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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE REHABILITATION OF STREET CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAIROBI AREA

AN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Masters of Arts in the University of Nairobi.

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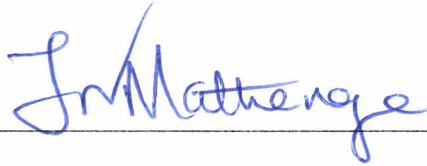


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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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Jane Nyaguthii Mathenge

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

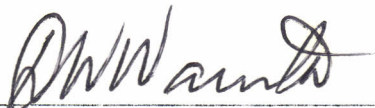
Signed



6/11/96

Dr. (Mrs.) H.W. Kinoti

Signed



6/11/96

Dr. D.W. Waruta

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DEDICATION

This work is a special dedication to my father, and mother.

MATHENGE KARUNGU

and

MRS. CHARITY WANJIRU

Thank you Mother and Father that I did not become a Street Child.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis has been made possible by a joint effort and support of a lot of people. Although it may not be possible to mention all of them, their assistance is highly appreciated.

I owe gratitude to my supervisors Dr. (Mrs.) Hannah Kinoti and Dr. D.W. Waruta for their assistance and guidance. It is as a result of this guidance that this work is what it is. I am also grateful to the University of Nairobi for granting me the funds to carry out this study.

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I owe special tribute to all my informants and especially the Provincial Children's Officer, Mr. Keraro Nyandoro and all his Officers. Special thanks to Father Okumu of St. Benedict Parish, Reverend Mungai of C.P.K. Church Kariobangi, Pastor Chekwel of Southern Baptist Church, Dagoretti, Father Michael of Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church and all those Church leaders whose

names do not appear here. I am also very grateful to the street children. This work is what it is because of their contribution.

To the street children, although life may begin in the streets, it should not end there.

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Although we have worked together with Dr. H.W. Kinoti and Dr. D.W. Waruta, I am fully responsible for any errors or distortion that could be found in this work.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

1.	ADC	-	African Divine Church
2.	APPCAN	-	African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse
3.	AIPCA	-	African Independent Church of Africa
4.	CCPD	-	Commission of Churches Participating in Development
5.	CEDC	-	Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances
6.	Ex.	-	Exodus
7.	Fm.	-	Female
8.	Fr.	-	Father
9.	Gen.	-	Genesis
10.	Hs.	-	Hosea
11.	JN.	-	John
12.	LK.	-	Luke
13.	LV.	-	Leviticus
14.	M	-	Male
15.	MC.	-	Maccabees
16.	MK.	-	Mark
17.	MATT.	-	Matthew
18.	NGO.	-	Non Governmental Organization
19.	NCC.	-	Nairobi Cares for its Children
20.	OAU	-	Organisation of African Unity
21.	PCEA	-	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
22.	PhI.	-	Phillipians
23.	PS.	-	Psalms
24.	Rom.	-	Romans

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- | | | | |
|-----|--------|---|--|
| 25. | Sam. | - | Samuel |
| 26. | SDA | - | Seventh Day Adventist |
| 27. | SIDA | - | Swedish International Development Agency |
| 28. | UNICEF | - | United Nations Children's Fund |
| 29. | UNEP | - | United Nations Environmental Programmes |
| 30. | WCC | - | World Council of Churches |

DEFINITION OF SOME CONCEPTS USED

STREET CHILDREN

This term refers to those children for whom the streets are their full or part time home. The full time street children work and live in the streets and have nothing or very little to do with their homes. The part time street children work in the streets but return to their homes at night. There are also potential street children who live in extreme difficult conditions. These ones could move to the streets any time either as full or part time street children if their prevailing conditions are not improved.

REHABILITATION

According to Oxford English Dictionary, to rehabilitate is to restore to normal life by retraining, medical treatment and other ways. Rehabilitation of street children therefore means restoring them to normal life after staying away from their families and schools. The rehabilitation would take many forms i.e. removing them from the streets; giving them medical treatment; taking them to school; helping them appreciate law and order and any other way that can restore them to the community.

RECEPTION OR RESCUE CENTRES

This refers to centres such as churches or social halls or even private homes where street children are taken as a first step towards removing them from the streets. At these centres, they are provided with a warm bath, food, medical attention and shelter. After there, they are taken to the rehabilitation centres.

PREVENTIVE MEASURE

According to Oxford English Dictionary, to prevent is to stop the spread of something. In the context of this study, preventive measures are activities aimed at stamping out the problem of street children. This is done through addressing the factors that cause the problem e.g. poverty.

CURATIVE MEASURES

To cure is to find a remedy to a problem. In the context of this study, curative measures are activities bent on helping the victims who are the street children without addressing the causes of the problem e.g. rehabilitating the street children.

ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate what the Church was doing to eradicate the problem of street children. This is a real social problem in the society today, not just in Kenya but world wide. In Kenya the problem has continued to grow in magnitude with seemingly no solutions. It was therefore felt that the church was part of the society that was faced with the problem and had a theological mandate to find short and longterm solutions to the problem.

The study had five objectives which were:

- (i) To find out the place of a child in the past and contemporary African societies with an aim of comparing the situation of a child in the present and past societies and to find out why the contemporary society has failed its children.
- (ii) To study the factors behind the problem of street children.
- (iii) To find out the role of the Church in their rehabilitation.
- (iv) To find out their needs.

- (v) To attempt at finding solutions to the problem.

The study had three hypotheses. It was assumed that the Church, being too involved in the spiritual life of the society, had forgotten their social problem; the Church has not used all the machinery at its disposal to prevent the problem of street children and that it has a theological mandate to do so.

In this study literature from the library, archives, Church and government documents on children were reviewed. This formed the secondary data. Other research techniques were employed to collect the desired data. These include indepth interviews where informants were given a chance to express their views freely. There was the questionnaire method and participants observations. All these methods helped to collect the desired information which formed the primary data.

After a critical analysis of the data collected, the study concluded that the Church had a role to play in the rehabilitation of street children. In total 75% of the Churches visited had rehabilitation programmes for street children. The Church had designed both curative and preventive strategies to combat the problem. Despite this, the Church was criticised for lack of cooperation and coordination. It was therefore suggested that for better services, there was need for cooperation between the various churches and any other organisation involved in the rehabilitation of street children. There was also need for cooperation between the organisations and the government.

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This study therefore has a unique contribution in the society today in that it has analyzed a social problem which is a reality world-wide. The study therefore recommends further research on the subject especially in the area of drug abuse among the street children.

