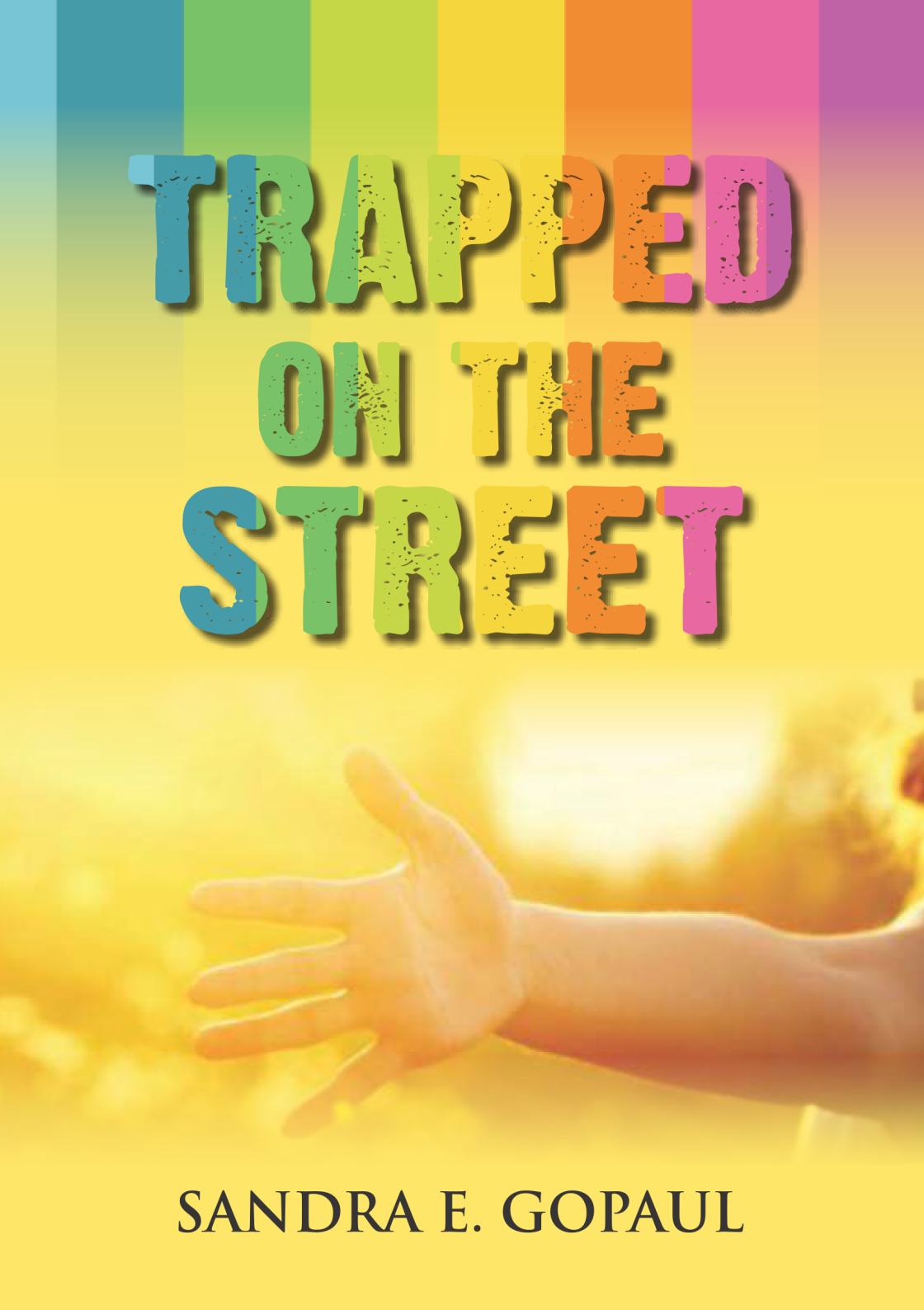


The background of the cover features a series of vertical rainbow-colored stripes in shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and pink. In the lower half, a hand is shown reaching out from the right side, with fingers spread, set against a bright, hazy yellow background that suggests a sun or a bright light source.

TRAPPED ON THE STREET

SANDRA E. GOPAUL

THIS BOOK IS PRESENTED TO:

FROM:

ON:

TRAPPED ON THE STREET

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Sandra E. Gopaul

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POEM

Forgotten Angels - by Margaret Austin Go

Do the heavens hear their cries?
How can they let these children slowly die?
I pray now spare them from agony
Sew their wings and set them free
For they are not slaves of poverty
But of souls unworthy of their sanity
A song for you my child
It is not your fault
You are not born to cry
A child is a child
Even if he sleeps in a bed of sweets
or in the busy streets
In your eyes pure innocence and love
In your hopes and dreams
you must fly like a dove
High as the angels above

Never will the sirens wake you
Never will the stones hurt you
Never will the cold bite you
For tonight you will not wake in fright
Rest in peace my child
The moon will swallow your woes
The stars will weave your dreams
And they will make you warm as you sleep

CHAPTER 1

STREET CHILDREN

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."

John F. Kennedy

Oliver Twist, the world famous fictional character created by Charles Dickens, is an excellent projection of the modern day street child. His mother is found on the street but dies soon after he is born. He spends the first nine years of his life in an orphanage and is then moved to a workhouse for adults. At the workhouse he is pressured into asking for more food. Asking for more food was a cardinal sin.

Thus begins the journey of Oliver Twist. He is immediately on offer to be sold, but narrowly escapes being sold to a chimney sweep. He is sold as an apprentice to the undertaker. Soon after, he is engaged in a brawl with another apprentice, who picks on his mother. He runs off toward the city of London. He embarks on a new journey as life on the streets begins. He is exhausted and starving when he meets Jack Dawkins, a young boy of similar age. He ends up with Fagin who preyed on

orphan boys and trained them to become criminals. He encounters a whole new world of lies, deceit, abuse, violence and murder. The Oliver Twist story has a wonderful fairy- tale ending.

It is an amazing story which somehow relates to the real world of street children in this century and centuries before. Children end up on the streets, but very few recover from their misfortune and circumstances. Very few, if any have a fairy tale ending.

There are many debates over the term 'street children'. Some are referred to as children "on" the streets and others are referred to as children "of" the streets. Children "on" the streets are those who generally work on the streets to earn an income for their family. Children "of" the streets are children that do not have a place of residence or may not have a family and therefore live on the streets. Street children serve as a visible and unattractive reminder of the apparent failure of society to care for, and protect this vulnerable group. Their existence on the streets is not so much a blatant disregard of society's norms, as it is a display of the extraordinarily adaptive behavior required to

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ensure continued survival for themselves and often, their families. Most street children are between the ages of five and eighteen. These children have often experienced hardship from an early age. The majority of them come from dysfunctional families.

When street children leave their homes and families, they perceive the streets to be a means to a better life. However, they soon find out that this is not the case. Survival of the fittest becomes their focus. Street children are a visible and constant reminder of the past inequalities of this country. Apartheid may have ended but its legacy lives on. Children believe that the streets of the cities are their only hope.

Taking a child off the street is not the solution. It is only a starting point in attempting to rehabilitate the child. A community often makes attempts to help children, but fails because it has little or no knowledge and understanding of the reality of the situation. Street children have cited various reasons for wanting to be on the streets. However, most street children often require a long period before they actually make an effort to change their lives. Century after

century seems to present a hostile face to many millions of children in sub-Saharan Africa. There is growing concern for the protection as well as the survival of children. It is worsened by factors such as economic crises, poverty, unemployment and lack of health care. Children all over the world are faced with similar problems that lead them to the streets.

The growing presence of children on the street is one of the most disturbing aspects of the sub-Saharan scenario. Throughout the world, the phenomenon of street children is growing exponentially. These are children whose innocence has been shattered. They are deprived of parental care and guidance in their formative years. However, somehow they seem to remain dignified in their own way. The testimonies of their lives in the street urges us not to remain silent to their tragedy. An increasing number of adolescents are being forced to the streets as a result of poverty, abuse, torture, rape, abandonment or because they are orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

Apartheid rule has been replaced by a democratic government. Transformation has begun and yet, the

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children remain in poverty and in a state of homelessness. Past problems continue to plague the government. Westernisation and the apartheid era have impacted the people of this country. Children seem to bear the final impact. They have borne the brunt of the repressive policies of the past. They have been placed in a position of great disadvantage and yet they are our most valued possession.

Poverty is a mass phenomenon in South Africa. It certainly is a major cause for children taking to the streets. Most communities in South Africa are characterised by abject poverty. This is an immense challenge to the new government of South Africa. Poverty will begin to be alleviated only when the basic needs of society are met.

Traditional African culture seems to be rapidly disappearing. This has impacted negatively on family structures and patterns. Family norms and values are slowly being eroded and community bonds continue to weaken. Society appears apathetic to having children living on it's streets.

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HIV/Aids has certainly affected the lives of thousands of people. Families and communities in our nation are soon affected in one way or another. Many are often found to be in a state of helplessness. Children are often left to face the hardship. Many find refuge on the streets.

Every avenue of resource available must be tackled. Existing facilities and service providers in Durban and its surrounding areas must be explored. Every effort must be utilized to create an awareness in the community.

While the rights of children seem to be discarded, many are unaware of their rights. The relationships that they form on the streets and their survival strategies are strong.

The rights of children, as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are not protected. Our children are constantly found on the streets. They are faced with extremely adverse situations in hostile environments. Children are denied their basic rights. The government, together with local communities must take action.

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While society on the one hand seems ill- prepared to meet the needs of street children, government on the other hand has not given enough attention to this phenomenon.

Street children have always been a part of my life. The days of watching them on the streets and assuming that there was not much to be done, changed when I attempted to make a difference in their lives. It all began on a cold rainy day in the city of Durban. We had just eaten in a restaurant and as we were leaving we found an old woman begging on the street. With her was a little baby wrapped in a blanket out in the cold. We left for home but then decided to go back and take them to our home. To my surprise the grandmother refused our help and stated that she needed to be there with the presence of her grandbaby so that she could earn money. That experience changed my life drastically. I made a decision that I was going to make a difference in this world of street children, no matter how small. It wasn't long after that we got a few interested persons and began working with children on the streets and those that resided in street shelters. Soon the local church CTPMI, and businesses assisted in purchasing a home for street children. So began the real

journey of my life with street children. I had the honour of working closely with them, listening to their stories and helping change their mindsets. Street children are no different from those in other parts of the world, however their stories are different. They begin life, forced to fend for themselves. This forces them into a life of doubt where they are unable to trust mankind. They are unpredictable and generally act on impulse.

The public pass street children daily, but never realise that they actually exist. Street children become invisible to the public. For most, street children are just a nuisance on the streets. How many times do we really stop and treat them with any form of kindness? Do we roll down our windows a little to just to enquire about their day? Most people move their cars away from them or drive off faster. People are on their phones in order to avoid any interaction with street children. Some drop coins into their hands and drive off without even a smile.

Street children seem to be ill mannered with inappropriate language and behaviour. It forces people to shy away from them. However, we can change their circumstances and make a difference in their lives.

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Changing our mindsets is the first step. Love and care will follow when we begin to acknowledge them as human beings. It is of no use caring for your pets when you don't care about a human being at your step. My experience has left me inspired and motivated to make an impact and a difference in their lives.

*"A fish's place is in the water, a bird's place is in the air, a child's place is in the home."
- Mongolian Proverb*

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CHAPTER 2

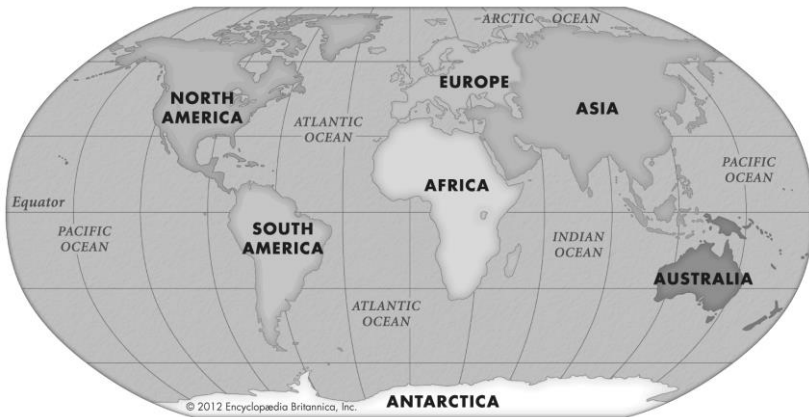
THE GLOBAL WINDOW

*"I will fight and not surrender, and to the people,
I shall show that for them, my life I will change."*

Ludvin Omar

*(Valdés, 17 year old poet and street child murdered on the streets of
Guatemala City, August 1998)*

(<http://www.oneworld.org/guides/streetchildren/front.shtml>)



The United Nations estimates the population of street children worldwide at approximately 150 million, with the number rising daily. Almost every continent on the globe is faced with the phenomenon of street children.

The children in these continents share similar conditions of severe deprivation.

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Every country has different reasons which attribute to the phenomenon of street children. Poverty, unemployment, abuse, family violations, child - labour, torture, abandonment, HIV/ AIDS and war are some of the reasons for children living on streets in most parts of the world. Economic imbalances also continue to contribute to the suffering of the street children. Children are forced into crime, violence, prostitution, drug peddling and other illegal activities in order to survive.

For these children that live on the street, the street becomes a life of freedom from all their sorrows. More and more children in countries all over the world are facing life on the street, not by choice but out of necessity. They are constantly driven to the streets in a desperate battle to survive. These children are forced to fend for themselves from a very early age, struggling against violence, harassment, disease, injury and early death.

AFRICA



Africa is the continent where the phenomenon of street children is most acutely felt. All across the world, children have drifted away from their homes. Some have been abandoned by their families and communities at an early age. These children find solace or take refuge on the street. These children are referred to as street children.

There are diverse definitions of street children, but let me begin by stating the definition of street children as declared by the Human Rights Watch.

...The term “street children” refers to children for whom the street, more than their family, has become their real home. It includes children who might not necessarily be homeless or without families, but who live in situations where there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults.

(<https://www.hrw.org>).

• **Zimbabwe**

The estimated number of Street Children in Zimbabwe is 5 million. Families are torn apart by war, famine and diseases. Poverty has contributed to the increasing number of children being abandoned and neglected. Most children are generally involved in glue sniffing. The following narratives found in the article written by Kudzai Makombe (1992) provide a closer understanding of the realities faced by street children.

“...Out of the dark shadows of the busy section of a street, a small figure emerges, hand outstretched to a

passerby. 'Can I have 50 cents sir?' The hand and the plea are completely ignored!

Stephen is only nine years old, but almost every day of the week you can find him in the Harare, Zimbabwe, city center, inconspicuously hanging around outside a 24-hour fast-food restaurant. It is 2 a.m. on a Sunday, and there are still plenty of potential customers. Few even notice his presence, except for those who are not yet hardened to the sight of small children out on the streets even in the pre-dawn hours. Stephen looks hungry, and any childlike, playful qualities have vanished from his eyes. Street kids! Not a week goes by without someone writing in the local press on the subject....”

Ralph Zuzu: Date of Birth: 6th January 1989 (13 years old).

Admitted to the Orphanage on 26th January 2000, Ralph has no known parents. He has no known brothers and sisters. He has no home other than the Chinhoyi Orphanage. His story is a sad one. Like so many of his friends at Chinhoyi, he had been abandoned. At the age of 11 years he was left to fend for himself on the streets of a neighbouring town. He begged for food and slept at the

bus shelter. Despite his tragic early childhood, we found him free of disease or illness. The Chinhoyi Orphanage gave him a home.

- **Uganda**

There are at least 8000 street children in Uganda. Most children are found on the streets of Kampala, which is the capital. It is not uncommon to find that most of the children come from dysfunctional families. Children are also forced to earn an income and give it to their parents. Most parents are unemployed and affected with HIV/Aids. Children are driven from their homes because of poverty and mistreatment. Some are orphaned by HIV/Aids. Many are driven from their homes by poverty and mistreatment. Most children leave their homes due to ill- treatment, be it in the form of a lack of love, care and protection or on the basis of threat and abuse by parents, step-parents or relatives. Many street children come from families that are impoverished. This happens most often when parents are infected with or have died of HIV/Aids. In these situations, grandparents or sometimes the children themselves, take charge of the household. Civil conflicts also cause deaths within the families. These type of situations cause children

to endure great pain and suffering. Children therefore choose to leave their homes. For most of the children, the street becomes a new home. Many children are exploited and abused on the streets. Some get involved in drug trafficking and drug abuse. However, if given the opportunity, most children would prefer to live in a functional home.

• **Gaborone: Botswana**

There are no statistical reports on the exact number of children found on the streets of Botswana. However, according to reports, it is growing at a fast rate. These children are no different from children in other countries. They, too, come from dysfunctional families. Some are abandoned while others escape abusive family situations. Children are usually found begging in order to earn an income. They are found to be on the street for most parts of the day. They do not attend school and are usually shabby in appearance. They usually bother the general citizens by begging. Their presence in public has become a concern.

• **Kenya: Nairobi**

At the time of writing this book it was estimated that there are over 95000 children on the street. Most of them are recorded as being victims of urbanisation. Since their families had left rural Kenya for the city, their lives have worsened. The opportunities they assumed existed in the city, did not materialise thus resulting in extreme poverty. Survival of the fittest became the order of the day. Street children make the streets their home, their source of livelihood, their source of security, their education centre and their playground. They grow up in a society with little or no idea of what love means. Beset by hunger and boredom, they will often find their way into the city centre. Once comfortable on the streets, they befriend other children and make the street their home. Most of their families have no knowledge of their whereabouts.

