government of Zimbabwe is also obliged to the child; in this case, the orphan maintains contact with his extended family, and original community. The Zimbabwean government recognises that the nuclear family is the unit that normally fulfils most of a child's needs and rights. In the case of an orphan if the nuclear family is disrupted the next best placement must therefore be sought which resembles the family unit as close as possible.
- 4 Participation-Article 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 (UNCRC) Articles V11, V111 (ACRWC). Orphans must be allowed where possible to express their opinions about issues pertaining to themselves and they must be given the opportunity to associate with others.
- 5 Protection of a child without a family-Article 20 (UNCRC).The Government of Zimbabwe as a state party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child agreed to provide "special protection for a child deprived of the environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is available in such cases." The government is obliged to take particular



consideration of the child's cultural background. To this end the government in drafting this policy took serious consideration of researches carried out to establish the situation of orphans in the country.

### **Strategies and interventions**

In accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the general tradition of the Zimbabwean populace, the Government of Zimbabwe put in place a six-tier safety net system for orphans as follows:

#### *Biological Nuclear Family*

Every child has a right to remain in his biological nuclear family for protection and care. When this mode is disrupted by way of death of parents the next best mode of care will be preferred.

#### *The extended family*

Where possible and appropriate when both parents die the extended family will be encouraged to take up the care and protection of the orphaned children.

#### *Community Care*

When both the nuclear and extended families are not available to care for their children, the community within which the children live will be called upon to

provide care and protection. The community will put in place adult (s) to take up the role of guardian(s) for the children. The children will remain in their community. The village and the chief's Child Welfare forum will monitor their situation and accord them appropriate care and protection with support from government and the child welfare forum in the form of capacity building and monitoring.

#### *Formal Foster Care*

Where the first three fail, children may be placed in formal foster care with government taking a more active role to ensure their proper care and protection.

#### *Adoption*

Children may be placed on adoption where appropriate.

#### *Institutional Care*

Orphans may be placed in institutional care as a last resort. Even then family type institution should be preferred to the dormitory type. Government together with the child welfare forum will engage in awareness workshops at all levels of society to promote the care and protection of children especially orphans.

Government officials at local level will be encouraged to assist child welfare fora at all levels.

#### *Their education*

The government of Zimbabwe will provide tuition and where necessary boarding fees to facilitate their education. The Child Welfare Forum, at the local level will take on those roles that were performed by indigent parents before their deaths. These include provision of uniforms where possible, provision of building and other non-tuition fees and stationery.

### *Their health*

The Child Welfare Forum at the village and chiefs' levels monitors health of all orphans. When an orphan needs medical attention, this forum will refer the child to their nearest health centre for treatment. The Government of Zimbabwe and the Child Welfare Forum from district level to national level will empower the village and the chief's Child Welfare Forum to do this through adequate information dissemination and resource mobilisation.

While efforts by government through the Department of Social Welfare have been commendable, the strategies and interventions however have not been effective due to lack of supporting budgetary allocations, as well as due to lack of appropriate implementation mechanisms. The child welfare service is poorly funded and the Social Welfare Office is inadequately staffed. Often welfare officers are overworked since there are no job specifications and one has to do everything (Makamure and Muzuva, 2000).

This chapter attempted to put the study in context by giving some socio-

economic information on Zimbabwe. Policies regarding the education and welfare of the children have been provided. Guidelines on how the government intends to deal with the growing problem of HIV/AIDS orphans have also been looked at.

# **Chapter three**

## **Review of the literature**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will critique studies on street children in Africa and South America. Literature on the situation of street children in South America and other developing countries is reviewed. The chapter goes on to discuss models of interventions and strategies currently being used to address this growing problem in the contemporary societies throughout the world. It examines the circumstances of these children and models/programmes used to deal with this problem in various countries across the world in so called developing countries such as India, South America, especially Brazil, and Africa.

### **Literature search process**

Besides the University of Leicester Library catalogue and other facilities, the following data bases were searched: ASSIA, Scopus, Social Science Citation Index, Sociological Abstracts and the Web Search engine, Google Scholar. Searching these sources yielded a large amount of relevant published studies, reviews and reports from across the world. However, the literature on street children in African countries was scant compared to such countries as Brazil and India. Using the internet, I also gathered a wealth of information, and access to material produced by national and international organizations working in the field of child protection, including Save the Children (UK), Save the Children

(Norway), Consortium of Street Children (UK), the Children's Society (UK), UNICEF, World Health Organization, International Labour organization, Child Watch International and the Anti-Slavery International. These on-line bibliographies provided a useful springboard for further research.

Full summary articles and abstracts were found in various electronic journals such as Anthropology Today, Child Abuse and Neglect, Child, International Social Work, and the Journal of Southern African Studies. These, I accessed through databases such as IGENA, BIDS, SOSIA, World Cat, ASSIA and the ISWS. The internet allowed me to travel the globe in my search for published and unpublished material. One of the lessons I learned from this activity is that a search, using the Internet needs to be systematic and managed carefully. It requires that you keep an eye on the quality of information which you are accessing (Blaxter, et al 2001).

### **What is childhood?**

Before I begin the discussion on street children, it is important that I briefly look at the above question. I postulate that the number of studies on children which emerged in the 1990s and onwards seemed to have been fuelled by what we may refer to as the re-discovery of childhood, although no studies I know of refer directly to this fact; a re-discovery in the sense that, according Aries (1979), the concept of childhood emerged around the late seventeenth. He summarizes his argument in part 1 of his book, *Centuries of Childhood*.

In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist, this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood should not be confused with affection for children; it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society this awareness was lacking. That is why as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle rocker, he belonged to adult society (Aries, 1979:125).

In other words, the concept of childhood that the international legislation use has relatively recent history, and was essentially brought into being through the era of mass literacy and mass education. It was at this crucial historical moment that the new medium of print brought about and imposed a categorical distinction between child and adult (Postman, 1994). In this era, schooling became important in many parts of the world and subsequently gained universal importance. Children then came to be seen as a separate social category defined by age. Such characteristics as physical and emotional immaturity, vulnerability, lack of autonomy and dependence on adults were attributed to childhood. Contemporary society continues to attribute these characteristics to childhood. Another important feature of childhood is sexual and mental innocence. The prevailing view is that children should be protected from the hazards of the world; that they should be provided with special support and given first call all the time (Archard, 1993; Qvortrup, 1985).

In other spheres children are also defined by their age and by what they are not. They are not workers, they are not sexual, not married, not

parents, they are not smokers, drinkers, car drivers or able to sign contracts. What they are is quite limited-they are in families, they go to school, they play. They are preparing to become adults (Ennew, 1994:8).

This is the putative global model of childhood that international legislation and international aid agencies tend to work with. It is based on middle-class children in the industrialized countries who go to school, play, live in increasingly private families and are assumed to be helpless and not able to carry out adult tasks. This therefore means that the programmes for poor children in the developing countries by aid agencies assume that all children are weak and powerless. Those “children who work hard for long hours and take a good deal of responsibility are not seen as capable human beings, but pitied because they are not having a childhood” (Ennew, 1994:10).

We find that part of the Western notion of childhood is that it is a time of innocence and non-responsibility when children should not be burdened with adult cares and problems. This is why a large part of welfare programmes and practices in these countries have progressively removed responsibilities from children in line with this concept. This could explain why there is such a vigorous lobby in western countries against ‘child labour’ in other parts of the world (McCartney, 2000).

Contrary to the western middle-class conception of childhood, Prout and James (1990) argue that childhood varies according to where it takes place and in which



historical era it occurs, that the nature of the social conception of childhood is an actively negotiated set of social relationships within which the early years of human life are constituted. "The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture. It is these facts of culture which vary, and which can be said to make of childhood as a social institution" (Prout and James, 1990:7).

Concurring with Prout and James, Boyden (1990) states that what children are capable of depends on the culture in which they live:

...while in many countries children are seen as dependent until well into their teens, in many others they are expected to be fully independent from an early age. The contrast between Britain and Peru, for example, is instructive. In the former it is illegal to leave infants and small children in the charge of juveniles under the age of 14. In the latter, on the other hand, the national census records a significant group of 6-to 14-year olds who are heads of households and as such are the principal bread winners in the family, sometimes even the sole person in charge of the care of younger siblings (Boyden, 1990:198).

Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon (Prout and James, 1990). The reliance on a model of childhood that is based on children in families that are better off ignores the strengths and the experiences of street children. This leads to an attitude of pity, rather than empathy, which is reflected in projects that try to rescue children without thinking of the consequences for the children or their

families (Ennew, 1994). Contemporary studies fail to appreciate that the current norm about the place of children in society is an ideal.

### **Changing concepts in the literature: street children**

Dube (1999) contends that if we are to follow the debate on street children well, there is need for us to make an analysis of the development of sociological thought around the same subject of children living on their own or unaccompanied children. First, we notice that there was a development of literature in fiction which we sometimes refer to as literary works. This was followed by sociological literature on the same subject.

A number of studies on the phenomenon of street children show that the manifestations of street children are not only in contemporary societies (Ennew et al, 1996; Grier, 1996; Agnelli, 1986). Reports of the presence of groups, gangs of youths have been heard in different parts of the world since the Middle Ages. The literature refers to the Children's Crusade as the starting point, although it is in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the theme becomes recurrent mainly in fiction. There are two determinants which stand out in this first discursive wave on children invading the streets, namely: the living conditions of the industrial revolution; nuclearisation of the family and privatization of the home (Rosemberg and Andrade, 1997). When industrial development takes place it is simultaneously thought that there is urban growth which leads people to migrate from the rural areas to the cities. This, in turn, is assumed to result in the nuclearisation of the

family. Rosemberg and Andrade (1997) argue, however, that during the time of the Industrial Revolution and the consequent demographic changes in society, there were different child rearing practices, as compared to now. As Aries (1979) shows:

In Europe until the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, practices of abandonment or separation of parents and children were not pathologies and the street, like other public spaces, was considered to be the context of a socialization of children. It is the beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the existence of children in the streets, usually poor boys, comes to be the subject of boys' admiration and fear (in Rosemberg and Andrade, 1997:2).

In those epochs, some novelists in Europe and North America portrayed the lives of these children. Charles Dickens portrayed the life of a street child through the character of Oliver Twist. Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* did it through the character of Gavroche, and in North America, the novelist, Mark Twain, celebrated a street child, Huckleberry Finn. Like Gavroche, and differently from Oliver Twist, Huck was a symbol of freedom.

The homelessness of youth has been given a romantic twist. Huck Finn, Mark Twain's barefoot hero, is a prime example. Many have dreamt of being a Huck Finn. A captivating, free soul having wonderful adventures, he refuses to be captured and "sivilised". He belongs to the folk of the open frontier and "freedom" (Shane 1996: 8).

Gavroche and Huck are romantic heroes, free and models for street children.

Huck was feared and hated by all mothers for being vulgar and bad because all the boys wanted to be like him. This is one issue which seems to underlie public antipathy towards street children in contemporary society.

We notice the emergence of specialized literature in Sociology and Psychology treating the issue of children and youth roaming in the streets under themes such as juvenile delinquency and gangs or gang culture (Becker, 1963; Cohen, 1955). In today's British Society, for example, these youth characteristics are subsumed under the rubric 'anti-social behaviour'. Between the early 1970s and the early 1980s we observe the same phenomenon as described by Shane being discussed under the subject of homeless children and youth (Brandon et al., 1980) or runaway youth (Weber, 1991). In colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the term used for street children was "children on their own" (Grier, 1996:22).

We may summarize the development of social science literature on the phenomenon of street children clearly by making reference to what Dos Santos said with reference to Brazil.

Before 1930, we had a predominance of religious explanations for the child on the streets. This child was regarded as paying for the sins of the family. From 1930 we began to get more scientific explanations but still very functionalist, rooted in American anthropology and the psychology of those days. Delinquency was explained as a product of personality or character, but these new interpretations had the virtue of contradicting

the magical explanations of the church. Then we began to get the explanation of the oppressed children as being the fruit of unstructured or dismantled families, but with no explanation of why these families were distressed. The view of the child as the accused began to change to one of the child as the victim but still the victim of isolated structures, the family or something else migration or unemployment taken out of context. But, from the 70s onwards and after the dictatorship, we were able to establish the whole framework of the socio-political context (Dos Santos, cited in Swift, 1997:96).

In contemporary literature, the issue of street children or youth gained some attention in the national and international arena in 1979, a year which was declared the 'International Year of the Child'. This is the year that the issue of 'street children and youth roaming the streets' took Latin America by storm. The late Peter Tacon, then a consultant on abandoned children to UNICEF, made his first visit to Latin America in March 1981. Findings and concepts from Latin America were adopted by international organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, the ILO, the UN itself and other international NGOs to the extent that they are now used worldwide, sometimes without caution. Sensitization of the world on the issue of street children culminated in the formation of the Inter-NGO Programme for Street Children and Youth in 1981 (Agnelli, 1986).

Contemporary literature on the phenomenon of street children is also beginning to gain ground, mainly due to the current trend in human rights and the general acceptance that children have rights. The impetus of such literature which also appreciates the value of children's work, under certain circumstances, appears to

emanate from the Declaration on Children's Rights, the International Labour Office Convention 138, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The literature's appreciation of the value of children's participation in certain tasks also stems from the historical contribution children have made not only in working for their families, but also their input in building modern nations, politically.

### **Studies on street children**

Studies on street children are recent and therefore still emerging.

Notwithstanding, there is a dearth of literature on street children in Zimbabwe, as it is elsewhere in Africa as a whole, compared to South America and to an extent India.

Reliable research evidence is needed in order to design appropriate and effective rehabilitation programmes for street children and their families. In the absence of such evidence, debates on these children are often superficial and unhelpful.

They tend to be based upon potentially damaging assumptions and stereotypes about street children, and pathologise their families. For example, in her study of child labour in a communal land in Zimbabwe, Reynolds (1985) noted the dearth of studies relating to children in Southern Africa as a whole:

Current research in these areas (children's issues) in Southern Africa lack, in my opinion, sociological depth and analytical breadth. Studies of children continue to be relegated to sealed-off areas where special focus

on aspects of childhood in isolation from the analysis of broader social, economic and political forces... Much time and money is spent in soliciting the opinions and report... and in compiling the results only to achieve descriptions that glance off the surface of reality (Reynolds, 1985: XIX).

Reynolds's Southern African observation has implications elsewhere. In other words, much of the international literature on the phenomenon of street children concerns itself with the periphery of the problem, how the children live and survive on the streets. Largely, studies in this important area tend to be descriptive, and so contribute very little towards meaningful policy and practice. Very few of these studies have adopted conceptual approaches that examine the issue from children's perspectives, as well as those of communities from which the children come. Knowledge and proper understanding of the circumstances of families in these communities will enhance understanding of the problems faced by the children and their families. Such understanding is essential to formulate and design policy and practice.

Compared to Southern Africa, more studies have been carried out in Latin America in this area. Consequently, other developing nations have adopted concepts and models derived from these studies. However, as some critics have pointed out, there are problems inherent in the wholesale adoption of these concepts and models by developing countries. This is "largely because, the critics argue, due to western writers' influence, the debate of street children in Brazil and Columbia in particular has been characterized by ambivalence. The

debate is often lurid and lacks academic rigour” (Ennew et al., 1996; 21, see also Aptekar, 1988a).

Reporting on the literature on street children, Connolly and Ennew had this to say:

Apart from pioneering work, such as that carried out by Felsman (1981) and Higgens (1979) there are few serious attempts to challenge the hegemony of the pervading image of street children until the late 1980s when Lewis Aptekar (1988a) and Jill Swart (1990a, 1988b) developed novel methods of research that shed doubt on ideas that these children were helpless victims. Such seminal works have developed a discourse on childhood in which academic work on street children has become more acceptable (Connolly and Ennew, 1996:132).

From Latin America, we have Lewis Aptekar who carried out a number of useful studies on street children. One such study was on street children in Colombia. His book titled *Street Children of Cali* (1988a) is described as a psycho-ethnography by the author. The research described combined psychological and anthropological approaches. By using both the anthropologist’s observational approach and the psychologist’s empirical methods, the study obtained a most complete and accurate picture of Columbia’s street children. This study helped to dispel some of the “delusional beliefs” of the public and professionals towards street children.

For example, the study found that the children lived not in “the streets,” but in



particular streets that had their own history and cultural context. It noted that society's reaction to them did not take place in a vacuum, but included the children's responses to adults, and this was influencing their self-concepts and how they lived. The study also found that the way these children were living on the streets and the demands that the streets made on them advanced their development because these demands actually accelerated rather than retarded their intellectual skills. It showed that the perception skills of street children had not been ruined and that there was no widespread and obvious brain damage as was suggested by reports of their drug use.

We have a few studies on the phenomenon of street children coming from Africa. African studies in this field mainly come from South Africa and Kenya. Swart researched the lives of black street children in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, from 1985 to 1987. She initiated two important projects to assist street children in Johannesburg namely: the "Halfway House" and "Street Wise". These projects provided street children with shelter, food, non-formal education and job skills. Her book, *Malunde: the Street Children of Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (published in 1990) has been hailed as one of the most useful studies on street children in Africa. Swart's studies are enlightening. Methodically, the studies dealt with important ethical issues concerning research with street children. By adopting a child-centred approach and ethnographic oral and visual methods, Swart's studies with street children produced meaningful results.

Some of her results showed that street children were an important part of the economic organization of poor families. Her studies suggest that the existence of street children is part of the adaptive responses of poor families which, from the point of view of an outsider, could be judged as a maladaptive response. Thus, from the perspective of changing family forms, it is possible to talk of street children as part of a given society that has organized itself in a way that is different from the norm, but still intact although it may seem “broken” from the perspective of other members of that society. Indeed the survival strategies of street children are not unique to themselves. Some adults survive just as these children do, and some street children work along side their parents or other adults. There is that link with traditional expectations in Africa and other developing countries for children to work along side parents as part of their training and development. From South Africa, we have other useful studies by Bernstein and Gray (1993), Scharfer (1989) and Cockburn, (1990) to support these claims.

Another practical and useful book from Africa: *An Experience with Street Children in Nairobi* was written by Dallape (1987). This book is based on the work of Undugu Society with street children in Nairobi, and is particularly addressed to those individuals and organizations that work with street children. It gives practical guidance on how to work with street children and the communities from which they come. Practical ways of dealing with ethical issues when researching street children are given in the book, such as access, confidentiality, informed

consent and other ethical issues. It outlines also the causes of this social phenomenon, looks into the marginal communities producing street children and gives guidance on how to work with them. The author advises that the most important initial step in working with street children is to know the characteristics of the communities from which these children come. This can help to minimize conflicts when we try to help street children.

Swart (1990a) had earlier suggested that being accepted by the wider community was paramount:

For me the degree of personal acceptance in the community was more an intuitive feeling than a measurable entity. It seemed to me that being personally involved with projects that provided some services for street children, there-by also lessening their number on the streets, enhanced my acceptance in the community. People began to invite me to speak about street children at public and committee meetings, and the police became aware that I was not just there to record arrests of the children, but that I could be called up in the middle of the night to place children into care if they had been taken off the streets at the request of annoyed citizens (Swart, 1990a:265).

Stacks (1974) found such an approach to be most beneficial to her investigations into the unfavourable structural circumstances of black families in the United States of America.

Dallape's (1987) book discusses a very important issue which has been

neglected by many studies. It is the issue of street girls and young street mothers. Many published studies on street children refer to the children using exclusively male pronouns, implying that street children everywhere are boys and that the samples comprised only males (Connolly and Ennew 1996). On the contrary, street children everywhere include girls. The lack of recognition of the existence of street girls influences services or institutions dedicated to street children. The problems that street girls face do not seem to be of importance to them. It is true that street girls are in the minority, compared to street boys, but they are not absent (Lucchini, 1994). Street girls, as a subgroup of street children, will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

In Zimbabwe, street children are a relatively recent phenomenon and there is therefore a dearth of literature on the subject. Much of the available data on street children in Zimbabwe are superficially descriptive and loaded with statistics (Dube, 1999). The problem with the current but scant studies on the situation of street children in Zimbabwe is that there is very little knowledge about the way children who are themselves directly affected by serious problems of life and survival think about their situation. What is portrayed in most literature elsewhere is that talk about street children. Such talk discusses lives, problems that are not lived or shared but merely observed externally by the subject (Glauser, 1990). Such studies have not bothered to ask such questions as:

Is there really a problem? If so, what precisely is the nature of the problem (Bourdillon, 1994:1)?

A few critical studies on the phenomenon of street children in Zimbabwe are beginning to emerge. Bourdillon's book (1991) brings useful insights into research methods in studying street children. Some critical papers have also begun to emerge (Grier, 1996; Dube, 1996). These studies seem to be the turning points towards a critical analysis of the situation of street children in Zimbabwe.

### **Historical background**

In Zimbabwe, street children are relatively a new phenomenon. The paper by Grier (1996) is helpful in that it gives us information on the phenomenon of street children during the colonial period, as from 1920s to the 1950s with the historical past of Zimbabwe, the then Rhodesia. Grier argues that the unaccompanied children in Salisbury in the 1920s were the forbearers of the street children of Harare in the 1980s. In this paper Grier investigates the ways under which these children lived, the ways in which they earned a living, their relationships with the white employers and their relationships with adult Africans in the urban areas and on the farms. Grier examines the official views of the causes of the problem of unaccompanied children. Grier argues that a large number of African children between the ages of 10 to 15 years left the rural areas to look for employment in the towns and on the mines. According to the authorities some of the children left with the consent of their parents, others had run away without the consent of their parents, while others had run away to see the world, leaving the family flocks and herds unattended. Grier also notes that in the years following the First World War more children tended to flock to the cities. This was due to increased

immigration of White settlers into Southern Rhodesia who confiscated additional land from the natives, creating over crowdedness and growing landlessness in the rural areas.

Many children were employed as domestic servants, gardeners in white homes. Mining companies employed these children to cook and clean for adult African workers in the company-owned single sex compounds. Sometimes these boys provided sexual services to single African mine workers (Grier, 1996). According to Grier comments from the colonial authorities were always negative. They tended to emphasise the illicit rather than the legal informal economic activities in which the unaccompanied children were involved. Colonial officials argued thus:

The immediate and unfortunately almost inevitable result of change from the primitive conditions of village/kraal life to close contact with all classes of men and women, and unrestrained association with form of vice and degradation, is moral and physical degeneration. There is no restraining or guiding influence over the simple native child thus left to its own resources and abandoned to influences of the most pernicious kind. Debauchery, gambling, drunkenness, are some of the most pronounced evils which it is exposed to and often readily succumbs... Hundreds of young boys are or may be found in our large centres. Many are idle and in nominal or questionable habits of life; all alike are open to evil temptations, and fall an easy prey to degrading associations. They form a community from which ultimately the habitual loafer is evolved and the offender and hardened criminal largely recruited (Grier, 1996:12).

The colonial authority gave a number of explanations as the causes of the

phenomenon of children on their own. The first explanation was that the boys and girls ran away from home to experience town life. Girls were domestic slaves in the rural homes. Children were said to be running away from the discipline of their parents. The second explanation was that there was disintegration in the tribal system as a result parental authority was weakening. The colonial authority did not want to acknowledge that these were the results of the migrant labour system.

The fact was that children were part of the labour force in colonial Zimbabwe. They were an integral part of the cheap agricultural labour force of colonial Zimbabwe from a very early age. Children were drawn into the labour force through: the system of labour tenant's families, as children of residents living near a farm, and as the children of migrant workers.

Tenants' agreements were made between the farmer and the African head of the household. Agreements usually stipulated that the head of the household should make available the labour of his dependents, which included wives, sons daughters and servants (Grier, 1996). In exchange for their labour, the tenant family was given the right to cultivate a piece of land and graze some animals on it. If wages were involved they were only paid to the head of the household, rather than to the family members individually. This according to the authorities gave the head of the household the incentive to maintain control over family members and their labour so that he could turn out as many as he could for work.

It was therefore the head of the household who answered for family members who failed to work, disobeyed orders, or destroyed property. Failure to live up to the terms of the tenancy agreement could result in the family's eviction from the farm.

While the children were very popular with the white employers, they were also very unreliable. They often deserted due to the harsh treatment they got from white employers. Reasons for leaving employment were non-payment of wages, physical and verbal abuse. This was a way of resisting exploitation and abuse. The Native Juveniles Employment Act of 1926 was then passed to control child labour. The colonial authorities put emphasis on the negative when they put forward explanations of the children on their own in the cities, towns and mining areas. They put it like this:

Men who left this rural homes and families for long periods of time often became involved in irregular relationships with urban women, beginning second families for which they were not bound by customary law. As a consequence, innumerable domestic arrangements of varying degrees of permanency existed... Into this social chaos and conflict of many different customs, children legitimate and illegitimate, are being reared; others hasty of discipline, runaway from homes to the freedom of the towns and others are permitted by parents to live and earn as they please (Grier, 1996:20).

The underlying causes of the phenomenon of unaccompanied children in colonial Zimbabwe were factors such as land dispossession, overcrowded reserves,



growing rural poverty, and low wages – the direct consequences of colonial policies designed to create and reinforce the condition of settler capital accumulation. The colonial authorities conveniently ignored these issues by emphasizing as causes, such factors as parental neglect, family disintegration and the lure of the cities (Grier, 1996: 4).

### **Causes of the problem**

Authors worldwide have discussed the causes of the social problem of street children. There are similarities among the causal factors, and explanations for them. Studies show that rapid urbanization; industrialization and the consequence breakdown of close family ties are largely to blame for this problem (Agnelli, 1986; Aptekar, 1988a; Chatterjee, 1992; Ennew, 1994; Swart, 1990a). These factors apparently give rise to a network of other interdependent causal factors such as poverty, unemployment, poor and inadequate housing. These are considered to contribute to the problem of street children in developing countries. Swart (1990a:57) puts it as follows:

The reasons for children living on the streets are very complex and studies of street children throughout the world have shown that no single factor underlies their presence, rather factors which may be categorized as social and personal appear to be closely linked.

### **Rapid urbanization**

One of the main factors associated with children finding themselves in difficult

circumstances in Zimbabwe is rapid urbanization. The populations of urban areas in many developing countries are growing at an alarming rate. The causes of this urban demographic explosion are both internal and external to cities. Among the internal causes is the high population growth rate that results from high birth rates. External causes include all factors that favour the exodus from the rural areas. The real or perceived facilities available in the city with respect to employment, schooling and social advancement are a pull factor behind rural-urban migration. Consistent drought and the poor living conditions of rural areas that lack proper infrastructures operate as push factors. Rapid urban growth creates a huge imbalance between the resources available and the needs of the population. The net effect of the pressures on infrastructures is the development of densely populated peripheral areas and slums, in which many people are deprived of basic services, and the environment becomes so polluted that there is permanent risk of epidemics (Dallape, 1996).

### **Dysfunctional families**

Apart from the general problem of rapid urbanization, researchers also tend to agree on a series of specific factors linked to the phenomenon of street children in urban areas. Most of these factors are related to the family environment. Economic and social upheaval has led to the breakdown of traditional family structures and values. The reduction in family size from extended to nuclear has led to the availability of fewer child-support resources traditionally provided by the extended family. Family disruption, in the form of desertion, separation, divorce

and death due to HIV/AIDS or other natural causes, has shrunk the family size among the poor still further, often resulting, in poor single-parent or child-headed households. This leaves children vulnerable, and with the general absence of community and government support, they have few options in times of crisis other than the streets (Le Roux and Smith, 1998a). The traditional subsistence economy in which family members, including, children were jointly responsible for family welfare has been replaced by a money economy. Children in African cultures used to be provided by an extended family, other than biological family to whom they could turn if ill-treated or orphaned (Swart, 1990a). Foster et al., (1997:156) wrote:

The extended family was the traditional local social security system and its members were responsible for the protection of the vulnerable, care for the poor and the sick and the transmission of traditional social values and education. In recent years, such as labour migration, the cash economy, demographic change, formal education and westernization have occurred and have weakened the extended family.

## **Poverty**

In some countries the phenomenon of street children has been aggravated by the inability of the economy to create sufficient formal employment. Many family problems are created by high unemployment rate, and poverty in many developing countries. Young children may be left to their own devices while parents are trying to make a living. Others are sent to the streets to beg or vend to help their families or to fend for themselves (Swart, 1990a; Lusk, 1989:

Peralta, 1993).

### **The school system**

Several problems are faced by children of poor families at school. Some children move away from home onto the streets because there is no money to pay for schooling. They have very seldom received any pre-school care and education. Sufficient schools and facilities to accommodate them adequately in their communities are seriously lacking. Educational facilities are overcrowded and teachers may need to conduct double sessions. Teachers are placed under stress by such conditions and may resort to punitive methods to obtain discipline in the classroom. The workload does not allow the teachers time for individual attention and guidance to help disadvantaged children. Children are consequently educationally disadvantaged and many schools become a frightening and alienating experience. Those who have experienced emotional trauma and family disruption are particularly at risk of dropping out (Baizerman, 1988; Drake, 1989).