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SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NAIROBI MUNICIPALITY

NATIONAL CONTENT

LEGEND

- International boundary
- - - Provincial boundary
- District boundary
-  study area/municipality
- ==== International trunk road
- ===== National trunk road
- + + + + + Railway
-  ocean/lake
-  river
-  mountain

Scale 1:350,000



UGANDA

WESTERN

NYANZA

VALLEY RIFT

CENTRAL

EASTERN

NORTH EASTERN

SOMALIA

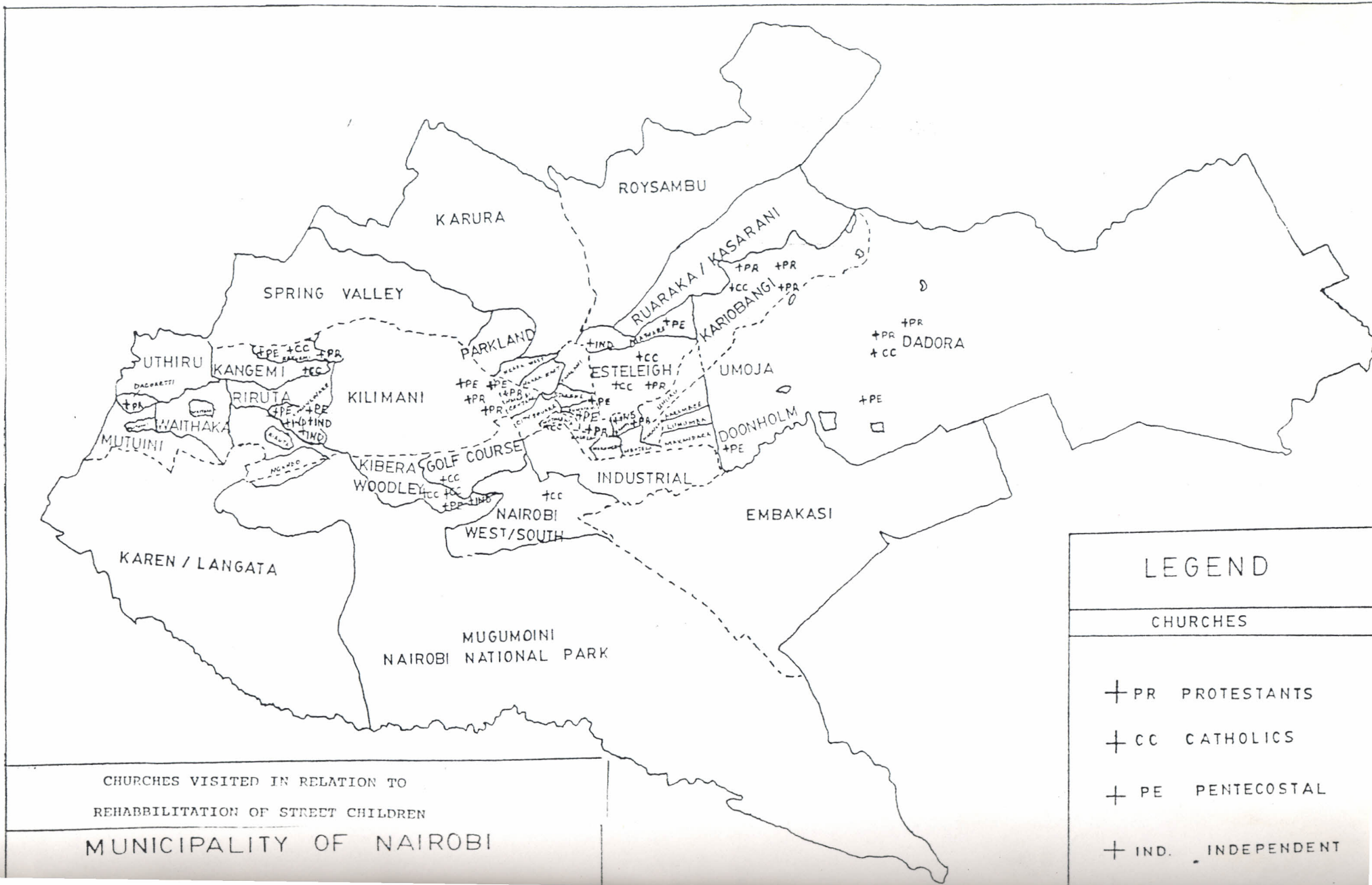
COAST

TANZANIA

INDIAN OCEAN

MUNICIPALITY OF NAIROBI

+ IND. INDEPENDENT



CHURCHES VISITED IN RELATION TO
REHABILITATION OF STREET CHILDREN

MUNICIPALITY OF NAIROBI

LEGEND

CHURCHES

+ PR PROTESTANTS

+ CC CATHOLICS

+ PE PENTECOSTAL

+ IND. INDEPENDENT

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

This study was carried out in Nairobi. Nairobi is the capital City of Kenya. Kenya is on the East Coast of Africa and it covers an area of approximately 569,200 Sq. Km's. Nairobi is the largest city in East Africa. It lies on the western edge of the Athi Kapiti plains and the foots of the Kikuyu escarpment. It is about 140 Km's south of the equator and about 490 Km's from the Kenyan Coast. It also lies at the altitude of about 1700 metres above sea level.

The history of Nairobi dates back to the colonial time. It was established as a railway depot because it was a convenient stopping place enroute to Uganda in 1896. Later in 1899 the Headquarters of Uganda railway was shifted from Mombasa to Nairobi. In the same year the government administrative offices for Ukambani were moved here. In 1907 Nairobi was accepted as the official capital of Kenya.

Nairobi is the centre of several local, national, regional and international organizations including United Nations, UNEP and Habitat. It has grown into a major commercial, industrial and political centre.

The majority of urban dwellers in Kenya reside in Nairobi. Obutho R.A in, Population Growth and Urban Change: A case study of Nairobi; notes that in 1969, 51% of the total urban population was accounted for in Nairobi. In 1979, Nairobi accounted for 37.0% of the total urban population. According to 1989 Population Census Report, Nairobi had a total of 1,324,570 people.

In Kenya the growth of street children has been gradual. It has been corresponding to the growth of urban population. In the colonial period, rural urban migration was slowed down by racial policies which made enforcement of vagrancy laws against Africans very strict. Onyango observes that, "at the same time it was the colonial policy on employment of women and children which marked the beginning of the phenomena of street children¹."

The population of street children in Nairobi is uncertain as the existing estimates vary. A report by the Government of Kenya and UNICEF on Children in Difficult Circumstances (1992) recorded a total of 17,000 street children countrywide. This figure was based on collected provincial data on the population of street children. The same report estimated Nairobi to have 4,000 street children. Onyango in her report, A Study on Street Children in Kenya, estimated 'the population of street children to be 300,000 countrywide and an annual growth rate of 10%²'. The Undugu Society Biennial Report (1990-1991) estimates over 100,000 street children in Nairobi alone.

Street children are found in two categories. There are the full time street children who spend all their lives in the streets and there are also part time street children who only work in the streets and then go home in the evening. It has also become common to see very young children in the streets accompanied by their mothers. The ages of street children vary between 3-20 years. Majority of them are boys but the number of street girls is also rising rapidly.

Physically, the street children look dirty and unhealthy. They are often drunk and they carry small dirty bottles of glue or gum which they inhale as they go about their business. They walk around in tattered greasy clothes which indicate a very poor background. They feed on discarded food from the dustbins. There are some who stay around fast food cafeterias waiting for leftovers.

The street children live in unprotected physical environment. This includes open sewage systems; near heaps of garbage where in most cases they get their food; others sleep on the pavements while there are still some who have put up makeshift cartons or paper houses what they refer to as 'Cuoms'.

There are some who are found on the streets entertaining the public for a small fee e.g. in dances, acrobatic activities and singing. Some collect and sell waste papers, bottle tins and other waste materials for recycling. They move around in groups

which seem to offer protection and a sense of identity. But their most common activity in Nairobi is begging.

1:2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of street children is a universal phenomena in todays world. The Church is part of the society that is faced with this social problem and therefore has a role to play in their rehabilitation.