They engage mostly in illegal activities that ensure their survival. They spend days begging on the streets. Sniffing glue and other substances enable them to escape reality temporarily.

- **South Africa**

Like the rest of the world, South Africa has and continues to experience the phenomenon of street children. In this country, it is a unique situation since it is a by- product of the decades of apartheid rule. Many families are split due to the fact that most parents work great distances away from home. Some children are left in the care of grandparents so that parents may stay over at their places of employment. Most families live in poverty- stricken circumstances.

The children of South Africa, like children in many other countries have chosen to strike out on their own and make their circumstances work for them. They choose to escape poverty by taking to the streets and hope for a better life there. Street children certainly poses a growing problem in South Africa.

Most children are involved in glue sniffing, drug abuse and thieving. Some work as car guards and also wash cars to earn money. However, most children wander around aimlessly. For the plight of street children to improve, the social problems of the country need to be addressed. Both

the community and other non-governmental organisations are involved in rehabilitation programs. There are many other initiatives that have made remarkable progress with street children. However, much more can and needs to be done.

SOUTH AMERICA



- **Brazil: Rio**

It is generally estimated that there are approximately 7 to 8 million Street children in Brazil. Brazil is filled with huge numbers of destitute people. Most live in slums which are a common sight. These favelas, as they are called, have no water or drainage systems. People just occupy vacant land which is mostly unused property.

Children come from poverty stricken families. They endure unhygienic conditions, illnesses and are constantly faced with violence, malnutrition and abuse. Many never attend any educational institution. Poverty drives them to the streets. They are homeless in their own country! Street children in Brazil are part of the daily life for it's citizens. They are seen begging and stealing throughout the day. Some make a living as newspaper vendors, shoeshine boys, or car guards. Others roam around the streets.

- **Haiti**

There is no statistical record of the number of children on the streets of Haiti. However, there are many children on the streets. Most families are poverty- stricken. Parents are often unemployed. This has resulted in children being abandoned or left to fend for themselves. Many choose

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the streets to earn a living so that they can assist their parents. Most children on the streets are involved in begging while others resort to stealing. Some of the children also earn an income by washing cars. Glue-sniffing and drug abuse is also prevalent.

NORTH AMERICA



- **Canada**

...Of the 10,000 kids living on the streets in Toronto, more than one-third are girls, 80% come from middle/upper income families. 96% are on the street because they are usually escaping sexual abuse.

(<http://www.savethechildren.ca/en/whatwedo/pdf/street.pdf>).

Most parents of street children are unemployed. While seeking out employment, their children are left unattended. As with other countries, children often leave their homes to escape poverty. Malnutrition often forces them to the streets in search of income.

Children are found begging on the streets. Occasionally, some will resort to stealing. Children on the streets often engage in glue- sniffing and drug abuse. It has also been noted that children are also exploited by adults.

EUROPE



• Albania

...The numbers of street children still remains largely unknown although 138 street- living children were found in Tirana (<http://www.childhopeuk.org>).

Street children generally come from dysfunctional families. Parents are often unemployed. The economic hardship in homes forces the children to leave. The extreme poverty puts a strain on their families. Children are usually found begging on the streets. Many get involved in glue- sniffing and drug abuse. Most are often exploited by adults.

- **Romania**

The issue of street children in Romania has emerged as a serious problem. There is a large number of children on the streets. Many live on the streets of the capital. Most of these children have very little contact with their families. Some use the streets simply for begging in order to raise some income for their homes, while others just survive on the streets. Begging, stealing and prostitution are common amongst the children.

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ASIA



• Vietnam

The number of children that live on the streets in Vietnam is often debatable. Most organisations estimate that there

are approximately 19000 children on the street. Others believe that the number is much more than that.

The Vietnamese government has undertaken certain measures to remedy this problem. However, this has not prevented the number of children on the streets from increasing. Street children are concentrated in provincial capitals. It is known that economic reforms have benefited Vietnam. However, there is a dramatic imbalance between the rich and the poor. Many children leave their homes in order to prevent their families from being over- burdened. They venture out looking for opportunities.

Many of these children, particularly the younger, come from families that have been broken apart by death, divorce, or abandonment. Others have willingly left behind destructive and abusive home environments. Children in these circumstances often view leaving home as an opportunity to escape their troubled existences and pursue a better life. When on the streets, most children are often exposed to exploitation. They soon get involved in illegal activities. Others resort to begging and stealing.

• **Nepal**

The majority of Nepalese children live in abject poverty. Most children live in poor, remote villages and lack basics such as food, clothes, medical treatment and education. Like South Africa, most income-generating opportunities are found in urban areas. Most children in Nepal leave home because of the difficult circumstances faced. They need to support their families financially. Therefore, every bit of money received is necessary and valued.

Children endure extreme poverty. Parents are often unemployed. The employed families usually do not receive sufficient income in order to survive. The attractions of street life include fewer responsibilities, an immediate cash income, and freedom to move around. It is also an escape from poverty and dysfunctional homes. Most children found begging are often involved in thieving as well.

AUSTRALIA

Australia



Over half a million children in Australia are living below the poverty line. Homelessness is common. Children usually come from poverty- stricken families. Many are already homeless. Parents are usually unemployed and unable to provide for the children. Poverty drives most children to the streets. They are forced to earn an income in order to survive. Some are simply rebellious children that prefer the freedom of the streets. Children are involved in begging

most of the time. Some may resort to the washing of cars. Street children are exposed to drug abuse and prostitution.

Common Factors

Looking at the information presented on street children in just a few countries, it is obvious that there are common factors involved. Millions of children all across the world are left alone. The streets, vacant properties, sewers, subway service tunnels, and dilapidated buildings are their homes. It is sad that future generations often live on the streets. It is rare for children to return home. Life on the streets seems to be more attractive. The number of street children has consistently been increasing all over the world. Issues such as income inequality, poverty, unemployment, economic and political upheavals, wars, AIDS and abuse are contributing factors toward this phenomenon. Other common factors responsible for the increasing number and the growing visibility of street children are illegal refugees, lack of housing, lack of health care and other housing problems.

Vulnerabilities: Street children all over the world are exposed to all kinds of problems on the street. Their rights are often ignored.

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Abuse: Most street kids are faced with all types of abuses on the street. Physical abuse on a daily basis is common and is often ignored by society. Children are raped and beaten. Some are also murdered.

Health: Children on the streets very seldom enjoy any type of health care. Usually, when they are unwell, they are assisted by other children.

HIV AIDS: Being sexually active on the streets puts children at risk from HIV Aids. Health care is usually not accessible to street children. The disease is passed on from adults to street children and to newcomers on the streets.

Substance abuse: Most street children sniff glue. Glue sniffing is the most popular substance abuse. It is cheap and easily available. Children are also exposed to drugs that are readily and easily available.

Sexual Exploitation: Children are often exposed to the sex trade on the streets. Lack of exposure, experience and knowledge makes them highly vulnerable to being

exploited. Many are encouraged by their friends on the street, to get involved so that they have a source of income. Others participate out of sheer curiosity.

Psychological problems: Most street children display a brave front while on the streets. Their personalities also seem to change. Many are faced with a host of psychological problems but live in denial of these.

Education: Street children lack education. Most are illiterate and will grow up with few employment opportunities. The cycle of poverty in their families will continue.

Poverty and dysfunctional families are common factors all over the world. They contribute to the growing number of children on the street. The AIDS epidemic and urbanization in South Africa are also contributory factors to this problem. Street children are present on every continent of the world over the last few decades. Children choosing the uncertainty of the streets, is an indication of desperate family situations. Issues such as abuse, alcoholism, lack of food and family disintegration are all

too often strongly linked to poverty. Children who sacrifice their childhoods to live on the streets are fuelled by anger. Their rage is directed not only at society, but on themselves. Disintegrated families are fast becoming commonplace. People are forced to live in extremely degrading conditions. They have no dignity left. Urbanisation has led to people expecting to find a better life in the city, only to find that they are worse off. The extended family system does not exist in the cities. Throughout the world issues such as war, corruption, diseases and lack of government initiatives have led to an increase in this phenomenon. The problem of street children is a worldwide phenomenon.

It would be unrealistic to say that this will not continue to remain a global issue at this stage. Existing support structures for these children are few and often under-resourced in most countries. This challenge is a significant one. Governments must address the underlying problems in more detail. It is absolutely crucial to deal with endemic poverty. Poverty seems to be the root of the problem in all of the countries researched in this document. Without a strategy to addresses this fundamental problem, we

cannot succeed in eliminating it. Governments and society must make a positive contribution to uplifting the disadvantaged people in their countries. It is all about enabling children to reach their full potential. For a child growing up within this framework, the street often appears to be a haven in comparison to the difficulties faced at home. An immediate international strategic intervention is essential for the phenomenon of street children all over the world to be eliminated. It certainly is a shame for any nation to have its streets become homes.

Society all over the world generally rejects street children. They are regarded as being a danger and a threat to society. There are few people and institutions that render aid in the form of food, shelter and clothes to these children. Governments also extend assistance on a small scale by providing overnight shelters. Many people believe that the United Nations is the organisation that offers hope for mankind. They feel that the UN can work towards the co-operation and mutual understanding worldwide. The United Nations has a key role to play in solving international problems such as the phenomenon of street children. It can assist in getting countries together and

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ensuring that constructive policies are formulated and implemented. When a society of nations joins and strengthens its forces, a rainbow of hope arises on the horizon. Action needs to be taken now - so that the world may make good on its pledge to create a better world for children to live and grow in.

"We worry about what a child will be tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."

Stacia Tauscher

(<http://myfamilycafe.topcities.com/Quotations/children.html>)

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CHAPTER 3

DURBAN'S STREET CHILDREN

*"All grown-ups were once children, though few of them remember it."
Antoine de Saint Exupéry
(<http://www.quotationreference.com>)*

The phenomenon of street children is not confined to any one continent or country. It is a universal problem. There are many concerned people involved with this phenomenon.

Although this phenomenon has been investigated extensively, all the answers have not been found. However, the information provided will certainly bring greater insight and knowledge into the street child phenomenon in Durban.

Durban's Children

Many children experience negativity during the course of their lives. However, not all of these children end up on the streets. Every child reacts differently when faced with adversity. In order to find the causal factors relating to children leaving their homes for the streets, one needs to put aside the glaring realities of the visible circumstances

and focus on the innermost experiences of street children. Interviews conducted with children that reside on the street provided the following information:

- It was found that children are generally introduced to or initiated into street life by the age of seven.
- Many remain on the streets for as long as they can.
- The absence of the inculcation of essential values and norms during this formative period can be catastrophic!

The conclusion is that among the children on the street, the largest number is between the ages of 10 – 17 years.

All of the children found and interviewed were predominantly Black, except for four Coloureds.

Some children maintain contact with their families while others sever all ties. Some, on the other hand, occasionally take to the streets but return home. There are also those that live on the streets because their parents also live on the streets, but at different sites.

Education

There did not seem to be any significant differences in literacy between the boys and girls interviewed. It is obvious that all of the children of school- going age are capable of regularly attending school. However, only a few are included in the education system, in the lower grades. It can be expected that they will also quit schooling. Many children abandon their schooling because they work at a slower rate than others and because they simply fail. Some of these children that do attend school are simply passed onto the next grade even when they fail. Many of the street children are much older than they should be for the grades that they are enrolled in. The highest formal education received is usually Grade 6.

Children maintained that they view school as being important to them. They also claim that they have future aspirations and that they want to attain the highest level of education that they can. However, they believed that it is out of their control as to whether they attend school or not. They find it difficult to divide their time between school and begging. Begging seems to be a priority to survive. Children that do not attend school cite their reasons for not

attending as not being able to afford school fees and school uniforms, or because other children made fun of them since they were very poor. Many maintain that family problems prevent them from attending school. Some children, on the other hand, simply preferred not to go to school. It seems that they were unable to cope with the discipline involved and with the issue of having to learn. These children simply choose to remain outside the education system.

Many children had mentioned that they were embarrassed to attend school because of their poor performance. A common issue was the fact that most of them could not read or write well. This hampered their performance in class as well as results in other subjects. All too often, children were embarrassed publicly by teachers or their classmates. During the time of Apartheid, Black South Africans were made to believe that they were inferior in virtually every aspect of their lives. Children have assimilated these attitudes. They act accordingly when they interact with teachers, adults and other children. The inadequacy of government- aided schools in dealing with the needs of street and disadvantaged children, is an

important and complex issue. More research needs to be carried out on this subject since it seems that our educational system continuously fails to meet the needs of these children, who so often lack family support in terms of upbringing, finances and general care.

Family Backgrounds

The family status of the children on the street is diverse. The largest is the group of children with both parents, and less present are those that live with their relatives (usually grandmother, grandfather), alone, with only one parent, or with a spouse (in illegal juvenile marriages). The actual data for question 5 on the surveyed children are:

Family status is given in the following table:

living with both parents	56%
living with mother only	21%
living with relatives	11%
living with father only	7%
living alone	5%
Total:	100 %

The above table reveals that fifty six percent of the street children live with their parents, i.e. their origin is

known. They are on the street with the knowledge of their parent's whereabouts. It was found that most fathers worked away from home. Many mothers also worked during the day. Most children came from overcrowded homes. The average number of children per home was 5. Children had left their homes and chose to live on the streets. At night, they sleep behind buildings and in parks. Some make use of deserted buildings or buildings under construction. A few children do go back to their homes at night. Children come from all areas surrounding Durban. Most children live within the informal settlements, while a few lived with their mothers in domestic servant quarters.

Sixty percent of the children had both parents but lived with their mothers only. Twenty percent lived with their grandparents, while five percent lived with their older siblings. The remaining fifteen percent lived alone.

The family home is traditionally regarded as a haven in any culture or society. It is a place where one can be released from the pressures of life. However, it seems that the home, for these children, is perceived as a dwelling filled with violence and abuse.

The following statistical definition of the family was stated in the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P60-185,

“...A family is generally a group of individuals that choose to live together intimately and function as a unit in a social and economic system. The family is supposed to be a social unit that provides love, care and security for its members.”

However, the African family has undergone major transformation. It is bound to change even further with the next generation. These changes have impacted on the way these children think. Their perceptions and attitudes towards the traditional family structure model, varies. The city suffers from poverty, unemployment, violence and also a huge inequality of wealth. Many once-traditional family units have been destroyed through urbanisation. Children have become vulnerable to a lifestyle of poverty, abuse and neglect. Their only hope seems to be on the streets.

Causes and Attitudes

- The interpretation of question 11 indicated that thirty two percent of their fathers were employed, forty nine percent of their mothers were employed as casuals or domestic servants, and seventy percent of the children stated that their grandparents were on pension. Some of the children mentioned that their siblings did odd jobs. Fathers, it seems have a lower rate of employment than mothers. Mothers are regarded as the providers in the home. Children have a poor image of their fathers and this is due to their inability to carry out their roles as society would have it.
- Question 12 revealed that the males in the family were either alcoholics or drug addicts. Most fathers had been in and out of prison. This led to children being constantly abused. Child abuse is a significant factor in homelessness. Children that abscond often do so because of issues such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and discipline from those in authority. Of the many children interviewed, it appeared that all types of abuses were involved.

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- Question 13 indicated that most children loved their mothers more than they loved their fathers. Some preferred their grandmothers and grandfathers. It seems that the older generation was more sympathetic to these children and their circumstances.
- Question 14 showed that children mostly had contact with their mothers. However, most of the children that slept on the streets did not bother to visit their mothers because their mothers often took away all their money.
- Answers for question 15 provided the following information: Sixty-two percent always miss their families, eighteen percent sometimes miss their families, ten percent never miss their families. Another ten percent did not care either way.
- Question 16 indicated that forty percent of the children would not go back to live with their families. It was also found that children on the street progressively distance themselves from their families.

- Question 17 indicated that most of the children had left home because of poverty. It was found that poverty was a major concern amongst most of the children involved in this study. The minority had left home for reasons such as: to earn money, because of violence, to escape abuse and to avoid attending school. It therefore appears that children turn away from their unbearable situations at home and head for the streets. Another reason for children leaving home was that street life seemed more glamorous, and that their standard of living could be raised.

Street Living

Research into the daily lifestyle and activities of the children gives an insight into their relationship with the community, police and the dangers that they face. They willingly, and proudly gave accounts of their experiences. They expressed no humiliation during the interviews. The surveyed children's housing conditions were below expectations. It turned out that 63% of the children live in improvised dwellings, i.e. cardboard and metals. These sub-standard dwellings have no supply of water or electricity

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- Answers to question 18 indicated that most children left home and headed for the streets where they made friends. They then either slept in the streets or went to various shelters.
- In question 19 it was found that most lived in the area for about 4 months. Thereafter, they moved to new areas because people see them as a familiar face and stop giving them money.
- The following was found with answers to question 20. Activities engaged in were Substance abuse 90%, Theft 30%, and Alcohol intake 0%, Begging 100%, Prostitution 0%, and Bag snatching 20%. Street children are often found to be "street wise" and very careful about information that they are willing to share.

Street children become victims of the sub-culture of the streets, which involve activities such as glue sniffing, drugs, prostitution, gambling, smoking, and theft. Shoe glue is the most common and cheapest inhalant that street children use. It is common knowledge that the fumes of the glue affect children's brains by suppressing the cold, hunger, and loneliness. Many children believe that it takes

the pain away. Some of the products used for sniffing cause irreversible brain damage and also sudden death. Many of these children are never missed by society.