### **Abuse and neglect**

Apart from disruptive socio-economic conditions which may force children to the streets, verbal and physical abuse and conditions of neglect also drive children from home. Some of the families of street children are headed by mothers who are victims of abusive male partners. The mother has no alternative but to endure the abuse, because she needs the male partner for economic survival.

These children run away from home due to poor relationships with their step-parents (Aptekar, 1988a; Bourdillon, 1994).

### **Inadequate housing**

There are children who are on the streets in many developing countries because they have no suitable homes. Some have families which live in very cramped conditions, perhaps one room or even a room shared with another family. As children reach adolescents, they are no longer able to live in such conditions and opt for the streets. Lucchini (1997) states:

The dimensions of the accommodation are too small to allow any intimacy. Lack of privacy is the rule and provokes animosity and conflicts...The streets ...naturally become the places allowing the child especially the boy, to escape the familial lack of privacy (Lucchini, 1997: 15).

The marginal areas, in which the majority of the people live, are crowded and bursting with children looking for free space, such as roads and alleyways that are still not filled with temporary shacks, in which they can play, work, fight, dance and laugh. By escaping from their overcrowded homes, children find in these streets and alleyways freedom to experience the harshness of survival on the streets. Street children concede that street life is harsh but it provides reprieve from the often invisible, difficult circumstances that characterize their families (Dallape, 1996).

Although most researchers now recognize that the children's families must provide an important key to understanding the phenomenon of street children, I found no study which specifically examined their family circumstances. At best researchers represent an approximate profile of the children's families, obtaining information about them indirectly and generally from the children themselves. This might be because it is considered not easy or fascinating to measure and analyze child-parent relationship, wife-husband relationship and sibling relationship in a family. For example, Jareg and Jareg (1994) have argued that affection between parents and children cannot be measured, and that we only see the effects when they have been lacking.

We cannot question the fact that factors such as poverty, urbanization, civil strife, family violence and physical and sexual abuse play a significant role in the genesis of the phenomenon street children. This view is however, limited. For example, it does not account for those children who have been exposed to similar fate, but are not in the streets. In other words, we need to delve deeper for a further understanding of this serious social problem.

Environmental circumstances may be a necessary condition but it is not sufficient to explain the phenomenon of street children. What is required is an interaction perspective, one that gives equal weight to intrinsic factors within the individual child (Felsman, 1988).

Complete clarity about factors that cause some families and individuals to react in certain manner to certain circumstances, while others react differently, has not been reached yet. Personality traits, individual motivational factors, family structures and the interplay amongst different sets of factors which make every situation unique, might probably contribute to this social problem (Lucchini, 1993). Some communities do not generate street children. The common factor among such communities seems to be the existence of more traditional family patterns which hold the possibility of refuge. Certain families stick together despite the adverse conditions and others split up. How then are we to understand why one or two children decide to leave home while the larger number remains at home (Aptekar, 1988a; Ennew, 1994)? This and such other questions need to be addressed in our quest to understand and deal effectively with the problem of street children.

### **Their characteristics**

Studies have shown that there are striking similarities in the characteristics of street children. Their group life styles, peer relationships and coping strategies are much similar regardless time and space (Felsman, 1988; Aptekar, 1988a). Most of them are male. This fact is hidden when they are referred to as street children not street boys (Aptekar, 1994).

### **Their numbers**

In 1989, UNICEF estimated that there were 100 million street children worldwide.

This figure is widely quoted by many authors in spite of the obvious fact that, for a range of reasons, the numbers of street children are likely to have increased significantly since then. It must be recognized, however, that there are major difficulties in trying to estimate the numbers of street children in a given country and the extent of the difficulties they face because of the floating character of their life style (Chatterjee, 1992). Consequently these populations are not covered by national census, educational and health data. Another main reason for the lack of accurate figures is the lack of consensus on definition (Ennew, 1994). In spite of the difficulty in ascertaining the number of street children in any given country, it is important for organizations and agencies working with them to have a figure that approximate the size of this population and their backgrounds. This is needed, among other things, in order to design appropriate and effective interventions for them.

### **Their health**

There is very little hard information about the health of street children (Ennew, 1994). The nature of continuous exposure to the street and the associated life styles make street children vulnerable to a range of health problems which are not typically experienced by other young people. Factors, which may contribute to their vulnerability include: poor hygiene and sanitation, poor diet, lack of shelter from the environment, violence, and possible lack of positive, attachment, which results in emotional and social deprivation (WHO, 1993).



Worldwide, street children suffer from a number of physical illnesses. These include respiratory problems, ranging from coughs and bronchitis to tuberculosis, skin infection, injuries from fights, traffic accidents and other daily dangers; stomach worms and other intestinal parasites; diarrhoea and other stomach problems; kidney and bladder infections; bad teeth; sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS and eye infection especially conjunctivitis (Connolly, 1994 in Ennew, 1994: 118).

In spite of all these health problems, some researchers appear to give the impression that all street children are well-nourished (e.g. Ennew and Connolly 1996, Gross et al., 1996). From specific countries, Baker (1993) reported that children living on the streets of Katmandu, Nepal, had better nutritional status than their counterparts in the rural areas. Another report from Aptekar (1988a) also stated that street children of Cali in Colombia fared no worse than other children with similar backgrounds as far as nutrition was concerned. He suggests that begging and stealing might actually enhance the nutritional status of street children. What seems to be ignored by these workers is the fact that not all street children get money to buy food everyday. It is likely, however, that the irregularities in the income of street children are partly compensated for through the caring capacity within the group (Dallape, 1987; Swart, 1990a).

Gross et al., (1996) discuss the causal model of malnutrition which was proposed by UNICEF in 1990 and accepted internationally by the Food and Agriculture

Organization and the World Health Organization (1992) in which the children's caring capacity plays a central role. They suggest that the children rely on the physical and emotional support of others. They conclude that the lower prevalence of under-nourished street children in Jakarta, for example, (Gross et al., 1996) could be the result of additional care they receive from their peers on the streets. The authors, however, acknowledge that very little knowledge exists regarding the relationship between the caring capacity of street children and their nutritional status. Thus, Gross and colleagues rightly refrained from generalizing their findings to street children outside Jakarta.

### **Their mental health**

A study conducted by Aptekar (1988b) in Columbia showed that intellectual and neurological functioning of street children were below the national average. The author, however, argues that given the street children's low socio-economic status, high rates of illiteracy, multiple siblings and no intact families, the results were better than might have been expected, and that the degree of self management required on the street might actually enhance cognitive development (Aptekar, 1988a).

Research seems to suggest that mental health problems are common among homeless young people (e.g., Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Brandon et al., 1980; O, Mahoney, 1988). Yet, as Shane (1996) has pointed out, the health problems among this population has not been adequately investigated. Huston and

Liddiard (1994) hypothesized that there are two slightly different, yet related links between homelessness and mental illness. The first hypothesis is that mental health problems make young people more prone to homelessness; and the second emphasizes that homelessness itself can lead to mental problems. In order to help these young people, it would be useful to know clearly whether they are homeless because of their mental illness or vice versa; in other words, research is needed to address this question.

It is undeniable that by being homeless, these young people are exposed to mental health risks. As Shane (1996:49) has noted, their lack of a stable place to sleep, to take care of hygiene, and to keep belongings, is a "psychic assault and destroys self-esteem. This assault is augmented by abuse, exploitation, fear, insecurity and rejection."

### **Their sexual health**

Street children are sexually active at a younger age than adolescents generally owing to the way they survive on the streets. Survival on the streets entails giving priority to obtaining food, shelter and clothing over concerns about health practices (Swart and Richter, 1997). Abuse of drugs enhances sexual behaviour which, in turn, exacerbates risk of HIV infection as they engage in sex indiscriminately (Athey, 1991). Their vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases is further heightened by the fact that they are unaware of the dangers involved in their sexual activity. Namely, they receive neither parental or adult supervision

nor sex education. On top of this, they tend to have more sexual encounters, for various reasons, for example, rape, commercial sex, and survival sex (Athey, 1991). A study conducted by Human Rights Watch (2002) in Zambia supports this claim. So does the World Bank Report on Education and HIV/AIDS (2002). The report supported the findings of the Zambian study that both boys and girls between 15 and 19 years of age with medium to higher level of formal education had a lower HIV prevalence than their counter-parts with a lower level of education. Besides their lack of education, parental or adult guidance, street children are often denied access to statutory health care and other welfare services (WHO, 1993).

### **Drug misuse**

A number of authors have investigated the use of drugs among street children. There seems to be a general agreement among investigators that the levels of drug use among street children as a whole are low and that they are able to stop at once if they want to (Lucchini, 1993; Swart, 1990). Similarly, (Dallape, 1987) found that street children in Kenya controlled their consumption of glue, that their intake is limited to the amount required for action and that over doses are not tolerated and so street children impose moderation on each other. Obviously, not all are optimistic about street children's ability to cease, control or moderate their use of drugs. Connolly (1990) argues that there are street children who do not control their use of drugs. "The heavy users among them are easily recognized by their ragged clothing, soiled faces, and glazed eyes and the effects of brain

damage are observed among the long users” (Connolly1990: 144). When street children are addicted, as Casa Alianza (2001) has observed, their personalities change and this makes it impossible for psychosocial rehabilitation to take place.

## **Delinquency**

A number of authors have observed that street children survive through activities that are largely illegal and are always in conflict with the authority and the law (Swart, 1990a; Hecht, 1998). This has led to the suggestion that today’s street children may become tomorrow’s criminals (Press, 1987 in Muchini, 1994: 24). The increasing involvement of street children in theft, as they progress through adolescence, has been observed (Aptekar 1988a; Felsman, 1988; Lusk, 1989). The younger boys mainly practise such petty thefts as snatching caps, stealing food from the shops and markets, while older street children get involved in more serious and confrontational crimes such as pick pocketing and robberies. These activities bring them into contact with the police. Thus, they are viewed as a threat to society, as delinquents or criminals (Lalor, 1999).

Delinquency in working class boys in general results from frustration and lack of opportunity to move upward socially and to develop healthy self-concept owing to their unfavourable social experiences (Fein, 1978 in Muchini, 1994). It has been suggested that inadequate socialization, factors within the social environment, and characteristics within the individual offer the best explanation for delinquency (David’s, 1979 in Muchini, 1994: 25). Environmental and individual risk factors for

delinquency include, being male, poverty, having no or low education, poor home and community backgrounds, and being exposed to crime (West, 1985). Most street children exhibit these characteristics.

Lusk (1989), in Columbia, outlined a three-stage type of delinquency development. He states that a pre-gamine is a pre-adolescent child who lives at home, but spends part of his time on the streets in order to supplement family income. He is likely to indulge in theft while on the streets. A gamine is an adolescent who has lost family ties and spends most of his time on the street, and sleeps on the streets. These adolescents live with other gang members in rented rooms and maybe self-supporting through activities which are illegal. The final group is the largos. These are older adolescents who have taken on street life. They are seriously involved in hard-core street life and likely to develop into adult criminals. Lusk's portrayal of the developmental pathway of delinquents seems to imply an agreement with Press, as reported by Muchini (1994).

Lusk (1989) is not alone in his pessimism regarding street children and criminality. A study by Aptekar (1988a) suggested that development of street youths from petty thieves to seasoned criminals is inevitable. This study concluded that:

The gamines as they grow older were compelled by their perceptions of themselves as haughty provocateurs to give up small scale mischief and become either full scale delinquents or find a way to live outside the

mainstream of the larger society (Aptekar, 1988a: 76-77).

Other investigators working in developing countries, including African countries have expressed similarly negative views (Dallape, 1996; Lalor, 1999; Tierney, 1997). How helpful these gloomy predictions are regarding efforts to help or rehabilitate street children is open not just to rhetorical debate but, more importantly, to research.

### **Street girls**

Earlier in this chapter, I touched on the subject of street girls. This is a subgroup of street children which has special needs and difficulties, unfortunately these girls have been virtually neglected by researchers and, consequently, are absent from, the literature compared to street boys. The fact that the number of street boys is far greater than that of girls (Lucchini, 1994) does not justify researchers' apparent neglect of these street girls and their needs.

A number of reasons have been put forward to explain this disparity, in terms of numbers. The first and most common claim is that these girls are taken off the streets to become prostitutes (Agnelli, 1986). While this may be accepted as a factor regarding the lower proportion of girls among street children as a whole, Lucchini (1994) questions the appropriateness of labeling these children as 'professional prostitutes'. He argues that it is not possible to classify very young children between the ages of 10 and 12 as professional prostitutes. According to him this is an "an abuse of classification which does not find any scientific and

ethical justification” (Lucchini, 1994:6). Other researchers and authors are in agreement with Lucchini. They argue that it is more helpful to see and treat these children as victims of sexual abuse, even if they may receive some coins for food or drink in exchange (e.g. Farias de Amelda, 1986: in Lucchini, 1994:6).

Others attribute the higher proportion of boys among street children to socio-cultural factors and family circumstances (Aptekar, 1988a; Felsman, 1988).

Socio-culturally, these authors argue that most of these children come from female-headed households in which boys are encouraged to leave home early, while girls are encouraged to remain at home as long as possible. Regardless of sex, children may leave home early or run away due to family circumstances. This often happens when there are relationship problems within the family; such problems are particularly common in a household which includes a step-parent (Aptekar, 1988a; Felsman, 1984).

The differences between street boys and street girls are not only in terms of numbers and activities, but also in terms of their needs. For example, it has been suggested that street girls are at greater risk of experiencing certain health problems than boys. Street girls experience specific problems related to female development and reproductive health. They face considerable risks on the streets, such as unplanned pregnancies which are often complicated by a lack of antenatal care. Many of these young girls experience miscarriages. Those who complete pregnancy receive no support in their efforts to care for and raise their



babies (Tierney1997). Hecht also reported that:

Street girls completely forego any prenatal care and are apt to continue sniffing glue and using other drugs while pregnant. Beatings from the police and other children make them susceptible to miscarriages. Some street girls terminate their pregnancies by taking large doses of Citrotex, a prescription drug intended for ulcers that has strong side effects. Another method involves getting very high [drugged] and standing against a wall as a friend gives a forceful kick in the belly (Hecht, 1998:67).

It is therefore very difficult to see how this category of street children can be helped, when most organizations working with street children do not seem to recognize them or their female health needs. The Undugu Society of Kenya, which works with street children, admitted that it felt very strong inhibitions towards dealing with street girls because of the problem of female sexuality and the possibility of pregnancy (Dallape, 1987).

Street children come predominantly from female-headed families (Lalor, 1999; Lusk, 1989) and, yet, there is a bias against researching and assisting street girls. Street girls are the most invisible amongst all groups of visible child workers. They are out of school, and are employed as child minders or domestic workers and, yet, there is almost no data about them. This data is needed (Black, 1993). When a family is poor and has limited resources and has to choose between educating the boy or the girl, most choose the boy: the girl drops.

They drop out of school because the family has to shift resources ...the girl takes the role of a mother and cares for the home...they become adults at that time. Our [African] culture expects girls to do chores, cook, and take care of the kids (Human Rights Watch, 2002:46).

I argue that one of the best ways to break the hold of poverty, which is one of the causes of the street children problem, is to educate the girls. Educated girls have greater confidence to make decisions for themselves. They marry later in life.

There are strong possibilities that they are likely to plan their families. They are better informed about good child rearing practices. Women who were educated as girls are more likely to enroll their children in primary school. Educating children particularly girls is therefore a critical part of breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty (UNICEF, 1996). We can conclude that street children are both genders although there are more likely to be boys than girls.

### **Coping strategies**

Coping strategies are defined as ways in which people deal with demands of living. The process of coping means that persons create a series of solutions to life's problems, solutions that can be changed in the future. Coping strategies include behaviours that are relevant in an active, effective persons dealing with demands, often conflicting, of a biological, psychological and social nature (Kroeber, 1983 in Folley, 1993: 5).

Other studies have highlighted the strengths of street children, the personal resources they call upon in order to survive. Such studies suggest that these

children are creative and resourceful in the face of very difficult circumstances. It is, nonetheless, unfortunate that much of their strength and coping skills come from being survivors of abuse, neglect and other adversities (Charterjee, 1992; Swart, 1990).

Street children rely on a diverse range of survival strategies to meet their daily needs. Much of the street child's daily life is purposeful and largely conducted on the move (Felsman, 1988). Studies from many developing countries show that street children's work include, shoe cleaning, singing on buses, vending, carrying loads in markets or at stations, guarding and washing cars, pimping and prostitution (Charterjee, 1992; Felsman, 1988). Black (1993) states:

...in many ways working street children are of the informal sector in the urban environment. They perform such economic activities in order to survive. The means by which these children do so are not even reflected in the countries' definition of labour or productivity (Black, 1993: 18).

Apart from engaging in economic activities for physical survival, street children form warm and supportive relationships with one another. Researchers (Aptekar, 1989; Baker, 1993; Connolly, 1990) have described the close peer-groups that these children form and the degree of altruism among them. Thus, these researchers see street children as constituting an organized society. This society is seriously misunderstood by the wider society of which it forms a part. Rather, the public often assumes that these children group together for the purpose of committing a crime (Swart, 1990). On the contrary, in most cases, the group

functions as a substitute family: to provide protection, economic, emotional support and guidance; and as a social network: to provide friendship, companionship and support or solidarity (Baker, 1993; Connolly, 1990).

Despite research emphasis that a majority of street children do not engage in criminal activities, the public continues to associate them with crime, violence and other illegal doings. Lusk (1989) has argued that this demonic image of street children serves to over-shadow their strengths and valuable potential or capacity for development.

### **Perceptions and reactions**

However we perceive street children, their numbers will continue to grow, unless governments fully acknowledge their existence and needs. Indeed, mere recognition of them will not get them off the streets. It must be matched by the provision of appropriate services (health and social) and programmes, especially training and educational programmes.

Ruxton (1996) reported that despite the establishment of a range of international human rights instruments affecting children and young people, the rights of homeless children in Europe have, for various reasons, received little or no attention. The structural problems they face include states' failure to recognise their existence, lack of awareness of legal instruments at all levels, limited political interest owing to the weak, social position of children and lack of

coordination between different authorities. In some countries there has been greater public awareness of the existence of street children in part because of their increased visibility on the street. “This awareness has, however, been double-edged, with many members of the public-often prompted by politicians-stigmatising young homeless people as ‘feckless’ and ‘inadequate’ or condemning ‘aggressive begging’” (Ruxton 1996: 268). Likewise, others have commented that the world over, authority figures in the community such as the police, social workers and magistrates, are inclined to view street children with disapproval and to take punitive action against them (Agnelli, 1986; Lalor, 1999).

A study by Swart (1990) on street children in Hillbrow in South Africa revealed that fifty two percent of the respondents advocated that street children be placed in residential homes, foster homes or educational and training institutions, while forty one percent advocated harsher measures; they proposed that street children be committed to state penitentiaries or distant reformatories; they also suggested they be compulsorily sterilized, exiled or annihilated. One respondent suggested cutting the children up into dog food cubes while seventy percent of questionnaire respondents had a strong belief that the street children would not make good in adulthood; they firmly believed that the children would grow into criminals, murderers, and drug addicts and misfits in society (Swart, 1990a).

Studies from other developing countries have also found public antipathy towards street children (e.g. Aptekar, 1988a; Bourdillon, 1995; Dube, 2000; Ennew, 1995; Sanders, 1987a).

The press plays a large part in creating or at least reinforcing the demonic image of street children. For example, the Kenyan Press once reported that street children were carrying syringes filled with HIV infected blood, and those who refused to give them money were threatened with the injection. Not one case of this behaviour was ever authenticated, yet it was perceived by members of the public as a common occurrence. Such reports got as far as Swaziland. The image of street children painted by this report was accepted without question. Although some correspondents wrote more sympathetic letters, the general picture painted by the press was that street children were criminals or potential criminals, who needed to be, controlled (Bourdillon 1994). The demonization of street children by the press and members of public often goes beyond the children to include also their parents who are often labeled as inadequate, violators of cultural norms and irresponsible (Black, 1991; Dube, 2000; Hecht, 1998; Owusu-Bempah, 1995).

As pointed out earlier, research evidence suggests that the public and media portrayal of street children as petty thieves, drug addicts, prostitutes, and so forth, is not justified. The general antipathy towards them, as Ennew (1995:202) has as argued, is largely because “the phenomenon of street children offends the status of childhood “.That is, they violate society’s expectations that children should be well-fed, healthy looking and garbed, at school or at home, and not on the streets. This is obviously a myth. Millions of families around the world, especially in developing countries, are poverty-stricken. Many of these families

struggle to meet such basic needs as food, shelter and clothes. A substantial proportion of street children come from such families. Bourdillon (1994) pointed this out when he argued that many street children carry out very useful activities for their families and themselves. To families and the children, child labour is not the problem; it is a solution to the problem of not having enough money to feed, clothe and pay fees for education.

The physical signs that distinguish rich children from poor children are merely one aspect of the children's radically different social and economic worlds....rich childhood is a nurtured status; poor childhood for nurturing the house hold....nurtured children are loved by virtue of being children, the love relieved by nurturing children is to a great extent a function of what they do, and they struggle to win the affection of their mothers (Hecht, 1998).

Very often it is the wealthy public which blames the parents of street children for being irresponsible, for being morally and sexually irresponsible. In short, the wealthy have tended to view the street children as the product of irresponsible sexual behaviour by their parents (Black, 1991).

Given the negative public perceptions of street children, any programme seriously intended to improving their situation must include the public, its aims and objectives must include changing the public's attitudes toward these children. Such programmes must have an educational component to raise awareness and understanding of the children, their adverse circumstances, as

well as their family and community characteristics. Such an eco-systems perspective is needed in order for any given programme for these children to be useful.

According to a report by the Human Rights Watch (2002) the attention that is given to street children focuses largely on their pressing economic and social needs, poverty, lack of shelter, denial of education, AIDS, prostitution and substance abuse. With the exception of mass killings of street children in Brazil and Columbia, little attention has been paid to the police violence and abuse inflicted on street children, or their treatment within the justice system through which they regularly pass. Civil and political rights violation against street children are largely overlooked, symptomatic of the larger failure to take the full scope of children's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report goes on to claim that there are not many advocates who speak up for these children, let alone lawyers or prosecutors, and street children rarely have family members or other concerned adults able to intervene on their behalf. In many cases, family members are not informed of their children's arrests and detention. Over years, Human Rights Watch has attempted to highlight the seriousness of the nature of human rights abuses perpetrated against street children by law enforcement personnel, including the police in Brazil, Colombia, India, Kenya and Sudan. There has been a gross lack of police accountability for abusive actions. Widespread impunity and the slowness of law enforcement bodies to investigate and prosecute cases of abuses against street children allow



violence against street children to continue unchecked (Human Rights Watch 2002).

In spite of the 'doom and gloom' surrounding the lives and future of street children, there is hope for them. That hope resides in us as researchers, practitioners or workers and policy makers. Regarding research, the field is young; there is much to learn, as Edwards (1996) points out that there is room for creating a 'grand alliance' of those who believe that every child's right to a childhood really does mean **every** child, and not just those who are neat, clean well-behaved, who smile and look endearing. In many settings this will require a revolution in attitude-a revolution which embraces not only employers and policy makers but child workers and their families (Black, 1993: 29).

### **Intervention strategies**

In several countries, nongovernmental organizations have taken the lead in working with street children. Besides developing practical measures to directly help street children, they have been instrumental in ensuring that governments are aware of the problem. These organizations therefore help to some extent to fill in the gaps left by official authorities (Ruxton, 1996).

Programme development for street children has been hindered by a weak understanding of the phenomenon of street children and their families of origin (Rafael, 1997). If we are to formulate effective intervention strategies in order to

mitigate the adversaries faced by street children in any given society, it is imperative that we have knowledge about the background, extent, characteristics and causes of the problem, as well as the needs of the children and knowledge about them on the streets. We must also know the dynamics surrounding the community in which the problem occurs (Aptekar, 1988a; Dallape, 1987).

### **Macro programmes: Changing social attitudes**

The studies on street children have concluded that the difficulties facing them come less from the harsh conditions of the streets than from societal reaction to them (Lusk, 1989; Swart 1990a) and yet most programmes work towards changing behaviour of the street children, leaving the important work of changing society's attitude towards the street children completely neglected (Aptekar and Abebe, 1997). No treatment programme for street children can succeed as long as the community fails to respect and provide opportunities for them (Schurink and Rip, 1993 in Le Roux and Smith, 1998b).

Aptekar (1988a) has proposed a two-level approach to designing programmes for street children: (1) macro level approach and, (2) micro level approach. Macro programmes are larger scale programmes attempting to change attitudes of society towards street children, while micro programmes are much smaller and deal with the diagnoses and treatment of children on an individual basis. Macro programmes assume that street children will cope better if they are provided with jobs than if they are continued to be treated only as children. In other words,

programmes for street children should start with the assumption that the children can, and should be, included as part of the labour force. That is street children should be offered possibilities to be “adult members “of the labour force. The goal of these programmes is to allow children an earlier entrance into adult life status. Macro programmes should thus attempt to replace attitudes toward street children, which are based on emotional responses, with more measured, contemplative, and empathetic attitudes (Aptekar, 1988a).

### **Micro programmes: Adapting to individual differences**

Central to micro programmes is recognition of individual differences. A key objective of these programmes is to promote the healthy growth and development of individual street children, as required by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The essence of a good micro programme is that it deals with street children as individuals; the micro approach starts with a careful diagnosis of the child. Children with particular needs are then matched with certain programmes. Different programmes are thus, aimed at addressing the needs and problems of children with similar needs. For example, a programme can be highly structured, involving step-by-step procedures and ending in artisan training or it can be less structured, leaving more room for creative skills; it can be specifically aimed at building self- confidence; or it can provide medication together with supportive treatment (Aptekar1988a).

Underlying these and other approaches are different and, sometimes, over-

lapping assumptions and ideologies. Lusk (1989) has, therefore proposed that we consider current programmes for street children in terms of a continuum. At one extreme end of this continuum are programmes that assume that 'the street children problem' is a reflection of societal structural deficiencies. At the other extreme are programmes that suggest personal deficiencies and pathologies as the key underlying factor. This perspective gives rise to three different positions or programmes: one with an emphasis on "public affairs" (with a radical concern for social change); the second with "private problems" (with the traditional concern for individual adjustment to the system); and the third may be thought of as an eclectic (or middle line) approach, whereby programmes incorporate elements of both positions. I use Lusk's framework to examine some of the programmes in place to address the street children problem in South America and other developing countries.

### **The correctional /Institutionalization model**

When some people see street children (particularly older boys) they see a threat to their safety, they see adult thieves in the making. The assumption here is that street children are delinquents, with deviant /pathological behaviours, that. they are a threat or potential threats to public order (Connolly, 1990). The only way to deal with them is to "break their will" by placing them in institutions. The idea here is to bring these children to our own way of life by integrating them into society. The strategy for dealing with the threat they pose is to remove them from the street and put them into institutions for re-education and correction. The

assumptions underlying this approach are questionable because not all children on the streets are criminals (Carrizosa and Poertner, 1992; Felsman, 1984; Swart, 1990a).

The process of putting children in institutions, impacts very negatively on the lives of these children. Imposed institutionalization as a widespread dominant approach, however, appears to be both short-sighted and counter-productive (Felsman, 1984). Children of various ages are housed in over-crowded buildings, which are below standard. If you take children and put them in institutions you are at the very best, taking care of their physical needs. No individual attention is given to deal with serious acute emotional problems (Ennew, 1986). It is difficult for a child to develop self-identify in an institution, given that they often end up institutionalized for long periods. Children in these institutions are physically or sexually abused. Children who have passed through these institutions are likely to become very violent adults because they lack the love and attention required to become members of any functioning society (Carrizzosa and Poertner, 1992). Children fail to integrate in a society if they are separated from it. They are not in touch with a variety of roles on which to model their behaviour (Dallape, 1987). This is by no means a solution to the problem (Swart, 1987).

### **The rehabilitation model**

This perspective holds that street children are not delinquents as much as they are victims of poverty, child abuse and neglect, and unstable living conditions.

Because street children are seen as having been harmed by their environment, hundreds of church and voluntary services have been organized to rehabilitate or help them (Inciardi and Surrat, 1997). This approach is more benevolent than the correctional approach. Because street children are seen as having been harmed by their environment, intervention seeks to rehabilitate and protect the children. An inherent weakness in these programmes is their tendency to try to rescue the children from the street life without offering any realistic alternatives. This raises questions about the motives of these organizations. In Swart's (1990a:37) words, "their efforts are often confused acts of power by individuals who wish to exercise benevolence". Although important, this strategy only provides basic services such as food and shelter, the focus is more one of compassion and maintenance than one of helping the child to get off the streets. One of the problems with such approaches is that they reflect attitudes of patronage and benevolent charity. Some commentators have, indeed, charged them with encouraging excessive dependency and undermining the dignity of the child. Dallape (1987:82) for example, noted: "people assisted in this way quickly learn that their problems are solved by others and develop attitudes of passivity and beggary."