This problem has continued to grow in proportion as these children continue to swell up the urban streets. According to Undugu Society Biennial Report (1990-1991), "there are thirty million street children who are forced by their wits in the avenues and alleys of mindless cities"³. The same report estimates that "Nairobi has easily upto 130,000 street children"⁴. This number is a problem in itself and as Undugu Society describes it, it is a real human tragedy. In view of this problem, the study aimed at finding out what the Church was doing to eradicate this social problem.

The problem of street children is worsened by the physical environment these children live in. They live in unprotected environment and they have to fend for themselves as Agnelli has observed, "they are thrown into deep end of life pre-maturely; street life eliminates childhood"⁵. They live under constant harrassment, hence they are described as "children who see grown-ups as enemies"⁶. The Church has a duty to provide for these

children a decent childhood and this is why this study makes an inquiry into what the Church was doing in their rehabilitation.

Therefore the problem of street children is a challenge to the Church and it must intervene and find solutions. The Churches should also be placed where these children feel at home because this is one of the Church's mission - to help the poor.

The study therefore sought to establish as to what extent the Church is involved in the rehabilitation of street children in Nairobi in accordance to its theological and missionary mandate and also to find out the effectiveness of such efforts in alleviating the problem of street children.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (1) To find out the place of a child in the past and contemporary society.
- (2) To study the factors which create and perpetuate the problem of street children.
- (3) To investigate the needs, hopes and aspiration of a street child.
- (4) To find out the role of the Church in relation to the plight of street children and its response to the challenges manifested by their plight.

- (5) To attempt at finding solutions to the plight of street children.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study was prompted by the current deepening problem of street children in the urban centres. There has been an outcry all over the country over the activities of these children. Currently, a local daily carried in its headline, "street children armed with Aids needles; watch out⁷!". This report was a warning to Nairobi residents that street children could kill. They were said to be armed with syringes with HIV tainted blood to harm those who refuse to give them money. There are also reports that in Nairobi, these children have been accosting people with human waste. These and other actions are indications that worse things could come. Once a child learns he can use human waste to force money out of other people's pockets, it can be expected that he could graduate to lethal methods.

The Church cannot be removed from the social affairs. It cannot be established where there is no community and, that is why the study focuses on the role of the Church in eradicating this social evil. As Camara has said, "the temporal are the activities of men and all that concerns men concerns the Church⁸". He also says that if the Church separates itself from the world, it would no longer be a Church of Christ. Therefore the Church should not just be concerned with helping humanity to

get to heaven, but should be concerned with their wellbeing on earth.

The problem of street children is deepening as it was confirmed by a Nairobi mayor. "The number of parking boys prowling the city streets has increased⁹". Records have it that Nairobi alone has over one hundred thousand (100,000) street children. If this number is not checked in good time it could be a great threat to the community and this is a big challenge to the Church.

The predicament of these children has driven them to drug abuse and child prostitution. These drugs are said to keep them under illusions. It is also said that these drugs help them cope with the hard physical environment which they have to put up with. Once addicted and the body is intoxicated, these drugs can be a health hazard to these young children. It could also become hard to leave the habit. This calls for drastic actions before this street generation is ruined by drugs.

Historically, the Churches were places where the poor felt at home. Also the Church involvement with street children is not new. Agnelli notes that, "In the works of several Roman Catholic Orders, identification of street children as a specific target can be traced in the 17th century, particularly in the works of Vincent de Paul¹⁰". She says that the Salesian Congregation has always been closely associated with the street children and is

still at the forefront. Therefore the Church in Kenya has a duty to protect the street children and give them a new hope.

Today we have the street children but tomorrow, they will be street adults. At that time it might be hard to confine them in rehabilitating institutions. Besides, when they are adults they could have turned into full fledged criminals. Also, Agnelli notes that at the youthful stage they are prone to misuse by unscrupulous persons. She states that, "the presence in a city of a large number of disgruntled young people with nothing to loose may be politically destabilizing¹¹". There are some people who may consider street children to be ruthless enough for terrorism. Hence it can be predicted that street children of today might become terrorists of tomorrow.

In Kenya it was reported currently in a local daily that some Aids sufferers were suspected to have been using street children to transmit the virus. The report stated that, "It was suspected that a clandestine exclusive club of Aids sufferers could have been the source of HIV tainted blood¹²". This makes the situation delicate requiring urgent action. The society needs the Church at this time to eradicate the problem. As Camara has said, "it could be scandalous and unforgivable if the Church was to abandon masses in the hours of greatest need¹³".

Though he said this in a different situation and context, it is relevant to our situation today as far as the street children are concerned.

Talents are God-given gifts and people should try to discover their talents. Street children lack neither talent nor ability, only opportunity. In view of this, the Church should help these children discover their talents. The Undugu Jazz Band which was comprised of former street children, is a good example. Agnelli also notes that, "Pele the great Brazilian footballer started life as a street child¹⁴". The researcher's family friend started life in the streets and has turned out to be a good teacher. Therefore the Church should try to give these children an opportunity to discover their talents.

Hence the situation of unprotected children in the streets is urgent. The problem is an invitation to the society and the Church to re-examine their conscience. The Church should seek for these children a descent childhood and as Agnelli has stated, the plight of street children should "Let the conscience of humanity revolt¹⁵". This whole situation of street children disfigures and damages the image of God. Hence Camara has said "If what we desire is the construction of authentic christian society, we are bound by our faith to help every group to become a community that is the living centre of the human creative relationship¹⁶".

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the arguments of Commission of Churches Participating in Development, (CCPD) in the World Council of

Churches, (WCC) entitled, Towards a Church in Solidarity with the Poor, as its Theological Framework.

This report challenges "the Church to be in closer relationship with the poor"¹⁷. In this study, the poor are the street children. The report states that, although there are cases when the poor are present in the Churches, many times they neither feel that ecclesiastical institutions are their representatives nor their situation. The Church is therefore challenged to respond to the calling of the spirit of God and become a Church in solidarity with the poor.

The report observes that the plight of the poor is a manifestation of how God's will is being denied to the poor and "God has made human beings in his own image highlighting the centrality of human life"¹⁸. Hence when people are living in conditions not conducive for human existence, it is evident that God's design and image is not being followed, according to this report.

This report also challenges the Church to be a sign of new humanity to the poor. This is, "a new humanity which God is creating through Jesus Christ where there is no such thing like Greek and Jew, slave and freeman, male and female". (Gal.2:2-8). The Church should also be a sign of new humanity to the poor because "the historical force of the poor was related to the right hand of God doing justice in the midst of history". This is portrayed in the liberation of Israel from the Pharaonic

Powers of Egypt. I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt; I have heard their appeal to be free of the slave drivers.... The cry of Israel sons has come to me... (Ex. 3:7)"¹⁹. Hence the God of Israel is portrayed as a God of the poor.

Finally, the report argues that the scandal of poverty today is a challenge to the Church at all levels of Church life. The "Church ought to respond and make concrete commitment in the task of liberating the poor"²⁰. It stresses that throughout the history of the people of God, men and women have always participated in the struggle of the poor, sharing their hopes and being deeply committed in their lives. There was the case of Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament like Amos.

The arguments in this report are biblical and provides the basis for Churches' interventions in the problem of street children. The bible forms the framework within which the task for caring for the poor like the street children falls. Jesus said "verily, verily, I say unto you, as much as you have done these things unto the least of these brethren, ye have done them to me". (Math. 18:5).