...The short and long-term health effects on these children were shown to be very significant. The consumption of glue was shown to cause damage to the respiratory and digestive systems, alterations to the nervous system, disorientation psychological deterioration and suicide (<http://www.casa-allianza.org>).

Most children often preferred to be involved in informal work such as assisting with parking spaces for motorists, washing cars, carrying shopping bags and pushing trolleys.

...Street children prefer to work informally: 'We want this money easy ... washing cars is simple, unlike working on contract. Well we do not get a lot of money but with the little I get I can afford to buy a pair of shoes and satisfy my wishes. For instance, if I would like to buy a tape recorder, I can give a deposit and pay it off bit by bit.'
(Schurink & Schurink 1993:185).

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They are involved in income- generating activities since they have to support themselves and their families. It is difficult to estimate their earnings since they are reluctant to disclose this information. However, many of the children not involved in informal work were found to have approximately fifty Rand in their possession. Begging was found to be the most common practice amongst street children. It served as an income- generating occupation.

Possessions are difficult for street children to keep. Sometimes the children have places where they stash things, such as under a news kiosk or in an abandoned house, but these are certainly not secure storage sites. Other people have access to these places too. Money and other important items can sometimes be entrusted to an adult benefactor, for instance an all-night guard or a street vendor, but this is by no means an everyday option. Thus when street children wake up in the morning, they typically possess nothing but a pair of shorts and a T-shirt (Hecht:1998).

During interviews conducted with Durban's street children, it was found that their possessions were valuable

to them. Many stated that during the course of the night one of the children would attempt to keep guard over them. Usually the designated child would fall off to sleep during the early hours of the morning. However, this did not prevent stealing amongst them. Some complained that while they slept, their shoes would be taken off from their feet. It seems that it is difficult for street children to hold on to their possessions for a long time unless they became familiar with NGO volunteers or shop owners that were sympathetic towards them.

Children on the street cope and adapt to the lifestyle of living on the streets. They create their own street families. They provide guidance to each other and become street wise. Their circumstances do not seem to dictate to them. However, it appears that they dictate to their circumstances and make it work for them.

- The following information was revealed in question 21:

- (a) Some children have been in prison, while the majority have, at some stage, been to a shelter. One child ran away after being placed in a foster home.

(b) The activities in making money are washing cars and begging.

- Question 22 indicated that hunger was their biggest fear. Cold and loneliness were not really an issue for most since their frequent use of plastic bags enables them to remain warm. However, they did fear the police to a certain degree. Most children seemed to have a very antagonistic attitude toward the police force.

- In question 23 it was found that most of the children would be happy if they had more money. They wanted to live like the rich. Some, however, would be happy to go to school and become famous. A few mentioned material things like cars, clothes, and houses.

- Answers to question 24 indicated that most children would like to become business persons. A few mentioned professional occupations such as doctors and lawyers. They perceive these to bring in wealth.

Street children seem to have a good relationship with the friends that they find on the street. They bond so well

that they look out for each other most of the time. Like all children they have their differences and fights, but they have a special relationship that enables them to keep strong bonds. Through this bonding many of them are comfortable living on the streets. They develop their own 'families' on the streets.

They develop their own code of ethics, culture and morality. The street 'family' offers them protection, emotional support and survival strategies, while they in turn are loyal to each other.

Recommendations

- Question 25 indicated that most children wanted their situations improved by helping their parents. They felt that if their parents were helped then they themselves would live better lives. Accommodation was also another major issue for them.
- In question 26 it was found that most children did not want to live in shelters. They felt that there were too many rules at shelters. Some children preferred to be on the

streets, but just needed a place to sleep at night. None of the children wanted to live in homes or orphanages.

Case Histories

This research suggests that there is a substantial number of children that have no option but to resort to street life. The research undertaken also suggests that there are a significant number of children that have to choose between subjecting themselves to homelessness or extremely adverse conditions, which include poverty and abuse. Children taken from the actual locations of this research were placed at the Children with Purpose home in Overport, Durban. All of the children mentioned here were given the opportunity to live in a home in an attempt to rehabilitate them. These children were under constant supervision and observation by field workers. The following are extracts from case histories of a few street children in Durban. The names of children have been changed.

i. Thami

He is 12 years old and came to the streets because he needed to get away from home. His father was shot dead

in his presence and he was shot several times. Although he recovered from the bullet wounds, the trauma of the incident had affected him. He joined other boys on the street and sniffed glue while his mother was at work. This caused him and his mother to have numerous arguments. He therefore took to the streets.

ii. Sphiwe

He is 14 years old and came from out of town. His parents had died and his older sister brought him to Durban. She returned home without him.

iii. Dumi

He is 5 years old and has lived with his mother who worked as a domestic servant. There was no place for him in the servant's quarters. His mother sent him out to earn money on the streets. Most nights he sleeps on the street with his mother's brother.

iv. Cindy

She is 8 years old and lives nearby. She does not go to school because her mother needs her to beg on street corners. She makes lots of money during the day. She does go home at night.

v. 'Sbu'

He is 14 years old and ran away from home because his father was always drunk and abused him. His father never worked. His mother worked as a domestic servant. The income was very low. Most of the time, they had no food. He had to steal on many occasions.

vi. Vincent Siyabonga Mthembu aged 15years:

His father is employed at a caravan store in Ndwede, Pinetown where he lives. His mother lives in Clare Estate but has turned to alcohol. Vincent was living with his paternal grandmother who is presently supporting the house. She resides in Mayville and is an alcoholic who ill-treats him, as he is youngest. His elder sister is married. Vincent has a grade 2 education obtained from Clare Estate Primary School. He is unable to visit his father since his mother had stolen him from his father at a younger age. He would love to attend a trade school. He was willing to reside at the house provided. He remained there for 6 months and left because he did not want to go to school. He was embarrassed to be placed in grade six at the school. Despite being told that alternative arrangements would be made for him, he ran off during the course of the night.

vii. Sibusiso Cele aged 15years:

His mother is employed as a domestic worker in the Sydenham area. His father is deceased. He has three siblings who attend the Clareville Primary School. He has a grade four education. His mother is alcoholic and ill-treats the children when intoxicated. He has a huge scar on his face that was caused by a friend who burnt him with plastic by mistake. His desire is to return to school so that he can be taught a trade for his future. However, this child only remained for about 2 months. He was involved with a drug peddler.

viii. Khululekani Mbatha aged 15years:

His father resides in Umlazi and his mother in Umkomaas. His father is a tiler. He has four siblings. Khululekani attended Sandelekhazi Primary school in Umkomaas. He completed grade six. He left home because of the abuse he experienced. He desired attending school so that he could achieve his goal of becoming a television presenter. Khulekhani was an extremely well- mannered child. He did, however, occasionally get involved with glue- sniffing. He was placed in a local school and then at the Westridge School. He was quite happy about being able to learn a

trade at the school. Unfortunately, he was caught on several occasions with girls in his room at night and eventually left the house of his own accord.

ix. Skumbuzo Sithole aged 11 years:

Both his mother and Stepfather reside in Cato Crest, Mayville. His biological father is deceased. Skumbuzo attended Mayville Primary and his last grade was 2. His mother and stepfather are employed. He left home because he was influenced by his friends. Skumbuzo did not want to return home since street life has changed him completely. Skumbuzo also mentioned that if an adult took him home and had a discussion with his parents, he would go back home someday. He was enrolled at a local school despite being unable to present any form of identification. He remained at the house for 7 months and then left. He was the last child to have left the house. It is presumed that he was pressurized into leaving by the other children that had already left the house.

x. Mfanafuthi Ndlovu aged 16 years:

His parents are alive and reside together. He has 2 siblings and has attended school before. His mother is employed

and his father owns a Bible College. He has no problems at home. However, he joined his friends and left home for the streets. Mfanafuthi has completed grade seven and was determined to return home. He resided at the house for 1 month and left. His reasons were that he was unhappy about having rules at the house.

xi. Mazandi Ngcobo aged 9 years:

Her mother resides in Mayville and is employed in Clare Estate as a domestic worker. Her father resides in Claremont with his family and is employed. Mazandi states that there are no problems at home. She was influenced by friends to reside on the street. She attended Wiggins Primary School and completed grade two. Mazandi remained at the house for 7 months. She was enrolled at the local school. She was unhappy about the discipline involved with living at a home. She eventually ran away after being threatened by her friends.

xii. Nkosinathi Mthembu aged 14 years:

His mother is deceased and his father is unknown. His mother passed away when he was ten years old. Nkosinathi has 3 siblings who are younger than he is. He

has been on the street from the age of four. His glue sniffing habit has caused him to have physical disabilities. Nkosinathi desired to learn a trade. He is an occasional visitor to the house. He is unable to live at a house since he prefers to beg at night. It is common knowledge that he prostitutes himself at night. He has made some progress with attending the day sessions at the house.

xiii. Balungile Cynthia Maphumulo aged 16 years:

Her mother has been deceased since 1994 and her dad is deceased since 1995. Cynthia has 3 siblings who live with relatives. Cynthia and her sister did not get along, so she took to the street. Her sister also physically abused her on many occasions. Cynthia has been on the street since 2002. She desired to attend school. She had completed grade five at the time of her stay at the house. Cynthia ran away from the house since she had a boyfriend. She eventually ended up being pregnant and has since left the area.

xiv. Khumblani Msomi aged 12 years:

His mother lives in Reservoir Hills. His parents are separated. His mother lives with Khumblani's 4 siblings.

She is employed as a domestic worker in the Reservoir Hills area. Khumbulani left school in grade four and has been on the streets on his own. Unfortunately, he chose not to live at the house. He only called in during the day sessions to have a meal.

xv. Mabuyi Ngubane aged 15 years:

Her mother is deceased and her father is unknown. Mabuyi's eldest sister went to visit her children's father on the farm and never returned. Her brother did not return home from work for days so she decided to leave the house for the street because she was terrified of living alone. Mabuyi has been on the street since 2000. She resided at the house for 10 months. During this period, she was treated for Tuberculosis. She made a remarkable recovery and was enrolled at school. However, she became a very troublesome child and was addicted to glue sniffing. She was an extremely good scholar. Mabuyi left the house since she wanted to spend more time with her friends that have remained on the street. She was also unhappy about having any type of discipline imposed on her.

xvi. Nthobe Nzama aged 11 years:

Nthobe attended Addington Primary School in Grade 1 but did not complete it. She was expelled due to absenteeism. Her mother resides at Reservoir Hills and her father in Point Road. Her mother lives with her stepfather who ill-treats her. Her biological father is unable to take care of her since he lives at the flat with friends where no children are allowed. Nthobe has 3 siblings. She lives on the street and is an occasional visitor. The longest period that she has been able to live at the house is 2 days. She has a constant urge to be on the street. Her reason for not wanting to live at the house is that she loses out on her begging abilities.

xvii. Zanele Mkhize aged 15 years:

Her mother is deceased and her father is unknown. When her mother passed away, she lived with her mother's friend. Zanele left for the streets with friends who told her that life on the road was better. Zanele has been on the road since 2001. Zanele was placed at Alice Street shelter but was unhappy there. She was then placed at Youth for Christ but absconded. She had completed grade two at a local school. Zanele lived at the house for two months. As

soon as she received gifts and clothing during the Christmas period she ran off during the night. She had also stolen most of the other children's items. She has been occasionally spotted on the streets.

xviii. Mthokozisi Mkhize aged 15 years:

His father is deceased and his mother is presently ill with HIV/AIDS. His mother resides in Newlands East. Mthokozisi completed grade eight. His reason for not returning to school was his addiction to drugs. His desire is to complete trade school. He has been at the house occasionally but was caught attempting to sleep with girls at night. After many warnings, he was asked to leave. He is still on the streets, but at a different venue.

xix. Sandile Bhengu aged 13 years:

His mother has 5 children. His father left home when Sandile was of a young age. His mother is unemployed and is also walking around daily requesting for food and clothing in the area. Sandile originally lived in Marianhill. He then moved to Mooi River where he was kept by members of the Muslim community. His friend Bongani encouraged him to sniff glue and run away from home.

Sandile did complete grade three. He refused to live at the house. He was a day visitor. He has not been seen in the area for a few months now.

xx. Cynthia Zodwa Zondi aged 16 years:

Her mother is a casual worker and her father Stephen works in a steel factory. Zodwa has siblings whom the father disowns. The father pays R100 maintenance for Zodwa. Their family lives in poverty. Zodwa attended Nigral High School and completed grade seven. She had to leave school due to her mother's mental illness. Her mother is currently receiving treatment and is unable to support the household. Zodwa was placed at a local school. However, she was unhappy about curfews and discipline. She encouraged some of the other children to leave. She has since moved location on the streets.

The findings during the research conducted revealed that many of the children interviewed were generally embarrassed about their circumstances. Some keep their homelessness as secretive as possible. They pretend to be “just begging” on the streets whenever they can. Others invent “stories” about their parents and their homes. Many

of these children are undisciplined. Places of shelter make attempts to rehabilitate and discipline children while supplying basic needs. Shelter, food, health care and clothes are the basic needs of street children. However, many of these children run off to other shelters with a different 'story' about their circumstances. Volunteers and Childcare workers often recognise these children when they transfer to other shelters.

Research activities in the field of street children continue to highlight the social and economic situation of children. This chapter dealt with an investigation, which was undertaken among two hundred street children in the Durban area. The research findings have given valuable insights into the world of the street child. It is evident from these findings that the majority of street children were trapped in a vicious circle. It is also clear that the family structure for these children has been broken down. Children no longer play the role of children. Instead, they have become adults in a children's world. They have learnt to fend for themselves.

There is nothing extraordinary about the lives and stories of the children mentioned. They are children that have opted for street life because of their circumstances. These children believe that they are in control of their lives. They lack any form of supervision and give an impression of confidence. Many of Durban's children live in poverty. The social problems of this province have contributed to this phenomenon. Criminal violence is high on the list. The breakdown of families is another contributory factor. Children fall victim to the violence and abuse in the city of Durban. Their communities are under-developed and disorganised. Problems such as unemployment and shortages of food are also common.

Apartheid and its impact, have contributed to the growing phenomenon of street children. Street children survive as best they can. Many of the street children escape from their hunger pangs and loneliness by sniffing glue. The realities presented are a true reflection of the condition of street children. It is not exclusive to the street children in South Africa but are rather, a norm common to street children internationally.

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"There is a garden in every childhood, an enchanted place where colors are brighter, the air softer, and the morning more fragrant than ever again."

Elizabeth Lawrence

(<http://www.zona-pellucida.com>)

CHAPTER 4

THE APARTHEID LEGACY

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."
Nelson Mandela

Apartheid has been a challenge on an international level. Apartheid in South Africa was one of the most discussed issues of the twentieth century. South Africa had attracted widespread attention throughout the world as a result of its racial policy. Society seems to remain a reflection of the past. Apartheid may have ended, but the legacy has not ended. In fact, it has carried on to the next generation. The poor remain poor, the unemployed are still unemployed and families have become dysfunctional. The oppressions and legacies of apartheid are passed on from one generation to the next. Society, therefore, needs to look into the reality of this situation and take action to save the future generations from damages inflicted on past generations. However, many people realise that not only does the end of apartheid signal new hope for people, but that it will be a long time before the destruction caused by apartheid can be repaired. The word apartheid means "separateness" in

the Afrikaans language and it described the rigid racial division between the governing white minority and the non-white majority. However, not much has changed.

The apartheid laws classified people according to three major racial groups- White; Bantu, or Black Africans; and Coloured, or people of mixed descent. Later Asians, or Indians and Pakistanis, were added as a fourth category. The laws determined where members of each group could live, what jobs they could hold, and what type of education they could receive. Laws prohibited most social contact between races, authorized segregated public facilities, and denied any representation of non-whites in the national government. People who openly opposed apartheid were considered communists and the government passed strict security legislation which in effect turned South Africa into a police state. Before apartheid became the official policy, South Africa had a long history of racial segregation and white supremacy. In 1910 parliamentary membership was limited to whites and legislation passed in 1913 restricted black land ownership to 13 percent of South Africa's total area. Many Africans opposed these restrictions. In 1912, the African National

Congress (ANC) was founded to fight these unfair government policies. In the 1950s, after apartheid became the official policy, the ANC declared that "South Africa belongs to all that live in it, black and white," and worked to abolish apartheid. After anti-apartheid riots in Sharpeville in March 1960, the government banned all black African political organisations, including the ANC. From 1960 to the mid-1970s, the government attempted to make apartheid a policy of "separate development." Blacks were consigned to newly created and impoverished homelands, called Bantustans, which were designed to eventually become petty sovereign states. The white population retained control of more than 80 percent of the land. Increasing violence, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations by opponents of apartheid, and the overthrow of colonial rule by Blacks in Mozambique and Angola, forced the government to relax some of its restrictions. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the government implemented a series of reforms that allowed black labor unions to organize and permitted some political activity by the opposition. The 1984 constitution opened parliament membership to Asians and Coloureds, but it continued to exclude black Africans, who made up 75

percent of the population. Apartheid continued to be criticized internationally, and many countries, including the United States, imposed economic sanctions on South Africa. More urban revolts erupted and, as external pressure on South Africa intensified, the government's apartheid policies began to unravel. In 1990, the new president, F. W. de Klerk, proclaimed a formal end to apartheid with the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison and the legalization of black African political organisations
(<http://www.encarta.msn.com>).