NGOs, which use this rescue model, tend to perceive street children first and foremost as victims, children who "are out of place" and therefore "out of childhood". Their emotional response is based in the cult of sentimentality and is typically one of pity. Their actual intent is therefore to rescue the children and put them back into childhood (Ennew, 1994). Such approaches rely on a model of

childhood based on the children of the middle class families that are better off. They ignore the strengths and experiences of street children. The intervention of such approaches is to try and rescue children from work without thinking of the impact this will have on the children and their families. The families need the income that the children bring home (Ennew, 1994).

In short, imposed institutionalization as a widespread dominant approach, appears to be both short-sighted and counter-productive (Felsman, 1984). Such intervention strategies fail to reach many children and to assist in getting them off the streets. Street children are not motivated to participate in such long-term programmes (Carrizosa and Poertner, 1992; Inciardi and Surrat, 1997).

### **Street education**

This model is based on the work of Paul Freire (1973) who argued that the educational process must involve the learner as an active change agent not a passive subject. It assumes that societal deficiencies are the main cause of social inequalities and therefore the best way to combat the problem is to educate and empower the masses. In the context of the present thesis, this model recognises that children are not passive recipients of services but are full human beings who form the centre of development (Directions, 1995 in Pattisson, undated). This approach seeks to educate children about their situation and engage them in “collective action to find solutions to collective problems ” (Carrizosa and Poertener, 1992:409; Bartlome, 1999). To implement

programmes guided by Freire's notion of 'conscientization' or 'pedagogy of the oppressed,' educators meet the children on the streets.

### **Child participation**

The most important resource in project design and management is not money, or buildings or adult skills, but the children themselves, acknowledging that they are not "objects of concern," but people. The fact that children are vulnerable does not mean that they are incapable. Street children "need respect not pity." This is the 'rights' model, which allows children to participate in decisions in matters that affect their lives. It is an intrinsic value in Freire's (1975) model of pedagogy of the oppressed. Participation is where the responsibility and control of the process of development are in the hands of those who are intended to benefit from the process (Dallape and Gilbert, 1993). Participation also works at the political level as a means to foster proactive citizens who can create meaningful change in society. When children are subjected to authority and denied opportunities to establish rules through relationships of mutual respect, they fail to develop into responsible adults and contributors to the common good.

Through genuine participation young people develop the skills of critical reflection and comparison of perspectives, which are essential to the self-determination of political beliefs. The benefit is two-fold: to the realization of the child and to the democratization of society (Hart, 1992: 43).



## **Working together**

Those NGOs who are providing services to street children must not do so in isolation. Some of them have a tendency to remain boxed in their small universes. Instead they need to be linked to networks within and between countries to share information with each other and with their non-NGO partners (Black, 1993: 26). It is important for NGOs to recognize their limitations as individual organizations and build partnerships which can enhance their work.

NGOs which offer assistance to street children differ in their philosophies and it can be difficult to reconcile them. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why it is vital for NGOs who work with street children to work together. Firstly, by so doing, they are able to create a forum for discussion so that they present a “united front” of the problems facing street children to governments. Secondly this partnership will encourage NGOs to replicate models of good practices which are more efficient and effective, in other locations, with the ultimate goal of reaching and helping larger number of children, locally, nationally and internationally. In brief, greater national and international cooperation and coordination amongst NGOs will prevent duplicating work, reduce cost and improve efficiency (van Beers, 1996).

## **Staffing**

The key players in the success or failure of any programme for street children are the staff, yet studies have shown that these programmes are mainly staffed by

child care workers who are under qualified and poorly paid (Cockburn et al., 1988, in *The Who, Why and How of Street Children*, 1993).

Street children often complain about project staff. For example children at a project in Manila said they did not like the staff for various reasons. Staff members were accused of manhandling children and meting out too hard punishment, especially physical punishment. The staff demanded heavy work from the children, for example, digging wells or pit latrines. Some demanded that the children should feel indebted to them for the services rendered. They were not loving and caring. They pretended to be caring and loving when there were visitors but were not truly caring. They stayed in their offices and never related to the children. They gave attention only when things went wrong and never appreciated what the children did (Street Children in Asia, 1989).

Organisations employ unqualified staff because they cannot afford to hire qualified personnel. Because some organisations are charitable, they often “consider professional services as charity and these are not subject to scrutiny. Their attitude is whatever we can offer street children is good enough” (Dallape, 1987:45). Regardless of the level of commitment, staff working with street children cannot do their job to the best of their ability and intentions. They require appropriate training and support. In South Africa the De May Commission, through its findings, called for proper qualified professional staff to work with institutionalised children whose needs were emotional and psychological

(McLachlan, 1986 in Le Roux and Smith (1998b).

Staff who work with street children do not come freshly trained with the label on them. Recruitment is a matter of judging potential rather than looking at qualifications although training in psychology and social have proved useful. In-house staff development and training should take place continuously through regular meetings to incorporate staff observations and feedback in many institutions which work with street children (Ennew, 1994).

### **Symbolic interactionism**

The primary social theory that was used to orientate this study is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is a qualitative perspective, which emphasizes a phenomenological view in which reality inheres in the perception of individuals (Blumer, 1962). According to Blumer (1969) the term symbolic interaction refers to the peculiar and distinct character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or define and are influenced by each others' action, instead of merely reacting to each others' actions. Studies deriving from this perspective focus on subjective meaning and understanding of events that take place in naturally occurring settings. Symbolic interactionism has been one of the major bases of qualitative research (Mason, 1996).

I will attempt to give a brief explanation of symbolic interactionism as a social

theory or perspective. I will also try to show how it is related to the study.

According to Blumer, (1969), there are three simple premises that will help us to understand symbolic interactionism. The first one deals with how human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them.

This premise includes things such as physical objects, other human beings, institutions, guiding ideals, activities of others, and such situations as an individual encounters in his daily life. The second premise states that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interactions that one has with others. The third premise is that such meanings are then “handled in, and modified through an interpretative process used by the persons in dealing with the things they encounter” (Blumer, 1969:2). In summary, according to symbolic interactionism, street children internalize society’s negative attitudes and reactions towards them, more importantly, they see themselves as society portrays them and behave accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

There is an increase in the number of children on the street of urban areas in most developing countries. The reasons for children living on the streets are very complex and studies on street children throughout the world have shown that no single factor underlies their presence, rather factors which may be categorized as social and personal appear to be closely linked. In a broad sense street children have been regarded as one manifestation of a society disturbed by rapid urbanization; industrialization, unemployment, rural poverty, the destruction of

family life and an inequitable distribution of wealth and resources.

Some governments in a number of developing countries have not fully acknowledged that such a problem exists in their countries and as a result they have not reacted positively to it. They have not come up with policies that will look at the situation of street children positively. They appear not to understand who these children are, and why they are on street. Authority figures in many developing countries such as the police, social workers and magistrates, are inclined to view these children with disapproval and to take punitive action against them. Such responses have not been helpful.

Street children engage in various activities in order to survive on the streets. It has been observed that street children survive through activities that are largely illegal and are always in conflict with the authority and the law. Street children's work include, shoe cleaning, singing on buses, vending, carrying loads in markets or at stations, guarding and washing cars, pimping and prostitution. These children also form very close peer groups to provide protection, economic, emotional support and guidance to each other. The idea that they band together to commit crime has been dismissed by many studies.

The nature of continuous exposure to the street and the associated life styles make street children vulnerable to a range of health problems. Street children are sexually active at a younger age than adolescents generally owing to the way

they survive on the streets. They are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and they are unaware of the dangers involved in their sexual activity. Their sexual behaviour exacerbates risk of HIV infection.

The literature reveals that the use of intoxicants, such as glue, petrol and benzene is widespread among street children in most developing countries. Glue sniffing is common among street children especially the young ones. There appears to be no clear evidence to show why these children sniff glue. The use of hard drugs is rare among these children. It is the older street boys who may engage in this habit.

There are not many studies on the subject of street girls. The number of street boys is far greater than that of girls. This subgroup of street children has been virtually neglected by researchers and, consequently, are absent from literature compared to street boys. Various reasons have been put forward to explain this disparity, in terms of numbers. The most common claim that these girls are taken off the streets to become prostitutes has been disputed by many authors. Other researchers have attributed the higher proportion of boys among street children to socio-cultural factors and family circumstances. The differences between street boys and street girls are not only in terms of numbers and activities, but also in terms of their needs and problems.

Non-governmental organisations have taken the lead in trying to alleviate the

plight of street children in many developing countries. The programmes and policies designed to solve the problem of street children vary according to assumptions, ideologies and perceptions of different groups. Such programmes are not based on applied research. Some of these approaches have been found to be inappropriate and unacceptable by a number of authors.

There is lack of coordination amongst NGOs who are providing services to street children in Zimbabwe. These NGOs are being encouraged to recognize their limitations as individual organizations and build partnerships which can enhance their work.

# Chapter four

## Methodology

### Introduction

This chapter will describe the general approach that was used to collect the data for the study. Issues pertaining to sampling, gaining access, consent and confidentiality are discussed in this chapter, so are methodological issues. This chapter also describes how the qualitative and quantitative data was analysed.

### Purpose of the study

Although the purpose of the study has been discussed in chapter one, it would be helpful to reiterate the research questions which the study tried to address there.

- ❖ Who are these children in Zimbabwe? (Their backgrounds, categories, families and communities).
- ❖ Why are they on the streets?
- ❖ How do they survive on the streets?
- ❖ What problems/risks do they face on the streets?
- ❖ What policies are in place in Zimbabwe for the rehabilitation of street children?
- ❖ What services are in place to help these children?
- ❖ What are their rights?
- ❖ Which of their rights are not being protected, and why are they not being



protected?

These research questions helped the study to examine, and explain the current situation of street children in Zimbabwe with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The study aimed to understand the meaning for street children, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved in. It also explored their own perceptions of themselves, their lives and experiences in the street environment. Here, the term 'perceptions' carries much the same meaning as what qualitative researchers often refer to as the "participants' perspective". The perspective on events and actions held by the people involved in them is not simply their account of those events and actions, to be assessed in terms of its truth or falsity. Rather, it is part of the reality that the researcher is trying to understand (Menzel, 1978 cited in Maxwell, 1996:17). The study also wanted to investigate the services which were put in place to protect the rights of street children in Zimbabwe.

### **The approach**

The choice of research methods was largely determined by the aims and objectives of the study. What the study was trying to find out led to the question of what strategy and techniques it had to adopt. The selection of methods of data generation was also influenced by the socio-economic and the demographic characteristics of the population under study. Such characteristics included the street children's educational level, their ages, socio-economic status and ethnic

backgrounds. Taking all these factors into consideration, the study adopted a qualitative approach. According to Mason (1996) qualitative research is grounded in a philosophical position that is interpretivist, as it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced.

Ethnography was chosen as a methodology for the study. This methodology gave the children more direct say and participation in the generation of sociological data which is in line with Article 12 of the Convention which sets out the principle that children should be listened to in any matters which concern them and their views given due consideration in accordance with their age and maturity (Prout and James, 1990). Hence, an appropriate research design- participant observation, group discussions, in-depth interviews, and content analysis-were used to tap the subjective understandings of the street children who participated in this study.

Formal interviews or surveys of an experimental nature would not have yielded the data that this study required for a number of reasons. For example, street children hesitate to trust information to authority, and formal interviewing implies authority. Also, many of these children's concentration span is low, due to sniffing glue or their poor health. Thus, following Mason (1996) the present study used flexible and sensitive methods to gather information from the participants in their familiar surroundings. Social reality is understood in its own terms 'as it really' is. Rich descriptions of people and interaction in natural settings is provided. This is in contrast to some forms of experimental methods which are rather rigid,

standardized or structured or removed from 'real life or natural social context (Mason, 1996:4).

One of the street children's main survival strategies is lie-telling in order to keep people at a distance, to generate handouts, and to elicit and preserve a sympathetic view of their condition. Lies are less likely when you have built a relationship of trust with street children. This takes time and is not best achieved in the context of a one-off interview with street children. We cannot expect street children to tell the truth about their lives to strangers who do not even bother to tell them about themselves and why they are asking questions. The approach taken in this study enabled me to observe and interact with the children in relaxed and informal settings.

### **Gaining access**

I gained access to the children through non-governmental organizations which work with street children in Zimbabwe. Permission was granted for the researcher to do some voluntary work with street children at the drop-in-centres which are being run by these organizations in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare. I was introduced to street children at the centres by members of the outreach teams. Some of the boys and girls knew me well and were very happy to see me. I had worked with some of them when I was director of Streets Ahead in 2001.

I was allowed to do some voluntary work at three organizations which work with

street children in Zimbabwe. Overtime, my activities at the centres increased. I began to participate in some of the programmes that were set for the children at these drop-in-centres. My teaching experience became useful. I began to participate in the non-formal education programmes at some of the drop-in-centres. I started to tutor street children in English, Mathematics, Reading and Writing, at the drop-in-centres. On certain days the organizations provided street children with cooked meals. I also helped in preparing these meals together with some of the children.

I took some footballs and indoor games like, dominoes, snake and ladders and monopoly with me to Zimbabwe. I was involved in playing some of these games with the street children. In the morning we played indoor games with the children at the day centers and in the afternoon I and some members of the outreach team took the children out for football or volleyball. These activities attracted many street children.

On certain days and nights I joined the outreach workers who visited children on the streets. They talked with them, and assisted street children who needed to attend the local clinic due to illness or injury. Most of the street visits would take place at night because that was the time when many street children would start to trickle into the towns to look for food. The researcher and some street children also visited some street children who had been arrested by the police. We would take food to them and sometimes pay fines for them to be released from the

police cells. Through this programme of volunteering, some of the children's initial perceptions of the researcher as an outsider were gradually changed to one of an NGO worker. By engaging in these activities, I managed to build mutual relationships of trust with those street children who did not know me.

### **Informed consent**

The street children were informed that I was a student at a University in England, and that I was carrying out a study on the lives of street children so that other people would know about their circumstances. Most of the children agreed to participate in the research without further discussions, but a significant number felt that there had been too many studies done on them without any benefits accruing to them. Some of the children demanded payment before we could talk to them but the demands for cash were immediately dropped when they were informed that I had brought some footballs and other interesting games for them to play with.

The children were assured that whatever they said would remain confidential. No one, except the researcher and his helpers, would know who provided what information. The names of all the children in this study have been changed in order to protect them. No street child was forced to participate in this study.

### **Pilot study**

This was necessary because it allowed the researcher to see whether the

questions which were in the interview schedule for the children adequately addressed the goals of the study. Eight street children were selected to participate in the pilot study. Of these, five were boys and three were girls. All the interviews and discussions with these street children took place at one organization. The interviews were tape-recorded. The interviews and group discussions were then transcribed and analyzed using the process explained in this chapter. There was a need to make minor changes to some questions in the interview guide which I had prepared for the children. Two members of staff helped in this exercise. The pilot study also gave the researcher an idea of how long each individual interview would take. It helped to map out where the children 'hanged out' at various times of the day and where they slept.

### **The sample**

Street children lead lives of constant mobility and change; as a result they are very difficult to count (Agnelli, 1986).

Because their lives and location are so fluid it is difficult to define a sample or even individual respondents with any certainty and stability. Street children may simply disappear - as result of their own volition or because of arrest before research is complete (Swart-Kruger and Donald, 1994:119).

Because of this difficulty, selecting a proper scientific sample by random methods was impossible. Unless you know how many they are in the first place, this can not be done. The study therefore used "purposive sample" or "an opportunistic

sample” (Mason, 1996). In this study individual street children were deliberately selected based on a set of predicated set of characteristics. The researcher identified those particular street children who were liable to furnish the study with information that could help in answering some of the questions. This is in keeping with Maxwell's suggestion:

Selecting those, settings and individuals that can provide you with information that you need in order to answer your research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions (Maxwell, 1996:70).

The sample was selected from children who had been living and working on the streets for more than one year. The children had to be in the records of the organisations. Children in residential programmes were excluded because it was thought that these children were no longer engaging in the most common practices of street life. Some had been off the streets for a long time. Even though some of them were qualified to speak from their experiences on the streets, they would be doing so from a position of some distance from the street child's everyday world.

After an initial contact with over 60 children, 46 became the final sample upon which the study is based. These 46 were children who were aged between 6 and 18 years old (32 male and 14 female). All 46 street children managed to respond to all the questions on the interview schedule for street children. Of these, 30 were from Harare, 10 were from Bulawayo and 6 were from Mutare.

The number of street children constituting the sample (N=46) for this study got reduced from the number of street children initially contacted (N=60) due to a number of reasons. It was difficult to trace some of the children (N=14) who had earlier responded to the interview schedule as some had moved to other suburbs or other places of operation or were arrested and sent to probation homes or hostels. Other contacts with the children were through snowballing. Street children interviewed at the day centres introduced their friends to the researcher.

### **Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods**

As a qualitative perspective, the research reported here embodied qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Although the major focus of this study was qualitative, there was a need to include a quantitative approach which would help to identify overall demographic and social characteristics of street children and their families. These demographic and biographical variables would not have been apparent from a qualitative study alone. While quantitative data give a picture of the biographical and social characteristics of street children and their families, qualitative data give insights and understanding of the lives of street children on the streets. Insights are gained when we bring both qualitative and quantitative givens together in an analysis which may not be attainable without such integration. Bryman (1988a) states that quantitative research methods can establish regularities in social life and qualitative evidence can allow the processes which link the variables identified to be revealed. By bringing these two parts of analysis together, a richer understanding of the research topic is



obtained.

### **Data generating techniques**

The need to use interview schedules, which would generate both qualitative and quantitative data, was thus recognized. The study employed a semi-structured interview technique. The interview schedules included open-ended and close-ended questions that would generate qualitative and quantitative data.

Qualitative data were also gathered through group discussions and observations. Content analysis was also used to generate qualitative and quantitative data for this study.

The quantitative data included information on the ages of the children, their family backgrounds, and the communities from which they came. Information on their education, and the work which they did on the streets was also gathered. Records of the children kept by the organizations also helped to corroborate the information given by the children themselves regarding their categories, health status, educational level, their age, socio-economic status and ethnic backgrounds. Content analysis of articles from daily and weekly newspapers showed the general attitudes of members of the public towards street children.

### **Interviews**

The main purpose of these was to try and achieve a dialogue with each street child. Their aim was not to elicit factual or hard data from the respondents, but to

engage each child in a conversation. To facilitate this, each interview took place at the child's chosen venue. Through such conversations the children gave information on their life histories, family backgrounds, the hardships they were facing on the streets and the reasons why they left home. This technique also helped in formulating some of the case-studies that were used in the study. Interviews often took place at the day centres, at the football ground-after or during a match. Sometimes on their suggestions, we moved to other secluded "bases" where they cooked their food, kept their belongings and slept. Some of the children were also interviewed on the streets. These interviews took place during the day and during the night. Each interview lasted for about one hour. Some times it was necessary to abandon an interview with a child due to certain disruptions. Children would run off to direct a car into a parking bay or to beg from a potential client coming along the road. In such cases interviews would continue on the following day at the day centres or during the night at their "bases."

Because I was also interested in understanding how some members of the public people reacted to the street children, I carried out interviews with members of the public who were in constant touch with the street children. These were petrol pump attendants, railway station porters, restaurant workers, and those who worked in hotels. Street children tend to gather at these places, often begging, scavenging for food and guarding cars. I talked to 15 people who worked in these places.

Where it was possible, I also interviewed the parents and guardians of some of the street children (N=8). These interviews normally took place when some parents came to the drop-in-centers looking for their children or during the time when some of the street children were being reunified with their families. These also helped to show that some of the stories that had been given by street children differed from what their parents or guardians said. Responses were tape recorded and transcribed. A summary sheet of each individual interview was made on completion of each interview.

### **Observations**

The street children were observed while they worked and played in various locations, where they were found. Staggered observations were made and recorded on observation charts at the places where the children normally hanged out at different times of the day. Many hours were spent on the streets with, or watching, the street children. It was not possible to participate fully in their lives, for it would have been incongruous to gamble or to sleep in dustbins as the children did.

This method contributed to the study in a number of ways. It was valuable because it enabled me to make assessments of the children's, economic and recreational activities, and how they organized themselves in the street. I was able to understand how the children interacted among themselves, their carers and some members of the public. Street observations were also a valuable

means of checking the accuracy of information. Some boys who said that they did not sniff glue were seen indulging in this habit at night. Playing organized games with them also allowed me to observe how some of the street children reacted to the frustrations of playing according to rules and regulations.

The observations gave indication as to what type of questions I should ask or avoid during the group discussions with the children and their helpers. I concentrated on getting a complete a record of their lives by supplementing the observations with group discussions and individual interviews.

### **Group discussions**

All together twenty two sessions of group discussions were held; these ranged from one hour to one and half hours in length, or were as long as two hours if they were conducted at their 'bases' during the day and at night. Thirty eight children participated in the group discussions. These group discussions yielded information on aspects of the children's lives. Information on home environment, street lifestyle, survival techniques, beliefs, feelings and aspirations for the future came out of these discussions. These discussions were conducted in an informal atmosphere which was free from interruptions. Street children form very close peer groups and show altruism among themselves. Discussions were carried out in such peer groups at different locations with street children. Each group comprised 5 to 6 street children who were almost the same age. Every one in the group had a right to speak and be listened to. No one was allowed to dominate

the group. The children agreed to the method of recording. Children with less structured lives found it difficult to cope with structured group discussions. As a result of this, the themes for our discussions were not presented formally. It was normal for discussions to open with an overview of events that day and an update on what the children had done since I last saw them. Talk then moved naturally to other areas. If, for example the children had been arrested or beaten by the police, discussion would centre on reasons for their arrest, where the arrest took place, the number and names of street children arrested, the justice or injustice of the arrest and what happened to them in police cells.

The children were able to express their feelings and share their impressions about the services which they were getting from some non-governmental organizations which were working with them. This also afforded me the opportunity to analyze and evaluate the services that the children were getting from these NGOs. The wide range of street children who took part in these discussions ensured that a broad overview of their experiences on the streets was obtained. The children enjoyed listening to their voices on the tap recorder.

I conducted eight sessions of discussions with key representatives (No=10) of four non-governmental organisations which work with street children in Zimbabwe. Discussions provided information on how the children survived and the problems they faced on the streets. Issues pertaining to child protection in Zimbabwe and the major problems faced by no-governmental organizations in

attempting to protect the rights of street children were discussed. These discussions provided me with an insight into the position of the Government of Zimbabwe on the phenomenon of street children in the country. Information gathered from these discussions enabled the researcher to compare the work of the various organizations and to judge whether their programmes were benefiting the street children or not. The discussions were recorded and later transcribed.

### **Case files**

I was given permission to access all the files of all the participants held by non-governmental, organisations which I targeted. From these files, I gathered further corroborative information, such as the ages of the children, their education levels and their family backgrounds. These also helped to formulate the case studies that have been used in this study.

### **Content analysis**

Content analysis of newspapers articles also yielded further information on street children in Zimbabwe. Through these documents, information on some of the work being carried out by local and international no-governmental organizations regarding child protection issues in Zimbabwe was gathered. I gained also an insight into how international organisations like the United Nations Children's Education Fund, Save the Children (U. K.), and Save the Children (Norway) were working with local non-governmental organisations in attempting to protect the rights of all children in Zimbabwe. In short, analysis of stories in the daily and

weekly newspapers provided information on how street children were viewed by members of Zimbabwean society in general.

In this study, the combined use of a number of data gathering techniques such as, interviews, group discussions, participant observations, (or ethnography), case files, and content analysis helped to enhance quantity and quality information on street children and their service providers in Zimbabwe.

### **Methods of data analysis**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; or builds grounded theory (Marshall and Rossman, 1989 in Holdaway, 2000).

The study followed the main stages of data analysis that were suggested by Denscombe (2007) and Bryman (2001). The literature review helped to put the study in its context. Because the study explored theories or concepts developed in other studies on street children, the analytic approach employed in this study was predetermined. The concepts or categories that emerged from the review of studies by other authors on the situation of street children in other developing countries were used in the coding process. Those themes, ideas or concepts relating the research questions or appeared to be particularly pertinent to the worlds of street children were selected and used to categorize the data collected

in the present study. The interview schedules were thus designed accordingly.

All the interviews were read or listened to in full in order to get an overall feel for the content and what the concerns about street children were. The analysed raw data consisted of the complete transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews, group discussions with the participants and with members of the public, notes from the field observations, and newspaper articles. The data had to be appropriately segmented, according to topic in order to make the mass of data understandable. The transcripts were then organised under the themes, names or labels, which were used to formulate the interview schedules. This was the coding process which entailed breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorising the data. The transcribed qualitative data were analyzed according to these topics in order to discern the pattern of the experiences of street children. Triangulation of the different data sets (interviews, group discussions, life history interviews, and field observations) was carried out to check for consistency of information across methods. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical procedures manually. The two sets of data were combined to produce a deeper understanding of the situation of street children in Zimbabwe.



# Chapter five

## Quantitative findings

### Introduction

As stated in chapter one, the major aim of this study was to develop an understanding of the circumstances of street children in Zimbabwe with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The study examined also the services available to assist the children. The study used mixed methods to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter presents and discusses the quantitative data and other findings. The data were collected through interviews with the children and from case files kept by non-governmental organizations which work with these children.

### Summary of the findings

**Table 5.2: Proportion of sample by age**

<b>Age (Years)</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
6-8	4	8.6	3	1
9-11	11	23.9	8	3
12-15	13	28.2	9	4
16-18	18	39.1	12	6
Total	46	99.8	32	14

As table 5.2 shows, forty-six street children, aged from 6 to 18 years participated

in this study. Thirty-two children (69.5%) of the children who participated in the study were males and fourteen (30.4%) were females. Nearly nine percent (8.6%) of the children were below the age of nine and twenty four per cent were between the ages of nine to eleven years. Just over twenty eight percent were aged 12 to 15, and 39.1% were above 15 years of age.

### **Their categories**

**Table 5.3: The children, by category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>male</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
On the streets	7	12	19	41.3
Of the Streets	4	9	13	28.2
Home and Streets	3	11	14	30.4

Table 5.3 shows the categories of street children who were interviewed. The majority (41.3%) of the children interviewed were “on the streets.” These were children who worked on the streets during the day and went home at night. Of these, 15.2% were girls and 26% were boys. Twenty eight percent (28.2%) were children “of the streets.” These were children who worked and slept on the streets during the day, they did not go home at night. Of these, 8.6% were girls and 19.5% were boys. Nearly 30 percent (30.4%) were children who sometimes slept on the streets and at their homes at other times.

**Table 5.4: Family characteristics**

<b>Family description</b>	<b>No of children</b>	<b>%</b>
Step-mother	10	21.7
Step-father	8	17.4
Other relatives	11	23.9
Father only	3	6.5
Mother only	14	30.4

The majority (39%) of the children interviewed lived with either a step-mother or a step-father. Nearly 24% (23.9%) reported that they lived with relatives. These were orphans who did not have any parents to care for them. Nearly 37% of the children came from single-parent families. Of these thirty per cent lived with single mothers, while 6.5% lived with their fathers. There were no children who lived with both parents. The results confirm that street children exist along a continuum of varying degrees of connection with their families. After sleeping at home and on the streets, the child may finally choose the streets when conditions at home were no longer supportive as result of poverty, loss of a parent or guardian.

**Table 5.5: Street children's family homes**

<b>Family home</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
In rural area	19	41.3
In urban area	13	28.2
Commercial farming area	14	30.4

The majority (41.3 %) came from rural areas while 28.2 % came from the urban areas and 30.4% came from farming areas. These findings confirm what others studies and organizations have discovered, that most street children originate from the rural areas. One project in Bulawayo, Thuthuka, pointed out that a substantial number (26 %) of street children on their register came from the rural areas in Masvingo. There are a number of street children (30.4 %) in this study who came from commercial farming areas.

**Table 5.6: Proportion of children by nationality**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>All street children</b>		<b>Children of the streets</b>		<b>Children on streets</b>		<b>Home and the streets</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Zimbabwe	32	69.5	12	26	11	23.9	9	19.5
Mozambique	14	30.4	8	17.3	6	13	0	

Table 5.6 indicates that street children in Zimbabwe are heterogeneous not only in terms of ethnicity, but also in terms of nationality. Amongst the children

involved in the present study, nearly seventy per cent were Zimbabweans. Of these, (26%) were children “of the streets”; these were children who did not have any homes to go to. Nearly twenty four per cent (23.9%) were children “on the street” (these children worked on the streets and slept at home). Nearly 20% of the children reported that they slept either at home and on the streets. Just over thirty per cent (30.4%) of the total sample were Mozambicans. About seventeen per cent (17.3%) of these children were “of the streets” (they permanently lived on the streets), 13% of the children from Mozambique were children “on the street”. Most of these street children were employed as vendors by some African Zimbabwean business men and women.