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is limited literature on the phenomena of street children. Most of this literature focuses on Government policies relating to street children and the public institutions dealing with the

problem. However, no study has been carried out on the role of the Church in the rehabilitation of street children. Even the literature that has touched on the Church seems to accuse it of lack of social conscience.

Dallape Fabio in his book, An Experience with Street Children focuses his study on the suffering of the street children. In this study he tries to lay out some procedures to be followed while rehabilitating street children. He emphasizes prevention of the problem as a step towards the solution. According to him, "these street children remind the society of its imperfection and of its lack of social conscience²¹". Throughout this book he expresses strong conviction that these children can change if given the opportunity. Although his study is relevant and very useful to this study, Fabio accuses the Church of lack of social conscience when he says "Churches are a resource, perhaps only a potential resource - they will become a useful resource... the day Christians become true Christians²²".

Agnelli Susana in her book, Street Children: A Growing Urban Tragedy, shares the same view with Dallape, that given opportunity these children can change as they lack neither ability nor talent, only opportunity. Agnelli calls for a more compassionate society whose conscience will revolt in the face of the plight of street children. She expresses fear that this street generation can form the breeding ground of violence, prostitution and drug abuse. She therefore calls for tangible actions to eradicate the problem from a social and spiritual

stand point. She seems to blame the society for the phenomena when she says, "the condition of street children is symptomatic of widespread selfishness, insensitivity to the needs of others, yet being compassionate is being human²³". Agnelli's work is relevant and helpful to the study especially in its analysis of the causes of the phenomena of street children. However her study was carried out in Brazil. The Brazilian situation which had led to the problem of street children may not be the same as the Kenyan one. Besides, her document lacks a religious outlook which is the perspective of this study.

The Undugu Society Biennial Report (1990-1992) "Experiences in Community Development" blames the current problem of street children to not only lack of child care but to unjust economic policies. It views the phenomena as a manifestation of problems precipitated by economic policies like the structural adjustments which have made life unaffordable for majority of the urban poor. The report also sees the current problem of street children as the result of the failures of the modern societies and says, "the problem demonstrates the paradox of modern development as compared to traditional ways of life where a child was valued as the greatest asset of a nation requiring everybody to take appropriate care of²⁴". The report also views the problem of street children as the by product of rapid population growth accompanied by rising unemployment difficulties. This report however seems to put a lot of emphasis on the economic factors behind the problem of street children. It does not touch on

spiritual and social factors which have also contributed to the flight of children to the streets.

Enge Marrianne's book, The Situation of Children in Kenya, sees poverty as the single pushing force of children to the streets. She tries to compare the different lifestyles of families in Nairobi. She says that while some children live comfortable lives in Nairobi, many grow up in social misery in the slums where families are crowded together in single rooms". In these slums there is never enough food and health care attendance. For them to attend school is considered a luxury. According to her, this has led to boys from the slum crowding the city centre, Enge therefore states that "children have a right to be born and although they are one of the societies resources, only if they are treated well²⁵". Enge's observation of the phenomena of street children in Nairobi is relevant to this study. However, Enge does not portray the current picture of the problem. In her study she only talks of street boys while currently street girls are on the increase.

An unpublished document by both the Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, "Situation ~~of~~ Analysis of Children and Women in Kenya", also increases the awareness of the well-being of a child in Kenya. However it does not deal so much with street children. It stresses that the wellbeing of a child is a mirror which reflects the status of families and communities.

Another unpublished document by UNICEF and the Government of Kenya "Situation and Analysis of Women and Children in Kenya": Children in Especially Difficult Conditions, describes children in difficult conditions as all those children whose basic needs such a food, shelter, education, medical aid and security are not met due to the current problem of rapid urbanization, a process associated with rapid social, economic, cultural and political transformation. It shares the same view as Enge Marrienne, that it is as a result of overcrowding in the slums with barely anything to eat and children being worst hit that prevent them from realizing normal childhood development and therefore being pushed to the streets. The report also calls for preventive measures to be taken. However it does not present a clear picture of the magnitude of the problem of street children especially where it presents Nairobi's population of street children as only 4,000 children.

Rights of a Child: A Kenyan Perspective, was a report from a workshop held by African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse (ANPPCAN) in conjunction with UNICEF. This report observed that although Kenya observes the requirement as far as protection of a child is concerned, much more is needed. This report further argues that Kenya has sufficient resources to provide children with basic needs if appropriate development strategy was adopted. The report advocates for low cost, high impact grassroots projects to achieve this. This book, though relevant, only addresses the

legal rights of a child. It does not touch on the problem of street children.

An unpublished report of the seminar on Planning of a Child Welfare in East and Central Africa, noted that children are "the most valuable asset and the best hope for the future²⁶". The report states that anything possible should be done to safeguard the child and his future. It views the family unit as the only place where a child belongs. It notes that, children should be restored to the family wherever possible. Therefore it calls for the prevention of breakdown of the family as a step towards a better world for children. The report is immensely useful to the study especially where it talks about safeguarding the future of children and restoring them to the family. However, it does not touch on the problem of street children.

The main concern of this study has been the Church in relation to the street children. In connection with this, Introduction to Liberation Theology, by Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, state that, "It is the duty of the Christians to be in close relationship with the poor sectors of the society²⁷". In case of unjust poverty according to Boff, it is the duty of the Christians to give hope to the poor by telling them that God loves them. Boff argues that, "the poor merit attention from Christians because God has always come to the rescue of the poor". I have seen the miserable state of my people..... (Ex. 3:7). According to Boff, the worshipping that is pleasing to God must be a search of justice and turning to the needy and

oppressed. Boff seems to argue that the Church should be concerned with the welfare of the masses especially the poor. This book is useful to the study especially if we relate the poor in our study who are the street children to the poor in Boff's book. However the book does not deal with the problem of street children though it talks generally about poverty.

A similar emphasis on relationship of the Church to the poor has been made by Camara Helder in his book Church and Colonialism. He argues that the Church cannot remove herself from the activities of man. To Camara, poverty destroys the image of God which is in all humanity.

Similarly, a report by CCPD for the World Council of Churches entitled Towards a Church in Solidarity with the Poor, discusses the attitude of the Church to the poor. It states that, the Church should be in closer relationship with the poor sectors of the society. It also notes that, the plight of the poor is a manifestation of how God's will is being denied to the people. The report concludes that 'God had made human being in his own image, highlighting the centrality of human life in creation. It challenges the Church, therefore, to respond to situations of poverty. Like Boff and Camara, this report is very useful to the study but does not touch on the problem of street children.

The child in the traditional African Societies and Society in Biblical times was highly valued. The society fully protected its children and hence the phenomena of street children was not

there. This is why John Mbiti in his book, African Religions and Philosophy, observes that in traditional African society 'a child cannot be exclusively my child, but our child'. The African societies according to Mbiti, nature brought the child into the world, but the society created the child into a social being'. Children were viewed as buds of the society according to Mbiti and therefore the birth of a child was not only the concern of the parents but of many relatives. Although Mbiti's work does not touch on street children, it is relevant to the study. The literature reveals that the street children is a phenomena of the contemporary society.

Similarly, J. Muthiani, in his book, Akamba from Within, says that, 'when all matrimonial matters were normal, the birth of a child was the matter to which special attention had to be paid²⁸'. According to Muthiani, a child was valued in the African society as it indicated full man and woman. It was therefore the duty of the whole society to teach the children the Akamba customs and ethics.