Under the apartheid system, blacks were denied the right to vote and to own property. Their freedom of movement was restricted, and they were relocated in 'homelands'. Many were forced to migrate to the cities in search of work since they lacked the means to make a living in the places that they occupied. The system of apartheid began in 1948 and, within one generation, wove itself into every aspect of South African life. It certainly became a radical and extreme extension of a system of segregation.

The Group Areas Act

The Group Areas Act provided for stricter control of race. A large segment of the Non-White population was forced to relocate out of so-called white areas. People were forcibly removed beyond the city limits to rural areas. Laws such as the Group Areas Act are considered as being responsible for unemployment, poverty, shortage of housing and a host of other related problems. It has also led to the traditional women being forced to work. However most of these women spend long hours travelling to their employers for a meager income. This increases the risk of children being deprived or left to their own devices. These are some of the causes of children taking to the streets.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation became a reality for the vast majority of South Africans. Most of the people believed that the city had a better future and opportunities for them. Urbanisation and the lure of the city have impacted adversely on children. The reality of urbanisation settled in with migrant labour. This involved separation of family members over long periods of time. Women were forced into a culture change. They were left to take care of the

home while the men adopted urban value systems and culture. The family units were disrupted and support systems became ineffective. Value systems changed and authority structures were undermined. Children were exposed to a new lifestyle. Street children are by-products of the urbanisation process.

The Impact

Although there is no longer a legal basis for apartheid, the social, economic, and political inequalities between white and black South Africans continue to exist. Apartheid has been legally abolished but its effects remain with the people of South Africa. Despite the dramatic changes in South Africa during the 1990's, many of the distortions and dynamics introduced by apartheid continue to reproduce poverty, necessitating their identification, and the introduction of remedial policies. Many agree that there is a positive correlation between apartheid and the prevalence of poverty. They recognize that it has had a negative impact upon the majority, which are the disadvantaged Blacks of this country. A number of social problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime and diseases have been left behind. People have also

assimilated attitudes of inferiority and superiority between the different race groups.

President Mandela inherited a society built on inequality, with very different possibilities of access to jobs, houses, health and wealth. Since April 27th 1994, South Africa is called the 'Rainbow Nation', focusing attention on all the different races of society which, together, are moving towards the same democratic future. This concept of a 'Rainbow Nation' is simply a professed ideal that has no bearing on reality. However, South Africans have embraced this ideal as a way to close the book on apartheid.

A society must accept responsibility for its past actions. It involves progressive correction and development. Despite the courageous acts to remove apartheid, the people of this country are still struggling with its consequences. People are forced to determine their own future. The effects of the past live with them but they are gradually coming to terms with it.

...As Mandela was released on February 11, 1990, at age seventy-one after twenty-seven years in prison, South Africans poured onto the streets in celebration. His first words were to assure his supporters in the ANC that his release was not part of a "deal" with the government, and to reassure whites that he intended to work toward reconciliation. He also quoted his well-known statement at the Rivonia trial in 1964, "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die (Byrnes: 1996).

Prospects for Democracy in South Africa

The Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 states, ...We, the people of South Africa, Recognise the injustices of our past; Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; And Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We therefore, through our freely elected

representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to - Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations. May God protect our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.
God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa.
Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.

April 27, 1994, marked the end of the apartheid era in South Africa and the dawning of democracy in a land plagued with inequalities. The evidence of these inequalities is manifested daily by the impact of poverty, inadequate housing, and unemployment. Many people have been highly critical of democracy. They have reason to disbelieve it, since it is effective theoretically but not

practically. Throughout the world most countries profess to practice democracy, but there seems to be substantial differences in practice. Democracy certainly evolves through many struggles.

In his speech at the Masakhane Summit in Mmbatho on 5 December 1995, Molefe stated that “the basic objective of establishing this new democratic government was to achieve for all South Africans the right to political and economic self-determination in a united country.” That right is now firmly in the hands of all men, women and children, and is enshrined in the constitution. The feeling is strong in all corners of the country that South Africa belongs to all who live in it...

The abolition of apartheid brought in perceptions of true democracy. The new people's government would thus undo the injustices of the past. The premise would be that South Africa belonged to all its citizens, and that its resources should be put to work to meet the needs of all of its citizens. This did not happen. All that is happening is being done through a very, very slow process. The many people and races of South Africa are sufficient to build a

nation. The commitment of all the people of this country toward a common future will certainly rebuild this nation.

...It touches my heart to see how ordinary men and women have seized the chance that democracy brings to participate actively in shaping and building these projects. In doing so you are not only building assets for your communities and for your children. You are also building our nation and making a living reality of democracy by bringing government closer to the people it serves. This program has already clearly strengthened this spirit of partnership on which the future of our country must be built (Mandela 1998).

Despite a commitment to 'a better life for all', the government has been unable to commit the resources necessary for the inequalities of apartheid to be redressed. Our South African government's documented commitment to eradicating the legacy of apartheid is not yet a reality for the majority of South Africans. Children are the future of the country. They should have a bright future ahead of them. Instead, the future looks bleak for them. They have inherited a lifetime of poverty. However, most street

children believe that they have a better future if they move away from their situations into the land of 'milk and honey', which to them means the streets of the cities. Whether they live in the rural areas or in the streets of the city, they are trapped in a world of poverty. Although there are clear differences between the old and new governments, there is distinct continuance of poverty, which forces children to pursue life on the streets. Apartheid is no longer the real issue. The transition has been smooth and peaceful. The future is now in our hands. There are no supermen in South Africa, but together we can create a better environment for the next generation. The years of apartheid and racial segregation have most certainly led to considerable turmoil in South Africa. However, the end of the apartheid era has provided an opportunity for growth and development.

The illusion that the pain of apartheid will somehow wither away seems impossible. Street children are a visible reminder of the pain caused. They represent the failure of families and society. It is the same families and society that attempts to keep them out of view. Society believes that children should be kept out of sight. We keep

them out of view so that our country will look attractive to foreigners. Street children are an embodiment of the failure of the apartheid system and all its related evils!

Only time can be a healer and restorer of what has occurred in this country. Street children are a hidden treasure waiting to burst into the open. Hopefully the transformation process, although slow, will heal our land. The dawning of democracy does not end apartheid overnight. It is a progressive transition. Defeating apartheid is the duty of all government structures, organisations and individuals. Strategies and mechanisms must be established to eradicate injustice and inequality in a progressive and principled manner.

"Maybe the greatest challenge now is to find a way to keep our independence while also committing ourselves to the ties that bind people, families and ultimately societies together."

Jane O'Reilly

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CHAPTER 5

THE POVERTY TRAP

"I'm living so far beyond my income that we may almost be said to be living apart."

E. E. Cummings (1894-1962)

(<http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~robins/quotes.html>)

Mr. Nelson Mandela is often regarded as the true father that ushered in a peaceful transition in a situation which could easily have led to civil war in our country. The dismantling of apartheid epitomised freedom in every sense of the word for most South Africans. Although the end of apartheid is a significant development in the history of South Africa, it has brought in many challenges. However, both the social and economic policies of the previous government left behind major problems which society and government have had to grapple with. One of the more common and serious issues is that of poverty.

Poverty is rife in South Africa. It certainly is a major cause of children taking to the streets. Poverty is not confined to a minority group in this country or in any other nation of the world. Many communities in South Africa are

subjected to abject poverty. Poverty has to be defined, measured, and studied in great depth in order to establish what initiatives will help alleviate it. It has many dimensions associated with it. Many great ideas, solutions and recommendations have been initiated over time. What works in one era may not necessarily work in another.

Our country is most certainly faced with a number of challenges. However, poverty hits the majority of our people on a scale that cannot be tolerated, especially now that we have a democratically elected government. Failure to address the issue of poverty would be tantamount to betraying the struggle that the present government fought for.

Definition

...The 1990 World Development Report (WDR) defines poverty as 'the inability to attain a minimal standard of living' measured in terms of basic consumption needs or income required to satisfy them. Poverty is thus characterised by the inability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy their basic needs (World Bank 1990).

...Generally, poverty is associated with unemployment, lack of food and water. Generally, wealth is associated with formal sector trade, being educated, employed and being involved in criminal activities (Wentzel et al, 1995:11).

Statistics say little about the actual experience of poverty. The documented experiences of people in the communities provide a clearer picture of the effects of extreme poverty.

'One man's family has worked for a farmer for three generations; hard physical labour every day. The man has worked since birth for the same farmer but has nothing, no savings, and not even a bicycle. These people can afford nothing'.

'I am so behind with my rent I can't even sleep at night.'

'My child broke his leg and had to go to hospital. I sold my three cows to pay for transport and treatment. Now I have nothing.'

As the quotations above demonstrate, poverty is multifaceted. Poverty is linked to hunger, unemployment, exploitation, lack of access to clean water, sanitation, health-care and schools. This creates a vulnerability to crisis and homelessness. While many of these experiences are clearly related to not having enough money, it is simplistic to ignore the non-material aspects of the experience of poverty.

Everyone's experience is different. For this reason, statistics will never capture the full reality of poverty. Statistics can give us a sense of the magnitude of the problem, but we still need anecdotal evidence to give texture to the profile of poverty.

...When persons are deprived, not only of goods and possessions of a material, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural, or sociological nature, but of everything that makes up the foundation of their being-in-the world and the specificity of their 'ipseity' as individuals, society, and history - when persons are bereft of their identity, their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, their faith universe, and their basic creativity,

deprived of all their rights, their hopes, their ambitions (that is, when they are robbed of their own ways of living and existing) - they sink into a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only exterior or interior goods or possessions but strikes at the very being, essence, and dignity of their human person.

This is referred to as anthropological poverty. This is an indigence of being, the legacy of centuries of slavery and colonisation

(Uzukwu 2001).

...At least one in ten South Africans says they do not get enough to eat and one in five says they don't have enough money to buy healthy foods. One in ten in this country has gone hungry in the past three months because they could not afford to buy food...

...To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity. To impose on them a wretched life of hunger and deprivation is tantamount to dehumanizing them. But such has been the terrible fate of all black persons in our country under apartheid. The extent of the

deprivation of millions of people has to be seen to be believed (Mandela 1998:86).

Street Children and Poverty

Earning money is a personally enriching experience for street children. They take considerable pride in being able to contribute to the economic support of themselves and their families. Some often enjoy the work involved. Extensive research has shown that the income-generating activities of street children originate in the poverty and accompanying social disintegration of their families. To street children poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, lack of education, being sick and not being able to see a doctor. It also means parents being unemployed and seeing no future. They are forced to live one day at a time. It certainly is a situation that any child would want to escape from. Poverty has caused the break- up of homes and families. Children have been forced to find a source of income and invariably become victims of exploitation. It is evident that poverty is a major contributing factor to the phenomenon of street children.

Some people have been around a lot longer than others. Some have experienced poverty all their lives. They have become accustomed to being in a continuous state of poverty. Poverty has become an accepted way of life for them. Others have been confronted by obstacles and adversity, while some have been traumatized by suffering inflicted on them by society. The inequalities of the apartheid era have not been eradicated. The White minority continues to enjoy economic superiority, while the majority of the black population lives below the poverty line. The course of this vicious cycle will take many years to be rectified.

The Causes of Poverty

The root causes of poverty in South Africa are apartheid, lack of economic empowerment, domestic violence and poor health service delivery. Most households experience at least two of these problems. These factors provide a brief summary of the main causes of poverty vulnerability amongst the people of South Africa.

In South Africa, however, poverty is a constant reminder of apartheid's legacy. There is a great deal of evidence to

support this view. The apartheid government actively destabilized the lives of the disadvantaged majority in this country thus and contributing to very high levels of poverty. The new government has a challenge to eradicate the legacy of apartheid in order to raise the living standards of disadvantaged people. The majority of our people live in abject poverty and work under slave conditions. Poverty is the greatest threat that bedevils this nation. Understanding the lived experience of poverty is an essential element in understanding why a child chooses street life over the security of a home. Poverty and inequality are the norm for millions of our people. We need to look into what has been done so far to combat poverty and inequality.

Who are the Poor?

Most of the poorest and unhappiest people are unemployed or casually- employed women with children. Some of these are widows, mothers deserted by the fathers of their children, grandmothers struggling to support abandoned children and women looking after other people's children. All without support from fathers or maintenance grants from the state!

What is Unemployment?

Begging is commonplace to literally thousands of people. An unemployed person lacks the means to earn a living. However, they make it their responsibility to keep themselves and their families or dependents alive. Some will do anything just to obtain money to survive.

Employment and Labour

KwaZulu-Natal employs less than half of the potential labour force in the formal economy. More than one million people are without jobs while 1.57 million people between 15 and 65 years are employed, according to Statistics South Africa (<http://www.profilekzn.co.za>). However, many consider the unemployment figure to be significantly higher. In a country like South Africa, the major cause of poverty is unemployment. Unemployment entails significant costs both to the individual as well as to society at large. The unemployment benefits and social security system is not as extensive as those of the well-developed countries. Unemployment insurance is only available to those who have contributed to unemployment insurance schemes. However, even the best system of unemployment benefits cannot eliminate the costs of

unemployment. Increased unemployment tends to result in many psychological disorders, divorces, suicides and criminal activities. Further perspectives on the aspect of unemployment and government's involvement should be researched. Thus, street children are known to be characterised by urbanisation, unemployment, poverty and dysfunctional families. Apartheid may be gone, but it has left a host of problems. The previous government had failed the majority of the people of this country. The new government is saddled with the legacies of the past government. Apartheid has left behind a legacy of poverty that will take many years to reverse. South Africa has fundamental challenges of overcoming the legacy of the past and achieving a reduction in poverty. Children are the future of South Africa just as much as children are the future for any other country. However, the future does seem to be getting brighter, although at a very slow pace. Government and society must work together in order to transform this country and nation into a better place for children to live in.

Post- Apartheid Reconstruction:

Reconstruction and Development Programme

During the course of 1994 the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was initiated. The purposes and objectives of this program involved improving basic living conditions for the poor and raising their standards of living. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) states that, no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of our democratic government. (RDP: 1.2.9). The RDP detailed the extreme poverty of at least 17 million citizens who were living below internationally- accepted minimum standards. The report estimated that 4.3 million families were without adequate housing, and some 12 million people lacked access to clean drinking water. Most homes, and many schools and hospitals lacked electricity. An estimated 4.6 million adults were illiterate...."

...The RDP envisioned sweeping government programs to raise living standards--to build houses and

roads, to provide services, to upgrade education, and to create jobs to narrow the gap between rich and poor. By late 1994, the government had begun to implement its highest RDP priorities: a US\$135 million school lunch program; a US\$14 million program of free medical care for children and pregnant women; providing water and electricity to rural communities; and phasing in free, compulsory primary education for children of all races.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme is a transformation mechanism for the purpose of mobilising the people and the resources of the country to address the economic imbalances and uneven development of society. It also addresses the basic needs of society. It is definitely a dynamic and coherent policy framework, which, if implemented and exercised to its full potential, will be extremely effective. It has the power to build a strong socioeconomic order, which will remove the inequalities and injustices of the past. More research needs to be done on this issue. To defeat apartheid once and for all, it is the duty of all government structures, organisations of civil society and the private sector to put in place strategies that will eradicate injustice and inequality in a progressive and principled manner.

The general point about poverty is that it has become an obstacle to our national goal of a prosperous society for all. We are faced with the critical challenge of tackling poverty- eradication in our nation. Ending poverty is a call for action. Both the rich and the poor have to ensure that this change takes place. Children will then have access to food, shelter and protection. Every voice in a community can contribute to the upliftment of that community.

...Because we are one another's keepers, we surely must be haunted by the humiliation and suffering which continues to afflict millions of our people. We cannot be immune to the plight of our people living in conditions of degrading poverty. ..." No night can be restful when millions have no jobs, and some are forced to beg, rob and murder to ensure that they and their own do not perish from hunger" (Mbeki 1999).

Eradicating Poverty

It is certainly a massive task to eradicate poverty since the majority of the people are living in abject poverty. South Africa needs to introduce urgent programs to save its people from disaster. The government can begin with

political and social programs, which will attempt to alleviate the poverty issue. There are ways and means to putting an end to many of the issues related to poverty. A mechanism for linking the perspectives of the poor to the policy formulation processes must be provided. Programs involving the building of houses, education, skills training and self-help programs should be implemented on a larger scale than are currently available.

Poverty is, undoubtedly, an immense challenge to the new democracy of South Africa. Poverty can only begin to be alleviated when our societies are transformed and when the basic needs of the people are met. Achievements of this nature are only possible if Communities, Non- governmental organisations and the Government work together.

Uplifting the poverty-stricken communities and rebuilding confidence in them should be huge priorities. The new government has generally responded positively to the challenges presented. Policy formulation has been attended to. However, from an implementation perspective, very little progress has been made.

Monitoring and evaluation of programs must also be carefully scrutinised. Our Government must live up to its mandate for the reconstruction and development of our country. The ANC has done much in terms of transformation, reconstruction and the development of our economy, but not enough, it seems! There is still much that needs to be addressed.

The key to eradicating urban poverty lies in the development of cities where children's rights are given priority in budgeting and planning. Therefore, it is time for us to face our challenges linked to poverty. Developing a sense of urgency toward this challenge will expedite progress toward alleviation of poverty.

"If cities do not begin to deal more constructively with poverty, poverty may well begin to deal more destructively with cities."

Robert McNamara
(<http://www.uct.ac.za>)

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CHAPTER 6

THE WESTERNISATION IMPACT

"Our culture has become something that is completely and utterly in love with its parent. It's become a notion of boredom that is bought and sold, where nothing will happen except that people will become more and more terrified of tomorrow, because the new continues to look old, and the old will always look cute."