Soon after attaining independence a civil war erupted in Mozambique. Many families crossed the border into Zimbabwe. They were running away from the civil war and the harsh economic situation in that country. Many children were abandoned by their parents during this period. These street children were then employed by Zimbabweans as domestic workers or as vendors. They give all their daily earnings to their employers at the end of the day. Some reported that their employers provided them with adequate food and shelter while some were not getting such services from their employers. When the war ended in that country, some of them returned home but others never bothered to return. The study found out that these street children are often arrested and deported to Mozambique but many of them find their way back to Zimbabwe. They no longer have any contacts in their countries of origin. They now classify themselves as

citizens of Zimbabwe.

**Table 5.7: Levels of education**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>%</b>
None	-	5	10.8
Grade 1 - 3	4	5	19.6
Grade 4 - 7	12	11	50
Form 1 - 2	5	0	10.8
Form 3 - 4	4	0	8.7
Form 5 - 6	0	0	0

Table 5.7 shows the education levels of children who participated in the study. Nearly eleven percent (10.8 %) of the children had never attended school. These were all girls above 16 years of age. Almost twenty percent (19.6%) had less than four years of primary school education. The majority fifty percent (50 %) had four to seven years of primary school education, they dropped from school before getting to secondary school. Eleven percent (10.8%) had less than four years of secondary school education while nine percent (8.7%) had three to four years of secondary education.

**Table 5.8: Health problems**

<b>No of Children</b>	<b>Type of illness</b>
9	Skin infection
6	Diarrhoea
25	Sexually Transmitted Infections
7	Malaria
5	Tuberculosis
3	HIV/Aids
4	Traffic accidents

Source: Streets Ahead Monthly Report, July 2004.

According to Streets Ahead, an organization that works with street children, in July 2004, a substantial number of children who were escorted to the hospital suffered from sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhea. Among these children (25) five were girls and the rest were boys; they were all above the age of 15. Three children were taken in for HIV tests after their health had deteriorated, they tested positive. In 2004 the organization assisted in burying ten young people who had died from various causes. Four of the children who died had been involved in accidents with traffic on the roads when they were high on glue.

**Table 5. 9 Reasons for leaving home**

<b>Reasons given by 46 children</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Orphan-hood	8	17.3
Abused by step-parents	15	32.6
In trouble at home	1	2.1
Homes destroyed by the government	9	19.5
Abandoned by parents	3	6.5
Running away from poverty at home	7	15.2
Earning income for family	3	6.5

The children were asked why they were on the streets. A number of reasons were given by the children for being on the streets. The majority (32.6%) reported that they had left home due to abuse by step-parents at home. Almost twenty per cent (19.5%) children reported that they were homeless, that they were victims of “Operation Clean Up”. The Government of Zimbabwe destroyed squatter settlements and other shelters which had been illegally constructed in the high density townships. The displaced families found themselves without any shelter; as a result they joined other homeless people who sleep on the pavements in the cities. The affected children in this study reported that they did not know the whereabouts of their parents. The other children (6.5%) reported that they had been sent by their parents to look for money so that they could buy some food and pay for their school fees. The same percentage (6.5%) of the children in this study did not know where their parents were. Eight (17.3%) of the children were



orphans who had lost both parents (probably due to HIV/AIDS). Some of these children were in the care of relatives but due to problems of school fees and food they decided to move on to the streets. .

**Table 5.10: Birth certificates**

No	Response	%
42	No	91.3
4	Yes	7.6

Schools in Zimbabwe do not enroll children if they do not have birth certificates. Nearly ninety percent of the children reported that they did not have any birth certificates for various reasons.

**Table 5.11: Reunification with families**

Children of the streets	Response	%
7	Yes	53.8
5	No	36.4
1	Not sure	7.6

Just above fifty three percent (53.8%) of the children who lived permanently on the streets wanted to go back home. Five children (36.4 %) did not want to go back to their families.

## **Their survival**

**Table 5.12: Sources of food**

<b>Sources</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Buying	21	45.6
Scavenging from bins	4	8.6
Leftovers/hotels/restaurants	13	28.2
From drop-in-centers	8	17.3
Ate from home	None	-

To investigate the strategies that the children used to survive on the streets, all the children in the sample were asked how they obtained food.

As Table 5.12 shows the majority of the street children interviewed (45.6%) bought the food, they ate. Most of these were the older children. Nearly nine percent (8.6%) said they fed from bins, while 28.2% ate left over food from hotels and restaurants. Those who scavenged for food from the rubbish bins were mainly new street children who had not acquired the street survival techniques. About 17% of the children reported that they ate at the drop-in centers if there was food. Sometimes there was no food at the centres owing to financial constraints faced by some NGOs. None of the children, as the above Table indicates, ate from home.

**Table 5.13: Economic activities**

Activity	No of Street Children	Percentage
Begging	11	23.9
Escorting blind adults	7	15.2
Vending	14	30.4
Minding cars	8	17.3
Washing cars	6	13

All the children reported that they were engaged in economic activities. The main economic activities are presented in Table 5.13.

**Table 5.14: In conflict with the law**

No	%	Reason for arrest
6	13	Vending
20	43.3	Loitering (begging, guarding cars)
10	21.7	Stealing (sweets, bread, biscuits etc)
3	6.5	Smoking marijuana (cannabis)
7	15.2	Never been arrested

The children were asked if they had ever been in conflict with the law or had been arrested by the police. As the above Table shows, a majority (84.8%) of them had been arrested more than twice for various reasons, ranging from vending to smoking cannabis. Thirty six (14.3%) reported that they had been

arrested more than two times by the police. Seven children (15.2%) said that they had never been arrested by the police. These were young children between the ages of 6 and 8 years. Of those arrested, 6 children (13%) were arrested for vending. Among these, three were girls. Nearly 22% of the children were arrested for stealing. Three bigger boys reported that they had been arrested for smoking cannabis.

**Table 5.15: Problems faced by street girls**

	<b>Beating</b>	<b>Rape</b>	<b>Pregnancy</b>
% of street girls experiencing	43	35	21

As in other developing countries there is very little information on street girls in Zimbabwe. Other studies have revealed that the problems experienced by street girls are different from those of street boys (Lucchini, 1994; Hecht, 1998). I asked this question in order to ascertain whether this was also the situation in Zimbabwe. Table 5.15 shows some of the problems that are experienced by street girls. Forty three per cent of the girls reported that they had been beaten more than once on the streets. They were beaten by either the police, members of the public or other street children (boys). Twenty one per cent had experienced pregnancy and 35% said that they had been raped at home or in the streets.

## **Discussion**

This study has found out that there are fundamental similarities between the

situation of street children in Zimbabwe and other developing countries like India, South Africa, Kenya and Brazil. As in other countries street children in this study can be categorized as those “of the streets” and “on the street”. Children “of the street” live permanently on the streets; they live and earn their “living” on the streets; they live with other homeless adults. Children “on the street” earn their living on the streets but do not necessarily live on the streets. These children spend most of their time on the streets but usually return to some form a “family” unit where there is some form of supervision or control. This group includes an increasing number of school children that spend most of the day on the streets. This study has identified a transitional group of children who sleep both at home and on the streets. Thus the distinction between children “on the street” and “of the street” is not clear-cut. As in other countries (Connolly, 1990) the majority of street children in this study were male.

Street children are not usually counted, nor are they subject to any national census, so their exact numbers are unknown. It is still unclear exactly how many children are on the streets in Zimbabwe, especially since they fall into several categories. Their numbers are said to increase during the school holidays and on weekends which indicates that school pupils are amongst street children, probably, sent by parents to supplement the family’s meager earnings. The organizations which work with street children, estimate that Harare alone has 5 000 street children. Bulawayo is estimated to have 1 000 street children and Mutare 2 000. All the organizations which work with these children admitted that

it was very difficult to estimate the number of street children in the country. The estimates given by UNICEF are not very far from the ones that were given by organizations that provide services to street children. UNICEF estimates that there are over 12 000 street children countrywide of whom about 5 000 are in the capital cities of Zimbabwe. Most street children come from the rural areas where poverty is the highest, while others originate from the urban areas, also characterized by increasing poverty (UNICEF, 1994).

The majority of street children worldwide are aged between 10 and 14 years (Lalor, 1999). This is not the case in Zimbabwe where children as young as 6 years old are on the streets. A number of young children are 'used' by adults to elicit sympathy and obtain money by begging at major street intersections and in busy shopping centres. These children were usually in the company of other older street children. As Aptekar (1989) pointed out, the young children are considered cute, which contributes to their success when begging for alms. But as they grow older, their public image change; they are perceived as thugs and treated accordingly. The larger percentage of children in the study (39%) was above 15 years of age and 28% were in the 12 to 15 years age group followed by 24% who were in the 9 to 11 years age group. The lowest proportion (9%) of the children was below the age of nine. There were more boys than girls in the sample of this study. Thirty two were males and 14 were females.

The majority (41.3%) of the children interviewed were children "on the streets".

There were more street boys than there were street girls. In Zimbabwe, the smaller number of street girls compared to street boys may be attributed to the position the female child holds in society as a whole and in rural communities in particular. A female child in these communities is relied on by the family to contribute not only to household chores, but also to agricultural activities. This is not peculiar to Zimbabwe. For example, in Nepal, more young female children than boys were found to work more in the fields and at home, resulting in their lower rate of school enrollment (Archaya, 1992). In urban areas, on the other hand, girls are required at home to help with cooking, washing, cleaning and other chores.

Street girls face a number of problems on the streets. Table 5.15 shows some of the problems that are experienced by street girls. Forty three per cent of the girls reported that they had been beaten more than once on the streets. Twenty one per cent had experienced pregnancy and thirty five per cent said that they had been raped at home or in the streets. An increasing number of sexual abuses against girls comes from members of their own families. Given the high HIV prevalence in populations in the developing countries sexual abuse carries a high risk of HIV transmission. Nevertheless, the family, the broader community, and the law enforcement agencies are often complicit in attempting to hide the abuse. Effective protection mechanisms targeted at abuse against girls in the family are virtually nonexistence (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Hecht (1998) reported that many street girls became pregnant. They also experience beatings from the

police and other children on the streets. Lalor, (1997) conducted a study on street girls in Ethiopia and reported that every single response in her study contained a negative consequence of street life, most of the respondents mentioning lack of education, ill health, and physical and sexual assaults.

The results of the study show that the majority (39%) of the children interviewed came from households with either a step-mother or a step-father. Some children reported that they had previously lived in a wide variety of domestic situations, such as living with, aunts, uncles and neighbours. However, it would appear that these alternative safety net arrangements appear to be susceptible to a break down that does leave the child on the streets. Tierney, (1997) also found this same situation in her study of street children in Guatemala. She states:

The despair that the young children feel in this environment will increase if one or both of the parents lose their ability to cope with burden of everyday survival and take to drinking or become more abusive within the family and unable or unprepared to care for them home. Children sensing great mental and physical danger may opt to leave the home, perhaps ending in the streets after being passed from grandparents to aunts and uncles to family friends (Tierney, 1997:9).

Nearly 37% of the children came from single-parent families. There were no children who lived with both parents. A similar profile emerges from Lalor's (1997) survey of 69 girls "of the street" in Addis Ababa. Only 16% arrived on the streets from a two-parent household. The largest number (30%) came from female-headed households.



Street children come from families that are at risk. The concept of families at risk derives from the observation that families that are not able to cope with problems in one area often demonstrate a similar inability in other areas, and thus are at risk of breakdown. Families at risk are unable to meet their basic needs. They are unable to meet their members' basic needs in areas such as health, nutrition, shelter, physical and emotional care and personal development (Dube, 1999). Very few children would choose to live and work on the streets if they were given security, protection, sufficient food and clothing, a supportive set of caring people, good schools and time to play (Reynolds, 1990).

The majority of children in the study (41.3 %) came from communal areas while (28.2 %) came from the urban areas and (30.4%) came from farming areas. These findings confirm what others studies and organizations have discovered, that most street children originate from the rural areas (e. g. Muchini, 1994; Richards and Richards, 1996; UNICEF, 1994). One project in Bulawayo, Thuthuka pointed out that a substantial number (26 %) of street children on their register came from the rural areas. It is generally agreed that street children have their origin in migrant families who come from rural areas to urban centres in order to escape rural poverty (Rafael, 1997). Such migration is the “traditional” route for rural people seeking better lives for themselves and their families. In as much as children were and are a resource in a farming community, they are also seen and treated as such by the poor in urban settings. On migration into the city, poor people, through their experience of surviving in rural or farming

settings, ask their children to join in eking out an existence on the streets. There were a number of street children (30.4 %) in this study who were originally from commercial farming areas.

Many families were displaced when the government of Zimbabwe seized farms from White commercial farmers. Prior to these land seizures, there were 300 000 to 4000 000 wage-earning workers on commercial farms, perhaps one quarter of the formal sector labour force and between 11 and 18 percent of the total population. Perhaps 25 per cent of these are of foreign descent, mainly Malawian, Mozambican, or Zambian, though their families may have lived in Zimbabwe for several generations. It is estimated that 3 000 families were displaced because of the shut down of farming operations (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Some parents or guardians of these children were employed as labourers on these White owned commercial farms.

Nearly eleven percent (10.8 %) of the street children interviewed had never attended school at all. These were all girls above 16 years of age. Many of the few girls who were in school dropped out of school when the family had limited resources. A girl drops out of school and takes on the role of a mother, she becomes an adult. In many cultures girls are needed within the family as they are expected to perform household chores, to cook and take care for younger siblings (Connolly, 1990).

Many street children were not able to go through the primary education system

because parents did not have money for school levies, building fees and were unable to buy school uniforms. As far as education is concerned, many developing countries have two sets of children; those from well to do families who go to school well equipped and those from poor families who leave their homes less equipped and find school requirements alien to their own experiences (Gabarino, et al., 1982 in Dube,1999). Such children do not complete the course of the education system.

As children grow older and the expectations of them to contribute more to family income, school attendance becomes less feasible. Secondary education, which is frequently seen as a means to escape poverty, has inspired only frustrated expectations (Levine, 1996; Save the Children Fund, 1990) because many children who have completed secondary education are unable to find employment. As a result many poor communities do not see the importance of school attendance. Many poor families would rather place their children on the labour market. We could rightly say that in many of these poor communities school attendance competes with the earnings of a child. Even in countries where education is free or where books, uniforms and midday meals are provided, as in some Indian states, school attendance may still be low, because schooling competes with a child's earnings (Bequele and Boyden 1988).

Alternative educational strategies for urban poor children need to be devised. Schools for such children need to take into account the unaffordability of uniforms and fees for some parents. The existing school infrastructure (in urban

areas) could be used for educating street children say in the afternoon, early evenings or during weekends.

These schools could form part of an “earn and learn” programme which provides nonformal education to street children whilst allowing the children to earn their living. This is because one of the major costs associated with schooling is the loss of the child’s earnings. The programme is highly suited to the characteristics of street children as it provides them with skills to sustain themselves once they move through the programme to adulthood. This kind of programme has proved useful in Brazil, South Africa and Sri Lanka. According to Rev. Arnold Grol, a Dutch missionary and chairman and founder of Undugu Society, the key to reducing the flow of children to the streets, and to helping those already on the streets is education (Ramsay, 1996).

Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that: The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. The study revealed that almost 90% (91.3%) of the 46 children interviewed did not have any birth certificates. A number of reasons were given for this state of affairs. The most common problem cited was that either the mother or father or both had no identification particulars needed for acquiring the birth certificates for their children. The others said that both their parents were deceased. They did not have any birth certificates because they were no adults to testify for them at the Birth and Death

Registry offices. Some street children said their birth certificates were lost when their homes were destroyed by the Zimbabwean army and the police (Operation get rid of trash). The Provincial Child Welfare Forum acknowledged that this was a major problem for most children in Zimbabwe:

Obtaining Birth Certificates for the orphaned children or children in difficult circumstances is a fruitless task. The requirements of the Birth and Deaths Registry very often cannot be met because there are no people who can testify that they knew the child who requires a Birth Certificate. The children may be orphans and have relatives who are unwilling to take on the most tedious task of seeking for a Birth Certificate. The lack of a Birth Certificate is particularly tragic because it can deprive a child of education if that child cannot produce a Birth Certificate (Provincial Child Welfare Forum and the Department of Social Welfare, 1998).

Some street girls in this study also said that their babies are sometimes denied treatment and supplementary feeding at the local clinics because they do not have birth certificates. A report by the World Health Organization confirms this:

Many Health and welfare organizations particularly government agencies, have fixed rules and admission criteria which exclude unaccompanied minors from receiving services. Many street children are below the age of consent and do not have parents or guardians to accompany them for treatment. Reports from a number of countries in South America have revealed cases of street children who have actually died on the streets after having been refused emergency treatment at local hospitals (WHO, 1993:7).

Street children cited a number of reasons for being on the streets. These include

earning income, being orphaned, abuse by step-parents or relatives, inadequate housing and peer pressure. The study revealed that the majority (32.6%) had left home due to abuse by step-parents at home. Almost twenty per cent (19.5%) children were homeless. They were either victims of “Operation Clean Up” or the “Land Reform programme.” The Government of Zimbabwe destroyed squatter settlements and other shelters in the high density townships. It seized many farms from the White commercial farmers. Such political decisions displaced many families. The etiology of street children can be viewed as being socio-economic in origin. Street children are social casualties of conscious political decisions by certain governments (Cockburn, 1991).

About seven per cent (6.5%) of the children had been sent by their parents to look for money so that they could buy some food and pay for their school fees. The same percentage of (6.5%) of the children did not know where their parents were. 17.3% of the children were orphans who had lost both parents probably due to HIVAIDS. Although some of these figures may include some fictitious accounts given by the children, they nevertheless indicate the magnitude of the problems faced by the children. The reasons given by street children in Zimbabwe were not different from those given by street children elsewhere. Aptekar (1988) recorded that 48% of his sample of street children in Cali, Columbia, were on the streets for “financial reasons” but a further 32% were there because of abuse in the home. Some were in the care of relatives but due to problems of school fees and food they decided to move on to the streets.

Reintegration of children back into their families is a vital issue and a challenge for most of the organizations working with street children in Zimbabwe. When the children were asked if they wanted to go back home, some of the children (48%) said that they did not want to go back home. Children (28.2%) who said that they wanted to go back home did not know where their parents were.

The majority of the street children interviewed (45.6%) bought food with the money they earned through the various economic activities which they carry out on the streets. Most of these were the older children who had been on the streets for longer periods of time. Nearly nine percent (8.6%) said they fed from rubbish bins. It is assumed that children, who scavenged for food from the bins in the cities, were mainly new street children who were unfamiliar with the street survival techniques. Some children reported that they ate at the drop-in-centers if there was food. Sometimes there was no food at these centers owing to financial constraints faced by some of the non-governmental organizations which work with street children.

In South Africa Swart found out that not many children eat from rubbish bins, even if they are very hungry. It is not top priority to buy food-the children would rather get stale food from bakeries and restaurants or even snatch from plates at pavement cafes. Members of a group may sometimes share an evening meal-they may cook specially bought items in pots or tins over a fire. In the morning they usually brought bread and milk (Swart, 1990a).

Although Zimbabwe has legislation, which clearly bars children from working in formal settings, street children work in hotels and other food outlets in an obscure manner. Hotels in the cities benefit from an auxiliary labour force of street children. The workers at these outlets get the street children to scour rubbish bins soon after they have been emptied by workers of certain refuse removal companies. The street children are also made to sweep and mop the surroundings of these outlets. The street children are then given food that has been left by the customers as a form of payment.

Street children in Zimbabwe, like street children in other developing countries, engage in various economic activities for survival. It was observed that the highest proportion of the children thirty percent (30.4%) engaged in guarding cars for a fee. Bigger boys in the 16-18 age groups performed this activity. The fifteen percent (15.2%) who washed cars were also in this age group. Twenty four percent (23.9%) of those interviewed reported that they survived on begging. Another 13% are mainly young children who said that they escort adult blind beggars.

As elsewhere in the world, street children in Zimbabwe suffer from many health problems due to their life style. They are vulnerable to a range of illnesses which are not experienced by other children. Factors which contribute to this vulnerability include poor hygiene, poor sanitation and poor diet. According to a monthly report of Streets Ahead, (Table 5.8) an organization that works with



street children in Zimbabwe, the highest number of children (25) who were escorted to the hospital in July 2004 suffered from sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea. Three children tested HIV positive. Street children engage in sex indiscriminately and this exacerbates the risk of HIV/AIDS (Athey, 1997).

The children were asked if they were ever in trouble with the police. Out of the 46, 39 children reported that they had been arrested once or twice on the streets. Seven had never been arrested by the police. Those arrested reported that they had been arrested for illegal vending, for guarding cars (loitering) and for petty crimes like theft of bread, biscuits, fruits, or sweets from the supermarkets. Three bigger boys said they were arrested for smoking cannabis. Although no bigger boys admitted that they had been arrested for other crimes besides smoking marijuana, we heard through group discussions that these boys committed very serious crimes such as robbery and pick-pocketing. The delinquency of street children has been relatively well researched. A frequent observation has been the increasing involvement of street children in theft, as they progress through adolescence (Felsman, 1981). While younger boys mainly practice petty thefts such as stealing food from the supermarkets, older boys may become involved in more confrontational crimes such as pick-pocketing and robberies. Inevitably, such activities bring street children into contact with the police or other security forces (Lalor, 1999). The risk of arrest is carried by many of the activities through which street children 'earn' money, such as begging, theft, prostitution, trading in

stolen goods, gambling and 'parking cars'. These are all regarded as punishable offences (Swart, 1990a).

Although Zimbabwe has established the necessary national legal framework on juvenile justice, at the time of the study there were still a number of gaps in the implementation and monitoring of the law's application as there were no practical guidelines. In June 1996 the initial Report of the Government of Zimbabwe to the Committee on the Rights of the Child was examined. While the overall comments from the committee were that Zimbabwe had made some progressive achievements towards the fulfillment of the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a number of concerns were noted. Among them was the need for Zimbabwe to work progressively towards the observation of the minimum standards provided for in Articles 37 (a-d) of the Convention whose main theme is the administration of juvenile justice (Madenga and Makamure, 2001).

Juveniles are unnecessarily dragged into the juvenile justice system for minor offences which could be dealt with through other child friendly avenues of dealing with children in conflict with the law. Prisons in Zimbabwe are still much closed systems to the public. After arrests juveniles lose communication with their parents or guardians. There is no coordinated referral system. The role and significance of the probation officer in child welfare matters is not known or not recognized by other service providers within the system. Juvenile cases are

disposed of without requesting for a report from a probation officer and the option of referring them to the juvenile court is not fully utilised.

Young offenders do not receive the assistance of a lawyer or of a probation officer. The involvement of social workers and probation officers in juvenile justice is not recognized (Madenga and Makamure, 2001). The law does not provide for a compulsory legal representation for juveniles. A majority of the presiding officers do not have the required skills when dealing with cases of juvenile justice. The service delivery departments responsible for juvenile justice cases are under staffed and ill equipped to deal with the issues of street children's rehabilitation and skills' training.

The subject of juvenile justice is suffering from an identity crisis. This is because on the one hand the juvenile courts were created to mete justice and protect the society from criminal elements. On the other, they were created to ensure that the welfare and interest of individual children is promoted. The two criminal justice and welfare objectives are therefore often contradictory. The criminal justice system focuses on retribution and reparation, while the welfare objectives focus on rehabilitation and reform. The juvenile system cannot therefore be fully realized unless this identity crisis is fully realized (Kaseke, 1993).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have presented the quantitative findings of the study. The ages

and the categories of street children who participated in this study have been provided. The study has revealed that some of the street children in Zimbabwe are as young as 6 years old. The majority of these young children survive through begging, while some of them are used by adult beggars to elicit sympathy from the public.

The survival strategies of street children in Zimbabwe do not seem to be different from those of street children in other developing countries. Street children stand at shopping centres, bus stops, and traffic lights to beg from the pedestrians and motorists. Some street children scavenge for food from rubbish bins. This is normally done by street children who have recently come to the streets and have no knowledge of how to survive on the streets. Other street children guard cars. This activity is normally performed by the bigger boys. Some children are vendors. This group mainly comprise of children from Mozambique who are employed by Zimbabwean business men and women.

The study has also revealed that all the children in the study were not in school. The children were not in school due to lack of school fees. Children in the study were both male and female. There were more boys than girls in the sample of the study.

Street children suffer from many health problems due to their life style. They live in very poor hygienic conditions and their diet is very poor. The children engage

in indiscriminate sex practices and this puts them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS. Reports from non-governmental organizations that work with them showed that some children had died from HIV/AIDS. Some of the children were also involved in traffic accidents when they were under the influence of glue.

The children cited various reasons for being on the streets. A number had left home due to problems with step-parents at home. Some children had been sent by parents to work on the streets in order to supplement family income. Others were victims of political decisions by the government which had left many families homeless. For example, the Zimbabwe's "Fast Track Land Reform Programme" displaced many families who were earning a living on the commercial farms. This left many children homeless. Again the decision by the government of Zimbabwe to destroy many squatter settlements and illegal structures in all the high density suburbs left many families homeless.

The majority of the children did not have any birth certificates. This prevented them from accessing welfare services that were provided by the government. They were also denied treatment at the local clinics because they did not have any birth certificates. Children cannot be enrolled in any school in Zimbabwe if they do not have birth certificates.

Street children are often in conflict with the law through the activities of earning a

living on the streets. We have seen that the rights of street children like many other street children in developing countries are being violated.

## Chapter six:

### Qualitative findings

This chapter presents the qualitative findings of the study. Interviews, group discussions, observations and secondary sources were used to generate qualitative data for this study.

#### Related terms

In South Africa, street children describe themselves in different terms. The terms “malunde” and “omalalapayipi” (Zulu words meaning respectively “those of the street” and “those who sleep in the pipes”) are used by Johannesburg street children. Another popular term used in South Africa when referring to street children is “twilight children”, which reflects how society views them. Because they “hover on the periphery of other people’s lives”, society tends to see them “in an insubstantial or unreal way” (Swart, 1988:35). Street children in Zimbabwe also use certain terms to distinguish each other. These categories were only found in the city of Harare. There were no such categories in Bulawayo and Mutare. I look at these below. (See figure1.1 Chapter 1)

#### Magunduru / Madigira

The first is the category they call *manguduru*, meaning a boy who has no home; one who sleeps on the streets, in drains or on concrete pavements. This corresponds to the classification “children of the streets” in much of the literature

about street children, as opposed to the children “on the street” who spend their days on the street but who have some kind of home to go to at night. If a street child is a “*magunduru*” as well as “*digira*” (one who digs and scavenges for food from waste-bins), he is usually new on the streets. The street children socially disapprove of scavenging for food from litter-bins, and children who are so labeled take this label with less favour. Almost all street children at some stage, have had to scavenge for food from the litter-bins. They graduate from living on food from bins, especially when they develop a strong support network with other children or older people on the streets. Such graduates deplore eating food scavenged from rubbish bins and sometimes beat those who eat food from these bins.

### **Monya**

Another category of street children in Harare is the ‘*monya*.’ A *monya* is a street bully, a strong street boy or man who uses his strength and influence to get money or other items like blankets or clothes from the weaker ones. Most of them do not sleep rough on the streets. They rent rooms in the high density suburbs. Others do not work on the streets every day but resurface now and then to collect money from the boys for working in their territories and for protection.

It was reported that being a *monya* appears to be what most street children aspire to be. Even the *monyas* themselves are not sure of what their ultimate fate will be, despite the fact that they enjoy a privileged position within the “street



world.” However, with the resources that they get from the street, a *monya* can invest in some informal street-based occupation. Stephen, a well known *monya*, now owns a chain of magazine and vending stalls in the city centre that he regularly supervises. He is still a *monya* for a certain group of street children in the city of Harare.

### **Diniwe**

Thirdly, there is the category they call “*diniwe*”, meaning a tired boy, tired of working and living on the streets. Children in this category are “on-and-off” the streets. Their wish is to leave the streets but due to lack of possibilities of earning a living outside the streets, they come back onto the streets. This is usually a category of children in their late teens to early adulthood. The term also means that they do not know what to do exactly and as result they “grab this and that” opportunity to be on the streets and off the streets without careful thought or analysis. If a child is referred to as *mudiniwe*, it seems to imply that he is torn between two ideas or courses of action and is failing to resolve his dilemma.

### **Mboko**

Lastly there is a category they call ‘*mboko*’, often intended to mean an elderly vagrant, but it has other connotations as well. It also means a mentally ill street person who just roams the streets and survives by scavenging for food from litter-bins. It is also applied to those homeless people who are “perpetually intoxicated” such that intoxicants have taken control of their lives and therefore,

they look mentally ill. From an objective assessment the term seems to be applied to those people who have abdicated control over their lives and resigned to fate.