The same views are expressed by Kenyatta in his book Facing Mount Kenya. He states that education of a child among the Kikuyu's began from the time of birth and ended with death. It was the duty of the parents to educate the children until they reached the age of tribal education. Hence to Kenyatta, in the African societies, *the growing up of child was accompanied by acquisition of a mass of knowledge all the time.*

In the Biblical world view, a child was also valued and the phenomena of street children is absent. James Hastings in Dictionary of the Bible, observes that, 'Throughout the Bible a noteworthy characteristic is the importance and happiness assigned on the possession of a child'. A man who was a father and especially of sons was a rich man. His position was dignified and influential.

In another literature, Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Hastings notes that in the Bible, Jesus illustrated the ideal of childhood in his own life as a child. He manifested the tenderness of his affection for children by conferring blessings upon them. He further notes that Jesus chose those conditions of childhood as a type of fundamental character of the Kingdom of God. Although Hastings does not write on the contemporary situation of street children, he highlights on the value set on the possession of a child in the Biblical world view. The literature shows the care given to children by this society and therefore revealing the failures of the contemporary society as far as the children are concerned.

The genesis of the problem of street children in Kenya is directly related to poverty. T. Kanogo, in her book, Squatters: the Roots of Mau Mau, traces this poverty in land alienation in Kenya. Land was alienated in Central Kenya making many Africans and especially the Kikuyu squatters in the European land. She further observes that, by and by there was reduction of African livestock which led to impoverishment of the squatter community.

At the time of the Mau Mau uprising, according to Kanogo, the settlers were highly suspicious of the Kikuyu's and as such they were repatriated to the reserves. She remarks that, 'the reserves could barely support their own indigenous population let alone the additional from the Rift Valley²⁹'. She also notes that many people moved to the urban centres for cheap labour.

Although Kanogo discusses the beginning of urban poverty, she has not discussed the magnitude of the urban poverty today which has driven children to the streets. However, the literature was useful and relevant to the study.

Maina Paul in his book, Six Mau Mau Generals, expresses the same view with Kanogo that, it is as a result of land alienation that African's became poor. Maina says that after the land alienation, thousands of Africans migrated into the bigger towns in search of unskilled employment. He observes that those who were lucky found jobs as servants in the European and Asian homes. Here they met more frustrations and humiliations.

Therefore, according to Maina, majority of African males remained unemployed. Besides the African children were also denied education. All these problems made the situation of poverty among Africans very desperate. Like Kanogo, Maina does not touch on street children. However, his book is relevant to the study because it focuses on the origin of urban poverty which has made children go to the street.

The same issue of land alienation is discussed by Sorrenson M.K., in his book, Origin of European Settlement. He states that between 1903 and 1906, approximately 60,000 acres of Kikuyu territory in Kiambu were alienated.

R. McVicar in his thesis, Twilight of an African Slum, talks of overcrowding in Nairobi as a result of landlessness. He says that this overcrowding was caused by destruction of several squatter villages.

E. Campel in her book, The Guarded Villages, has noted that there was a policy of concentrating the Kikuyu community into villages. There were many problems experienced in these villages and as he has pointed out there were children without anybody to support them. Although this literature does not touch on street children, it gives historical events which led to the problem.

From the above analysis, it is clear that, the available literature does not focus on the role of the Church in the rehabilitation of street children. This leaves a gap for research on the Church and street children. This study tried to look at the activities of the Church towards eradication of the problem from an ecumenical perspective.

1.7 HYPOTHESES

The problem of street children in Kenya seems to worsen with time. Though some organizations especially the NGO's are having

programmes aimed at rehabilitating street children, the activities of the Church have not been very clear. Therefore the study had three hypotheses:

- (1) The Church in Kenya has been piously engrossed in the spiritual life of the people forgetting their social plight.
- (2) The Church has not used all the machinery at its disposal to prevent the factors that propagate and perpetuate the problem of street children.
- (3) The Church has a theological mandate to find short term and long term solutions to the problem of street children.

1:8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out from a micro level since time and funds could not allow a macro study. For this micro study, Nairobi City was found to be most suitable due to its large number of street children. For a comprehensive study, the researcher opted to study the activities of the Church from four denominations giving the study an ecumenical perspective.

Nairobi province being too big for an effective survey, the researcher picked at random some low income settlement areas for the study. This is because majority of street children come from these low income settlement areas (slums). For its large number

of street children, Nairobi City centre was also selected for study. The areas selected were Mathare, Kariobangi, Eastleigh, Mukuru (in South B), Shauri Moyo, Kawangware, Kibera, Kangemi and Dandora.

The collecting of data was initially designed to take three months. But due to difficulties in the field, it took four months. Three field assistants were hired to start off the study, but pulled out due to harassment from street children.

The author therefore had to look for people who were familiar with street life - social-workers. These ones were able to collect the data without much difficulties. The only problem was that they were to be paid a lot of money.

Initially, the study intended to have a sample of fifty Churches. After the pre-survey study, the number was reduced to forty. This was due to the distribution of Churches set for the study. It was felt that the field study would have taken longer than intended.

Also, the study intended to have a sample of two hundred street children. This number proved to be too big because of the problem of getting them due to constant harassment by the police and winning their confidence as they were very sensitive. Besides, most of them demanded money or food before responding to the interview. This demand was too expensive for the study, and therefore the number was reduced by half to one hundred.

For success of this study, the researcher employed various research techniques to collect the desired data. There was a library and archives research; in-depth interview; questionnaire method; and participant observation. Church and organization documents dealing with street children were reviewed. The government documents and records were also reviewed.

The library research formed the secondary data. For this study, books and documents on children in the olden societies and especially the traditional African societies and the Biblical world view were reviewed, to establish whether the phenomena of street children was present at that time and to see how the situation of children in the olden days compares with the situation of children today. History books as well as records of children in the colonial Kenya were reviewed to establish the history of the phenomena of street children. These were found in the Kenya National Archives. Records on street children from the Children's Department, Ministry of Home Affairs and the City Council of Nairobi were consulted. Finally, relevant records on street children from some Churches and Non-Governmental Organizations were consulted.

The researcher also employed in-depth interviews. Some Church leaders and especially the co-ordinators of Church rehabilitation programmes were interviewed. Government Officers from the Children Department were interviewed. Also interviewed were Non Governmental Organisations Leaders who are rehabilitating street

children. Finally, the researcher also interviewed some street children in order to establish their life history.

Through in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to make personal contact with the respondents. The respondents were also given a chance to express their views freely. The only limitation was that a lot of time was spent with an informant.

Also, all the informants refused to have their conversation tape-recorded which could have saved a lot of time. Many of them expressed fear of being victimized because of their views if they were tape-recorded.

A questionnaire method was used to collect most of the data. Questionnaires were administered to pastors and co-ordinators of church rehabilitation programmes to street children and to NGO's that rehabilitate street children.

Through these questionnaires one hundred street children were interviewed. Forty, either Church leaders or co-ordinators of street children rehabilitation programmes in various Churches were interviewed. There were twelve Catholic Churches, twelve Protestant Churches, six Independent Churches and ten Pentecostal Churches. All these Churches were picked at random from the city centre and the low income settlement areas set for the study as explained earlier.

The questionnaire method was effective, and consumed lesser time. The only problem was that some street children would become impatient and walk away after answering only half of the questions.