Malcolm McLaren
(<http://www.spicyquotes.com>)

We have every reason for wanting to know something about Africa. Africa is a rich continent with a diversity of people, cultures, and languages. We need to understand our past and how the people of this continent lived and survived. Westernisation has brought with it many permanent and irreversible changes in this country and many others in Africa. The values and ideals of Westernisation are found attractive and universal. Large numbers of Africans have moved into cities through urbanisation. Many have been exposed to Westernisation and modernisation. Although many have been modernized and transformed, they still practice their beliefs and customs. Despite living under western conditions and beliefs, there are few families today that continue to live according to the traditional patterns of their cultures. However, in South Africa, the

African culture seems to be rapidly disappearing. This has resulted in a change to family structures and patterns. Numerous studies have focused on the family in an attempt to explain the street child phenomena. Many of these writers have attributed this phenomenon to the disintegration of the traditional family structure. This chapter will investigate the possibilities that Westernisation has impacted both negatively and positively on South African culture. Street children are a result of the changed patterns in the traditional African family structure.

Westernisation

Broadly speaking, the term Westernisation involves accepting and adopting the ideas, structures, systems, values, and lifestyles of the West. It denotes the acceptance of western culture and western paradigms as a global structure of progress and development. Although it may have enriched and strengthened certain aspects of cultural identity, it also resulted in a loss of cultural identity. Therefore, a fundamental change in values and perceptions is needed. According to Westernisation, childhood is about having a free, secure, stable and happy

environment and existence. It encourages people to develop a new lifestyle, which involves changing or moving away from traditions. Traditional culture is rapidly being eroded and replaced by dominant Westernisation.

Western culture of South Africa.

Westernisation has invaded the traditional way of life for the people of Africa. The focus is on individuality rather than the extended family culture. Westernisation has certainly invaded the traditions and culture of Africans. This desensitization and adaptation has been smooth enough to allow the destruction in its path to go unnoticed. The value systems of the West have become a symbol of oppression and a loss of culture. The excitement of Westernisation is fast losing its appeal.

Despite the emphasis on rights being one of the peculiar characteristics of the Western value-system, societies are losing faith in Western value systems. People are refusing to follow the West blindly. Confidence in Western values is being lost. This is demonstrated by the fact that people are reverting to their old traditions and cultures. Africans are fast- becoming confident in their traditional roots.

Culture

Culture is an important, complex, and sometimes overlooked issue. It exists with a myriad of meanings and perceptions. Culture denotes a trend of impressions on the mind of a society, which are peculiar to its own. Culture and value systems are acquired. No person is born with a specific culture but it is a context into which each of us is born. Only while growing up in a society can one absorb values, norms, beliefs, customs and other cultural traits. Culture can be taught in schools or parents and friends can confer about it. It is often taken for granted as being normal or as being common sense. It is regarded as the way one's family behaves. To acquire another culture, one would have to invest time and effort in order to familiarize oneself with the new culture. Culture is a way of life. It is an ever-changing and never-static way of life. It is something that is part of our everyday lives. It is real and tangible and yet we never seem to take the time to think about it. It seems to be simply part of the subconscious.

South Africa is a country that is rich in culture and traditions. South Africans have mostly been referred to as the 'rainbow nation' of the world. This title speaks volumes

about the real illumination of this country's cultural diversity.

Defining Culture

Professor Jun de Leon defines culture as, ...a system of vital ideas that contains, energizes and directs virtually every aspect of social life and man's relationship to his world. It touches everything from the humanities to the sciences, from religion to technology. It is the matrix from which values, attributes and skills emerge. Whether rich or poor, man seeks to find meaning, to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order. Man cannot live in a world it cannot understand (<http://www.inq7.net>).

Culture is defined by Paul G. Hiebert (1996:142) as ...the integrated systems of beliefs, feeling and values characteristic of our society. These systems are our mental maps of the world that define reality for us, which we use for guiding our lives.....Culture is basically the way that different groups of people do things differently from other groups, and therefore perceive the world differently (Smit & Cronje 1997:445).

The various definitions and interpretations of culture explain why society is rapidly becoming aware of the different cultures that exist. It is essential since it is seen as a form of understanding which influences every aspect of one's life. Society is responsible for the identification of the outstanding values of culture and its inscription into the next generation. Culture must be accommodated in any democratic society.

Value Systems

A significant portion of our value systems is genetically determined. Influence of value systems also comes from friends, teachers and parents. These values are established in our formative years. Values generally influence attitudes and behaviour. As one grows, one is exposed to new or different value systems. Values are much broader than morality. Strong value systems are built by the people who spend their lives building their families. These value systems have an enormous impact on children who, in turn, will generate their own value systems.

A family and its home are a learning institution for life.

Family Structure:

Traditional Families

The family is the basic unit of social organisation. In his book, *Vanishing Culture of South Africa*, Peter Magubane stated that, "In the past, traditional life was highly structured and discipline underlined every facet. Each person had place and specific functions to perform" (Magubane 1998:47).

Ekin (1992:132) states that, "Families are governed by detailed customs and rules that can be thought of as enduring and deep-rooted social or cultural capital, transmitted from generation to generation."

Traditional Zulu society has many chiefs and a king. Usually, a few homesteads were controlled by one chief. The chief was responsible for making important decisions. The Zulu king was representative of the Zulu people both nationally and internationally. Zulu kings are still respected despite clashes with government structures and policies. Men in the traditional families play a dominant role. Men

are allowed to have more than one wife and are in charge of all decision making. Wives are responsible for their children. However, children grow up in the extended family situation.

In the last few decades, family structures have come under tremendous pressure. This has resulted in divided families and family structures. The family structure in our country has certainly come under tremendous pressure. Families are no longer characterised by the happy, loving family environments. To the contrary, they have become characterised by abuse, poverty, single parenting and diseases. The decline of family life in many countries is fast becoming a matter of concern. Children have been pressurized into taking to the streets in order to survive. The streets are viewed as a place of safety. Their rights to survival have been violated. These children will remain uneducated and unemployed and may end up as criminals or become involved in criminal activity.

The Extended Family

The extended family is one of the family structures that can be found in Africa. Traditional society was characterised

by the extended family system, which was a support base for the people, including the children. Unlike the nuclear family structure, it brings together generations of kin. It stood as a fortress against all turpitude. It offered security, psychological support, and material support to the members. There was no need for state funding and welfare organisations. All of this was unintentionally set up in traditional circles. People took care of their circumstances. In the past, when families encountered difficulties, it was common for the community to provide support, especially for their children.

Since the infiltration of Westernisation into African societies, there has been a transformation leading to the destruction and uprooting of the traditional African family value system. There has been a tendency for families to crumble and disintegrate. Families have succumbed to the onslaught of Westernisation and its influences. Thus, the foundations of the traditional family structure have been shaken to the detriment of this generation. Children have been robbed of their heritage and dignity. Westernisation has certainly been instrumental in the changes to family value system of the Africans. Previously, the whole

community became one big family. This was a support base for all. It was not uncommon for the extended family members to assist each other with the basic family functions. However, all of the advantages of the traditional family system are being disregarded as Western values are consistently being imposed on this generation.

The Spirit of Ubuntu

Westernisation, colonialism and apartheid have been instrumental in the breakdown of family life. This, in turn has disrupted communities and community life. As a result, children at risk are often alienated because support mechanisms and structures have simply withered away. The community is responsible for the welfare of its children. It must find ways to ensure the development of its children. Children must be protected at all costs by their society. It is often said that it takes a whole nation to raise a child. Nationhood is about encompassing principles of genuine caring for others and their well - being. It is about moral support and a spirit of humanity. Westernisation has created many opportunities for development, but has negatively affected various aspects of culture and traditions. Through the years, many changes have evolved

because of the impact of apartheid and Westernisation on indigenous peoples in this country. However, from the data obtained, it seems evident that the extended family system has most certainly been devastated by Westernisation. The security of the traditional family structure seems to have disappeared. Families react differently to their problems, adversities and other circumstances.

A Lifestyle Change

Most research concerning the changes in the African family system indicates that there has been a significant movement away from the extended family system to the nuclear family system. This has resulted in a change of lifestyle and living conditions. The lifestyle of children has been most affected. Every child should be exposed to the extended family system in order to survive. However, most families have moved away from the extended family structure. This has resulted in children resorting to street life in an attempt to solve their problems. When children experience abuse, rejection, poverty and other societal ills, we need to ensure that they retain their human dignity. Vanistendael (1992) has pointed out that all children can attain this if adults around them encourage them to be

independent, teach them to communicate, to find solutions and expose them to various models of solidarity. The values of the African societies embedded in the family institution as a basic institution have been neglected.

African history embodies values that would bring back a sense of brotherhood, humanity and prosperity which is desperately needed. Street children are considered as children that live in a modern society and in modern families. These families are consistently under pressure to live up to western ideals and expectations. These families are losing contact with their roots and with the stability of their culture. The communal support system is being eroded. Their norms and values have changed and they are constantly seeking solutions in alternative lifestyles. Children have also adopted this method of seeking solutions by adopting an alternative lifestyle: a life on the streets. I am of the opinion that Westernisation can be a positive force, but we need to sift out the positive aspects while discarding the negative. It would be beneficial to every community to bring a balance to culture and the acceptance of Westernisation. Westernisation could lead to advancement. However, we should be selective in our

adoption of its values and ensure that acceptance would not result in the wholesale destruction of our own values. It has been found that children leave their homes because of their environmental and family circumstances. In an effort to diminish the phenomenon of street children, attention should be given to reintroducing effective values of the traditional family system.

What is Ubuntu?

To Africans this word has a deep meaning. It involves becoming one through other persons. It involves acknowledging the diversity of values, history, culture and languages. The concept of Ubuntu has a distinctly African meaning too. It is about caring and sharing. This traditional philosophy is not new to Africans. Therefore, it is essential that it be revived in order to make a difference in this nation. Africans need to be true to themselves and heed the call of Ubuntu.

In the book, *Disciplining Nations*, Miller points out that,

“The development of people, communities, and nations doesn't just happen, nor does it occur in a vacuum. Just as

the soil in which a tree is planted will play a decisive role in the growth of the tree, likewise the values, attitudes, culture, and ethos of a people will determine whether its development is healthy, stunted, or non –existent”...

...Any development program that fails to take into consideration the prevailing belief system of a people and the possible influence of this belief system on the proposed development plan runs a serious risk of foundering before it gets off the ground (Miller s.a.: 22).

The depth of culture must come fully into play for the inspiration of liberation to be enduring and all- embracing. However, parents are the primary agents responsible for raising their children. Parents also have to ensure that the decisions affecting them are in the best possible interests of the child. Therefore, the need for a renewed affirmation of the role of the family in raising children must be stressed. Until such time that South Africans, regardless of colour, creed and race come together to build our cultural heritage, we will remain an impoverished nation. We must make a concerted effort and a deliberate attempt at reviving the values of generations and the pride of our

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diverse cultures. We have become apathetic and unpatriotic about our culture and our country. We must strive to build a national culture and intensify the reactivation of a truly South African culture.

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

Jimmy Carter

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CHAPTER 7

THE HIV/AIDS CRISIS

"Aids is not a set of statistics, although the numbers are horrific.

Aids is not a conference in Durban.

Aids is not a presidential PR problem.

*Aids is not advertisements and education programmes,
although these help.*

Aids is a feeling of hopelessness and despair.

Aids is young people who believe they're immortal.

Aids is a secret known by everyone.

*Aids is not knowing what'll happen to your children when you're
gone.*

Aids is people who are part of families.

Aids is everyday life carrying on against the odds."

Anonymous Poem

(<http://www.library.thinkquest.org>)

The deadly HIV/AIDS virus sweeps across the continents of the world. Literally thousands of families are being affected. South Africa continues to experience one of the worst HIV/AIDS crises in the world. It is a national tragedy that is not going to simply disappear. Today's children are victims of HIV/Aids. This disease has affected millions of people. This generation of children will never experience a world without the HIV/Aids epidemic. Children are left orphaned and homeless on a daily basis. Many children affected suffer quietly.

While some children are born HIV due to the disease being transmitted through their mothers, others will become infected through other circumstances. Infected newly born babies are either placed in orphanages, foster homes or left to die. However, many do not remain in the safe houses provided. Eventually, they also take to the streets when faced with adverse circumstances. While living on the streets, many become HIV positive themselves. Some are sexually active from an early age, while others are sexually abused. Some establish sexual relations with adults or other children. Sex is often used as a means to survival.

Denying that the problem of HIV/AIDS exists amongst street children can only serve to reinforce a general ignorance in society. HIV/AIDS is an acute threat to children of this generation. The damage caused by HIV/AIDS to the well-being of children and the societies in which they live. HIV/AIDS is a widely recognized issue, but its impact on children remains poorly documented. The HIV/AIDS Virus continues to have a negative impact on children. The research presented in this chapter will also concentrate on those directly affected by HIV-AIDS, such

as AIDS orphans, HIV positive children and children of families with an infected adult.

The Dreaded Disease

The AIDS epidemic began around the 1970's. It is a disease that affects millions of people all over the world.

...Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a complex disease, believed to be caused by the Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus HIV (Aids and Me 1997).

It is a disease caused by the virus HIV that attacks the immune system, which is our defense mechanism. Being HIV positive is indicative of the Human Immuno-Deficiency virus being present in one's body. However, it does not indicate that one has AIDS. However, having AIDS is proof of one being HIV- positive. HIV infection results in the progressive weakening of the immune system. This makes a person susceptible to various infections. Secondary infections due to the lower immunity occur before the development of AIDS itself. This disease affects people irrespective of race, culture, gender and economic status. Although many drugs have been

developed and registered, there is no cure as yet for the disease. HIV is passed from one person to another through contact with infected blood, unprotected sexual activity and from infected mothers to unborn or newborn babies.

The South African Face of Aids

...South Africa: In a country of close to 40 million people, an estimated 4.2 million (10.5 percent) were infected with HIV as of year-end 1999. Of those, over half were women aged 15-49. Among pregnant women, 19.2 percent were HIV-positive. There were 370,952 living children who had been orphaned by the disease, and another 95,000 children infected with HIV
(<http://www.securethefuture.com>).

...AIDS is a disease that was identified little more than a decade ago. Yet, in this short time, it has infected and affected millions of people worldwide. The current international estimate of HIV infections is 30.6 million people. In South Africa, it is estimated that 2.5 million people are infected - some 8% of the world total. A growing percentage of these are babies and young children, and

many children are orphaned as a result of AIDS (<https://www.health.gov.za>).

Despite shocking statistics that are continuously made available, the true face of AIDS in Africa is unknown. It is easy to portray the drama of death, but it is far more difficult to portray the quiet suffering of the children that are left behind. About two thirds of children born to HIV positive mothers do not contract the infection and grow up to be as healthy as any other child in the community. However, this fact is often unknown or ignored. They are at a greater risk of dying of preventable diseases and infections because of the mistaken belief that when they become ill, it must be due to AIDS, and therefore there is no point in seeking medical help. Due to the stigma surrounding AIDS, these children face a childhood of pain, neglect, and prejudice in their local communities. Children often are unaware of the circumstances surrounding the death of their parents. They are also unaware of the stigma involved. Many of these children have no protection and end up on the streets where they are often exploited and sometimes die. HIV/AIDS poses the single greatest threat to Africa's efforts to achieve its full potential. The pandemic

is certainly a threat to the future of South Africa. It is known to kill those on whom society is dependent. These are people that run our schools, manage businesses, govern the country, make our clothes and grow our crops.

AIDS is the single largest cause of death due to infectious disease in the world today. Some 40 million people worldwide are infected with the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. Approximately 3 million AIDS deaths occurred in 2001 alone. The AIDS crisis is most evident in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 26 million or between 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 people are infected with HIV.

<http://www.cshl.org/public>).

AIDS will kill more people this year than from all other causes put together. It is a known fact that KwaZulu Natal has the highest prevalence of HIV infection in the country. Since there is no cure, many of the infected will die. Many of those that die will be parents. Consequently, children will be left without mothers and fathers. AIDS has plagued our continent and children seem to be on the receiving end of this phenomenon. Children need more support and

education on this disease. The pandemic has certainly dropped challenges on the laps of society and government. We have created an awareness of this phenomenon, but have not done enough to ensure that children are protected.

The Impact of Aids on Children

The extended family structure has slowly been eroded in the African culture. Westernisation has contributed to its withering away. However, the economic status of most households does not create any opportunity for children to receive the extended family support. Modernisation has created a new generation that has moved away from past tradition and culture. The phenomenon of street children has reached an alarming proportion. Driven by the impact of HIV/AIDS, many children end up on the streets without shelter, food or any form of basic rights. Many AIDS orphans have nowhere to go. The impact of HIV/AIDS on these children is serious. Children from single- parent families are highly vulnerable to destitution. Once that parent dies, the children are left on their own because immediate family members rarely accept the opportunity to become guardians. Such orphans have nowhere to go,

and those who are lucky, end up in orphanages. Children infected with HIV/AIDS or children with infected parents are both normal children that simply need our support, care and love. HIV/AIDS severely challenges children in communities to meet basic needs. Children affected directly or indirectly by the AIDS virus suffer from loss of family, psycho- social stress, loss of homes, forced migration, homelessness, malnutrition, as well as lack of health care and education. These factors result in them resorting to street life, prostitution, crime, violence and continued exposure to HIV infections.