### **Circumstances of street girls**

When I asked how street girls survive one of the child care workers said:

Girls survive in a different way than the boys. Boys have more possibilities of earning money and protecting themselves. Most of the time girls take a more traditional role in street life, like cooking for the men and having sex with them. The street boy takes care of his street girl. He shares his money, food with his street girl and also offers her protection.

At certain times the street girls can have more than one sex partner. This is what one street girl said:

I look for a new boyfriend when my boy friend goes to prison. I don't mind sleeping with another boy for money, because it's only for a short time. After all I have to survive.

Some girls admitted to having sex everyday as one of them said:

Everyday the boys come to me and ask for sex. Sometimes if I say no, then the boy starts to beat me. In the end I have to give him what he wants.

The service providers reported that there has been a rise in the number of babies

who were found dumped in rubbish bins and in sewer drains. It is assumed that the babies were dumped by some of the street girls. A new generation of babies is being born on the streets to a significant number of illiterate teenage street mothers.

### **Sleeping conditions**

We heard that every street child strives to find a safe place to sleep. These safe places may be in deserted buildings under bridges and escalators, in storm water drains, abandoned cars, rubbish bins, in parks and on pavements. There is no security for essential belongings like blankets. Some church organizations have been donating blankets and clothes to these children. Thugs come during the night and take the blankets away from the children. It has been said that some children sell the blankets donated to them to members of the public. The police sometimes come during the night and confiscate the blankets and their other belongings. Thus very few street children had blankets. During the cold winter months, with no blankets to keep themselves warm, the children light up fires using cardboard. For longer lasting fires, they use old motor car tubes and tyres. Smoke from these fires makes these boys pitch black with soot. Fire can be dangerous, in that the boys can be burnt when they unconsciously roll over towards it while asleep especially after having sniffed glue. Other boys simply huddle like puppies as a technique to keep themselves warm. Sleeping conditions for street children in South Africa appear to be the same with those of street children in Zimbabwe. Scharfer, (1989) reports:

Flattened cardboard boxes are used for warmth and camouflage. They build fires or construct braziers from large tins or from plastic milk bottle crates on cold winter nights and many have been badly burnt from falling asleep too close to the flames (Scharfer, 1989:3).

### **Knowledge of AIDS and STDs**

From the information given by the street girls it is clear that sexually transmitted infections constitute a significant total of the health problems of street children. This is a cause for concern because experts in this area are generally agreed that sexually transmitted diseases pose more chances for HIV infection. It was apparent from the interviews and group discussions that street children are reasonably informed about HIV/AIDS, which some of them refer to as “*go-slow*.” This is a descriptive term of the slow and painful way in which AIDS sufferers die. Other street children euphemistically term AIDS as “*chirwere chemazuva ano*” (today’s disease). In a study on the vulnerability of street children to sexually transmitted diseases in Ghana it was also found out that:

The level of awareness of the disease among the street children is very high. About 93 per cent of both sexes said they had heard of AIDS. The level was significantly much higher among males (96.7%) than the females (87.8%). Similarly the children were aware that AIDS cannot be cured, with males showing a slightly higher level of awareness (96.4%) than females (93.9%) (Anarfi, 1997: 294).

When street children were asked to mention other sexually transmitted diseases

most of the street children could not mention any. Some boys mentioned “*siki dzechihure*” meaning sicknesses carried by prostitutes.

When asked to mention some modes of transmission of the virus, most of the children could not name any. Sexual transmission appeared to be the commonest mode of transmission mentioned by a few children. Apart from this one, the children’s responses revealed grave misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. These include transmission through eating bad food, touching some one with AIDS, use of toilet, sharing clothes, a plate or a room with someone with AIDS and “kissing”. The children’s misconceptions are very much consistent with those of mainstream society in Zimbabwe. In a survey on “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice of the disease” in the city of Harare amongst 2 109 adults the researchers noted the following:

A quarter of all the respondents stated that they would evict lodgers with AIDS. They would avoid either neighbour, co-worker or school mate with AIDS (Moyo, et., al 1993 cited in Dube, 1997:70).

### **Unprotected sex**

Although a good number of the children knew about condoms, very few children use them. The children said that they did not use condoms because they do not make sex enjoyable. One of the children said:

How can you enjoy a sweet that is wrapped in paper?

Buying condoms was also a problem for these children. Some children said they were too shy to buy them while others said they would rather buy some food instead of wasting money on condoms. Some organizations were issuing free condoms to the children but the children ended up selling these to members of the public. The problem of HIV infection among street children particularly girls was highlighted by one male out reach worker at Streets Ahead who said:

These children have no control over their health and welfare at all. Most of the boys and men they have sex with are unwilling to use condoms. Teaching the girls about self protection and providing condoms is useless if they are beaten up if they refuse to give the service required.

Interviews with the girls indicated that most of the boys and men they have sex with are unwilling to use condoms. Group discussions with street children and interviews with child care-care workers confirmed that street children were engaged in risky sexual behaviour. It was reported that young boys were also engaged in sex for protection. Older male youth or adult street people raped other boys. One boy admitted that he often had sex with an elderly man who picked him up in town every Friday.

I go with him at the weekend, usually Friday night. He has lots of cars. He gives me a signal. He drives past and then he waits for me near the park, pointing to the Harare Gardens. We watch films of people having sex then

we do what they were doing in the film, but first I bath, eat and drink. Afterwards he drops me in town and gives me some money and says he will come looking for me soon. I do this because I have nothing else to give me money.

The children's immaturity and powerlessness makes them less likely to insist on the use condoms. There is very little information available on HIV infection among street children (Kruger and Richter, 1996). It has become clear that most of the existing education programmes on HIV/ AIDS for children and youth are carried out in schools and colleges and therefore are not accessible to children and youth who work and live on the streets (Anarfi, 1997; Dube, 1997).

Besides their lack of sex education, street children are often denied access to statutory health care (WHO, 1993).

### **Substances misuse**

The children were asked if they sniffed glue. Very few admitted that they sniffed glue. Many street children do not admit to sniffing glue. It was however established from the observations carried out on the streets that most of the street children sniffed glue. Children normally abused glue that they sniff from milk containers. This is a way to deceive the public to assume that they are drinking milk. The children buy glue that is very accessible and cheap from the cobblers as well as the hardware shops in the city centers. A small bottle of 100ml can last a group of ten boys for about a week. I was told that some street children snatch designer caps from children of the wealthy and other members of

the public on the streets. They then exchange these caps for glue at certain places or hardware shops in town. These caps are then sold to the public by those who give street children glue. Asked why they sniffed glue, some children said sniffing glue helped them to forget their problems. They also said it makes them enjoy their work (they become hyperactive) and feel unashamed of their work in the public. Glue sniffing or intoxication also gives the courage to steal from pedestrians.

Although previous research on drug use in Zimbabwe is limited, studies in other developing countries have found rates of use to be very high. A survey among 119 street children in Sao Paulo, for example, classified 45% as heavy drug users (Dimenstein, 1991). In another study of street children in Belo Horizonte, 84% per cent of the children living full-time in the streets had histories of illegal drug use, 10.6% reported injection drug use (Campos et al., 1994b in Lalor, 1999).

### **Reasons for being on the streets**

The results from this study show that there are several reasons why they are street children in Zimbabwe. Identifying reasons for the existence of the street children phenomenon is crucial in finding a solution to the issue. I look at some of the reasons that came up during the interviews and group discussions with the street children and their service providers. The stories that we got from the street children showed some of the complex factors that drive these children to the



streets in Zimbabwe.

### **Their stories**

#### CHIPO

The case of Chipo illustrates a situation of step parenting. Chipo is 12 years old. His brother John is 9 years old. Their father married a second wife. Their mother showed disapproval by leaving the matrimonial home. The two left home because the step-mother was abusing them. The two street children alleged that the step-mother did not take care of them. Sometimes they went for days without any food. She only cared for her two young children. When they raised this issue with their father, he became very angry and accused them of disrespecting their step-mother. He sometimes beat them because of this. The father had to please the step-mother, and consequently failed to take action on their behalf. Chipo's parents are divorced.

What is interesting in this case is that before marrying Chipo's mother, Chipo's father divorced Taurai's mother. More often than not Taurai lives at home with his second step-mother. It appears he gets along well with her than his step-brothers, Chipo and John. The reason may lie in that he has experienced step-parenting for a longer time than the other two and therefore can tolerate it.

#### TICHAONA

The story of Tichaona illustrates the pressure on an extended family network in a

city. Tichaona is 15 years old and he lived with his maternal uncle and three cousins in Mbare, a high density suburb in the city of Harare. They all shared one room (a log cabin) with no electricity. Water is fetched from a communal tap outside. After the death of both his parents who lived in the rural area, he came to live with his uncle in the city. He wanted to further his education and so his grandparents send him to the city. They thought that it was better for him to attend a day school in the city rather than in the rural area. They had to walk for a long distance from home to the nearest rural day school. Furthermore, Tichaona also thought that the facilities and the standard of education were better in the towns. After some time, his uncle could not afford to continue financing his education. His uncle was laid off from work due to the prevailing economic conditions in the country. Tichaona left school to go and guard cars in a bid to raise money for school fees. His cousins started to abscond from school. His uncle blamed him for encouraging the boys to go and work on the streets. Tichaona eventually left his uncle and started living on the streets.

### KUDA

This is a case of child abuse. After being laid off from work, Kuda's father went back to the rural area and started to drink heavily. The wife deserted him after he resorted to selling all the family's assets like chickens and goats. Kuda remained looking after the young ones. He took over all the household duties that were being done by his mother. His father would beat him up after accusing him of not doing some work in the house. One day, Kuda stole some money from his

grandmother and boarded a bus to the city centre. He eventually found himself living on the streets with other street boys.

### NATHAN

This case shows a young person who was ejected from the school by the system. Nathan is 15 years old. He is the fifth sibling in a family of eight children. Four of his sisters are already married and the two youngest sisters are still attending school. The eldest in the family is now looking for employment. Nathan said that the teachers always called him names because he was not a very clever student. The teachers thought that he was deliberately not working hard. This was made worse by the fact Nathan is full of humor, which to his teacher seemed to be playfulness. Because of this, his teacher always called him names. This made him to resent going to school.

### GAFARI

The case of Gafari shows why there are a number of street children from Mozambique, a country in the east of Zimbabwe. Gafari is eighteen years old. His father was killed during the civil war in Mozambique. He came to Zimbabwe with his mother and his three brothers, as refugees. He was abandoned by his mother at the Harare market place. He was taken in by a man who started to send him to go and sell bananas on the streets. He now lives permanently on the streets.

I was not getting enough food. I left home in the morning to go and sell

bananas or oranges for this man but he did not treat me okay so I ran away to go and live on the streets with my friends.

He does not know where his brothers are.

### SOLOMON

The case of Solomon illustrates why some children leave the rural areas to end up living on the streets. Solomon is 15 years old. He is the eldest in a family of six children. He lived with his mother in the rural area of Murehwa. His father was working in the city. His father became ill and stopped remitting funds to the family in the rural area. The father eventually left the city to be cared for by relatives who had very little resources in the rural area.

There was no food at home .We all stopped going to school because we had not paid school fees. I left home to go and look for employment so that I could look after my brothers and sisters.

### SIMON

This case showed why the young person did not want to go back home. Simon is 9 years old. He is the only child in the family. He lived with his mother in Harare. He was playing truant from school. His mother was worried and so she consulted the head teacher who advised her to see a social worker about the matter. “My mother signed papers for me to go Kadoma reformatory. I ran away from there and went to Harare because I had heard that there were good schools and jobs there.” He ended up living on the streets with other boys. The mother did not

realise that the papers the social workers asked her to sign referred SIMON to the reformatory. It was only when the staff at Streets Ahead contacted the mother that the misunderstanding came to light.

The most common explanation given by the children is that they are running away from problems in their families. The first form of problem that I look at is the situation of step-parenting where a man divorces his first wife and marries another second wife. The children then remain in the care of the step-mother who, in many cases does not treat the children well. The father is away at work most of the time and does not believe the complaints from his children. Usually the father warns the children against making unsubstantiated negative reports about their step-mother. Most children from such backgrounds emphatically ruled out the father's intervention between them and the step-mother. CHIPO'S case illustrates this. Relationships between step-parents and step-children are often very strained. One child care worker a step- parent herself said this to me in a very objective way:

Most step-parents abuse the child because that child symbolizes either the man or woman who was once a rival and in most cases step-children "help" ex-lovers to keep contact with one another. More often it is the step-mothers that abuse their step-children than stepfathers do. More often a man will abuse his own children in order to please his wife, who is a step-mother to his children.

There is a fairly wide distribution of children who are on the streets following the

death of both parents. These children give accounts of how they were distributed among various relations. Some of these relations were either too poor to cope with the increased load of looking after more children or were old grandparents without adequate resources to satisfy the needs of the additional number of children. In some cases of this nature, the older children begin to move out of this new setting to look for employment or better life. In the city, next of kin can assist members of the extended family but such assistance is temporary. It is only a stop gap measure. Members of the extended family can be considered a burden at a latter stage. TICHAONA'S story illustrates this.

We also heard that some children are on the streets because they have no other suitable homes. Some have parents leaving in very cramped conditions. As the children reached adolescence, they were no longer able to live with their parents in the single accommodation.

Cases of children who find solace on the streets after committing various offences at home were noted. I talked to one child who left home because he had spent school fees on other things with his friends. After doing this, he returned home but was threatened with a beating and then he decided to leave home.

### **Leaving home**

The transition of children to full time street life does not involve an abrupt or sudden breakaway from the family (Aptekar, 1988a; Felsman, 1988). It was

noted that some children leave their homes gradually until in the end they no longer come back home for the night. For some children, it has been an abrupt breakaway especially at the last stages of the process when parents or guardians try to control the child after noticing that he tends to sleep out. Thus the way the children leave home ranges from a gradual drifting away from home in the early stages, to dramatic absolute break away at the last stages of the process. One night from home is followed by a few days from home. This was noted by Felsman when he said:

This pattern suggests a “testing of the waters. It is a cognitive as well as an effective appraisal of street life (Felsman, 1988).

The drift away and the final breakaway appear to be based on the support network the children find outside the home. They seem to negotiate emotional support on the streets when they cannot take the crisis at home any more. Although factors such as poverty, abuse and violence in the family play central role in the genesis of the phenomenon of street children, there are many children who face poverty, abuse and violence in their families but have not taken to the streets. Poverty merely puts children at risk of becoming street children. It would be misleading to say that all poor or broken families produce the phenomenon of street children. It could be argued that environmental circumstances comprise a necessary condition but not sufficient to explain the phenomenon of street children. We also need to account for the phenomenon of street children through the interaction perspective, which explores how a child copes with stress in the

family.

It seems that being a full time street child that is a child “of the street” is a negotiated process-negotiated by the child and his parents at home, and also between him and his peers on the streets, with the child making a comparison between his family and his peers on the streets. Such a comparison is based on love, warmth and companionship. Until the analysis and the negotiation process are complete the child will not be able to leave home. The whole process is under the child’s control.

### **Conducting economic activities**

Discussions and interviews with services providers and the children allowed me to understand how the children conducted their economic activities. I also observed children while they were carrying out their economic activities in various locations. This enabled me to understand the various organizational systems that the children have adapted in order to meet their daily needs of food, shelter, emotional satisfaction and security among other things.

### **The beggars**

It was observed that there was a relationship between age and the type of activity done by each street child. Most of the beggars are young street children (10 years and under) who position themselves at traffic lights in order to get the attention of the motorists. They are both boys and girls. Observations showed



that motorists react differently towards the street children when they come to the traffic lights where these street children position themselves. Some motorists are sympathetic while some close their windows as they approach the traffic lights.

In some cases these young beggars were on the streets accompanying their blind parents who also come to the streets to beg. Some of the child beggars are not necessarily related to the blind persons they are escorting. Apart from the parents and relatives, there are other relationships based on mutual economic exchanges. The blind persons have to pay the street children a certain fee if the children are not related to them.

Some of these young boys and girls had babies on their backs when begging. It was reported in the group discussions that a number of very young children and babies were “used” by adults to elicit sympathy and obtain money by begging at major street intersections and in busy shopping areas. Babies were hired out to child street beggars while mothers remained somewhere in the vicinity and would earn money from this “hiring out of babies”. Very young children as old as 6 years were sent out on to the streets by their mothers to beg. These children would give their mother the money donated to them by members of the public.

One street child commented:

I have realized that we tend to make more money on the streets when I am accompanied by my young brother. People seem to more sympathetic when they see this young child. So I am forced to bring Simba here everyday in

order to make more money. This is how we have survived over the past two years.

### **The vendors**

Street children who are involved in this economic activity are scattered all over strategic areas where there are dense human movements, especially around bus stops, taxi stops, road intersections and railway stations. It was established that most of the vendors in Harare are Mozambican children. Through a series of rough head counts of this group of children at various locations, the children were estimated to be over 200 boys and 39 girls. Items sold by vendors include cigarettes, confectionery and fruits. They have places where they hide their goods when the municipal police arrive. Street children often lose their wares to municipal police, either because they do not have the vending licenses issued by the local authorities. Efforts by some organizations to get market stalls at local municipal markets where these children could conduct their business legally have failed. A worker from one of these organizations said:

You have to carry the ruling party's membership card [ZANUPF] for you to be considered for a market stall at the Municipal markets in the cities and most street children do not qualify.

When goods are scarce on the market, they can easily be sourced mainly from these child vendors, employed by unscrupulous business people. It was observed that like beggars these vendors follow the commuters to the bus stops. Like beggars it was also observed that these vendors have a high sense of

territoriality.

### **The car minders**

Car minding involves directing motorists into empty parking bays; looking after the car; topping up the parking meter of the client and in some cases directing the motorist out of the parking. Car theft is a big business in Zimbabwe. Every motorist wants to leave his or her car in a safe, secure place like the parades, but such places are very few and very expensive. Although the services of these parking boys are cheap, they are definitely not the most reliable alternative.

The street boys' task is mainly to arouse the attention of the police and the public to deal with the thief. It is a mechanism to scare away the thief rather than apprehend him. While looking after the car, the street boy has to ensure that the parking meter does not expire or run out of money. Ideally the street boy has to keep on putting money in the parking meter once the initial coins run out. Some motorists give the boys the coins for this purpose while others do not, which means that the boys will have to use their own money, then ask for reimbursement from the motorists afterwards. Some boys however do not bother to keep on topping up the meter even if the motorists have given them the money for that purpose. They let the meter expire and feed it with a coin only when the municipal policeman shows up. When a street boy directs a car into an empty parking bay, he expects an agreement to look after it and be paid afterwards. This expectation is not always fulfilled. Some boys direct cars into parking bays,

yet the motorists refuse to have their cars looked after. It is considered a loss if a boy directs a car and fails to get an agreement to look after it.

Some division of labour was also observed. When a client has agreed to have his or her car guarded, other boys may offer to assist them in the shopping and carrying of goods to the car. I observed that older boys and the younger boys worked in different areas of the cities. This was because the bigger boys control the lucrative areas in the heart of the central business centers. These are “no go” areas for small boys who are confined to the less busy areas away from the city centre.

Some of these street boys form very strong relationships with the motorists. I did not have the opportunity to talk to some motorists but I believe the boys’ stories to be true, largely because they rarely take lightly some of society’s responses to them. Due to performance and trustworthiness of some older boys, some motorists offer them some part time employment or full-time odd jobs in their homes as domestic workers or gardeners. Through their social networks some motorists may even find the boys some part-time or full-time manual jobs in factories, shops and cinemas. However, it was learnt that most of the street boys who receive such offers do not stay long on their jobs, especially if it is a full time job, even if they are relatively well paid in comparison to what they earn in the streets. The reason for leaving employment as given by most boys is that they do not earn money daily and can not spend it readily as they were used to earn

while on the streets. Leaving employment is also explained partly, by loss of independence and freedom to control one's daily activities and life. Some boys employed full time have said that they were always rebuked by the employer when they did not do their work well or when they sneaked to the streets for a while to see friends or to earn some money.

We heard that some motorists have formed relationships with street children through illegal activities such as "deals" in drugs or foreign currency. It may also involve looking after stolen items or selling these to members of the public. A number of street children are arrested for selling stolen mobile phones. There is a danger in this type of work. Street children are often arrested for crimes, which they have not committed. Furthermore, this practice entrenches the stigma that street children are prone to criminal behaviour. This results in a deep-rooted hatred of street children by the public and in the process it legitimizes the often-used intervention of rounding them up and other forms of gross abuse.

### **Attitudes of some motorists**

Some street boys reported that they spend long hours looking after a car and injecting their own coins in the parking meter whenever a municipal police comes but when the owner of the vehicle comes back, the street boy is not given any payment. The motorist pulls out of the parking bay, at times shouting insults at the street boys. I witnessed two such incidents. I was surprised that the street boys never said any abusive words in response to the motorist. When asked why

they did not respond. The boys said that they were used to such insults from certain motorists.

In another incident a White lady motorist whose car had been looked after by a street boy shouted at the top of her voice:

You cause a lot of problems you people. Why should I pay you when you cause traffic jams?

One of the street boys shouted back, saying:

Say whatever you want, you will always find us here. If you do not want to see us and the problems we give you don't come here anymore (Translated from Shona, the vernacular language used in Zimbabwe).

The street boys will not always respond abusively to verbal abuse, although some do so when they are high on glue and other intoxicants. One boy justified their stance by saying:

How can you bully the person that feeds you?

The boys pointed out that any motorist is a potential customer. He or she can refuse to have their cars looked after today, but some time in the future they may find it necessary. This means that it is up to the boys themselves to create and establish a reputable relationship with their clients in a way that their services will

be appreciated.

Older children find it difficult to obtain money through begging and looking after cars especially when they have to compete with younger children. This explains why in some places especially the most lucrative places you do not find young street children. Older street children and some homeless adults have forced the younger street children to move to the periphery of the cities' centers.

Let me look at the activities, which were regarded, as unsafe for the street children by the child care workers and the street children themselves. These activities include guarding commuter buses at night, working for the police and pimping.

### **Guarding commuter buses**

From the information gathered from the group discussions and the interviews with the street children and their service providers, street children have become major players in ensuring that omnibuses are safe at night in the numerous open parking spaces that have sprouted around the city of Harare. Security guards are hired by commuter operators to look after the mini buses at night. The hired security guards pass on this responsibility to the street children. The arrangement is very exploitative because the guards demand that the street children pay them a fee for sleeping in the mini buses. During the cold winter months and the rainy days, street children have no option but to pay a certain

amount of money to sleep in the commuter mini buses. Most of them have no locks to the passenger cabin doors. Superficially, the gesture by these guards seems philanthropic, yet in reality it is not. We heard that once the street children have paid the official guard for the boarding, the guard wanders off to the nearest night club for a drink. The guard returns at dawn and bundles the children out of the bus before the driver comes to collect the bus for the day's work. In practice the street children become the guards since their mere presence acts as a deterrent to would be car-thieves bent on stealing extractable parts such as wheels and rear views mirrors.

### **Pimping**

Street children pimp for prostitutes in the cities. As part of the contract, the street children are expected to enforce payment if the client refuses to pay the prostitute. It is sometimes very difficult for street children to use direct physical violence to force the male client to pay the prostitute. This helplessness forces them to use indirect means of forcing the male client to pay the prostitute like piercing the tyres of the client's car or throwing stones at the man. Sometimes the street children gang up and confront the offender with physical violence. At times the process of enforcing payment degenerates into serious fights, which end up attracting law-enforcing agents. The street children may be arrested and, since they are considered homeless, they are not released until they raise the fines for the offence committed.



At times the prostitutes for which the pimping is done also exploit the street boys. They lie that the client has not paid any money to them. He would pay at a later date. The young boys are then told to come on another day for their share of the money. However, when the street boys turn up for their money on the said date, they are told that the money has already been used for other purposes and the prostitute offers the boys sex as an alternative payment. Some street boys refuse this offer and threaten to beat the prostitute. The prostitute then looks for a man to protect her from these young street boys. Of all the criminal activities that the street children are involved in, pimping is the most dangerous.

### **Working for the police**

Testimonies from the street children revealed that they also work for the police but they do not get any remuneration for this. Street children assert that the police frequently demand information regarding criminal activity in the cities. They emphatically pointed out that the police know quite well that on a number of occasions, thugs and thieves have been arrested on the information that they give to the police. The children felt that they were useful to the police. As one boy said to me:

Whenever a problem happens on the street we are the ones to be asked first by the police. Very often we are looked at as useless people, but when there is a “hit and run” or theft from a car, shop or murder we often supply useful information. It might be because they think we are the criminals but time has proved that we are not.

At first sight this may not appear under the category of “work”. The children tell of situations where they have to work hard to obtain information about a certain crime on which the police are working, as a condition of their freedom to undertake their own income earning activities. Since most street children’s lives depend on doing odd tasks on the street, at times they have to go out of their way to ferret information to give to the police so that they can continue with their income generating activities. In return for this service, the police promise street children that they would be allowed to carry out their day-to-day business without any interference from the police. In most cases the police do not keep the promises that they make to street children.

According to the police, street children are well placed to know about crimes committed in the towns. Unlike the practice with other members of the public, the police do not accept an answer of “I do not know” from the street children. It has been said that serious crimes have been solved through the cooperation of street children. However, the police do not acknowledge or appreciate the role of the street children, in the busting of these crimes. From an economic point of view, the cooperation of children in providing information to the police constitutes some saving on police operations. Crimes that would have taken quite a considerable time to solve, and use a lot of resources, are solved in short periods of time with the assistance of the street children.

Although it is morally accepted that the police should obtain assistance from civil

society in the execution of their duties, we do not think it is proper for the police to coerce the street children to provide them with information if they do not have it and further to that the idea of curtailing their freedom to carry out their day-to-day activities is also inappropriate. But the street children have to come to terms with this. This coerced incorporation of street children into police activity can be very dangerous. We have heard of numerous cases where criminals have stabbed members of the public in broad day light for alerting pick-pocket victims. The police expose the street children to danger when they boast to arrested criminals, of how they were given clues that led to their arrest by the street children. The end result is that these criminals plan reprisals through their friends who visit them in prison. In the final analysis the street children become the enemies of both the police and the criminal underworld.

The children also reported that refuse workers from certain companies wake them up early in the morning during the week and force them to empty the refuse bins into the big trucks. The street children do this for nothing. This practice was confirmed by those who work with these street children.

### **How they perceive their activities**

The children were asked how they perceived their economic activities. In assessing how the children feel about their activities, begging ranked low followed by vending. Vendors and car minders tend to value their activities while begging children had mixed feelings. Car minders tend to value their “work” in

terms of their relatively high earnings and their independence compared to vendors and beggars. They pride themselves in comparison to child beggars and vendors. I heard a group of children arguing:

Unlike beggars and vendors we are our own bosses. There is no one to control us. We hate control. But we still have our own bosses and friends on the streets that help us when in need or in trouble.

Vendors value investment in the goods that they are selling and look down upon car minders. They see them as directionless spenders. Furthermore vendors see their work as a business venture, especially in terms of their relationship with their clients. They do not accost their clients like beggars and car minders.

Beggars and car minders were however aware that they receive a token payment for their services because they do not charge them. They are often at the mercy of the donor or the client. They do not have any bargaining power. On the other hand vendors charge and bargain with their clients.

Both car minders and vendors saw begging as being not a service to the public. Charles himself a beggar said this to me:

Begging is useless. People just see you in town and think Ah! he is doing nothing. They think you are lazy and stupid, especially if you big an older boy.

Most of the boys in each activity were, however, aware that their activities were not the “best” ways to earn a living. At the same time, they are content and aware that they provide their services to the public cheaply and sometimes honestly.

One child vendor said:

You can bargain with me for a price reduction but not with a manager in a supermarket for this single banana.

Car minders feel that they fulfill the security needs of their clients cheaply and that they provide a valuable service. Ronald said:

It is not bad to watch cars because sometimes there are thieves and they just come and steal a car. But if I am looking after the car they won't steal it.

While Solomon sees the money he receives for his duties as a parking boy as an indication that he has performed his duties well:

I feel happy when people give money, because someone who gives you money is pleased with you and your work. I like more those people who have offered me to look after their cars as long as I am around and pay me regularly on a weekend.

We can conclude that generally the children are proud of themselves for living a hard but honest life. In the words of Ken, who is very fluent in English:

I like myself because I am looking after cars so that I can buy my own food

and clothes. These days I am looking for money to buy myself shoes

It can be concluded that street children are organized around the activities they are engaged in. It is also clear that street children do not live on their own on the streets but are also organized around other homeless youths, homeless adults and homeless families. They protect each other but can also exploit one another. We have also seen that street children do not necessarily change their occupations easily. This is contrary to the popular belief that “urban working children fit between unrelated activities according to whim or sudden opportunity” (Myers, 1989:326). There is some degree of structure and commitment within a chosen occupation, which encourages continuity.