The other method the researcher employed was participant observation. The researcher was able to observe the activities of the street children with the help of the Officers from Children's Department, Ministry of Home Affairs. She was able to establish a rapport with some children, helped some to collect papers and other activities. This exercise was carried out for a week.

The researcher also visited the children at some feeding centres where she was able to help in the feeding, shaving and even bathing of the children. The researcher also visited the juvenile remand home at Kabete, the Getathuru Approved School and the Juvenile Court where she was able to observe the rehabilitation activities and was able to participate in these activities.

All these methods were very useful. Through participant observation, the researcher was able to observe for herself and make judgment. Then it can be concluded that the field research gave the desired data in the study. This will be reflected in the chapters that follow. The immediate chapter which follows will reflect on the place of a child in the olden and contemporary societies.

1:9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher found it hard to get the Independent Churches for interview. Except the established Independent Churches like AIPCA, most of the other Independent Churches do not have a Church building or offices. They worship on the road side, in the market places or some rented civic halls. Besides, their services begin early in the morning and end late in the evening. Only six Independent Churches were available for the interview.

Most Protestant Churches did not have programmes related to street children. The Pentecostal Churches that had rehabilitation programmes were not well established and coordinated. As a result, the study seemed to focus and to place a lot of emphasis on the Catholic Church. The Catholic Churches in Nairobi had well organized rehabilitation programmes which were coordinated by a street children's committee of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. This committee met on monthly basis at the Holy Family Basilica Church.

The street children were not willing to be interviewed. They argued that so many others had interviewed them before and yet nothing had been done to help them.

The street children demanded to be paid before giving the desired information. Some of them could not accept any amount less than twenty shillings. Others demanded to be bought food. This was

very expensive considering the limited funds available for this study.

It was also very hard to get information from the street girls. This is because the bigger boys often came to their defence violently. These boys who gave protection to these girls would claim that they could answer all the questions on behalf of the girls.

The street children cheated about their lives. They aimed at drawing sympathy from the researcher with the hope that they could be given a lot of money. Hence they would tell lies in order to draw this sympathy.

The street children are also irritable and impatient. Some would walk away after just answering a few questions. Others refused to answer questions about their families background for fear that they might be repatriated back to their homes.

Some new organizations for street children were very sensitive. They would treat the researcher with a lot of suspicion. Some thought that the researcher was a government agent looking for reasons to close up their centres.

Some Church leaders could not honour the appointment dates. This delayed the study a great deal.

The study was also carried out in the months of September, October and November when there were heavy rains. Most children prefer keeping themselves warm in their makeshift houses. Besides the 'part time', street children do not come to the streets when there is a lot of rain. This again delayed the study for about a month.

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CHAPTER II

2. THE PLACE OF A CHILD IN THE OLDEN AND
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Oxford English Dictionary, a child is a young human being below puberty. For most societies, childhood covers the period below fifteen years. Childhood is a universal condition marked by common needs for development. Children are the most valued asset of every society.

Historically, a child was integrated in the society through a family which was regulated by traditions and customs. These traditions and customs prescribed patterns of behaviour for both parents and children. These duties of the children were to obey the parents and to protect them in their old age. This is confirmed by Hastings when he says 'The ancient Greek desired to have children to help him in his old age and to secure that after his death all customary religious rites should be paid¹'.

In the traditional African society, a child belonged to the whole society and the community at large helped in his upbringing. In the ancient Roman societies, a father had powers over life and death over his children. In the Bible, a child was highly valued and was regarded as a gift from God. Hence in these olden

societies, a child was not valued as an individual but as a society's asset.

The Christian concern for the child's life began in the first century when the Church opposed abortion and exposing of unwanted children. Abortion today continues to be a problem evidenced in the debate over the question 'Is it a right for a child liable to severe birth defect to be brought to birth than pregnancy terminated?'. The Catholic Church affirms the right of all conception to end in birth.

In its early days, it is recorded that rural Europe seems to have presented little problems concerning the physical welfare of a child, 'since over-population was prevented by high mortality rates and widespread plagues²'. But with the rise of cities, the child became an economic problem 'his plight being accentuated by eighteenth century industrial revolution. Child labour became the lot of the poor³'. At this time according to records, there was Christian protest. This protest reached its height in the pleas of Maurice and his fellow Protestants in the Christian Socialist Movement in England in the mid nineteenth century. Slowly, laws were enacted, limiting the hours and the kind of work and protecting the safety of children.

Formal education did not affect majority of the people until this century. The early Christians sent their children to pagan schools. The breakup of Roman culture and slow development of Northern Europe found learning presented through monasteries.

Education for a child began in Latin language. 'From the seventh century, preceptive educators sought to bring more understanding of the child into the education⁴'.

Today, issues concerning the welfare of a child have become a global concern. Child codes have been drafted to protect the basic rights of a child which could be summarised as survival, development and protection. Though this is the case, there are situations where a child in the contemporary society has found himself in difficult circumstances like child abuse which is manifested in child labour, child abandonment and others. But for a comprehensive study of a child, leading to a deeper understanding of a child in the contemporary society, this chapter will look at the concept of a child in the traditional African society, in the Bible and in contemporary society from the standpoint of secular and Christian view.

2:2: THE PLACE OF A CHILD IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES

2:2:1 INTRODUCTION

In the African societies, birth of a child was not a single event which could be recorded in a particular day. It is as reflected in Mbiti's words 'a process which begins long before a child is born'⁵. To Mbiti, 'while nature brought the child into the world the society created him into a social and corporate person⁶'. It was the community that protected a child, fed it,

brought it up, educated it and in many other ways, incorporated it into the wider community.

Children continued the lineage and prolonged the lives of their parents by taking care of them in their old age. They 'were seen as the 'buds' of the society and every birth was the arrival of the 'spring' when life shoots out and the community springs¹'. Hence the birth of a child brought joy to the whole society, the many relatives including the living and the dead. 'A child was never exclusively 'my child' but our child'. 'He belonged to the society'.

2:2:2 PREGNANCY

This was the first indication that a new member of the family was on the way. The expectant mother was treated in a special way by neighbours and relatives. Without children marriage could not be sealed. As Mbiti has observed, 'at times marriages were not fully recognised or consummated until the wife had given birth'. Hence pregnancy became the final seal of marriage and a sign of complete integration.

In many African societies, the pregnant woman observed many taboos and regulations. This was because pregnancy makes her ritually unclean and mainly to protect her and her child. One of the taboos concerned sexual intercourse during pregnancy. While in some communities there was complete abstinence

immediately a woman realised that she was pregnant, others abstained later in the pregnancy, a few months before birth.

Another regulation concerned food. Among the Elgeyo Markwet, according to Massam J.A. in his book, The Cliff Dwellers, pregnant mothers were fed on special food. This was buffalo meat, finger millet and milk from selected cows. Also according to Muthiani in his book, Akamba From Within, 'An expectant mother is forbidden from eating fat beans and meat of animals killed with poisoned arrows during the last three months of pregnancy'. She was supposed to eat special kind of food and earth from anthills. This was believed to strengthen the child.

Concerning work, among the Elgeyo Markwet, the mother is relieved off the burden of work two months before birth. Among the Kikuyu and the Kambas, all weapons and iron articles are removed from the house of the expectant mother and the husband is forbidden to carry fire prior to the birth of the child.