Aids and Street Children

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to devastate this country as it contributes toward the escalation of the number of street children. I had the opportunity to work with street children that I had placed at the Children with Purpose Home. The children taken in were sexually active. Some of the older boys abused the smaller boys, while the girls prostituted themselves for a few Rand. Most of the children were aware of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but did not seem to be bothered. The effect of HIV/AIDS could be devastating due to the fact that children are in denial as to

the dangers of the disease. Children will be affected in the prime of their lives. The future generation of this country will face a path of destruction. Some may survive while others may not be so fortunate.

The Destruction Path

A recently published Council document shows that within a few years, HIV/Aids in South Africa will have infected between 7 million and 8 million people, nearly three times the total number of inhabitants in the greater Durban area. It will leave more than one and a half million orphans in its wake. Without putting in place the community support needed, a large proportion of these children will become homeless. Many will turn to crime.

“Sandhile” (name changed) a street child found in the streets of Overport, in Durban revealed the following story:

...”My mother is ill. She has HIV/Aids. She is dying. She told me not to see her in that terrible condition. So I must go and live in the street. I will be better off there. She does not want me to see her suffering. So I now live here with the other street children. We sleep at the public toilets.”

There are many more children like Sandhile. There will be no future for these children if we do not make a concerted effort to help them.

Children Born with HIV/Aids

Children affected by HIV/Aids may be fortunate in finding relief or assistance. One such child is Nkosi Johnson. He was a child born with AIDS. Circumstances afforded him a better life. In his twelve years of life, he has achieved what many people would never be able to do that in their lifetimes. He made a magnificent contribution towards raising an awareness of AIDS. He gave AIDS a voice around the world. He captured the hearts of South Africans with his speech at the 13th International Aids Conference in Durban on 9 January 2001. The speech, that he wrote himself, outlined his experiences and issues with HIV/AIDS.

The following is an excerpt from that speech:

“...Hi, my name is Nkosi Johnson. I live in Melville, Johannesburg, South Africa. I am 11 years old and I have full-blown Aids. I was born HIV-positive. When I was two

years old, I was living in a care centre for HIV/Aids-infected people. My mommy was obviously also infected and could not afford to keep me because she was very scared that the community she lived in would find out that we were both infected and chase us away. I know she loved me very much and would visit me when she could. And then the care centre had to close down because they didn't have any funds. So my foster mother, Gail Johnson, who was a director of the care centre and had taken me home for weekends, said at a board meeting that she would take me home. She took me home with her and I have been living with her for eight years now. She has taught me all about being infected...

...Mommy Gail told me almost immediately my mommy had died and I burst into tears. My mommy Gail took me to my mommy's funeral. I saw my mommy in the coffin and I saw her eyes were closed and then I saw them lowering it into the ground and then they covered her up. My granny was very sad that her daughter had died. Then I saw my father for the first time and I never knew I had a father. He was very upset but I thought to myself, 'why did he leave my mother and me'?

...I hate having Aids because I get very sick and I get very sad when I think of all the other children and babies that are sick with Aids. I just wish that the government can start giving AZT to pregnant HIV mothers to help stop the virus being passed on to their babies... Babies are dying very quickly and I know one little abandoned baby who came to stay with us and his name was Micky. He couldn't breathe, he couldn't eat and he was so sick and mommy Gail had to phone welfare to have him admitted to a hospital and he died. But he was such a cute little baby and I think the government must start doing it because I don't want babies to die...

.... I want people to understand about Aids - to be careful and respect Aids - you can't get Aids if you touch, hug, kiss, hold hands with someone who is infected. Care for us and accept us - we are all human beings. We are normal. We have hands. We have feet. We can walk, we can talk, we have needs just like everyone else - don't be afraid of us - we are all the same” (<http://www.simplytaty.com>).

Nkosi was a symbol of and an activist in the HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment campaign. He did not end up on the streets and certainly made an impact on society. He was fortunate enough to have an ordinary member of society make an enormous contribution to his life. There are many others out there silently calling out to the people of this land. Let us open our hearts and hear them.

Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV

In the book, *Poverty and Development*, Allen and Thomas (2000) state that, "...HIV is primarily transmitted from one person to another through sexual intercourse, transfusions of contaminated blood or blood products, and the sharing of contaminated needles and syringes by infected drug users. It can also be transmitted by infected women to their infants during pregnancy, at delivery and during breastfeeding. It is known that the transmission of HIV/Aids by infected mothers to their babies is common.

Street Children Infected with HIV/AIDS

A UNICEF report states that, "Every time a child dies of AIDS, human rights are violated." Children on the streets have been tragically affected by the AIDS virus as well.

Many of their lives are ended by this killer disease. Some may survive but the majority end up as ignored tragedies.

... José was raped by an HIV-positive assailant. Manuel used to sell his body to survive. He was hungry and neither the government nor society offered him any alternative. Jessica died too...

...We know of many more boys and girls who are HIV-positive and are living on the streets, while some have died on the streets with AIDS-related illnesses. But no one seems to care. Governments say they do not have the resources (even to care). Our Street Educators regularly conduct AIDS education as part of their daily outreach efforts. When a child decides to leave the streets and come to one of our Crisis Centers, they receive sex education, and participate in AIDS prevention trainings. We hope, too, that in their intensive individual and group therapy, they will be able to deal with the trauma and internal conflicts that can drive young people to putting themselves at risk. But many children cannot be reached while many who come to us eventually return to the streets (Laino 2002).

HIV/AIDS will continue to spread amongst street children. It will no doubt increase dramatically over the next few years. HIV/AIDS among street children should therefore receive priority.

Protection for the Innocent

There is help available in our communities. We need to tap into these resources and contribute towards creating a better future for our children.

Csbonolo Ntuli is a 'very fortunate child that is accommodated by an orphanage in Durban. In the article, AIDS orphans: Africa's lost youth, Charlene Laino states, "Holding his infant sister in his arms, 10-year-old Csbonolo Ntuli sits in a corner of the unfenced yard, quietly singing a traditional Zulu hymn. Though he's lost both his parents to HIV disease, Ntuli feels he is one of the lucky ones. I can write my name, he boasts, taking a pen and spelling it out in careful block letters." Lucky is a relative term in the world of AIDS orphans. Although he shares a two-bedroom cottage on the edge of the orphanage's Grounds with 24 other youngsters, Ntuli is grateful he has a place to live in. Despite its limited resources, the center puts

three meals a day on the table, much of the food grown by volunteers in a vegetable garden down the rural road. Donated clothes, while sometimes tattered and stained, protect the children from the sun's harsh rays. Caring for AIDS orphans is one of South Africa's greatest challenges. By 2005, about 800,000 youngsters are expected to lose their Parents to the disease; by 2010, the toll could reach almost 2 million, according to a recent report from the Kaiser Family Foundation." Many will grow up as street children or form child-led households to avoid being separated from siblings," the report says. Others will be brought up by grandparents with a limited capacity to take on parenting responsibilities.

...Six year old Siyanda Vundla's life would have come to an end at the age of fourteen months if care workers had not heard his faint cries coming from a hut in the rural area of the Valley of a Thousand Hills near Pietermaritzburg. No one can say exactly how long he had been there alone, a tiny, frightened bundle huddled in a corner, but it was clear that he was near starvation and needed immediate medical care to save his life. All attempts to find his family failed and it was believed that

his mother was one of the hundreds of young women who had died of HIV/aids (Clarke 2002). The child was placed at God's Golden Acre, a home for abandoned children which overlooks the valley. However, while this story and many others have successful endings, many never have the opportunity to enjoy a second chance in life. We must start focusing on the positive and do the best we can. In the face of this challenge we need to be committed to ensuring that children have access to their basic rights. Every drop in the ocean makes our Ocean. There is most certainly a caring society that does exist. However, it would take initiatives far bolder than these to keep up with the rate of the spread of the disease. It continues to remain a major concern and is at the top of our agendas. Networking existing and new resources would definitely result in more help being made available.

Are Government and Society acting upon their Responsibilities? Government must be committed to developing sufficient support mechanisms for the children that are impacted by this dreadful disease. The government's focus has been on education and preventative measure campaigns, the care of HIV positive

adults and support to community-based programs. However, communities have carried out such programmes alone. Many have made attempts to protect children affected by the AIDS virus but have insufficient financial resources. Governments should introduce more financial support to initiatives taken by communities.

If this nation and its children are to survive, then something has to be done about it. It is unfair that a child should be made to suffer because the disease exists. They are our only hope of the future. Government must develop comprehensive policies and programs to ensure that the rights of children affected by AIDS are protected. Communities need to respond to the needs of these children. The problem of AIDS is real, but a collaborative effort by all concerned can assist in stamping out the problems that it creates and the destruction it leaves in its wake. Let us stand together and put on a human face for the fight against HIV/AIDS or let us look at their faces as a reminder of our failures. Only we can save them from a future of suffering and eventual death. We can save them from the emotional and physical trauma that awaits them. We must, therefore, challenge society and government to

come together and develop and implement new strategies to ensure the protection of children affected by the disease. We are challenged with a mission to serve our communities and bring relief to the suffering of children.

Children face many hardships when the breadwinner or wage earner dies. Some have to witness the deaths of adults while others have to focus on caring for the adults while they are alive. When the parents die, most grandmothers take responsibility for the children. When family members simply do not or cannot afford to assist, many children end up in orphanages or on the street. Children infected with HIV/Aids suffer the same fate as adults. These and many other stories have borne witness to the pain that children are burdened with. They are rejected and ostracized by the very people that they spend most of their lives with. Society has become cruel and insensitive to innocent children.

...In Ethiopia orphaned children as young as eight years take care of their siblings. Children who must head their own households face many difficulties, including stigmatization, poverty, malnutrition, lack of health care,

and lack of social support. Many children orphaned by AIDS take to the streets to escape their loss, to run from abusive or oppressive living conditions, to find work, or to seek independence. By leaving home, however, they often enter the street culture, with its violence, exploitation, crime, drugs, hunger, and disease. Tenuous living conditions and economic troubles make such children targets for sex work, sexual and physical abuse, pornography, cheap labour, and other forms of exploitation (<http://www.hrw.org>).

Aids is a global pandemic. It has literally affected the lives of millions of people. Almost every family in this nation will soon be affected in some way should the current situation deteriorate. Communities are suffering and are in a state of helplessness. There are also many cultural practices and traditions that increase the risk for HIV/AIDS. There are many adolescent behavior patterns and attitudes that contribute to this pandemic. Children have been affected in a horrendous way. Parents have been infected and have died leaving children orphaned. Mothers have transmitted the disease to their babies. These babies are often shunned by society from birth. Some children are

abandoned and never have the chance to live. There are children who run away due to the stigma attached to this disease. Many children find solace in the streets. Some prefer not to see their parents suffer and run off to the streets. Since many children do not have people to help them through their pain, suffering and bereavement, they become psychologically disturbed and rebellious. These children end up on the streets while others are infected with the disease through abuse. It has become necessary for every one of us to create a world in which we love and care for each other. We have to come up with a strategy and framework for action in addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on children. We have to simply respond to the needs of these children in whatever way we can. Street children must be educated about the phenomenon and society needs to speak about the disease. We need to create an atmosphere and an environment where there is freedom in communication. We must create an atmosphere where children are comfortable enough to speak about it.

"Every situation, properly perceived, becomes an opportunity to heal."

(<http://www.dailycelebrations.com>)

TRAPPED ON THE STREET

CHAPTER 8

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

"To show a child what once delighted you, to find the child's delight added to your own happiness – this is happiness."

J.B.Priestly

(Readers Digest, March 2002)

Having rights is so often taken for granted by those of us who have become accustomed to it. Many people out in the world are ignorant of their rights due to their situations and circumstances. We have access to health facilities, social welfare services and so much more. However, most of the time, we either misuse or abuse it.

The people who really are in need of it never get to use it. They never get to exercise their rights. Despite their circumstances and situations, children have rights like adults do. Many of us look at the external circumstances of children and forget that, they too, are human beings with rights. The rights of children have been the missing factor in the phenomenon of street children. We have a moral obligation to ensure that their rights are high-lighted! We need to respect the fact that everyone has rights. When

children observe how adults behave, they too will grow up in an environment where respecting each other's rights will become a lifestyle.

We must focus on creating an awareness of the rights of children. Many people perish because they lack knowledge. Many children die not knowing what their rights are. Many adults die not knowing what human rights are about. Children's rights can only be protected if they receive attention by those that are concerned about children's rights.

Human Rights

...Human rights in South Africa is a topic which has been extensively researched because of the gross violations which have occurred already.
(Frost 1998).

On 10 December 1948 the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration was one of the first major achievements of the United Nations. It is an extremely powerful instrument that exerts an enormous effect on people's lives all over the world. It

is one of the most referred- to documents on human rights. The declaration represents a common statement of goals and aspirations toward the promotion and safeguarding of human rights throughout the world.

Human Rights Watch conducts regular investigations into human rights abuses in many countries around the world. It addresses the human rights practices of governments and defends freedom of thought and expression.

Human Rights Watch began in 1978 with the founding of its Helsinki Division. Currently it includes five divisions covering Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, as well as the Helsinki accords. It also includes five collaborative projects on arms transfers, children's rights, free expression, prison conditions, and women's rights. It has offices in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, London, Brussels, Moscow, Dushanbe, Rio de Janeiro, and Hong Kong. It is a non-governmental organization, supported by contributions from private individuals and foundations and does not accept government funding.

What are Human Rights?

...Human rights are also called natural rights. It is argued that they belong to people just because they are human beings. People are entitled to them regardless of where they live in the world or their position in society. It doesn't matter what a person's race, sex, age, class, language, beliefs, culture or religion are, or how much money or education a person has; we all have the same human rights

(<http://www.take5tv.co.za/html>).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everybody is born free and equal in dignity with unalienable rights. It also states that human beings are entitled to dignity and to fundamental rights that are equal and inalienable. Every person has the right to be respected simply because he or she is human. There are many international organisations and documents that deal with human rights. Many countries with different social, political and economic systems have accepted and signed this document. This means that even though they may have different ways of doing things and have different beliefs, they believe that basic human rights apply to everyone.

Children and their Rights

When a child is born into this world, it is a helpless little being. The child is dependent on others and can only survive if assisted by another being. Children must be seen as human beings that are forced to cope with problems specific to their own circumstances. They are therefore pushed into a weaker position since they are not always able to fully participate in society and exercise legal protection for themselves. Children have not been protected from the social disruptions caused by apartheid. It is therefore imperative that when considering children and their rights our efforts are directed towards the best interests of the child.

The Compilation of Children's Rights

Parental responsibility is absolutely necessary! Parents are required to provide a suitable environment where children can be nurtured. All children are not fortunate enough to grow up in an environment that is warm and happy. Some are faced with adversity even before they are born! Children are unable to protect themselves and therefore suffer many injustices. Children basically enjoy the same rights as adults.

This and various other reasons had prompted the United Nations Organisation to compile the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. Thereafter, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. The children of this country and children all across the globe are precious. They are the future leaders of the world. They can build a better world. It is these leaders who will be at the heart of the foundation of a prosperous and caring society. It is imperative that they become accustomed to an environment filled with love and care. The society that we as adults have become accustomed to, is one filled with the after-effects of apartheid, namely poverty, homelessness, violence, abuse and suffering. The disadvantaged society was never afforded the privilege of having rights. If we did, it was on a very small scale. Children have the right to protection from issues such as poverty, homelessness, violence, abuse and suffering. They most certainly have a right to a proper shelter, better education, good health, and adequate food and clothing. Thus, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by South Africa's first democratic government on 16 June 1995.

UNICEF

UNICEF is mandated to provide support with a view to raising an awareness on children's rights, advocate for the protection of children's rights and to help meet their basic needs. It is a mechanism that supports and encourages political parties to cooperate with the goals set out in the Human Rights Charter.

UNICEF opened its offices in Pretoria in 1995. It was founded in 1946.

UNICEF advocates and works for the protection of children's rights, to help the young meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF is the only United Nations agency devoted exclusively to the needs of the world's children.

UNICEF was created at the very first session of the United Nations General Assembly, on 11 December 1946 – as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

The early resources of UNICEF were directed to meeting the emergency needs of children in post-war Europe.

In 1953, the General Assembly decided that UNICEF should remain as a permanent arm of the UN. The name was changed to the United Nations Children's Fund but the well-known UNICEF acronym, was retained.

UNICEF started operating in Johannesburg in December 1992 under a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
(<http://www.dfa.gov.za/forrelations/multilateral/unicef.htm>)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was formed with input from various countries, societies, religions and

cultures over ten years. It is the most widely- ratified human rights instrument in the world. It is a document wherein the rights of the child are most fully articulated. It is a successful legal and ethical instrument for promoting and protecting the rights of all children. It provides special protection appropriate for minors. It bans any form of discrimination against children. Much of the hard work that has accompanied the drafting of the Convention is due to international recognition of the horrific situations facing many of the world's children.

The African Charter

...Many African countries did not participate in writing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, although many of them have now ratified the Convention. It was decided to draw up an African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to deal with certain issues, which apply, specifically to Africa. These issues were either not covered in the Convention or were dealt with in very broad terms. So the aim of the Charter was to add to the Convention (McCurdie 1992).

The World Summit for Children 1990

On 29-30 September 1990 the largest gathering of 71 heads of State and Government and 88 other senior officials assembled at the United Nations to attend the World Summit for Children. At the World Summit, a Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration in the 1990s was adopted. One of their goals was to provide improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances and tackle the root causes leading to such situations.