### **Police harassment**

Street children showed different attitudes towards the police. Some of them hate the police, while others have friendly relations with some of them. Those who hate the police often felt that the presence of the police on the streets is meant to harass them. The children often feel that they have a right to work on the streets. One street boy said these words to me:

The police get some money from us so that they can allow us to continue with our work but surprisingly they keep on wanting to arrest us. They tend to ask for money from us for cokes when it is time when most people are broke and it is time they get to be friendly and we can even chat with them.

On the other hand it seems that those children who have some friendly

relations with the police accept the role of the police although they hate to be rounded up. Friendly relationships with the police seem to stem from particular members of the police force who accept bribes from the street children. The bribed policeman ensures that the children are not harassed and may even achieve this by warning the street children when a round up is foreseen.

Street children never seem to get any hearing from the police. They are often wronged or attacked by other street children, homeless people, and some members of the public. They go to the police to seek justice but it never comes. Some street children who have done so often complain that the police do not help them in any way but blame them for being trouble-mongers. Nathan puts it like this:

I was hit with a brick while looking after cars on Sunday at the golf course. I reported the matter to the police and was told by one policeman to go away, because this is how we street children live.

Some street children also reported that the police and some members of private security organizations rounded them up, beat them under their feet so that they could not walk. They then drove them in trucks and dropped them miles away in the bush from the city center. They then walked with feet swollen back to town.

### **Knowledge of their rights**

Children's views were sought on their understanding of the term "Child's Rights".

The majority of the children were not familiar with the concept of rights. They were not able to identify certain rights when asked or to point out to certain incidents which could be termed as violations of their rights. Some children understood that they were entitled to report cases about incidents they considered violations and that this was a way of seeking punishment of those who had wronged them. Some parents and child care workers understood Child Rights to mean provision of what a child “wants.” This understanding may explain to us why the issue of Child Rights is often resisted by certain people in Zimbabwe.

Many of the children I spoke to laughed when I asked if they had ever been mistreated on the streets; the very question seemed absurd. *Is there any one amongst us who hasn't?* The types of abuses that they experience are part and parcel of every day life. It is something to be expected rather than bemoaned. Street children may not defend themselves because they are unacquainted with the concept of rights or ignorant of the process they might go about defending them. It could be said that street children tend to normalize violence.

### **Their expressed needs**

When asked what help they wanted the majority of the children mentioned that they wanted to go back to school. Education was their most important need. Others mentioned material things as food, and clothes. The older street girls said that they needed to be trained in sewing. They mentioned that the organizations



that work with them should buy them sewing machines so that they could sew clothes and sell these in the rural areas. They could then afford to raise money for paying their rent and food. The children also said they needed some birth certificates. The older boys said that they needed identity documents so that they would look for employment.

### **Their recreation**

When the children were asked how they spend their time if they are not working, most of them said they spend their time playing football. The children have learnt to improvise by making footballs out of rags and plastic paper. They also spend considerable amounts of their earnings playing video games in fast food take-away shops. An important pastime activity for street children when they are not working is cracking jokes. Cracking jokes is more pronounced at night when children and other homeless youth and adults are gathered around a fire. While jokes are being cracked marijuana, beer, cigarettes will be shared. I could not find out why but most of the street children's jokes are sexually oriented or satirical. The joke session may go well into the night when everyone around the fire falls asleep.

Acting is another activity which the children enjoy. Street children are quite aware of how the public and the police react to their situation. Most of their small plays are based on their relationship with their families, the police and the public. I observed two street children acting. One was acting like a policeman while the

other one was a street child. The policeman was dealing with a street child who had stolen from a store in a harsh manner.

### **How they are perceived**

In this section I look at the perceptions of various sections of our society towards street children as well as trying to understand what informs and sustains such perceptions.

The children were asked what the general public said about them being on the streets. There were mixed feelings. Some reported that members of the public were sympathetic. They gave them money and some donated clothes. Other children said members of the public showed negative attitudes towards them. The service providers also said some members of the public were hostile to street children. One child care worker said:

Ask anyone what a street kid is and nine times out of ten the answer you will get will stereotype him or her as some sort of criminal.

Fifteen members of the general public who worked at places where the children spend most of their time (restaurants, the railway station, and night clubs) were asked the following question:

What should the government of Zimbabwe do about the problem of street children?

In keeping with the general ambivalence about street children in Zimbabwe, both soft and harsh solutions have been suggested for them. Eight of the respondents (53.3%) advocated that the government of Zimbabwe should place these children in homes or institutions where they could receive some education or training in carpentry, agriculture or building. Three of the respondents (20%) said that the children should be send back to their families. Four (26.6%) proposed some harsher measures. They suggested that the government should build distant reformatories on the farms seized from the White commercial farmers. The street children should be rounded up and send to these farms where they could provide some labour. One of the respondents said:

If these children remain on the streets, they will develop habits of criminality on the streets, which they can carry over into adulthood.

Perceptions of the public towards street children stem from the sight of the children and their activities on the streets. Such perceptions are by no means unified. They differ possibly because of the public's diverse backgrounds, upbringing and status. Let us look at some brief examples of common concerns of the public.

The service providers were all concerned about the plight of street children.

These children should not be living on the streets they said. On the street the children do not have enough food eat; they do not have any schooling; they do not have any moral teaching and guidance. These street children

are being denied the basic rights that a child should have. Having children on the streets offends what the public's ideas of what childhood should be about. Having these children on the streets offends the public; they do not have any security; they have no healthy recreation and no future. All children should have a home in a caring family environment.

Underlying the concern by the public is the worry about the future of society. It is common in political rhetoric for children to be referred to as "our future leaders." As a society, we often have a "rosy" image of children in the future. However, such concern is not without our selfish ends, as Bourdillon (1994:2) asserts:

When we see children fight on the streets we worry about how violent they will be when they grow up. Our concern for the children is mixed with a concern for ourselves and for our children. The motivating factor is not for the child's best interests but based on the fear of the parents and adults losing power or control of the young.

As a result of such concerns most people find it very difficult to relate to street children. The public's concern is also that the phenomenon of street children challenges its conservatism. As Bourdillon wrote:

From infancy onwards, we have been learning skills of how to cope with everyday situations. Our learning only works within society and culture. These need a degree of stability for us to feel comfortable as we carry out our intricate variety of learned routines. So we have an image of how society should be. We are disturbed by people who threaten this comfortable stability with radically different ways of organizing themselves and behaving differently (Bourdillon, 1994:2-3).

## **Status offenders**

Children are status offenders not criminals. The phenomenon of street children “offends” the status of childhood. That is street children offend society’s understanding of how children should grow up. Society does not expect children to work and if they do work, it does not expect them to work outside the family home. In fact at any one time society expects children to be in school, or at home or in a play ground. Ennew (1995) states that street children contradict the image of domesticity usually associated with children. Street children work and to make matters worse, they work in the streets of the city. They also offend society’s understanding and use of the streets.

As “status offenders” street children are carrying out useful activities for their families and themselves.

To families and the children, child labour is not the problem. It is a solution to the problem of not having enough money to feed and clothe the children (Bourdillon, 1994:3).

Street children are working children. Allegations that these children are criminals are exaggerated. Street children have adopted certain strategies for survival. Criminal activities such as petty theft, harassment of the public and prostitution form a very small proportion of the children’s strategies for survival.

If these children are defined in a much broader sense, as children in difficult

circumstances responses would not just mean rounding up children but they would be more holistic and realistic solutions like the provision of housing to their families, and assisting the families to set up income generating projects. A narrow approach to the problems of these children ignores the deep causes of the unsatisfactory conditions. This narrow approach is based on the activities of the children on the streets rather than social and economic explanations.

The way we perceive children and concomitantly our attitudes towards them depend very much on how we interpret their activities. When children's main activities are thought to be play, our attitudes are different from those when their main activities are thought to be work (Qvortrup, 1985:129)

Street children are working children. The cause of conflict between officialdom and the children is not so much that these children work but that they spoil the images of the cities and towns. If the conflict is that the children are working, then we would expect round ups to take place wherever we find children working. This does not happen in many situations where children are working. It is known that children are employed on the farms and in some factories. The officials against such types of child labour have taken no action. We assume the reason for this inaction is that children are working outside the cities, therefore out of sight, making it an issue of less concern.

## **Policy**

All the service providers were asked if Zimbabwe had a clear policy regarding the rehabilitation of street children in line with the United Nations Convention on the

rights of the Child. They all reported that the government of Zimbabwe did not have any meaningful rehabilitative policy on street children. The traditional policy has been to round up the street children with the intention of putting them in the so called institutions of safety. As the name “round-ups” implies, these are raids on street children.

Rounding up of street children is usually carried out by the police in the early hours of the morning. They are rounded up at this time because some street boys stay up late, to about midnight. At certain times round- ups are carried out during the day by plain clothes policemen. When a round up is looming, there is too much talk about it, sometimes through the press, such that the children get to know all the facts about it. Those children who have regular links with their families go back to their homes. Those street children, who do not have homes, go into hiding. They tend to hide in underground drains or in the parks. Vendors usually disappear from cities because they fear that their goods will be confiscated. They have more to lose than the parking boys. Vendors believe that the police raid them to confiscate their goods for their own use, some of which they say end up in the tuck shops operated privately by the police, while the car minders feel the police want bribes from them.

### **Reasons for rounding them up**

I was informed that round ups generally come about when street children have flouted city by-laws and the interests of various officials. The following reasons

were given for rounding up street children:

- protection of public motorists,
- protection of the urban environment,
- protection of industry and commerce,
- protection against loss of revenue from parking meters.
- protection and education of the children themselves.

#### *Protection of the public and motorists*

To some extent these street children extort money from the public and motorists. They threaten the rights of other law-abiding as well as tourists and diplomats. Begging children shove their begging plates into the faces of people passing-by and motorists. Through competition amongst themselves, the parking boys rush for clients and in the event, the motorists feel threatened although it is not the intention of street children to harass shoppers and motorists. At times some street children have become uncompromising when their requests are not met. Members of the public have been cursed, taunted and their cars tempered with. Bourdillon wrote:

Flagrant breach of law cannot be tolerated. Street children often do break the law and certainly do not respond well to the attempts to control their activities; especially where making money is concerned (Bourdillon 1994:1-2).

#### *Protection of the urban environment*



Rounding up of street children is also meant to protect the urban physical environment from destruction by street children. Street children, beggars, vendors and parking boys have been accused of messing the streets in the cities and town centres with litter. They use the streets as toilets urinating, defecating on the streets at night, and lighting fires that destroy trees and flowers in the parks. Public authorities are worried that street children lower aesthetic beauty and standards of hygiene in the cities and the towns. This reflects badly on the management of cities and towns to the public, tourists, and national and foreign dignitaries. I observed that street children are not the only colonisers of public spaces in the city and town centres. Adult beggars, the unemployed adults who also loiter, sleep in the parks (even at day time) also mess up the beautiful parks.

#### *Loss of revenue from the parking meters*

There was conflict between street children and council officials over loss of council revenue to street children who often take over from cars owners the task of feeding the parking meters in several of the cities' and towns' parking zones. The children, however, only use part of the money entrusted to them by the owners of the vehicles to keep the traffic wardens at bay. The children insert money only when the traffic wardens are approaching. Further more, parking meters are damaged by being jammed with coins in various ways (see also The Herald, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1990). The City Council further loses revenue to street children when it repairs and replaces damaged meters. Damaging parking meters is also part of the street children's survival techniques as it ensures that money goes

into their pockets, at the expense of the city council.

### *Pressure from commerce*

The pressure to clear the streets of street children comes from the owners of private business concerns who have been complaining over the years that street children threaten their business interests. We were informed that business representatives in the city centre of Harare continue to complain about the increasing number of street kids, beggars and vagrants on the streets, saying they are a threat to their establishments.

There is no doubt that the city and town authorities feel the pressure from commerce and industry. In fact in other cities and towns commerce and industry are moving out of the cities to get away from the problems of the inner cities' decay through the creation of industrial parks within the suburbs.

### *Protection and education of the children*

Street children are not only rounded up to stop them from messing up the streets and the beautiful parks. These street children are rounded up for their own welfare as some of them end up being sent to school and places of safety. There is no doubt that street children are exploited on the streets. We have also seen some of the dangers which they face as they eke out a living on the streets of the cities and the towns of Zimbabwe.

## **Places of safety**

Most of these government institutions of safety were all built during the colonial era. They were all secure units which were meant to accommodate young Black offenders. The police play a major role in placing street children in these institutions. Social workers play a very limited role in this whole exercise. The findings reveal that among the ones that have been institutionalized some have been in the homes as many as four or five times and many children have expressed their aversion and negative feelings for these oppressive institutions. When asked why they ran away from the children's homes one boy said:

Here (on the streets) I can do things I like, like earning money and playing games. But there I just sit all day and sometimes we work for free.

While another said:

The reason I do not like the probation is because we just had little food- a slice of bread that if you look through the bread at the sun you can see the sun.

The third remarked:

Probation hostels and the streets are the same because we are facing the same problems.

While the Government of Zimbabwe argues that children are better off in the government run institutions like Kadoma, Probation Hostels, and St Josephs than

on the streets, a number of service providers said that locking them up is not the answer. Alternatives to detention need to be found. A social worker involved with the rehabilitation of street children in Bulawayo said:

The idea of the putting street children in these homes was bound to fail because it is not possible to rehabilitate children by imprisoning them. Most of these children's homes were modelled like prisons.

It was further stated that these places cannot only afford to provide accommodation to children who need care but can also not afford to higher qualified personnel and feed the children. Most staff members seem to lack patience and are quickly tempted to beat the children. Children have reported cases of sexual and physical abuse at numerous times. It is evident that this atmosphere takes a psychological toll on children. One child worker reported that:

When children are in these institutions, they lose their independence; suffer from poor relationships with the staff of the institutions; and receive insufficient food. The institutions are under staffed. As a result, staff suffer from burnout. They are lowly paid and their moral is very low. Most seem to lack impatience and the temptation to beat the children is very high.

However, to say that the children run away from these institutions merely because of abuse does not give a complete picture. They abscond because they want to regain their independence on the streets. In institutions, the children lose

all their independence and all the fun they used to enjoy.

Jill swart who conducted a study on street children in Johannesburg, South Africa concurs. She states:

Street children in common with children in general value their freedom. It is their most treasured personal possession. They do not take kindly to being locked up. One of the reasons children why children are on the streets is to escape the confines of their overcrowded homes and therefore they do not want to trade this for the confines of an institution (Swart, 1990a: 103, Reddy,:1992:98).

### **Policy changes**

Discussions surrounding policy took two different directions: some service providers made suggestions as to how the policy could be developed and others considered that it was the overall philosophy that should be adopted. Generally two types of approaches were suggested for policy development. First the organizations and the public should take more active role in their development of programmes.

There is need for the involvement of the educational institutions, e.g. the School of Social Work, to find out what should really be done for street children. The mass media should be involved in a more positive way, i.e. stating what is available and what is needed rather than criticizing what is there. There should be an organized multi-sectoral approach to the problem.

The public should be discouraged from giving money on the streets but rather donate to service providers.

Apart from policy development, policy philosophy was also addressed. The dilemma over which direction the policy should take is well expressed by one respondent:

We haven't really agreed on the objectives, whether child protection, child development or child survival. We have to agree between these different goals, what we want to do with the street children.

Some of the respondents suggested child protection solutions including legal solutions which were rather punitive.

There is need for a policy to prosecute families not taking care of their children.

There were some who emphasized that street children be provided with training in order that they ensure their survival.

Institutionalizing street children is not the solution. What they want is a market to sell their produce. We need to set up organized activities and opportunities for children to sell goods.

Some of the respondents stressed the importance of preventing street children from working on the streets and ensuring that the families and communities receive the necessary support:

There is a lot to be done in the areas where they are coming from. They are coming from very poor families living in terrible conditions and that is where

the problem is. Families need to get information on alternative sources of assistance rather than to send children to beg on the streets.

Another aspect of the preventative approach and concern with child development is the emphasis on supporting organizations aimed at providing services for street children:

There needs to be a follow up on organizations that come and say they want to help. Some of the groups interested in helping street children are not registered. People begin to form organizations for their own gain. Many organizations end up not being registered.

Although under the Child Protection Act, it is a criminal offence to use the child as a means to one's enrichment; reports of unscrupulous people who start children's homes to enrich themselves were on the increase and needed to be investigated. Sometimes the Department of Social welfare which is responsible for policing these organizations does not conduct regular inspection to check the conditions of children's homes. An article in one of the national newspapers read:

City of Harare's Health Department has ordered the immediate closure of Shungudzevana Trust, a children's home in Hatfield, describing it as "overcrowded, unhygienic and inhabitable (The Herald February 2007).

## Service providers

**Table 5.16: Services for street children**

Organization	Where	Grouping	Services
Streets Ahead	Harare		Bathing, Washing clothes, Informal education, Feeding, Skills training, Family reunification, Shelter, Counseling, Recreation,
Just Street Children Foundation	Harare	Forum Syd	Shelter, Bathing, Washing Clothes, Feeding, Schooling, Counseling, Family reunification,
Presbyterian Church	Harare		Schooling, Skills training, Counseling, Feeding
Simukai	Mutare	Scripture Union	Shelter, Education, Skills training, Shelter, Family reunion, Counseling, Feeding, Washing, Bathing

The following non-governmental organizations were part of the study in Harare:

Streets Ahead, Just Children Foundation, and the Presbyterian Church

Children's Club. In the city of Bulawayo we have Thuthuka and in Mutare there is Simukai. All the projects which provide services to street children were registered



with the Department of Social Welfare. Those that were not registered operated under the aegis of other welfare organizations or church groups.

### **The Presbyterian Church**

The church is situated in the city centre. The director of the Presbyterian Church's Club said that the institution has been going for over ten years now. It provides literacy and numeracy lessons to street children up to the age 14 years. Street children are referred to this project by other organizations that work directly with the street children. The church also provides uniforms and pays school fees for about 90 street children who are in mainstream schools. It operates a feeding scheme for these children. The club is also assisting 40 elderly people, half of them are blind. They are being taught courses such as sewing, knitting and jam making. The project is funded by the Presbyterian Church. They don't have any permanent staff, the project relies on volunteers.

### **The Just Children Foundation**

The Just Children foundation has been in operation for ten years. It provides accommodation for up to thirty children in very crowded conditions. The organisation calls its centre a drop-in-centre but children are not free to come in and leave as they wish. All the staff members are not qualified to work with children except the director. An untrained teacher is employed to provide informal education to the children. Lessons take place outside the building. Lack of educational material was noticed. At the time of this study the organisation had reunited ten children with their

families in the rural areas.

## **Thuthuka**

Thuthuka is Scripture union initiative. The Thuthuka Rehabilitation Process has three levels, namely the Contact Centre; the Rehabilitation Centre and the Half Way House/Home.

### *Contact Centre*

The Contact Centre is where street children come in for a bath; wash their clothes; receive basic medication and access to basic literacy and numeracy classes. It is a place for relationship building. The children met in the streets by outreach workers are encouraged to visit the centre. Once they come in voluntarily, they then go through a detailed counselling process that the organisation has, the children eventually accept to go through the whole rehabilitation exercise of the organisation. The parents of the children are also involved in this whole process.

### *The Rehabilitation Centre*

Once the children have a commitment to get out of the streets, the child is taken into the Rehabilitation Centre. The Rehabilitation Centre primarily is a skill for life training centre. At this centre the children are offered academic classes as well as skills training such as carpentry, metal work, gardening and poultry.

### *The Half Way House*

On graduation from the Rehabilitation Centre, the child moves into the Half Way House, which also training for independent living. Some of the children in the Half Way House are in apprenticeship programmes and when they have realised sufficient money, the organisation weans them off, and they are then supported by their families too. The various steps that Thuthuka Rehabilitation Process goes through also represent the level of trust and solidification of relationship/partnership, with each partner having roles and obligations/responsibility to the others. Thus, at some point in the rehabilitation process, when a child runs away back into the streets, it means that trust and the partnership social contract is broken, although this can be temporary or permanent. An important developing lesson that Thuthuka is imparting to young people is that they are primarily the agents of their own development and if they are to better their own lives they need to commit themselves to the rehabilitation process. This process does not kick-start unless the child has made a commitment to be the prime agent in making change in his or her life. This rehabilitation process must also be very clear as to what the child could end up being through a certain amount of time and the commitment that each of the stake holders has to put in the process. The stake holders are the child (primary) while the other (secondary) stakeholders are the child's family (represented by a parent/caregiver or any significant other person) and then the Thuthuka staff primarily the outreach workers and the social worker.

## **Streets Ahead**

It is one of the oldest non-governmental organisations which provide services to street children within the city of Harare. The major benefactor is the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA). Funding by DANIDA is augmented through solicited and unsolicited donations from individuals and organisations. The Presbyterian Church assists children by providing life skills to street girls. The Red Cross assists the children usually by throwing Christmas parties where the children from Streets Ahead are invited together with other children in difficult circumstances. Streets Ahead's funding is not adequate to meet the demands at hand. At the time of this study, the organisation's existence was under threat. The organisation had cut its activities and services to street children because the major donor DANIDA had indicated that it was no longer going to continue funding the activities of the project. Many international non-governmental organisations were leaving the country due to the political situation in the country. The Government of Zimbabwe was accusing these NGOs of supporting the political opposition party (MDC).

### *Drop in centre*

The main function of Streets Ahead is to provide services for children on the streets. The drop-in-centre is crucial in the quest to the goal of alleviating the situation of street children. This is the first port of call for street children where all the preliminaries take place regarding registration. Information regarding name, sex, age, family background (father, mother's marital status, whether dead or alive, employed or unemployed, other siblings) level of education attained, last school

attended, year and month of dropping out of school, reasons for dropping out of school, rural home, other relatives and where they reside, and the reasons for leaving home is all compiled here. It also serves as a centre where street children come to report any problems affecting them on the streets. It provides services to children who are 18 years and below. At the time of the study the organisation had registered 526 children. Forty three of these were girls and the rest were boys. On a single day an average of 120 street children visited the centre. This is what the records reflected during the time of this study but it could be more because some children do not bother to register when they drop in at the centre for the day. Through this facility the children are monitored and accounted for.

#### *Medical care*

The drop-in-centre ensures that children get medical attention as they are susceptible to a variety of illnesses due to their life style. Fights among themselves, beatings by law enforcement agents and sexually transmitted diseases are very prevalent. The organisation has an arrangement with a medical doctor who diagnoses diseases free of charge, with the organisation buying the drugs that are prescribed. Besides this, the organisation also sends the children to government and local authority hospitals with covering letters. The younger street children are escorted to these institutions by members of staff. Depending on resources available at these institutions, the children get free treatment. However, in certain cases the children may find that certain drugs are out of stock at these government health centres. In such cases the organisation buys the prescribed drugs for the street

children. The drop in-centre is central to the organisation and other services depend on it.

### *Counselling*

Counselling permeates every aspect of Streets Ahead's intervention. Every member of staff helps children in this regard. Drug abuse, casual sex, stealing and other bad practices are discouraged as a matter of principle. For more serious cases of this nature the organisation makes representations to professional bodies that have the necessary expertise to provide counselling. Visual counselling is also provided through the display of posters on various topics like HIV/AIDS, sex and drugs. The drop-in-centre has a chart, which displays the set of rules that all children have to abide by at the centre. These rules were formulated by the street children themselves.

### *Procurement of identity documents*

Most street children do not have birth certificates and national identity cards. Streets Ahead helps street children to acquire these. The service is dependent on the effectiveness of the outreach programme. It is through outreach work that critical information needed in procuring these documents is gathered. Procuring these documents is important because it has a bearing on the success or failure of the other services and programmes that the organisation provides. Without these documents the organisation cannot place children in school, in employment or in skills training programmes being run by other organisations.

### *The outreach programme*

The outreach programme is the cornerstone of all the organisation's activities. It ensures that workers of the organisation are always in touch with street children and their families. Each out reach officer keeps a log book where details of individual cases are recorded. These details outline the characteristics of each child's problems at home and in the street. The workers reach out to the children so as to understand their circumstances better from their point of view. It is through information gathered from this programme that solutions to children's problems can be found. These details are used to design and evaluate solutions to individual street children's problems.

### *Street peers*

The project is operating "a street peer programme" where older boys and girls care for the younger ones on the streets and keep the staff of the organisation informed on any issues that may affect the children on the streets at night when staff of the organisation retire to their homes at night. These peers also inform new street children about the services they can get from the organisation. Although this has not been very successful, these street peers attempt to protect the younger children from the bullies on the streets. The street peers are elected by the street children themselves. The peers sit on the monthly management meetings of the organisation. These peers get a weekly allowance for doing these duties. Of late the organisation is pursuing the possibility of transforming this peer education programme into some form of movement by street children. This is in line with the worldwide acclaimed

best practice on street children coming out of Brazil and other Latin American countries.

### *Advocacy*

Advocacy concerns changing public perception of street children, from one that is characterised by prejudice and discrimination to one of tolerance and acceptance. The organisation has embarked on a campaign to educate the public on the situation of street children. Its main focus was on leaders of industry and commerce. It is important to note that the focus on industry and commerce links up with the objective to place street children who have reached the age of majority into employment. This programme was still in its infancy stage at the time of the study. The organisation had sourced the services of a female White volunteer to coordinate its work on advocacy. There was not much progress in this area because some of the people who were supposed to facilitate were not being co-operative especially the media. They never bothered to attend some workshops which they were invited to.

### *Informal education*

Street children are benefiting from an informal education programme which was being funded by the American High Commission in Harare. The children were getting lessons in Mathematics, English and Art. A number of volunteers come in to teach various subjects to the children. Every Friday afternoon A-level students (White) from local secondary schools came in to teach individual street children.



At the time of this study five street children (vendors) were being trained in how to manage their small businesses. They were also assisted to open banking accounts at the post office.

### *Recreation*

Recreation should be integrated into project planning and the children's development, rather than just a bit of fun on the side. Its effects should be monitored alongside other projects components. In addition to enjoyment, the therapeutic and educational value of sports, drama and art need to be maximised (Ennew, 1994).

A television and a video recorder are available for use by the children. There was a weekly supply of audio-video cassettes for the children. Viewing was done in a fairly large room which also functions as boardroom and hall for drama rehearsals. There was football team which was affiliated to the local division four league. Children also played table tennis and other indoor games in this room if they were not watching the television. The children's marimba band raised funds for the organisation when they were hired to play at various social functions like weddings or birthday parties.

The organisation defends the rights of street children to choose what services to participate in, and they are free to come and go as they please." We have often been criticised for allegedly encouraging children to stay on the streets" said the director of this organisation." It aspires to make society appreciate that street

children are as much part of society as all other children through its advocacy programme.

### **The Bulawayo Taskforce**

This is a collaborative effort by Thuthuka, and the Bulawayo City Council, together with the police and the department of social welfare. It focuses on the preventative side by trying to stop children from coming onto the streets. The task force provides school fees, uniforms and food for about 200 children. It conducts community awareness programmes on the needs and the rights of children.

It also promotes poverty alleviation, mainly through urban agriculture, in selected areas. It used to target the elderly only, but it is now also supporting those people who are caring for orphans and large families, in order to prevent the children from working on the streets.

### **Missions and visions**

The mission statements of the various service providers were very broad. Generally all the organizations seem to profess working towards preventing the children from getting onto the streets in the first instance. Some were weak in this area save for projects in Bulawayo and Mutare. In fact it would seem that this area needs to be developed further by all organizations working with street children, possibly in some partnership with the local authority as is the case in

Bulawayo under the guidance of the Bulawayo Taskforce on Street Children. All initiatives have clearly laid out management structures with clear lines of command of authority. All are run by a director or coordinator, who takes full charge of the day-to-day running of the organization. The director or the coordinator is the leader of the staff management team of the organization. In some organizations, immediately above the co-coordinator or the director, there is a management committee. The management committee is made up of representatives of the staff management team and members of the board of directors. The management committee meets regularly to deal with policy and programme issues. Above the management committee there is the board of directors, which in some initiatives is referred to as the executive management board. Thus while management structures varied from one initiative to the other; they were but similar in most cases. While it was difficult to ascertain the strength of these management structures, in some initiatives it was glaringly clear that these were weak. Some of the problems faced by some organizations were largely due to a lack of a strong and visionary management teams at all levels.

The culture and practice of documentation was evident in the Scripture Union initiative of Thuthuka in Bulawayo. This agency regularly commissioned studies to look into the situation of street children in order to establish street children who might not be benefiting from their services, with a view to understand their needs. Apart from the newsletters and end of year reports to the donors, there was no meaningful documentation from the other organizations.

## **Chapter Seven:**

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

Like any other study in the field of street children, this study had its own challenges, problems and limitations. During the initial stages of gaining entry I found it difficult to communicate fully with some of the street children. Street children have developed their own language which they use to communicate among themselves. As an outsider, I did not initially understand their language, but after some time I acquired enough of their lingo. Another difficulty related to the locations of the interviews with the children-on the streets. It was extremely difficult to conduct conversations with the children on the streets, due to multiple distractions and interferences. At times they would hardly concentrate on a single issue while they were running around doing their work and watching out for the police. On occasions, interviews had to be abandoned because the children were high on glue. They had to be interviewed later when they were sober.