In some societies, prayers for the mother and the child are made to God to ensure their safety. The Nandis for example are said to have conducted prayers for the expectant mother.

2:2:3 BIRTH

During birth, elderly women acted as midwives in many African societies. For many African societies, the placenta and the

umbilical cords were symbols of the child's attachment to the mother. They were therefore treated with special treatment. According to J. S. Mbiti, in his book, African Religion and Philosophy, the Kikuyus deposited their placenta in uncultivated field and covered it with grass or grain. This symbolised fertility. It also symbolised that the mother's womb remained fertile and also used this as a silent prayer. The placenta and the umbilical cord also stood for separation of the child from the mother as he begins to belong to the wider circle of the community.

The child then began to be incorporated into the society through rites of passage. Hence, 'whatever methods that were used in the disposal of the umbilical cords and placenta, the disposal indicates that the child had died to the state of pregnancy in the mothers womb and now had risen in a new life of being part of a human society⁹'.

Among the Kikuyu, the midwives ululated five times if it was a boy and four times if it was a girl. Among the Kamba, when a child was born, 'it was the duty of the father to signify the occasion¹⁰'. He also fetched two sugarcanes, one with black bark and the other with grey bark. Although he had to fetch enough for beer, these two were very significant. No sugarcane was to be cut with a knife. The two sugarcanes, black and grey, brought home with their heads uncut were symbols of the birth of a child among the Kamba.

Then followed the rite of purification which was performed for the new born baby. It was supposed to purify any sexual offence performed by either the parent or any other relatives who were present. Two goats were slaughtered and the content of the stomach was mixed with special herbs to make purification medicine. The ceremony was led by the maternal grandparent.

Among the Elgeyo Marakwet, according to J. Massan, in his book Cliff Dwellers, the mother went into seclusion immediately after birth. During the period, she lived on special diet of blood mixed with curds. She was not allowed to drink fresh milk. When she was allowed to leave the house, 'she made beer and prepared food, so that she could call the old women together and celebrate the event¹¹'. After this, she was free to take up her normal duties.

Therefore, the whole occasion of birth was marked with feasting and great rejoicing among relatives and neighbours of the parents concerned. Hence 'in the birth of a child, the whole community is born a new¹²'. The society was renewed and revitalised. Thus, birth and childhood were a religious process. The physical aspect of birth and the ceremonies that accompanied it were regarded with religious feelings and experience.

2:2:4 CHILDHOOD AND RELATED RELIGIOUS RITUALS

When a child was born among the African societies, not only was God brought into the picture but also the living dead. These two

participated fully in the occasion of rejoicing because as well as being the child of the human community, it was their child. Hence for many African communities when a child was young, rituals were performed which were found to be necessary before he became a full member of the community.

Among the Kikuyu, four notably rites of passage were performed in the life of a child. In one of the rites, wristlets of goat skin were put in the hands of a child. With this, a child was considered old enough and parents could resume sex. Around the age of five, another rite is performed by which the child is now entitled to start looking after goats. The rites of the wristlets is said to symbolise the bond between the child and the entire nation. Hence 'the wristlet is the link in the long chain of life, linking the child with both the living and the dead'.¹³

Another rite of passage performed to a Kikuyu child was re-birth or second birth. This took place before a child was initiated. This rite allowed a child to participate fully in the life of the community. The rite took place when the child was between six and ten years. The child was supposed to re-enact birth. If the mother was dead, another woman took her place. The child was put in-between the legs of the mother and both of them were bound with intestines. This ceremony symbolised birth and after this, the child is ready for initiation. It has been observed that, 'unless a child goes through this, he cannot fully participate in the life of the community'¹⁴. He was forbidden to assist in

the burial of his father, to be initiated, to get married, to inherit property and to take part in any ritual.

The other rite of passage performed in the life of a child was initiation. Through initiation which took place at adolescent age, the youths were introduced into adulthood. 'It was here that the young were told all the secrets of life, about sex, incest, and everything else about life in general¹⁵'. It was also a period of awakening to many things as the youth learned to endure hardship, to live with one another and to be full members of the society. The occasion was marked with feasting as it was a very important occasion in the life of a child. Among the Akamba, 'the ceremony of circumcision was marked by a sort of public feasting¹⁶'. A man who did not have a circumcised child could not attend the ceremony. Sacrifices were made to the ancestral spirits to mark the occasion.

Therefore in the African societies, birth and childhood were religious processes in which a child was always in contact with religious activities. Through rites of passage, a child was introduced into the corporate community and became part and parcel of the community.

2:2:5 EDUCATION

In the African societies, relevant education was given to a child throughout his life. This was as Kenyatta has noted that,

'Education began with birth and ended with death¹⁷'. The child passed various stages of age grouping with a system of education defined for every stage of life. The parents took the responsibility of educating their children until the stage of which Kenyatta refers to as 'tribal education'. Also important in the education of children was the extended family members. Grandparents played a very important role in the child formation. The older the people were, the greater the influence they gained over their children and their grandchildren. The responsibility of childraising and education however fell on the whole community.

Education of very young children was done by the mother. This was carried out through lullabies. Through these lullabies, 'it was easy for the children to assimilate the teachings without any strain'.¹⁸ Through these lullabies the history of a people, their traditions and customs were passed from generation to generation.

Songs also served as a medium of education. The song would be taught in a way that, it would amuse the child and at the same time it was educative. Also when a child was able to speak, he learned through answering many questions which were asked gently and naturally to test how much he had learned. In these questions a child was able to learn the traditions and history of the society.

After infancy, the education system took a different shape. The parents, both the mother and the father took equal responsibility in training a child. At this time the child training took the form of games. Children were left free to indulge in any game that pleased them. The boys would play with small wooden spears. They would also do some running and wrestling as they imitated the old people. Girls also imitated what their mothers did like fetching firewood, cooking and grinding grains.

At childhood, the fathers took charge of boys education, while the mother was responsible for the girls education. The boy was taught about farming, different plants, fruits and also anything that concerned agriculture. The boy was also taught about his family, clan and the tribal land and the boundaries were carefully pointed out to him. Gechaga in his fiction book Kariuki na Muthoni, paints a vivid picture of the way the boys learned by observing their fathers, e.g., they would accompany their fathers to the beehive to look for honey where they would carefully observe their fathers extracting honey. They would also join their fathers for hunting expeditions and this way they learnt through observation.

Among the Akamba, 'boys were given more intensive education, because in addition to their social obligation, they were expected to become defenders of their people and warriors¹⁹'. They were also expected to be raiders so that they could increase the societies animal wealth.

Mothers taught girls all things concerning domestic duties. They would prepare them for house keeping, and all things concerning womanhood. In the evening, at times the mother would teach both boys and girls the laws and customs especially those governing moral codes and general rules in the community.

Among the Kikuyu society, there were children's dances and as Kenyatta has observed, 'they were attended by almost all children in the district'. Although these dances were a means of providing physical development in a child, they were also used to test the behaviour patterns of a child in the community. It is said that children were supposed to behave well during these dances and parents of children who misbehaved were heavily criticised.

There was also health education for both boys and girls. In relation to this, 'children were trained not to go to houses where there was smallpox and not to touch clothes of a leaper nor touch dead animals²⁰'.

Riddles were also used in testing or teaching one how to use his knowledge to solve problems. A whole evening could be spent by children telling riddles, competing to find out who either knew the most or the most difficult ones.