The International Summit on the Rights of Children

...The summit was part of the 'International Conference on the Rights of Children in South Africa' which followed on 10-13 June 1992. It was a follow-up to the 1987 Harare Conference on Children, Repression and the Law in Apartheid South Africa. The conference was hosted by the Community Law Centre of the University of the Western Cape and was focused on developing policy on children's rights. Both these events were a result of the Harare Conference on Children, Repression and Law in South Africa held in 1987. (<http://www.gopher.anc.org.za>).

The Children's Charter of South Africa

The International Summit on the Rights of Children in South Africa was held from 27 May to 1 June 1992 in Somerset West in Cape Town. More than 200 children, between the ages of 12 and 16 years came together from 20 different regions in South Africa. These children were representative of the various race, gender and disability groups. At the summit, issues such as human rights violations, and injustices of the past were discussed. The children also spoke about not being treated with respect and dignity. The summit at which the 'Children's Charter of South Africa¹¹ was drawn up and adopted, has been a historical turning point in realizing a culture of children's participation in child rights advocacy.

...The Children's Summit of South Africa launched the Children's Charter on 1 June 1992. The Charter points out that, ...Realizing that, all children are created equal and entitled to basic human rights and freedoms and that all children deserve respect and special care and protection as they grow and recognizing that, within South Africa children have not been treated with respect and dignity,

but as a direct result of apartheid, have been subject to discrimination and racism that has destroyed communities and has disrupted education and social relationship (King 1997).

The Children's Rights Division (Human Rights Watch)

...The Children's Rights Division was established in 1994 by the Human Rights Watch. Its mission focuses on the monitoring of human rights abuses against children around the world. It deals with abuses carried out by society and governments, takes action against them and campaigns to end them. The Children's Rights Division sends fact-finding missions to places where abuses are occurring- interviewing child victims, parents, human rights activists, lawyers, child care workers, government officials, and others, working closely with local human rights groups to identify specific abuses and strategies for change. We then write objective, factual reports and present them to governments, international organisations (such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization of African Unity), non-governmental organisations, policy makers, and the media. We devise campaigns and work in coalition with

other groups to expose abuses of children's rights and to put a stop to them (<https://www.hrw.org/children>).

Children's Rights Information Network

...The key objectives of the Child Rights Information Network are to improve the lives of children by:

- meeting the information needs of organisations and individuals working for child rights.
- supporting and promoting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- developing networking tools that enable effective information exchange among members (<http://www.crin.org>).

There are many documents and organisations that campaign for the rights of children. Children in need are left virtually unprotected. Promises and commitments made toward children and their rights can only be met with the help of society in ensuring the implementation thereof. It is time for action and results, not philosophical debates and opinions. The real challenge is not what is said in statements, nor what is documented, but rather the actions

that will take place in the years ahead. The way for implementation has been paved. However, follow-ups will be the yardstick of success or failure.

The Role of the International Community

Despite the many conventions, summits, children's rights organisations and other documents, there certainly seems to be a struggle with achieving basic human rights for children in South Africa and around the world. Governments must remain steadfast to their commitments to children's rights. International instruments and constitutions must be used to promote children's rights.

Empowering the Children

Children need to be equipped with lifestyles that will enable them to build a better future in a better world. This can only be accomplished if children are empowered to do so. They need to be given the tools required for the job. Durban, like the rest of South Africa has many generation gaps to bridge. The wrongs of the past must be undone in order to ensure the rights of the future. Decision-making structures must be accessible to children. Trusted persons must be available to provide support bases for children.

Society must acknowledge children and value their input, suggestions and ideas. It also needs to create an awareness of their rights.

Raising Awareness

Raising awareness extends beyond national boundaries. The Children's Rights Resource Handbook states that,

...People who are ignorant, unaware and even uncaring about the rights and needs of children, will not be willing to work and sacrifice or take any action to help them. Raising awareness of children's rights makes people more sensitive to the needs of children. It is in the best interest of children and it builds a support base for the rights of children. It allows the community to stand together with one strong voice.

*"Children are our most valuable resource."
Herbert Hoover*

TRAPPED ON THE STREET

CHAPTER 9

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

"To discover and recover your creativity. But where do you begin? You begin by offering an open heart and willingness to serve."

Sarah Ban Breathnach

(www.vanderbiltsamoyeds.com)

The phenomenon of street children is a complex and dynamic issue, which cannot be attributed to a single cause. The information in this book provides a useful framework for discussing policies and measures that can be used to combat this phenomenon.

Having children live on the streets is not unique to Durban. All over the world, street children are a common sight. The number of children on the streets of Durban is not definite. Children move from shelter to shelter and street to street. It is not easy to keep track of them since they have a tendency to change and exaggerate their stories all the time. Many of these children have chosen street life over the adversity of their family circumstances. Should drastic measures not be undertaken, street children will have a bleak future ahead of them. There is no quick solution to a problem of this magnitude. However,

the responsibility for the phenomenon of street children needs to be shared by the various interested groups. Following on this line of thought, it is entirely possible that the street children phenomena can be diminished if every avenue and resource is explored.

The Attitude of Society

Society often sees these children as a nuisance, a threat or a menace. Many do not even wonder why children are on the streets. We have failed to live up to our responsibility as adults and parents. The number of street children grows enormously every day. We choose to ignore their presence. We silently hope that the problem will soon disappear. The tragedy of it all is that we have become desensitized to their presence. As a community we offer no solutions. A few religious groups, individuals and non-governmental organisations make contributions toward them, but there does not seem to be any strategy or development aimed at rectifying the situation.

Community Involvement and Approaches Roof (1990) states,

...Homelessness. Say it ten times and the word will mean nothing to you. Use it in a television report or a party political broadcast and you're dealing with emotional dynamite. Like abortion, or cancer, homelessness has a peculiar ability to provoke an immediate mental response. That response, typically an image of a young person huddled in a cardboard box, is a powerful one.

In her book, *Also God's children*, Heather Parker Lewis claims that,

...A street child is someone under eighteen, who has decided to leave home to care for himself on the streets, unassisted by an adult. This definition challenges the romantic notion people have about street children being homeless, abandoned or orphaned. The majority of children have homes and families to return to, although they are initially unwilling to divulge this. What makes them street children is their decision to give up any form of adult control, care and supervision and make it on their own. However, unfortunately, when a child says goodbye to adult authority he also turns his back on childhood. Life can never quite be the same again. Street children often

resist help that is offered and prefer living in sordid conditions. They prefer their freedom so that they can live according to their own beliefs. It is therefore not easy to integrate them back into society.

Every person should take some responsibility for the problem since it is known that” many hands make light work”. Together, as a community and family, we can strive towards diminishing the phenomenon of street children. Communities need to be actively involved in changing the mentality of street children. The plight of street children has received increased publicity. Concern over this issue has led to the formation of many groups offering their services in various forms such as feeding schemes, clothing distribution and overnight shelters. Help can be offered to street children in various ways.

Voluntary work

Voluntary work is already underway. Many communities and interested persons are continually making sacrifices by working towards the re-building of this country. Volunteers spend hours working with street children in order to gain their trust. They assist and support these

children in an effort to rebuild their lives and re-unite them with their families or communities.

Non-Governmental and Non-Profit Organisations

Many Non-governmental organisations are administered by religious groups. Their programmes seem to be less extensive and involve mostly volunteers. The work of religious groups with street children often goes unnoticed. Many, it seems prefer not to get coverage from the media to advertise themselves. However, it was found, that many non-governmental organisations are faced with legal red tape. Most of the funding that they receive is spent on administration. This is a government requirement. Excessive sums of money are paid to auditors and accountants. Money that should be directed to more useful initiatives! Although many of the initiatives undertaken by non-governmental institutions are often duplicated, it was found that they seem to have a better understanding of the phenomenon than the political leaders do. The work of non-profit organisations is often crucial, strategic and significant. Their affiliations, or lack thereof, does not allow them to be ruled by power or greed. Transforming societies and communities is their main focus. Non- profit

organisations contribute by increasing the probability that society will take charge of their lives and those around them. Non-profit organisations can practice and keep alive ideals that can set a standard for the rest of society. These organisations are often seen as competitors to government welfare departments. It is necessary for governments to support and encourage these organisations in order to facilitate empowerment and a progressive transformation.

Shelters

Shelters are operated mostly by non-governmental organisations that obtain their own funding. They are used to keep children off the streets. They offer overnight care, food, clothes, and bathing facilities. They also offer educational programmes and life- skills training. On visiting some of the shelters, it was found that they operated with inadequate facilities. Many children do not bath due to there not being hot water. Food provided was just brown bread. Most shelters are endeavours by non-government organisations.

Reuniting children with their families was a common long-term goal. They are in dire need of assistance from the government in terms of manpower and training. Some of the organisations receive local and international funding while others barely survive. Some suggested that research on the subject needed to be done and that workable solutions must be implemented. Many have not, as yet, developed a plan or strategy that is actually successful. However, many suggested that community involvement was essential. The children commented that they were better off on the streets. Street children felt that shelters were too strict and had too many rules. Children go to these shelters only because they need a place to sleep at night. They were not interested in going to school from the shelters. They were very independent and could survive without shelters. Many also stated that they only used the shelters because they were available. However, there was a minority that did enjoy being at shelters and classified shelters as being a- 'friendly' places. Shelters are in a position to offer overnight facilities for children in distress. It is in essence a short-term option.

Local Community

Members of the community indicated that many are aware of the presence of street children in the area. I believe that society is continually being desensitised to this phenomenon. However, they did not seem to mind since the children were not an immediate threat. Many reported that children were occasionally involved in theft, crime and prostitution. The community seems to be aware of the facilities that are available. Children regarded the people in the community as being very helpful. They were always given food and clothing. They were sometimes given money as well. However, some street children were critical of the neighbourhood. They felt that members of the community were obliged to attend to and take care of them. Religious organisations in the area have attempted to assist street children. Some are grateful for the generosity but it is short-lived. It is obvious that the local community has a critical role to play in transforming our society.

Child Welfare

Clearly, child welfare has responded positively in the face of the changed social circumstances in this country and

made much- needed adjustments to enable it to continue to serve children. The only information received from this service provider was that the non-governmental organisations have become a threat to them. The reason behind this was that funding was being re-directed from them to the NGO's. It was also found that the welfare department preferred to have children living in foster homes as opposed to shelters and children's homes. Children had various perceptions of the child welfare department. Many stated that some social workers were kind while some were very rude. Most children had no idea of who social workers really are. They were unable to distinguish between childcare workers, volunteers and child welfare workers.

Police Department

The police make a concerted effort in finding accommodation for street children. Children are picked up from streets at night and placed in overnight shelters. Policemen are aware of all shelters available. The South African Police Services established the National Bureau for Missing Persons on 3 October 1994. It is regarded as a community-orientated service through which missing

persons can be located. It is a support service rendered to investigation officers. Although most street children are runaways, they are often reported as missing persons by their parents and relatives.

Children interviewed reported various abuses by the police. They reported that they were chased and beaten by some police officers. They were also sworn at. Some children reported that they were frequently detained in police cells. Most of the children interviewed seemed to have conflicting stories. This was mostly attributed to their behaviour and state of consciousness. However, many stated that some police officers did treat them well by giving them food or leaving them at shelters to sleep. This occurred mostly during cold weather conditions.

Police have often been criticised for picking up street children and keeping them out of sight during special events and conferences in the city. The public is usually outraged by such acts.

Currently, in South Africa, it seems that only the non-governmental sector has experience in delivering youth

service programmes successfully. Many of these organisations have developed programmes that engage young people in service delivery as a method of providing youth development opportunities.

...There are, doubtless, many more organisations doing valuable work inside communities and in focused areas of need. The problem is a lack of co-ordination between these organisations. There appears to be no central bureau in position to ensure that the skills of specific volunteers are properly utilised. A central bureau that logs details on a database and matches urgent needs with willing providers of assistance would be invaluable (Hunt and Lascaris 1998:220).

...At least one organisation, the President's Award, is known to be trying to develop this type of database for its own purposes. This South African version of the international Duke of Edinburgh award scheme insists, among other things, that participants acquire a skill. Individuals choose the skills (usually work-related) and the organisation provides trainers or methods of skills transfer. Volunteers give off their time and expertise - perhaps teaching welding skills, carpentry or computer literacy. The

organisation records all offers of help and is then in a position to match up requests with volunteers and resources. The person transferring skills may have to give up time in the evenings or at weekends. This form of moonlighting involves no financial rewards, but those engaged in it have the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing something to rebuild our country and repair the damage done by apartheid education and the denial of equal access to training opportunities (Hunt and Lascaris1998:220).

Most children start and end their days on the streets. It is evident that the street children phenomena should be addressed by first assisting the families of the children. The needs of the family and their circumstances should be given priority. This will enable children to go back to their homes. Visits to the homes of some of the children revealed absolutely impoverished and inadequate living conditions. The attitude of the parents has revealed that they are not about to make any effort to raise their standards. Some continue to make attempts but, economically, they are in no position to make much change. In all activities and projects planned with the

'children on the street' it is necessary to include the entire family and involve the community. Existential problems and troubles encountered by street children can be eliminated if welfare, the community or other interested organisations can detect at an early stage, persons, families and social groups at risk. Appropriate institutions should take responsibility for resolving the housing problem of the families of street children. The community should initiate the undertaking of material support for the families of street children. Non- governmental organisations can get involved in these types of projects.

Humanitarian organisations should assist in the implementation of provision of essential needs. This includes food, clothing, and primary health care.

By having a hands-on approach, it is easier to establish trust and respect with street children. It is an opportunity to learn about street culture and to identify the diverse means to survival for these children. It is evident that street children require us to create a platform to be given opportunities to develop their potential. Being detained in police cells is not a solution, but rather a more brutal

punishment for children who have already been exposed to an unjust past. Irrespective of their circumstances and their past, street children can determine what the future holds for them. It is up to society to step in and uplift them. Although many countries make concerted efforts in implementing projects to help street children, no one has been able to solve the phenomenon of street children. Durban has many programs that are focused on assisting street children. It is evident, however, that more needs to be done. Every generation has the opportunity to influence the next. It is society's responsibility to act upon this statement. Our future and the future of our children are determined by us. As a concerned society, we must seize the opportunity and direct our services and skills toward the development of our country. Every individual should invest in his or her community by volunteering time and effort. We must work toward designing, implementing and encouraging the development of community-based youth development programs. The economic empowerment of communities is certainly one of the many solutions available to communities to assist in alleviating the phenomenon of street children.

Many local communities have few or inadequate facilities for street children. There is a dire need for specialised facilities. Existing facilities must be refurbished. Projects must be developed to promote the survival and development of children. Another recommendation would be to provide street children's centres that would be used as a draw- card for attracting them. It should provide activities that would keep them out of trouble. Organisations, together with the community, should combine their efforts and manage such centres. Programs that street children would respond to must be identified and implemented. The initiatives and programs of these centres must complement those of the governments. They should also endeavour to collect and provide information on the status and needs of children in South Africa and to increase public awareness around the issue. Communities and local governments must create partnerships and mobilise their resources in ensuring that everyone fulfills their promises to the children of our country. Extensive planning for a more sustainable response to this growing phenomenon is essential. The phenomenon of the street-children is the product of complex social problems. There may not be easy solutions

to this phenomenon, but the efforts of society are a starting point. Street Children have received and continue to receive much attention in the media, both nationally and internationally. Creating awareness and sensitization efforts have led to several initiatives involving numerous groups working with street children. This has led to more research programs being launched. Various schemes and programs at national and international level have also been initiated and implemented. Many organisations are involved in dealing with issues related to street children. Criminal and violent activities ensure the survival of children on the streets. However, their past is not as frightening as their future. Facilities in the Durban area are insufficient to deal with the extent of the problem and there is an urgent need for systematic and effective aid for street children.

"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles with it."

Winston Churchill

(http://www.hivan.org.za/edit_essays/july.asp)

CHAPTER 10

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

"We live in a society in which great disparities in wealth to transform our society into one, in which there will be human dignity, freedom and equality, lies at the heart of our new constitutional order."

(Judge Arthur Chaskalson, President of the Constitutional Court in Soobramoney v Minister of Health, KwaZulu Natal 1997 (12) BCLR 1696 (CC), PARAS. 8-9.)

The present government continues to struggle in contending with the havoc wreaked by the apartheid era. The legacy of apartheid in South Africa has affected most young people. The present government has its own internal challenges that have yet to be addressed. Youth and children have borne the brunt of the repressive policies of the past. They have been placed in a position of great disadvantage. In 1994, President Mandela stated that, "youth are the valued possession of the nation. Without them there can be no future." Their needs are immense and urgent. They are the centre of reconstruction and development (National youth policy).

It is common knowledge that children and youth comprise a substantial part of the South African society.

They are recognised as a vital resource in any country. Their future prospects are inextricably linked to the well-being and the success of any nation. In the past, the apartheid-government violated the rights and opportunities of young people through its repressive policies. No recognition was given to the needs of children. Instead the vast majority were left to find their own way in a difficult world. The democratization process of South African society was supposed to have afforded new opportunities to the previously disadvantaged groups. However, a significant number of children have not been afforded the opportunity to live in a society in which one is given the ability to develop their full potential. Many have been forced to live in poor conditions and have limited access to education. They have had to resort to crime in order to survive. The government of today may have addressed the needs of children, but has not acted upon its promises.

We live in an era of homelessness, poverty, substance abuse, AIDS and countless other societal ills. Children are a matter of grave concern since they constitute a large number that live in poverty. We need to search for ways to help and support these children. There has been a serious

failure in attempting to discover the reason for the burgeoning number of street children. Therefore, we should be focused on addressing this phenomenon by finding feasible and practical solutions.