Apart from the problem related to interviewing the children on the streets, there was the problem of my role from the perspective of the public and sometimes the police. In the towns where groups of street children were concentrated, there was rarely a moment when I was not interacting with the street children. A lot of time was spent conversing with street boys, and listening to their stories. This interaction with the street children frequently attracted attention, and passers-by

would often stop to warn me that my young companions were dangerous and not to be trusted. People would look at me in amazement, wondering what I was doing with the street children.

The study was conducted when the political atmosphere in Zimbabwe was very tense. The presence of the army and the police in the cities was very threatening. The police and the army were stopping and searching people in the streets and those who were suspected of being supporters of the opposition party (MDC) were arrested and taken in for questioning. We were also informed that some of them were severely beaten by the army and the police. This practice was also taking place in the rural areas. Street children and other homeless people on the streets were being rounded up and put in holding camps far away from the towns. One day, the street children were found gambling and arrested by the police. I was also arrested because I was talking to some street children who were not gambling. I was taken in for questioning and after I had identified myself, they wanted to know why I was interviewing street children. The street children were never relaxed during the period when this study was conducted.

There was no fuel at all the fuel stations in the country. Travelling from one place to the other using public transport was virtually impossible. This limited the researcher from travelling to other cities and small towns to conduct the study. This study was conducted in the three major cities only. It did not cover the other cities and small towns of Zimbabwe. Only 46 street children formed the sample of

the study.

The younger children struggled to answer some of the questions in the interview schedule for the children. I am of the opinion that if I had allowed the children to draw pictures of certain themes, I would have given them an opportunity to express their feelings and experiences better. Tape recording the interviews and the discussions took a long time because I only had one tape recorder. More tap recorders would have allowed me to give the children an opportunity to interview each other. Therefore the results of this study may lack generalisation as a result of some the issues raised above

The findings of this study indicate that the rights of street children are being violated in Zimbabwe as a result of the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions in the country. Such conditions include the social transformation of the family unit, poverty, HIV/AIDS rampant corruption and land reform in Zimbabwe

The number of street children in Zimbabwe appears to be on the increase. This trend is likely to continue as the population of street children increases, the economic contraction persists, people continue to be retrenched, housing opportunities continue to dwindle, parents become more and more unable to provide for their families and the extended family further weakened. HIV/AIDS has already orphaned thousands of children. Persistent drought in the country has forced many families to migrate to the urban areas for survival. We can

speculate that these will add to the numbers of street children.

The housing problem in Zimbabwe is closely related to the issue of street children. Until national independence in 1980 the colonial authorities maintained such surveillance and control that children living on the streets were unheard of. Furthermore, a housing policy and urban council by-laws were strictly and brutally enforced which prohibited the construction or setting housing structures not approved by the local councils. The council by-laws also restricted the movement of people from the rural areas to the cities.

When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, the housing policy and urban council by-laws were relaxed. Some of the families, which had been displaced by the war of liberation, went back to their rural homes but others did not since they had nothing to go back to. The attainment of independence had heightened expectations and with it an influx of job seekers into the urban areas. The rural urban migration continued during the drought years. Thus there has been an increase in urban population's consequently squatter camps and many backyard shacks have become a common feature in many high density suburbs. The demolishing of these squatters camps, and other illegal housing structures by the Government of Zimbabwe in all cities and towns in the country displaced many families. A significant number of families were sleeping on the streets in the cities and towns of Zimbabwe.

The influx of homeless families in the cities is also result of the chaotic “fast track” land reform programme formally announced by the government of Zimbabwean in July 2000. Many farm workers together with their White employees were driven from their sources of livelihood on the farms. Many children of the farm workers dropped out of school and found themselves on the streets with their families. Such political decisions by the Government of Zimbabwe were violating Article 27 which states that every child has a right to a standard of living adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. The State has a duty to ensure that this responsibility can be fulfilled. State responsibility can include material assistance to parents and their children.

The phenomenon of street children in Zimbabwe has been aggravated by the inability of the economy to create sufficient formal employment. Many family problems have been created by high unemployment and poverty. Poverty is the inability to meet basic nutritional, health, educational, shelter, social and recreational needs Chitereka (1999). Generally speaking, poverty enhances the maltreatment of children by undermining the capacity of poor families to provide for their members economically. This, in turn, denies children the right to a good standard of living.

The Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) has had a negative impact on the welfare of the people particularly the vulnerable groups such as children;



women and the elderly. Massive retrenchments have also pushed many families into mass poverty due to unemployment. Poverty impedes the realization of the child's right to education as free primary education in Zimbabwe is no more and government expenditure on education has declined. Compulsory primary education can only be realized if education was provided free of charge, as it had been in the 1980s when favourable economic conditions enabled the country to achieve universal education. Although the majority of children in Zimbabwe today attend school, a good number have dropped out of school. Zimbabwe introduced state school fees in the early 1990s, but as the economy has declined in recent years, schools have had to raise their fees and parents have been unable to keep up with the rising costs. The costs of education have been prohibitive, while other costs like uniforms, levies and sport fees are not manageable. This study has revealed that children are on the streets to try and raise money to go back to school. It is evident that Article 28 is being violated. The child has a right to education, and the State's duty is to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different forms of secondary education to be accessible to every child and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity.

Reasons given by the children for being on the streets indicate that some street children were victims of dysfunctional families. Many children have fled to the streets from violence and abuse in the family. We cannot dispute the fact that causalities of poverty in traditional society were kept to a minimum because of

family care, community support, and institutional provision was especially intricate. The extended family was the traditional social security system and its members were responsible for the protection of the vulnerable, care of the sick and the transmission of values and education. There are several key functions which are performed by the family that are essential to the protection of the various categories of children's rights envisioned by the 1989 United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child. Socialisation and social (emotional) and economic protection are the most important functions. African families did not experience problems of abuse and neglect that are driving many children away from home.

While there is agreement on the role of the family and the importance placed on it in raising children, it is clear in international instruments in seeking to promote the welfare of children, such as the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child that the state has an obligation to provide basic minimum support in cases where the family is failing. Article 18 asserts that parents have the primary responsibility for the physical, psychological and intellectual development of their children, and where the parents cannot fulfill their responsibilities; the state must step in to ensure that the child's rights are met. Yet quite often with the introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes we hear such phrases such as "shifting investments from the nonproductive sectors to the productive sectors." This basically means shifting emphasis in the allocation of resources from the social sector to the economic sector. The shift affects

communities, adults and children alike. Qvortrup (1985: 145) states that:

To the extent that public expenses on children are considered in budgetary terms as expenses [therefore perceived as costs of which there will never be any returns] we are prevented from recognizing that children's activities are of value to society [in future].

Corruption has become a threat to the protection of the rights of the child in Zimbabwe. Corrupt practices include acts such as the use of public authority, office, or official position for personal or private monetary rewards or other privileges at the expense of public good and in violation of established rules and ethical considerations. Corruption is of increasing concern in Zimbabwe. The government has set up a commission to investigate some of the cases. Numerous cases have gone before the courts of law, while some have received extensive media coverage.

A report in one of Zimbabwe's newspapers read:

Top officials of President Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANUPF party and government are using their powerful positions to grab antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) meant for public hospitals, depriving millions of poor citizens suffering from the disease (Daily News February 2006).

Another article in the newspaper read:

About \$96 million of taxpayers' money was embezzled from the Aids Levy Fund, a report by Eric Harid, the Comptroller and Auditor General, says (Daily News.4 October 2002).

According to Makumbe (1994) persistent corruption has led to the total collapse of the economy coupled with rising poverty and unemployment, and has undermined economic and social development by depleting the resources that are necessary for them to take root. This situation is inconsistent with the protection of the child's overall provision and protection rights. Corruption in the health care sector with the diminishing state expenditure on health care has undermined the gains made in the provision of health care during the initial years of Zimbabwe's independence (Makumbe, 1994 cited in Human Development Report, 1998).

In addition to the misdirecting and inefficiency of social spending programmes, corruption contributes significantly to poverty and inequality. "Every available measure of corruption is inversely related to per capita income, while every measure of bureaucratic efficiency, rule of law and enforceability of contracts is directly related to per capita income" (Mauro, 1995, Barro and Elesina 1997 cited in Human Development Report 1998 :7). Corruption has led to tax evasion, poor tax administration and exemptions that favour disproportionately the better-off and well-connected. This has narrowed the tax base and the progressiveness of the tax system. Corruption has resulted in misdirecting of social programmes because of the diversion of funds from poverty-alleviation programmes by well-

connected individuals. Corruption has lowered the quality of health and education service, primarily those provided by the public sector for the poorer sections of the community (Human Development report, 1998).

The HIV/AIDS pandemic with its related illnesses today constitutes one of the greatest social challenges to the protection of children's rights in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is one of the countries hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. This has created a generation of orphans. Most orphans live in households headed by other children or by very old grandparents, thus making them vulnerable to economic conditions that deny them basic rights such as right to parents, adequate nutrition, basic education, and healthcare. Being orphaned through AIDS has also lead children to go and work on the streets.

Most of the activities that children perform on the streets in order to survive contravene their rights as provided under the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Street children in Zimbabwe survive through activities that are hazardous, illegal and often in conflict with the law. Street life is hazardous for any street child. Apart from problems of exposure to the weather, malnutrition and disease, street children in Zimbabwe are commonly used unscrupulously and deliberately by members of the community and other street dwellers.

Pimping, working for the police and guarding commuter buses were some of the unsafe activities which the children were involved in on the streets.

The risk of arrest is carried by many of the activities through which street children 'earn' money, such as begging, theft, prostitution, trading in stolen goods, gambling and 'parking' cars. They are often held in custody for months and in most cases, family members are not notified of their children's arrests. The police, government, and private security forces subject street children in Zimbabwe to routine harassment and physical abuse to wipe the streets clean of perceived social blight. According to the Children's Adoption Act 1989 of Zimbabwe, the police are supposed to protect the children against all social ills and yet they have tended to abuse the power invested in them by sexually and physically abusing street children. This is a clear violation of Article 19 which requires the Government of Zimbabwe to protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programmes for the prevention of abuse and treatment of victims. The failure of law enforcement bodies to promptly and effectively investigate and prosecute cases of abuse by the police and some members of the public against street children allows the violence to continue.

The use of inhalants such as glue by some children in Zimbabwe has a variety of mental and as well as physical effects on them. These range from the direct effects of the inhalants on their behaviour and the functioning of their bodies, to injuries sustained while intoxicated from inhalants, for example being knocked over by a car. Practising prostitution and sexual exploitation in general, carries a further serious health risk for street children-it makes them particularly vulnerable

to the AIDS virus. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically emphasizes the need to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse such as the inducement and coercion of a child into unlawful sexual activity, prostitution and pornography.

The enforcement of fee collection at health facilities enacted nationwide from 1991, combined with an apparent deterioration in the manpower situation and service quality at these facilities, appear to be causing significant changes in health-seeking behaviour. Most street children come from poor families who cannot afford these costs because of their situation. The government of Zimbabwe is violating Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states: State Parties must recognize their right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilitate for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. State parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access of to such health care services.

The government of Zimbabwe does not have any clear policy on the problem of street children. The traditional response to street children by the government of Zimbabwe has been repression. Rounding up street children as policy does not solve the issue of street children. They harm the children psychologically. The children are harassed and abused, thereby creating in them a feeling that they are worthless. This is immoral as well as psychological torture. These children

are being abused by a society that should be taking care of them. These round ups in a way comprise a vicious circle that leads to a waste of resources either directly or indirectly. Rounding street children up further illustrates that the official definition of street children is very narrow. The definition is limited to those children that are visible in the city centre. Any definition of a phenomenon leads to a certain type of action. Because of this narrow definition, the programme of action is limited to chasing children in an attempt to treat symptoms instead of the causes of the phenomenon. This means that the government of Zimbabwe has failed to take appropriate measures to promote physical, psychological recovery and social reintegration of street children who are victims of neglect, abuse, exploitation and inhuman degrading treatment or punishment. This is a violation of Article 39 which requires the state to provide rehabilitative care to children who are victims of torture, maltreatment and exploitation.

Observations on these round ups seem to imply that all the work that the street children are doing is illegal. The conflict between street children and officialdom is real but it tends to be anchored in misconceptions. Street children are accused of engaging in criminal activities. If they are criminals they should be arrested and brought before courts. However, this is not the case. The solution in dealing with the issue is at community level, providing support to the families in the community to prevent separation.

There are many nongovernmental organizations working with street children in



Zimbabwe. What motivates groups to handle problems associated with street children in Zimbabwe? I identified two groups. Academics have tended to be the forerunners of programme initiatives and some of them have contributed a lot in their own right in setting up projects that seek to deal with the phenomenon of street children. Most academics seek to engender children themselves in seeking solutions to their own problems. They view children as potential change agents not just as recipients of charity and sympathy.

Projects run by persons from an academic background tend to be based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children. The programmes provided for street children by such organisations indicated that the three most important principles of the Convention were being upheld. These are the principles of “Participation, Provision and Protection”. Practical activities that have been born out of projects initiated by academics often take the form of drop-in-centres, to which children come in and leave as they please. These have a strong outreach component both in the cities’ centres and in the suburbs from which the children come, as well as a strong documentation of the phenomena. Such organisations have been accused of being nothing more than studies of street children which encourage children to be on the streets.

The other group with religious based motivations is by far the most prevalent in Zimbabwe and other developing countries. These projects seem to be attached to a church or a church affiliated organization. In Zimbabwe we have Emthunzuni

WeThemba founded by Reverend Ndoda in the city of Bulawayo. There is Thuthuka also in Bulawayo which is attached to the Scripture Union.

The tendency by some religious based initiatives is to view children with pity and sympathy as objects of charity. Further more there is a tendency to establish homes which tend to be much closed than drop-in-centers. These homes are very expensive to run and usually cater for a few lucky street children. Such projects are less involved or in touch with communities from where the street children come.

The study noted that the organisations working with street children are faced with a number of challenges and problems. When projects for street children are looking for alternatives to closed institutions, they naturally think of reuniting children with their own families. Reintegration of street children back into their families is a vital issue and a challenge for most of the organizations working with street children in Zimbabwe. Although some projects have achieved much success with this option, children who are simply sent home will often come back to the streets because they fear that they may encounter the same kind of physical abuse, which forced them to leave home in the first place. This not a reunion between ourselves and their families. It is their reunification, which implies a firm decision from both the families and the children. Such a decision will only be taken if the cause for the separation has been removed. This reintegration exercise cannot be effective unless it is integrated with community and family development (Ennew, 1994). This therefore

means that those working with street children must also work very closely with the families of these children. This is not the case in Zimbabwe. Most of the organizations providing services to street children do not work with the families and communities of these children.

There is a general feeling amongst street child-care workers interviewed that lack of coordination has worked against successful programmatic interventions.

Another challenge facing these organizations is the influx of children into the streets owing to the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. They cannot bring about the desired change for street children due to poor funding for programmes.

Poor staffing was another problem being faced by most of the NGOS that work street children. Not all the service providers had staff with any professional qualifications. The workers are not motivated at all. They do not have the funds to hire qualified staff. Lack of qualified staff makes their work with children in need of care very difficult. Another challenge facing these organizations is the influx of children into the streets owing to the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Many organizations can cope in providing services to all the children due to their financial positions.

Initiatives of Christian origins (or with strong links to the church) seem very solid and relatively successful in promoting the rights of street children. They do not worry very much about raising funds for their work and their general sustenance. On the other

hand secular based initiatives seem to be very few, and generally tend to be much bigger in terms of programmes which over-all seem not to be sustainable. They rely heavily on donor support which is not forthcoming as most traditional donor agencies are now shunning the country due to the political climate prevailing in the country.

It would seem that very few children were not benefiting from service providers' services in Bulawayo, where co-operation with other service providers was very effective. In Harare the numbers of street children appeared to be very high, and were suggestive of the ineffectual co-operation of the service providers there. In Bulawayo where organisations work in collaboration, they have a better chance of succeeding. This is particularly the case when they have the support of municipal authorities which are able to push issues of advocacy strongly. They also rely on a variety of sources of support, and are more stable economically and administratively.

Zimbabwe has legislations which give effect to national and international standards protecting children from economic exploitation through child labour practices. The statutory instruments and regulations define the concept of light work and hazardous work. The Children's Protection and Adoption Act addresses the issues of child work and child abuse. In November 1999 the parliament of Zimbabwe ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention number 133 on minimum age for admission into employment but again there are

no mechanisms to enforce such laws. The one thing that we can be sure of is that child labour causes poverty. If street children drop out of school only to earn money, they will never develop skills. Street children who are minding cars today will be minding cars in 10 years time if nothing is done (Chauvin, 1994).

The task of helping street children seems to be Herculean. It is clear that this task cannot be achieved simply by merely passing laws or by providing more financial assistance to those who work with these children. Mere material improvement trickling down to the community level will not help either. It is possible that all these efforts may even worsen the situation unless they are complimented by programmes which will allow the children to develop their full potential and by softening of punitive attitudes towards street children by authorities.

There is no longer any reason for the government of Zimbabwe to be complacent. These children are Zimbabwe's future leaders and Zimbabwe must invest in them in no uncertain terms. The presence in cities and other urban areas of large numbers of disgruntled young people and children can be politically destabilizing. These children are prime targets for those prepared to use violence as a political weapon. Some of the street youths who are tough, ruthless unattached, half educated intellectually vulnerable, familiar with secrecy, deception and the subversion of authority can be perfect recruits. The street children and street youth can be the guerrillas and terrorists of tomorrow. This

problem can no longer be ignored.

One can argue that the welfare of children, particularly street children cannot be advanced in a situation of declining human development. The idea of the welfare state, which will oversee the protection of children and other vulnerable members of the society, cannot be overlooked. Let us conclude by emphasizing the observation that it is inconceivable that the welfare of children can be advanced in an environment of increasing mass corruption, poverty, internal conflicts and wars. It is in this regard that the government of Zimbabwe must make efforts to ensure sustainable development in the country.

### **Further research**

There is no one answer to the problem of street children but there are some clear messages. There are many reasons for street being on the streets most of which are outside the control of street children or their families. Although most researchers now recognize that children's families must provide an important key to the phenomena of street children, there were no studies that specifically examined the families of street children. Studies in the area of street girls, young street mothers and their babies were also lacking. Epidemiological and health data on street children is scant. There is therefore a need for further research to be carried out in these areas. Such research could be better informed by street children and their legitimate representatives.

I provide some suggestions that may help in protecting the rights of street

children and alleviate their plight.

## **Recommendations**

- ❖ The Government of Zimbabwe should adopt or amend legislation as necessary to abolish all forms of violence against street children and to ensure the effective enforcement of such legislation.
- ❖ There is need for the government of Zimbabwe to come up with alternative educational initiatives for the urban poor children. Schools for such children must take into account the unaffordability of fees and uniforms for some parents. Non-formal education programs should be introduced where street children especially the bigger children could be taught practical subjects such building, carpentry or agriculture.
- ❖ The government of Zimbabwe should make sure that the budget is child-friendly; the formulation process has to be participatory. Participation provides the space for stake holders to influence the course of actions that affect the fulfillment of their rights to development. A participatory approach will engender ownership of the budget.
- ❖ Through the Child Welfare Forum and other initiatives, the government and no-governmental organizations are urged to formulate intervention programmes to combat child labour. This is because child labour requires a multi-pronged approach involving different institutions in addition to government's efforts.

- ❖ A major capacity building exercise is needed in the government ministries responsible for children's welfare so that they are not found wanting during budgetary submissions. In particular, the Department of Social welfare should be allocated more financial resources for training its personnel on child welfare activities.
- ❖ The police must thoroughly and promptly investigate instances of violence against street children and take appropriate action against those responsible. Criminal charges should be brought against perpetrators.
- ❖ Training programmes in children's rights for teachers, police staff of both correctional and non-penal institutions and others who work with children must be initiated.
- ❖ There is needed for the education Act to state clearly what is meant by "compulsory education". Many street children are not able to go school because their parents do not have money to pay for their fees and cannot afford to buy their uniforms.
- ❖ Free primary education should be re-introduced as was the case in the 1980s.
- ❖ The boy and the girl child should be regarded as equal in every respect especially in the area of education. The education system should provide children with practical training and not merely prepare them for academic and examination orientation.
- ❖ Taxi incentives should be provided to encourage the private sector to invest in those organizations that work with street children.



- ❖ Establish effective and confidential complaint procedures for children and their families and ensure that complaints are promptly and thoroughly investigated by an independent body outside authority (Child Ombudsman).
- ❖ Literature and accurate information should be given to communities in order for them to fully understand the concept of Child Rights.
- ❖ Programmes need to focus on family tracing and re-unification since this is a best practice. Street children, as well as other children in difficult circumstances, need to be cared for within the context of their families and culture. Strategies for intervention need to consider ways of strengthening families' responsibility for their families. Children should be placed in institutions only when there is no reasonable alternative, and that children are never detained with adults.
- ❖ With the escalation of the number of AIDS orphans in the country, the resuscitation of the AIDS fund is critical. Funds should be set aside in the budget. This fund should allow donors and other private institutions to contribute to it. The largest chunk of the funds should be directed at orphan care (nutrition, education and health care).
- ❖ More resources should be directed towards the empowerment and the needs of women. Empirical research has found that the promotion of the well-being of women has got a direct positive impact on the welfare of the household, including children.
- ❖ Those organizations working with children need to step up their work with

- communities, educating them to identify the signs of child abuse and encouraging them to tenaciously protect their children by establishing and supporting functional child protection committees, where children themselves are represented.
- ❖ Arising from the need for co-operation, there is need for setting up a network of organizations working with street children in cities and towns where they do not exist already. At the same time there is need to establish a national network of all organizations for service providers working with street children who will support various city and town networks for service providers to street children. This is based on the fact that a number of children on the streets come from distant parts of the country, and from other cities. It would be useful for organizations to co-operate beyond the boundaries of their particular cities and where possible establish some satellite taskforces in areas where most children come from, outside of the city or town.
  - ❖ Co-operation should extend to sharing experience and establishing the best practices and policies most likely to lead to effective rehabilitation of street children.

## References

- ACHARYA, F. (1992). *Time use data and the living standards measurement study*. Washington, DC: Development Research Department, World Bank, LEMS Working Papers, No.18.
- AGNELLI, S. (1986). *Street Children: A Growing Urban Tragedy*, London: Wed Enfield and Nicholson.
- APTEKAR, L. (1988a). *Street Children of Cali*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- APTEKAR, L. (1988b). *Columbian Street Children: Their Mental Health and How they can be saved*, International Journal of Mental Health Vol.17, No3 (pp81-104).
- APTEKAR, L. (1989). *Characteristics of Street Children in Colombia, in Child Abuse and Neglect*. The International Journal in Social Work 13:427-430.
- APTEKAR, L. (1994). *Street Children in Developing World: A Review of their Condition in Cross Cultural Research* 28(3): 195-224.
- APTEKAR, L. & ABEBE, B. (1997). *Conflict in the Neighbourhood in Childhood* Volume 4(4).
- ARCHARD, D. (1993). *Children's Rights and Childhood*. London. Routledge.
- ARIERS, P. (1979). *Centuries of Childhood*, London, Jonathan Cape. Ltd.
- ARNAFI, J. K. (1997). *Vulnerability to sexually transmitted disease: street children in Accra* in Health and Transition Review, Supplement to Volume 7, 1997, 281-306. Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, Legon.
- ATHEY, J. (1991). *HIV Infection and Homeless Adolescents*, in Child Welfare. 517-528.
- BAIZERMAN, M. (1988). *Street kids: Notes for designing a programme for youth of and on the streets*. The Child Care Worker.6 (11) 13-15.
- BAIZERMAN, M. (1989). *A primer on the phenomenon of street children: some work for them and others against them*. The Child Care Worker, 9 (9):6
- BAIZERMAN, M. (1996). *Youth Work on the Street: Community's Moral Compact with its Young People*, in Childhood, 3(2): 15-165.

BAIZERMAN, W.O. & PELLET, L. (1992). *Street Children in Brazil and their Helpers: Comparative Views on Aspirations and the Future* in International Social Work. 35:163-17.London Sage Publication.

BAIZERMAN, M. (1988). *Street kids: Notes for designing a programme for youth of and on the streets*. The Child Care Worker.6 (11) 13-15.

BAKER, R. (1993). *Street Children What Do We Assume?* B. A. Dissertation in the Department of Anthropology. University of Durham.

BARTOLOME, M. C. (1999). *Alleviating the Plight of Street Children: A Challenge for the Social Work Profession the next Millennium*: Joint Conference of the: A SW, IFSQ, APASWE and AASWWE, Brisbane.

BECKER, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, Free Press, New York.

BEINSTEIN, A. & GRAY, M. (1993). *Khaya Lethu-An Abortive Attempt at Dealing with Street Children* in Social Work 1991: 27(4), (pp.).50-58.

BELLAMY, C. (2000). *The State of the World's Children*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

BEQUELE, A. & BOYDEN, J. (1988). *Working children current trends and policy responses* in International Labour Review, Vol. 127, 1988, No. 2, (pp153-171)

BHARGAVA, P. H. (2003). *The Elimination of Child Labour: Who's Responsibility, A Practical Work Book*, London, Sage Publications.

BLACK, M. (1993). *Streets and Working Children*: Innocenti Global Seminar, Summary Report, UNICEF.

BLACK, M. (1991). *Philippines: Children of the Runaway Cities*, UNICEF, Innocenti Studies. Florence, Italy.

BLAXTER, L.; HUGHES, C. & TIGHT, M. (2001). *How to Research*. Philadelphia. Open University.

BLUMER, H. (1962). *Society as a Symbolic Interaction*, in A. M. ROSE, (ed.), *Human Behavior and Social Processes*. London Routledge & Kegan Paul.

BLUMER, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Interacting Approach Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice Hall.

BRANDON, D. & WELLS, K. (1980). *The Survivors: A Study of Homeless Young Newcomers to London and the response made to them*. Routledge and Kegan

Paul. London.

BRYMAN, A. (1988a). *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London Routledge.

BRYMAN, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. New York. Oxford University Press.

BOURDILLON, M. F. C. (1991). *Poor, Harassed, but Very Much Alive*. Gweru, Mambo Press.

BOURDILLON, M. F. C. (1994). *Street Children in Harare* in Africa, 64(4), 1994 (pp. 516-532).

BOURDILLON, M. F. C. (1995). *The Children on our streets* in Child Care Worker, Vol.13 No.3 March, 1995:12-13.

BOYDEN, J. (1990). Childhood and Policy Makers: *A Comparative Perspective of Globalization of Childhood in Constructing and Deconstructing of Childhood: Issues in the Social Study of Childhood* edited by Jane, A. and Prout, A. London Falmer Press (pp184-215).

CARRIZOSA, S.O. & POERTNER, J. (1992). *Latin American Street Children: Programmes and Critique*, in Journal of International Social Work 35: 405 -413.

CASA ALIANZA (2001). *Sticky Business* at <http://www.casa-alianza.org/EN/street-children glue>.

CHATERJEE, A. (1992). *India: The Forgotten Children of the Cities*, UNICEF, Innocenti Studies, Florence, Italy.

CHAUVIN, L. (1994). *Poverty turns children into "pint-sized hustlers"* in National Catholic reporter, September, 1994, Vol. 30 n 39 p.9.

CHINAKE, H. (1997). *Strategies for Poverty Alleviation in Zimbabwe* in Journal of Social Development in Africa. Vol. 12 No 1.

CHITEREKA, C. (1999). *Poverty and the Role of Social Work in Poverty Alleviation: The Case of Zimbabwe* in African Journal of Social Work, Vol. No. 1(1-13)

COCKBURN, A. (1990). *Street Children: an Overview of the extent, causes, characteristics and dynamics of the problem*, a paper commissioned by the Southern African National Council for the Child and Family Welfare.

COCKBURN, A. (1991). *Street children: an overview of the extent, causes,*

*characteristics and dynamics of the problem.* The Child Care Worker, 9 (1): 12-13.

COHEN, A. K. (1955). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the group*, Glencoe, I L: Free Press.

CONNOLLY, M. & ENNEW, J. (Eds), (1996). *Introduction: Children Out of Place: Special Issue of Childhood* Vol. 3 (2):131-145.

CONNOLLY, M. (1990). *Adrift in the City: A Comparative Study of Street Children in Bogota, Colombia, and Guatemala City* in BOXIL, N. (ed.) *Homeless Children: The Waiters and the Watchers*, New York, Haworth Press.

CONRAD, S. F. (1999). *Poverty in Zimbabwe*, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Harare, Zimbabwe.

DALLAPE, F. (1996). *Urban Children: A Challenge and Opportunity*, In *Childhood* 3:263-294.

DALLAPE, F. & GILBERT, C. (1993). *Children's Participation in Action Research: A training course for trainers*, Harare, Zimbabwe. ENDA.

DALLAPE, F. (1987). *You are a Thief: an Experience with Street Children*, Nairobi Undugu Society.

DIMENSTAIN, G. (1990). *Brazil: War on children*. London: Latin American Bureau.

DENSCOMBE, M. (2007). *The Good Research Guide for small-scale social research projects*. Third Edition. London, Open University Press.

De OLIVEIRA, W. BAIZERMAN, M. & PELLET, I. (1992). *Street Children in Brazil and their Helpers: Comparative Views on Aspirations and their future* in *International Social Work*, 35:163-176.

DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL WELFARE, (2002). *A Project Proposal for the Development of a National Strategy on Street Children in Zimbabwe*.

DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL WELFARE, (1994-96). *Community Based Care of Orphans and CEDCs Masvingo and Mwenezi Phases 1, 11 and 111* Government of Zimbabwe.

DRAKE, E. (1989). *Workshop on Street Children in Botswana*. The Child Care Worker, 7 (4): 14-15.

DUBE, L. (1996). *Street Children Versus Officialdom: The Search for a Solution*

*to the Phenomenon of Street Children in Harare, Zimbabwe* in Journal of Psychology in Africa, South of the Sahara, the Caribbean and Afro Latin America, 7(1)1997:31-46.

DUBE, L. (1997). *Aids-Risk Patterns and Knowledge of the Disease amongst Street Children in Harare, Zimbabwe*, in Journal of Social Development in Africa. 12 (2):6173.

DUBE, L. (1999). *Street Children: A Part of an Organised Society* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe).

DUBE, L. (2000). *Working With and For Street Children: Programme Challenges*: A Paper prepared for The Just Children Foundation in Partnership with Forum Syd for the Capacity Building Workshop, Adelaide Acres. Harare, Zimbabwe.

ENNEW, J. (1986a). *Children of the Street*, New International Oct. (164):10-11.

EDWARDS, M. (1996). *New Approaches to Children and Development*, Journal of International Development. 8, 6, 813-827.

ENNEW, J. (1986). *The Sexual Exploitation of Street Children*, Cambridge, University Press.

ENNEW, J. (1994). *Street and Working Children: A Guide to Planning*, London. Save the Children (U.K.)

ENNEW, J. (1995). *Outside Childhood: Street Children* in Franklin, B. (Ed.) The handbook of Children's Rights-Comparative Policy and Practice. London. Routledge.

ENNEW, J. & CONNOLLY, M. (1996). *Introduction: Children Out of Place in Childhood*, Vol. 3, pp131-135

ENNEW, J. GOPAL, K.; HEERAN, J. & MONTGOMERY, H. (1996). *Children and Prostitution: How can we measure and monitor the commercial exploitation of Children*: Literature review and annotated bibliography, collaboration between UNICEF Headquarters New York, Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances Section, Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge and Child Watch International.

FELSMAN, J.K. (1981). *Street Urchins of Cali: On Risk, Resiliency and Adoption in Childhood*. PhD Dissertation Harvard University

FELSMAN, J. K. (1988). *Risk and Resiliency in Childhood: The Lives of Street Children* in the Child in Our Times: Studies in the Development of Resiliency, edited by TIMOTHY, F. G & COLES, and R. 1988. New York. Mazel Publishers.

(56-80). (Ed.).

FELSMAN, J. K. (1984). *Abandoned Children, Reconsideration*, in *Children Today*. New York. John Wiley and Sons. Ltd. (13-18).

FOLEY, M. (1983). *Coping Strategies of Street Children*, in *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. 27 (1):15-20.

FOSTER, G. MAKUFA, C. DREW, R. & KRALOVEE, E. (1997). *Factors leading to the establishment of child headed households: the case of Zimbabwe in Health Transition Review*, Supplement 2 volume 7, 1997.

FRERIE, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

GLAUSER, B. (1990). *Street Children: deconstructing a construct* in JAMES, A. and Prout, A. (Eds.), *Constructing and Deconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the study of childhood* London, New York, Philadelphia. The Falmer Press.

GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE, (1996). Revised Edition *Children's Protection and Adoption Act*, Government Printer Harare.

GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE, (1987). *Harare Combination Master Plan: Report for the Combination Authority*. Harare Combination Master Plan Preparation Authority, Harare (Unpublished).

GOODE, J. (1987). *Gaminiso: The Changing Nature of the Street Child Phenomenon in Colombia*, Universities Field Staff International Report (UFS) 28.

GRIER, B. (1996). *Street Kids in Zimbabwe: the History Origins of a Contemporary Problem*, a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, San Francisco, and C.A. USA.

GROSS, R.; LANDFIELD, B. & HERMAN, S. (1996). *Height and Weight as a Reflection of the Nutritional Situation of School- Aged Children Working and Living in the Streets of Jakarta* in *Social Science Medical* 4 :453-458.

HART, R. (1992). *Children's Participation-From- Tokenism to Citizenship*, Italy UNICEF.

HECHT, T. (1998). *At Home in the Streets: Street Children of Northern Brazil*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

HIGGENS, S. J. (1979). *Shoe shiners Street life and Survival: A Case study of the gamines of Quito*, Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas.



HOLDAWAY, S. (2000). *Theory and Method in Qualitative Research in Research Training for Social Scientists; A Handbook for Postgraduate Researchers* edited by DAWN B. London, Sage.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, ZIMBABWE, (1998). United Nations Development Programme.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, (2001). *In the Shadow of Death: HIV/Aids and Children's Rights in Kenya*. Vol. 13, No. 4 (A). <http://www.org>.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, (2002). *Suffering in Silence: The links between Human Rights Abuses and HIV Transmission to Girls in Zambia*.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, (2002). *Juvenile Injustice: Police abuse and detention of street children in Kenya*. Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/Kenya>

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, (1996). *Police Abuse and Killings of Street Children in India*. Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project Human Rights Watch/Asia Human Rights Watch New York, Washington, London, Brussels.

HUMAN RIGHT WATCH, (2002). *Promises Broken: An Assessment of Children's Rights on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/promises/police/html>.

HUTSON, S. & LIDDIARD, (1994). *Youth Homelessness: The Construction of a Social Issue*. The MacMillan Press. London.

INCIARDI, J. A. & SURRAT, H. L. (1997). *Children in the Streets of Brazil: Drug Use, Crime, Violence and HIV Risks*. [http://www.ndel.edu/butz/articles/chil.html.\(09.04.02\)](http://www.ndel.edu/butz/articles/chil.html.(09.04.02)).

INTER-NGO PROGRAMME ON STREET CHILDREN AND STREET YOUTH, (1983a). Document 83/23-Sc/35/, 18 March 1983. Geneva: International Catholic Children's Bureau.

JAMES, A. & PROUT, A. (eds.) (1990). *Constructing and Reconstructing childhood*. London: Falmer Press.

JAREG, E. & JAREG, P. (1994). *Reaching Children through dialogue*, Redd Barna, McMillan.

KASEKE, E. (1993). *Juvenile Justice in Zimbabwe: The need for Reform* in Journal of Social Development in Africa. Harare, Zimbabwe.

KRUGER, J. M. & RICHTER, L. M. (1996). *South African Street Children at risk*

of AIDS in Africa Insight Vol.26, 1996 (237-243).

LALOR, K. J. (1999). *Street Children: A Comparative Perspective* in Child Abuse and Neglect. Volume 23, Issue 8 August 1999, Pages 759-770.

LALOR, K. J. (1997). *Victimization of street children in Addis Ababa: Factors of resilience and susceptibility*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis: University College Cork: Ireland.

LE ROUX & SMITH, S. C. (1998a). *Causes and Characteristics of the Street Children Phenomenon: A Global Perspective* in Adolescence Vol. 33 (131) p 683.

LE ROUX, J & SMITH, S. C. (1998b). *Public Perceptions of and Reactions to Street Children*, in Adolescence 33(132):901-913.

LEVINE, V. (1996). *The Economics and Finance of Education in Zimbabwe 1990-2000*, a report for the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and UNICEF-Zimbabwe.

LORENZO, R. (1992). *Too Little Time and Space for Childhood*, UNICEF, Innocenti Studies, Florence, Italy.

LUCCHINIR. R. (1996b). *The Streets and its Image* in Childhood, 3(2):235-246.

LUCCHINI, R. (1994). *The Street Girl, Prostitution and Drugs*, University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

LUCCHINI, R. (1997). *Between Running Away and Eviction: The Child Leaving for the Street*. This Working Paper is the English Version of: "Entre fugue at expulsion: le depart de L'Enfant dans la rue" Daniel Stocklin has made the translation.

LUCCHINI, R. (1993). *Street Children and drug consumption in Brazil. Thoughts about addiction*. University of Fribourg, Switzerland Institute for Economic and Social Sciences. Working Paper No. 231.

LUSK, M. W. PERALTA, F. & VESTA, G.W. (1989). *Youth Homelessness Street Children of Juarez: A Field Study* in the British journal of Social Work, 32, (pp289-302).

LUSK, M. W. (1989). *Street Programs in Latin America* in Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 16 (1):55-77.

MADENGA, R. & MAKAMURE, J. (2001). *Study of Children in Conflict with Law* in Zimbabwe. Harare, UNICEF.

- MAGGIE, B. (1993). *Street and Working Children: Summary Report*. UNICEF International Development Centre Spedale degli Innocenti Florence, Italy.
- MAKAMURE, J. & MUZUVA, H. (2000). *A Child Friendly National Budget: Children Are Our Future*. Funded by Save the Children Norway (Redd Barna, Zimbabwe).
- MASON, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching*, London. Sage Publications.
- MAXWELL, J.A. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach: Applied Social Research Methods Series Volume 41*. London, Sage.
- McCARTNEY, I. (2000). *Children in our Midst: Voices of Farm Workers Children*, Harare, Zimbabwe, Save the Children (U.K), Weaver Press.
- MINISTRY OF NATIONAL AFFAIRS, EMPLOYMENT CREATION and COOPERATIVES (1997). *An Information Update*.
- MINISTRY OF INFORMATION POST and TELECOMMUNICATIONS, (1996). *Zimbabwe in Brief*, Government Printer, Harare: 8-9, 24.
- MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR and SOCIAL WELFARE, (1999). *Zimbabwe National Child Labour Survey Country Report*. Central Statistics Office, Harare, Zimbabwe.
- MUCHINI, B. (1994). *Morality and Street Children in Harare*. Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Philosophy Degree in Psychology at the University of Zimbabwe.
- MUCHINI, B. & NYANDIYA –BUNDY, S. (1992). *Struggling to Survive: A Study of Street Children in Zimbabwe*. Harare, Department of Psychology, University of Zimbabwe and UNICEF.
- MYERS, M. (1989). *Urban Working Children: A Comparison of four surveys from South America* In International Labour Review, Vol28, No. 3(321-335).
- NEFT & LEVINE, (1997). *Where women stand: An international report on the status of women in 140 countries, 1997-1998*. New York: Random House.
- O'MAHONY, B. (1988). *A Capital Offence: The Plight of the Young Single Homeless in London*. London. Routledge.
- ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, (1992). *The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*.
- OWUSU-BEMPAH, J. (1995). *Parental information as an important factor in the*

*well-being of children of single-parent families*. International Social Work, 38,253-275.

PATTISON, B. (undated). *Street Living Children in India: Assumptions and Approaches Non-governmental Organizations*. Social Work Monograph 174 Norwich.

PERALTA, F. (1993). *Children of the Streets Of Mexico*, Children and Youth Services Review 14:347-62.

POSTMAN, N. (1994). *The Disappearance of Childhood*. New York: Vintage Books.

PROUT, A. & JAMES, A. (1990). *A New Paradigm for Sociology of Childhood: Provenance, Promise and problems* in JAMES, A. & PROUT, A. (eds) *Constructing and Deconstructing Childhood*. Brighton, Falmer Press.

PROVINCIAL CHILD WELFARE FORUM & The DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE, (1998). *A Situation Analysis of Urban Orphans and Children in Difficult Circumstances in Bulawayo*.

POWEL, G. M. (1994). *Child care policy in Zimbabwe*.

QVORTRUP, J. (1985). *Placing Children in the Division of Labour in Family and Economy in South Africa's Informal Economy*, edited by Preston-White and Rogerson, 1991, Oxford University Press, Cape Town.

QVORTRUP, J.; BARDY, M.; SGRITTA, G. & WINTERSBERGER, H. (Eds.) (1994). *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. European Centre Vienna, Avebury.

RAFAEL, M. (1997). *The Family Situation of Street Youth in Latin America: A Cross National View*, International Social Work. SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oak, and C A and New Delhi 40:86-100.

RAMSAY, R. (1995) *Global Studies: Africa*. Dushkin Publishing Group, Guilford Connecticut, USA.

REDDY, N. (1992). *Street Children of Bangalore: A Situational Analysis*. New Delhi. International Labour Institute.

REYNOLDS, P. (1989). *Children in Cross Roads: Cognition and Society in South Africa*, Cape Town. David Phillip.

REYNOLDS, P. (1985). *Children in Zimbabwe: Rights and Power in Relation to Work*, In *Anthropology Today* 1(3): 16-20.

REYNOLDS, P. (1990). *Dance Civet Cat: Child Labour in the Zambezi Valley*, Zimbabwe. Baobab Books; London, Zed Books Ltd. Ohio University Press.

RICHARDS, H. & RICHARDS, G.J. (1996). *Effective Cooperate Sector Strategies Aimed at Alleviating the Plight of Street Children*. Lakeside Publishing, Cardiff.

RICHTER, L. & SWART- KRUGER, P. (1995). *Aids risk among street children and youth: Implications for intervention*, in South Africa Journal of Psychology 25 (1) (31-38).

RICHTER, L. (1989a). *Description of Self, Family and Society given by Street Children in Johannesburg*. Institute of Behavioural Sciences, University of South Africa. Internal Report.

RITCHTER, L. M. (1988). *Street Children: the nature and scope of the problem in Southern Africa*, in Child care worker 1988, 6(1-14).

ROSEMBERG, F and ANDRADE, L. F. (1997). *Ruthless rhetoric: child and youth prostitution in the Brazilian media*, a paper presented at the Urban Childhood conference, held in Trondheim, Norway, 9-12 June 1997.

RUXTON, S. (2001). *Towards a Children's Policy in the European Union Contemporary Theory Policy and Practice* in Children in Society Edited by FOLEY, P.; ROCHE, J. & TUCKER, S. New York. Palgrave.

RUXTON, S. (1996). *Children in Europe*. NCH, Action for Children. London.

SANDERS, T. G. (1987a). *Brazilian Street Children Part 1: Who they are*, In University Field Staff International Reports (U S F I), 1987 No.17.

SAVE THE CHILDREN, (2001). *Children's Rights: A second Chance*. International Save the Children Alliance Ohio.

SAVE THE CHILDREN U K (2002). *Children's rights: What's all this about rights?* <http://www.savethechildren.org.ukchildrights/main.html>

SAVE THE CHILDREN, (2001). (U.K.). *Children's Rights:* <http://www.scfk.org.uk/chidrights/main.html25/10/2001>.

SCHARF, W; POWEL, M. & THOMAS, E. (1986). *Strollers-Street children of Cape Town*. In BURMAN, S. & REYNOLDS, P. (eds.). *Growing Up in a Divided Society; the contexts of childhood in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Raven Press.  
SCHARFER, P. (1989). *The twilight world of street children*. Kamvelhile.5:3-5.

SHANE, P. G. (1996). *What About Americas Homeless Children?* Sage Publications (Ltd) London.

SHAW, H.W. (2003). *They Stole Our Land: Debating the Expropriation of White farms in Zimbabwe* in *Journal of African Studies*. Cambridge University Press: 75-89.

SUMMING UP, (1990). *Summing Up Our experiences in Work with Street Children*, Africa, Redd Barna.

STACKS, C. B. (1974). *All our Kin*. New York. Basic Books.

STREETS AHEAD, Monthly Report July, 2004. Harare, Zimbabwe.

STREET CHILDREN IN ASIA, (1989). *Mobilizing Community Action for Street Children, First regional conference/seminar on street children in Asia*, Manila, Child Hope International. 4 -13MAY 1989.

SWART, J.M. (1987). *Street Children: Refugees, Drop Outs or Survivors?* In *The Child Care Worker*, Vol. 5(10) October 1987, (6-8).

SWART, J (1988a). *Street-wise: opening the way to self-actualization for the street child* in *Africa Insight*, 18 (1):9 (pp.33-41).

SWART, J. (1988b). *Community Perceptions of Street Children in Hillbrow in the Chiid Child Care Worker Vol.6 (6).June 1988 (pp121).*

SWART, J. M. (1988b). *An Anthropological Study of Street Children in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, with special reference to their moral values*. M.A. Thesis in Anthropology, University of South Africa.

SWART, J. M. (1990). *MALUNDE: The Street Children of Hillbrow*, Johannesburg. Witwatersrand University Press.

SWART, J. M. (1990a). *Street Children in Latin America*. *Latin American Report* 6 (1).

SWART, J. M. (1990b). *Of the Streets: A Study of Black Street Children in South Africa*, in *Truth in the Field: Social Science Research in South Africa* edited by

SWART-KRUGER, J. (1996). *An imperfect Fit-Street Children and State Intervention* in *Africa Insight*, Vol. 3, 1996:231-236.

SWART-KRUGER, J. & DONALD, D. (1994). *Children of the South African Streets* in *Childhood and Adversity: Psychological Perspectives from South*

African Research, edited by Andrew Dawes & David Donald, 1994, David Phillip, Cape Town & Johannesburg, (107 – 121).

SWART-KRUGER, J. & RICHTER, L. M. (1997). *Aids Related Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour among South African Street Youth: Reflections on Power and Autonomous Self*. Soc. Med. Vol.45 No. 6. pp 957-966, 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd.

SWIFT, A. (1997). *Children for Social Change; Education for Citizenship of Street Children in Brazil*. Heretics Press, Nottingham.

TACON, P, (1985). *A UNICEF response to the needs of abandoned and street children*, unpublished , Geneva, UNICEF.

THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN (1990).

THE WHO, WHY and HOW of STREET CHILDREN (1993): *A Guide for Street Children Projects within the Child Welfare Movement*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Braamfontein: South African National Council for Child Welfare.

THE FORD FOUNDATION, (1991). *Report on a study of Street Children in Kenya*, Compiled by ANPPCAN-Kenya.

THE HARALD, 25 May, 2002.

THE HERALD, 25 May, 1990.

THE HERALD, 23 May, 1990.

THE HERALD, 4 June, 1990.

THE HERALD, 11 December, 1990.

THE HERALD, 4 February, 2007.

THE ZIMBABWE STANDARD, 1 September, 2004.  
<http://www.zimbabwesituatuion.com./sep2-2004.html>

THE ZIMBABWE NEWS, 26 December, 2004.  
<http://www.manniskohjalp.se/asp/factabank/visa.asp?26/12/04>

THE ZIMBABWE DAILY NEWS, 4 October 2002.  
<http://www.zimbabwesituatuion.com./Ap9-2001.html>

The ZIMBABWE STANDARD, 6-12 February 2000

THE ZIMBABWE DAILY NEWS, 13 February, 2006.

THE ZIMBABWE DAILY NEWS 16 April 2002

TIERNEY, N. L. (1997). *Robbed of Humanity: Lives of Guatemalan Street Children*. United States of America. Pangaea.

THOMAS, N. (2001). *The Real Debt: Britain's Part in the destruction of Zimbabwe*. Planet. The Welsh International.

UNITED NATIONS, (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York.

UNICEF, (1990). *Children and Development in the 1990s* A UNICEF Source Book, proceedings of the World Summit for Children .New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF, (2000). *The State of the World's Children*, UNICEF House New York.

UNICEF, (2002). *Situational Assessment and Analysis of Children in Zimbabwe. Hope Never Dries Up: Facing The Challenges*. Harare Zimbabwe.

UNICEF, (2006). *Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generations: Children Affected by AIDS*. United Nations New York.

UNICEF, (1999). *Growing Up in Zimbabwe: Considering the Rights of Zimbabwean Children and their Families. Summary of the 1999 Situational Analysis*. .UNICEF, Harare, Zimbabwe.

UNICEF, (2001). *Poverty and Children: Lessons of the 90s for Least Developed Countries*. UNICEF. New York.

UNICEF, (2007). *The State of the World's Children: Women and Children*. UNICEF House, 3 U N Plaza, New York.

UNICEF, (1998). *Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances in Zimbabwe: Final Report of UNICEF Consultancy to the government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare*. Produced by the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC).

UNICEF, (1994). *Children and Women in Zimbabwe: A Situation Analysis Update*. United Nations Children's Fund Harare, Zimbabwe, June, 1994.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, (1996) *Human Development Report, 1996*. New York: Oxford University Press.



UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND, (1999). *The Progress of Nations*.1999, UNICEF, New York, July,1999.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND, (1996). *The State of the World's Children*. UNICEF, New York.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND, (1999). *Child Impact Assessment, Making Children Count: Implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNICEF, New York.

van BEERS, H. (1996). *A plea for a child-centred approach in research with street children*. *Childhood*, 3,147-156.

WEBER, M. (1991). *Streets kids: The Tragedy of Canada's Runaways*; University of Toronto, Toronto Canada.

WEST, D. (1985). *Delinquency* in M. RUTTER & L. HERSOV (eds). *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Modern Approaches*. Blackwell Scientific Publications. London.

WILLIAMS, C. (1990). *Street Children and Education: A Comparative Study of European and Third World Approaches*. PhD Thesis submitted in the Department of Education, University of Birmingham.

WORLD BANK REPORT, (2002). *Education and HIV/AIDS: A Window of Hope*. page 4.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION, (1993). *Street Children Community Children World Wide: Programme on Substance Abuse*. (WHO/PSA/93.7) *A One Way Street*. Report on Phase 1 of the Street Children Project. Geneva. Switzerland.

## **Appendix One**

### **Interview Schedule No1: Interviews with street children.**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Markim Wakatama. Some of the older street children in Harare call me “Big Dhara” (Big father). I used to work with street children when I was at Streets Ahead. I am writing about the lives of street children and the problems they face on the streets would like to talk to me about your experiences in the street? I have this small tape recorder which I will use to record our conversation which we shall listen to after we have finished recording.

**Name of the child** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time started** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time finished** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **(A) The street children**

**Sex** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your name? (Optional\_\_\_\_\_---

2. How old are you?  Years

3. Where is your home? Town  Rural area

**(B) Family Description**

4. How many are you in your family?

5. Are both your parents alive? Yes  No

6. Whom do you live with? Step mother: Yes  No

Step father Yes  No

Father/Mother: Yes  No

Father only  Mother only

Other guardians

7. What work does your parent/guardian do? \_\_\_\_\_

8 How long have you been away from home? 0-1 Year ☐

1-2 Years ☐

2-3Years ☐

3-4Years ☐

4-above ☐

9. When did you first come to the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

**(C) Education**

10. Have ever been to school? Yes ☐ No ☐

11. What grade were you in when you left school? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Tell me why you left school \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you have a birth certificate? Yes ☐ No ☐

**(D) Reasons for being on the streets**

14 Please tell me why you are not at home? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**(E) Their survival**

15. What work do you do on the streets? Begging ☐ Vending: ☐

Car minding ☐ Shoe polishing ☐

16. Where do you get your food? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17 Where do you sleep? At Home ☐ On the street ☐ Home and street ☐

**(F) Problems on the street**

18. Tell me about the problems that you and others face on the  
streets. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**(G) Support Networks**

19. Who helps you on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

20 How are you helped by these people? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(H) Public's perception of street children**

21. Why do you think that some people do not like street children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(I) Aspirations and needs**

22. What type of help would you need? \_\_\_\_\_

23. What do you want to do when you grow up? \_\_\_\_\_

**(J) Reunification**

24. Do you like to go back home?

Yes ☐

No ☐

25. Why do you like to go home? \_\_\_\_\_ -

\_\_\_\_\_

26. Why don't you like to go home? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(K) Health risks**

27. Have you ever been ill while you are on the streets? Yes ☐ No ☐

28. What were you suffering from? \_\_\_\_\_

29. Who helps you and others when you are sick on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

30 Do you know anything about HIV/Aids? Yes ☐ No ☐

31. How did you come to know about this disease? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**(L) Use of intoxicants**

32. Do you sniff glue? Yes ☐ No ☐

33. Are there any children who sniff glue? Yes ☐ No ☐

34. Why do street children sniff glue? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

35. What other drugs are taken by street children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(M) Conflict with the law**

36 Have you ever been in trouble with the police?      Yes ☐      No ☐

37 Why were you in trouble with the police? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

38. Do you like the police?      Yes ☐      No ☐

39 Why do you like the police? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

40. Why do you hate the police? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(N) Children's homes**



41. Have you ever been to children's home? Yes ☐ No ☐

42. Which homes have you been to? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

43. Who sent you to these homes? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

44. Were you happy at the children's home? Yes ☐ No ☐

45. Why were you happy there? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

46. Why were you not happy at that children's home? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

47. Tell me how you left the children's home. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**O) Recreation**

48. How do you spend your time other on the streets if you are not looking for money or food? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for talking to me.

## **Appendix Two**

### **Interview schedule No 2: Interviews with services providers**

#### **Introduction**

First of all I would like to thank you for affording me the opportunity to interview you regarding the work that you do with street children. This interview is being conducted as a requirement for fulfilling the PhD programme that I am pursuing in the School of Social Work at the University of Leicester. I am also carrying out this study in order to understand the current situation of street children in Zimbabwe and the organizations that work with street children. This is being done with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1(989). It is hoped that this study will come up with recommendations that will assist government and other agencies in drawing up policies that will go some way in fulfilling the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

#### **(A) Your organization**

1. Why was this organization formed? \_\_\_\_\_ -

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the aims and objectives of your organization? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Was any research carried out before this project was established? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. If yes, what were some of the findings of the study? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5 Who is funding your organization and how do you use these funds? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

6. Do you get any assistance from the government? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. What type of assistance do you get from the government? \_\_\_\_\_

---

8. How long has your organization been in operation and what are your future plans?

---

---

9. What services does your organization offer these street children? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

10. How do the street children access your services? \_\_\_\_\_

---

11 About how many street children come to your organization for such services? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**(B) Causes of the phenomenon**

12. Why and how do these boys and girls end up on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(C) The children**

13. What are the ages of the street children that you work with? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. What are the categories of these children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. About how many street children are there in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(D) Their survival**

16. How do street children survive on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(E) Street girls**

17. How do these girls survive on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

---

18. What problems are faced by these girls on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

---

19 How does your organization address some of the problems faced by the street girls? \_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**(G) Education**

20. Do these boys and girls attend school?      Yes ☐      No ☐

21. Why are they not at school? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**(H) Their families**

22. What type families do these children come?

---

---

---

**(I) Their communities**

23. How would you describe the communities from which these children come? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**(K) Children's rights**

24. How does your organization attempt to fulfill the principles of the CRC? \_\_\_\_\_

---

25. What problems (rights violations) do these street children face on the streets? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**(L) Staffing issues**

26. How many members of staff are employed to by your organization? \_\_\_\_\_

---

27. What qualifications do they have? \_\_\_\_\_

28. Do staff members receive some form of training now and again? Yes ☐ No ☐

29. What type of training have they received so far? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

30. How has this training improved the conditions of the children you work with? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

31. What problems do the staff members face while they are on their tour of duty? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

32. How do they deal with some of these problems? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(M) Other organizations**

33. Are there any other organizations that work with street children? Yes ☐ No ☐

34. What services do they provide to the street children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

35. What problems are faced by organizations that work with street children? \_\_\_\_\_



---

**(N) Working together**

36. What government departments, agencies, local NGOs, international N G Os do you

work with in trying to uphold the rights of these children? \_\_\_\_\_

37 How do you do this? \_\_\_\_\_

38. What problems do you encounter as you work with government departments and other agencies in your in efforts to assist street children? \_\_\_\_\_

39. Is there any umbrella organization that coordinates all the work with street children?

Yes ☐

No ☐

40. How do you work with this organization? \_\_\_\_\_

---

41. Do you work with the families of these children? Yes ☐ No ☐

42 How do you work with the families of these children? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

43. Do you work with the communities from which these children come? Yes ☐ No ☐

44 Please explain to me how do you do this? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**(O) Policy Issues**

45 How is the government of Zimbabwe dealing with the problem of street children in order to protect their rights? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

46 .Do you think that the current policies on street children are in line with the CRC?

Yes ☐

No ☐

**(P) Way forward**

47. What is it that can be done in the best interests of the street children (immediate medium?

and long term) in order to protect the rights of street children? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

**(Q) Other issues**

48. What other issues regarding street children that you would like to discuss with me? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

I would like to thank you again for sparing me time to interview you. I indeed appreciate the good work that your organization is doing in order to protect the rights of street children.