A lack of understanding of the phenomenon of street children restricts the government in attempting to integrate street children into programmes that will lead to sustainable improvement in their lives. This information presented has described the general characteristics, behavioural patterns and causes of the phenomenon in order to assist the government in preventing and providing an efficient service to the street children. Every government has an obligation to ensure human dignity toward its children.

Who is the Government?

...Government is the organisation of a group of people in a given community; it is the institutions, people and offices by and through which the rule of state is exercised (Paul Ekins 1992:152).

People in general believe that the government has the primary responsibility of ensuring that their rights can be

exercised. People believe that it is the responsibility of the government to improve their standard of living and quality of life.

...The role of government is easily stated in theory, but immensely complicated in practice (Paul Ekins1992: 152).

...The road to a democratic form of government can be long and hard. Such government has three key features: first, it must have the legitimacy needed to govern; second, decision making and implementation must be possible; and third, there must be stability and continuity in political life (Paul Ekins1992: 152).

Governments have a binding responsibility towards the citizens of their states. It is their duty to ensure that all have access to their basic levels of economic and social rights, which are essential for the sustenance of human life and dignity. It has a key role in facilitating and realizing the rights of children. People generally expect their government to meet their stated objectives and promises. The credibility of any government depends on the ability to adhere to their stated objectives and promises. This can

only be achieved if there is consistent and open communication with the public.

Obligations of Government

The Children's Rights Manual states that, "there are appallingly few resources and facilities to promote healthy children in an HIV/AIDS positive world as far as the 6-year old age group is concerned." There is no official policy and no assistance to help pre-schools and places of care to provide resources in their communities for basic needs and care for young children. There is no adequate subsidy for food, water and shelter, and no adequate provision to ensure that adequate care is taken of children. There seems to be a lack of support services and community resources in our country. This fundamental need has to be addressed urgently and seriously. Laws and policies of the last governments have left behind a legacy of immense poverty and inequality in South Africa. The government of today has a tremendous task in securing an improvement in the quality of life for today's society.

It would be erroneous to say that children receive adequate attention from the government. The government,

it seems, has far more serious issues to attend to. Should this situation not change, these children will become a more serious issue than any other in the next few years. Although government must facilitate new research on street children, it is imperative that new strategies be implemented immediately in order to alleviate this problem. The Government must restructure its welfare departments and ensure that they are accessible to children. These departments should ensure that the rights of children are accommodated. New policies or strategies should ensure that children are removed from the streets and placed in proper care. Temporary overnight facilities should be created. It is not enough to simply remove these children from the streets. A cure needs to be found. It may be an expensive process, but it will change the future generation of this country. The community, together with interested organisations, should ensure that both national and local governments remain faithful to promises that are made. We also need to ensure that the needs of children are met.

...To defeat apartheid once and for all, it is the duty of all government structures, organisations of civil society and the private sector to put in place strategies that will

eradicate injustice and inequality in a progressive and principled manner.

Thus, the need for further investigation and analysis into the situation facing street children is a major priority. There is clearly a need to ensure the effective implementation of new legislation and policy to protect children from being abandoned by government. The general perception is that both the old and new governments have failed to protect children. Governments have failed to provide effective solutions for the phenomenon of street children. The government has a key role to play in facilitating strategies to eradicate this phenomenon. The government can no longer remain indifferent to the plight of street children. The government of this country should provide a framework for the long-term sustainable development of this nation. Policy decisions and practices at all levels should be carried out in the best interests of children. The local and national government, together with the family and community, need to take action. South Africa most certainly has a framework in place. However, the framework needs to be strong and strategies must be holistic. The government must ensure

that the various departments accept responsibility and ensure that policies are implemented. Their activities should also be carefully co-ordinated.

The following are recommendations to governments across the globe:

- To identify the role that government can play in addressing the needs of children.
- Although challenging, adequate structures and resources must be developed and operated.
- To create awareness for attitude change so that children will grow up to be the future generation of leaders of their nation. We must change our attitudes and help them become independent and self-sufficient. They, in turn, will change their attitude and make their nation self-sufficient and strong. They will consequently make a positive contribution to the world. This will be the start of a process that may never change.
- Building shelters only scratches the surface of the problem. The root of the problem of children being on the

street is the dysfunctional family. A new, modern approach should be developed. It should be centered on the family. If family problems are not tackled, then children most certainly will be back on the streets in no time. Government must invest in a family program in which mentors and specialists that are trained are utilized effectively.

- Authorities in countries must address the root causes of poverty. Children will continue to choose the hardships of life on the street over a life of poverty at home.
- To nominate an official to oversee the development and activation of policies geared toward children.
- To assist local governments in their endeavours to promote the development of children.
- To develop resource centres for the educational development of children.
- To provide adequate facilities for the rehabilitation of children.

- To provide more overnight shelters for children.
- To intensify training and development programmes for people to work with children.
- To increase awareness of human rights especially amongst the disadvantaged.
- To play an active role in ensuring that children have access to basic social and economic services.
- To identify and provide appropriate assistance to children in at- risk family situations.

These mechanisms are merely a beginning. They simply point out a number of critical areas of intervention in which government can contribute. African children throughout the continent have been subjected to different forms of neglect. They have been forced to live in an undignified manner. We can now initiate the beginning of a journey of celebration for every African child. It should be a journey filled with peace, joy, achievement and an abundant life. It should be a journey that allows every child

to achieve his or her aspirations and dreams. Our past has caused grave harm to the people of this country but our future can be better. Today we have a democratic order. This proves that the time has come for us to take the initiative to do something about the future.

Many communities have begun to respond to the call to help children affected by the regime of the last government. We need to ensure that this is a consistent response to the needs of children. The Government must endeavour to create a climate that is conducive for the accomplishing of the goals of the interested organisations and persons. In order to tackle the needs of children, all areas of every policy and legislation must be reviewed. Every government official and office should work hand in hand with society and raise the levels of the lives of children.

*"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."
Nelson Mandela*

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CHAPTER 11

THE WAY FORWARD

“Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country, the creators of our national wealth who care for and protect our people.”

Nelson Mandela

<http://www.nelsonmandelachildrensfund.com>

Street children continue to remain a deeply emotive issue that has drifted on and off of the agenda of society and government. During festive seasons such as Christmas, the media pricks our consciences with reports of society doing their bit to ensure that the underprivileged enjoy the season. Let us not wait for seasonal interventions! Let us instead, focus our efforts into turning this city around with a sense of urgency. Now! The future has in its path many opportunities and many challenges. Both government and society have the potential to move confidently onto this road with a new determination to protect its future. Our country has the resources. All we need to do is to identify them and use them wisely in order to make a difference. Finding a way to address the street child phenomenon has presented many challenges. Much research has been done and many solutions have been

provided, but how practical and real are our solutions? For street children, the street is home. They portray an image of self-sufficiency and prefer to control their own lives. They do not conform to rules, regulations, or discipline. They enjoy the freedom that they experience. Life is cruel and harsh on the streets and yet they leave their families at home to make new ones on the street. Life at home is no better since caregivers and parents are mostly abusive. In fact, to many street children, life on the streets is more preferable than their homes. When confronted with the sight of street children, one can't but feel obligated to do something. The most one can do is offer food, clothes or money. This is a short-term solution. Short-term solutions serve the immediate needs and basic necessities. Short-term solutions have, instead, been proven to encourage children to live on the streets. They are exposed to more material things than they would at home. The medium term solution would be to remove children from the streets and place them at rehabilitation centres away from the street environment. Limited access to illegal activities, crime, drugs, prostitution and a host of other activities will give children an opportunity at attempting to change the course of the direction of their lives. Foster homes and children's

homes are alternatives. However, children are aware of the fact that the facility is a medium term arrangement. Facilitating the immediate re-integration of these children into their families and communities is also not advisable since most street children come from dysfunctional families.

The long-term solution is far more complicated and has very little to do with street children directly. Injustices and inequalities of the past must be addressed. Employment opportunities, housing and social upliftment programmes must be initiated. Societies that have been affected must be restructured in terms of their culture. Cultural norms and value systems must be developed again. Families must be rehabilitated and transformed before children are reintegrated with them. Street children will return home, only to run off again if the home environment has not been transformed.

The energy and talent of the young people in this country will be lost if we remain passive. The development of children is being threatened. The legacy of apartheid and unfair social practices should not be extended. We,

as society, can create a safe environment and a nurturing community. Changes in this country are far from being complete. This country is a reflection of its past. Ignoring the past and its realities will only produce a country that is living a lie. Change is sometimes a painful process. Change must be effected wherever people are. There is hope that a generation from now, the struggles of the last decades of the twentieth century will have generated more power, strength, freedom and dignity for street children. Both young and old are challenged to play an active role in the future development of ourselves. It is imperative that we become a just and caring society.

Delivering the State of the Nation Address to Parliament on 09 February 2001, the President of the democratic Republic, Thabo Mbeki said, "no African child should ever again feel ashamed to be an African". "Failure is not our destiny. Defeat is not in our vocabulary. We will reach that summit (Welsh 1998:93)".

Documenting the plight of street children has been an enormous but important task on the road to attempting to alleviate this phenomenon. However, actually doing

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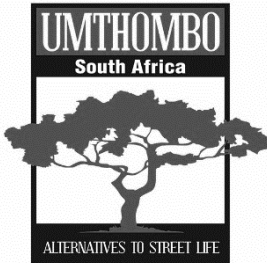
something at a practical level is an even greater challenge for every individual and every government. This is undoubtedly a call for action.

This book has been written not only in the interests of street children in Durban, but rather for the benefit of children all over the world. Oliver Twist had a great ending but the lives of street children continue to be at risk as they take shelter on the streets for long periods or simply never return home. They become trapped on the street.

*"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way
in which it treats its children."
Nelson Mandela*

FEATURED ORGANISATION

UMTHOMBO SOUTH AFRICA



uMthombo is committed to providing alternatives for street children. We have developed a unique understanding of the dynamics of street life through more than fifteen years of working with street children.

uMthombo's model leads children and youth out of street life towards alternatives through a holistic integrated programme bringing healing, leading to integration into their families and/or communities or supporting them to build productive independent lives.



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Vision

Transformed, just and reconciled communities where there are no street-connected children and children at risk are supported to avoid turning to drugs and the streets.

Mission

To support children & youth who are street-connected and/or at-risk in eThekwin Metro and surrounds to be re-integrated and become functional members of their families and/or communities.

Values

Creativity, innovation, transparent communication, accountability, integrity, commitment, passion and unconditional but tough love as key to reclaiming human dignity, restoring hope.

Staff



uMthombo's staff team is a fusion of social work professionals, community workers and former street-connected youth.

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Activities



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Outreach – sport and fun activities for boys, girls and youth on Durban’s streets to offer alternatives. If needed, referrals to professional care.

Counseling interventions for boys and girls and their families for healing, resilience and re-integration.

Development interventions:

Activities tailored to specific needs and vulnerabilities of young girls and young women.

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Post sixteen-year old boys residential programme to help young men build independent and productive lives.

Prevention interventions:

Fun educational activities with at-risk children and youth in townships.

Partnering with local non government organisations, schools, and municipality war rooms to build community safety networks for at-risk children and youth.

Advocacy – educating local communities and government services for improved implementation of laws.

In African tradition, all adults are called to be parents to children. Street-connected children are all our children!

...uMthombo...

FEATURED ORGANISATION

LUNGISISA INDLELA VILLAGE (LIV)



There are over 5 million orphans in South Africa, and countless vulnerable children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS, with many of them living in child-headed households. It is against this background that Lungisisa

Indlela Village (LIV) was founded. LIV is partnering with government, business and the church, to provide urgently needed holistic residential care, on a large scale with the core vision to “Rescue a child, Restore a life, Raise a leader and Release a star.”

Our mission statement

LIV is about change on a large scale. It exists to raise the next generation of leaders in our nation. Our mission, purpose and passion is to place vulnerable and orphaned children into a family environment where they receive unconditional love, spiritual discipleship, care and

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nurturing and where all their physical needs are taken care of. We want to equip these children with essential moral values and life skills in order that they truly can live lives that will influence and inspire others.



Our History and Credibility

The first LIV Village has been in operation since 2010 and is located outside Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. LIV (www.liv-village.com) is a registered non-profit company as defined in the South African Companies Act, 2008, with a Board of Directors ensuring good governance, transparency and credibility. Deloitte are the appointed auditors and have been since inception.



Our Progress

The first 96 environmentally friendly homes are complete with 33 house mothers at present and a team of relief mothers, as well as others in training, and 170 children in

residence. Our LIV school includes an ECD (Early Childhood Development) Centre, primary and high school with 22 classrooms, as well as a fully fitted-out library, computer room, art room, woodwork room and music centre, with dedicated and talented teachers. The LIV Children's choir is gaining stardom and being invited to perform at key cultural events across the country and travelled to the UK & Dubai in 2016. This was life transforming for them. Our nurses, therapists, counsellors and social workers are facilitating our vision of holistic healing for our children in the LIV Health Care Centre. We have also established the LIV Owethu Community Clinic which provides primary health care for the impoverished community surrounding the village. The Church/Multi-purpose Hall is at the centre of the village and the Finance, Administration and Marketing teams are housed in the adjacent office block. In February 2018 we installed a Waste Water Treatment Plant which feeds into our newly built dam. This now supplies much needed water for our vegetable gardens and will supply fresh fish for the mothers and children. The LIV Culinary School was started at the beginning of 2016 and The LIV Welding Training Centre opened in September 2017. Both of these ventures

aim to help provide future employment for our LIV children when they grow up, and for our local community in need. Further training is planned as we develop the Training Centre. LIV Church with “Promise Land” Kids Church on the village is thriving and making a meaningful impact on the neighbouring community in Cottonlands.

Long Term Sustainability

LIV Business has been established to focus on our long-term mission of having many self-sustainable villages across South Africa; as well as providing skills training and employment, including future vocational training, for the immediate and surrounding communities and for the children as they prepare to finish their schooling. The core purpose of each business is to contribute positively to the running of LIV Village, that we may realise our calling of building many villages across South Africa. LIV Business is owned 100% by LIV Village, thereby making the children full beneficiaries of all profits from the business. Some of the businesses that have been established are LIV Moringa, LIV Agriculture, LIV Labels and LIV Clean. This first LIV Village in itself employs 96 people from the local

community and within its portfolio of businesses, a further 1,200 people are currently employed.

Future Villages

1. LIV Lukhanyiso in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape – underway with the rezoning of the land in progress.
2. LIV Cape Town, Western Cape - LIV Cape Town have been established and land identified.
3. LIV Lanseria, Gauteng – LIV has merged with Refilwe who have been in operation for 25 years. They have a baby's home and 3 foster homes, a preschool with over 100 children from the local community (informal settlement) and After Care facilities. The benefit of the merger will increase existing programs whilst we negotiate for land earmarked in Lanseria, Gauteng.
4. LIV Hope Restoration, Gauteng – LIV is partnering with Hope Restoration Church in Johannesburg to establish a village in the area where this church is already having a big impact, and where they have identified a huge need for the growing number of neglected and abused children.

5. LIV Thokomala – LIV took over management of the Thokomala Orphan Care Organization from Unilever on January 1st, 2018. Thokomala is a registered non-profit that has been in existence since 2002. A different model of raising children is used in that Thokomala raises children in homes within their communities. We currently have 18 foster care family homes around South Africa. Each home has a foster mother and a maximum of 6 children. We partner with local social services agencies and churches to ensure that each child is given every opportunity to succeed and grow in a safe and loving environment.



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“It takes a village to raise a child”
...African Proverb...

We need many villages and family foster homes across our nation and beyond to rescue, restore, raise and release these children.

“A solid family environment is essential in paving the way towards the realization of future dreams and aspirations of children.” -Nelson Mandela

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We need many partners to journey with us to make this a reality. We believe, as we put a roof over every vulnerable child's head, give them a mother/parents to love them, feed and educate them to the glory of God, our nation will be changed forever.

Together we can!

Tich and Joan Smith
(Founders of LIV)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sandra is an inspirational woman who leads with wisdom and excellence. She has authored several books and is a dynamic teacher and speaker. She is the executive director of Leading Authority, an educational institution and Elizsan, an image and interiors company. She is passionate about women in leadership and disadvantaged children and has made tremendous contributions to it. Those in contact with her have benefitted from her disciplined management, administration, financial, music and educational expertise. Sandra is a practical resource as a life coach and mentor.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Once they leave home the lifetime journey of the street begins for street children all over the world. It is the start to a life of freedom filled with sorrow and despair. They face life on the streets not by choice, but out of necessity.

These children are forced to fend for themselves from a very early age, struggling against violence, harassment, disease, injury and early death. Abuse, poverty and violence are some of the reasons they land on the streets. They seem to be trapped for a lifetime unless society and government can step in, rehabilitate them and turn our world around.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sandra is an inspirational woman who leads with wisdom and excellence. She has authored several books and is dynamic teacher and speaker. She is passionate about women in leadership and disadvantaged children and has made tremendous contributions to it.



She founded Radiant women, Lady one and Children with Purpose. She is the CEO of Leading Authority – a skills and leadership training company. She is also the CEO of Elizsan - an image company.

She is a co-pastor with her husband Clive Gopaul at CTPMI. The church has benefitted from her disciplined management, administration-financial-music and educational expertise. Sandra is a practical and spiritual resource as a mentor and mother



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