X The most intensive education however was gotten through the age groups which formed a social ladder. It is from one social group to another that a child received his education according to the

age group he was in. Among the Kikuyu, when a child was about five years, there was the piercing of ears. Thus a boy passed childhood to boyhood through this rite. The biggest step in the social ladder was initiation where children were admitted into adulthood. They became full members of the society and learned more about their people.

African society was a society with values and norms and children had to be raised in a manner that they fitted in it. Therefore it took the whole community to bring up children so that they were fully incorporated in it.

2:2:6 CHILDLESSNESS

A child in the African society was highly valued. It was considered a great achievement to have a child as this indicated 'a full man and a full woman'²¹. It is also true that failure to bear children was a very unhappy situation especially to a woman. This is indicated in Mbiti's words, 'it was worse than committing genocide'²². Such a woman became the dead end of human life, not only for genealogical line but for herself. When she died, there was nobody of her own immediate blood to remember her. She was simply forgotten. Husbands usually remedied the situation by marrying other wives.

A childless wife bore a scar which nothing could erase. She suffered for this and it was an irreparable humiliation for which

there was no source of comfort in traditional societies. This was because child bearing was a sacred duty that had to be carried out by all in the community and also, a man's wealth depended on how many children he had.

2:3 A CHILD IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

In the modern society, a child is still valued in many ways. Child survival has been a global concern. Children are no longer seen as tools for societies economic growth unlike in the olden days where a large number of children in a household meant wealth. They are no longer seen as property whereby they could be disposed off if need arose, but they are valued for themselves as individual human beings.

Today, just like in the olden societies children have no political power. 'They do not vote and their opinion carries very little weight in government²³'. Also it is true they cannot manage property due to their limited experience in life. Therefore they fully depend on their parents or guardians to act in their best interest and to protect their rights.

In view of this, child codes have been drafted to ensure full enjoyment of human rights by a child as an individual member of the family. In 1954, there was the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of a Child which led to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of a Child in 1959. In 1966, there was the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of a Child. In 1979, there was an UN International Year of the Child. At the same time the Organization of African Unity (OAU) stressed on the need to take relevant measures to foster, promote and protect the socio-economic and cultural welfare of the African child. In 1989 the UN put out a draft convention on the rights of a child. In 1989, the African Heads of States declared the 1990's the 'African Decade for Child Survival, Protection and Development'. To give practical value and meaning, the OAU summit of July 1990 adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. These child codes provide an internationally accepted moral and legal framework on the rights of a child. This ensures that a child is fully protected.

In the modern societies there is improved health services. Child survival has become a global concern and hence children's existence is not so much under threat like in the olden societies. According to UNICEF Report (1989) 'actions for children in 1980's have saved the lives of children under five, reduced the annual child death toll by approximately two and a half million and protected the health of even a larger number of the world's young children²⁴'. Preventable childhood diseases such as measles, polio, tetanus, tuberculosis, whooping cough, diphtheria, diarrhoea, pneumonia and other acute respiratory diseases which were responsible for the death of millions of children have now been brought under control. Most parents are also empowered with nutritional needs of their children and this has improved the quality of life of children today.

Education has also improved the life of a child today. Universal access to basic education including completion of primary school education has been the main goal of most governments in the world. According to statistics 'In 1996 the percentage of six to eleven year old children in primary school in Africa was approximately 65%²⁵'. Onyango also observes that 'in Kenya primary school enrolment is also very encouraging with some parts of the country enrolling 90% of school age children in Standard One²⁶'. Together with education, vocational training and preparation of the employment are the best hope for a child's future.

However, although this is the trend of issues affecting a child today, millions of children live under specially difficult circumstances; as orphans, street children, refugees or displaced persons, victims of war and natural and manmade disasters, child workers and other forms of child abuse.

2:3:1 CHILD ABUSE

According to Encyclopedia America, 'child abuse is physical or emotional harm caused by parents or guardians²⁷'. Others have defined child abuse as denying children their basic rights to decent human life, which includes food, shelter and others. Child abuse is a universal phenomena and hence Onyango says 'It is wide spread and global and may only differ in forms²⁸'.

It has been noted that "there are 4 million children who are physically or sexually abused or economically exploited by the families who are supposed to provide them with security and love²⁹". Also in a large number of cases, children are denied their rights by forces beyond family's control. These are war, natural disaster like drought, unemployment and parents lack of education. Some governments are also found to have recruited children to fight in wars. The UNICEF Report (1989) notes that, "national and international economic forces are still allowed to inflict permanent mental and physical damage on young children³⁰".

Child abuse is also manifested in form of child labour. According to Encyclopedia America, child labour is 'work performed by children that either endangers their health or safety, interferes or prevents their education or keeps them from play and other activities important to their development³¹'. Most children work because their families are poor and the family's survival is at stake. Others work because there is little else to do as their parents are unable to keep them in school.

Child labour is a social evil that should be abolished. In traditional African societies children worked. However the child was not physically separated from the care of the families or from their occupation. Children were also fully protected and their labour was a form of vocational training for the economic

roles they were to assume as adults. They were not exploited like the situation of child labour today.

Another form of child abuse is abandonment. Children with deformations or disabilities are often left in hospital beds or thrown away. Mothers who are economically unable to take care of their children also abandon them. There are cases when mothers are imprisoned for offenses Onyango refers to as 'geared to survival'³², and their children are abandoned. School girls also abandon their children due to shame and fear.

There are also cases of battered children. This is a situation where a child receives serious physical assaults from a parent or a guardian. In Kenya, it is reported that 'the first report of battered baby syndrome was made by Bwibo, in 1972 when eight cases were reported, two of whom died'³³. Those who batter children are said to have a social characteristic such as living in poor conditions, stressful circumstances or they may have been subjected to abnormal upbringing. It has been estimated that 'In 1966, 10,000 - 15,000 in U.S.A. children were severely injured by non accidental means. Approximately 5% of them died, 23-35% permanently injured'³⁴. Traditionally, caning was accepted as a way of instilling discipline to a child, but it was never to the extent of injuring a child. Besides, the extended family ensured that a child was not maltreated by anybody even if it was his parents.

Children are also subjected to sexual harassment ranging from molestation and incest. Children who are sexually abused according to Onyango 'are under the age of ten years with the majority (72%) being females³⁵'. However, male children are not also spared from sexual abuse and most of them are normally victims of homosexuals. The result of sexual abuse is a change in behaviour in most children. They also become depressed and some even get nightmares.

Child abuse also takes the form of emotional abuse. This occurs when a child is repeatedly terrorized, by being set up as a scapegoat or by rejection. Such children normally feel rejected and lonely and this may lead to serious and lasting effects on the child's personality.

Children are also neglected in many parts of the world. This is a situation where the child is not provided with the basic needs of life such as food, clothes and shelter. Child neglect is also manifested by under-feeding which leads to underweight and in extreme cases children are starved to death. Factors that may lead to this is premarital pregnancies, heavy drinking, divorce and others. A Report on Child Welfare in Kenya (1961) cited the 'increasing lack of understanding by parents on the needs of the children, poverty and overcrowding as the causes of child neglect³⁶'.

In Africa child abuse is related to the socio-economic changes that are coming along with modernization. Thus Onyango laments

that 'the pace of change in Africa has been extremely fast and has not spared the African family³⁷'. In the urban areas today, the family has been reduced to nuclear family and this is seriously limited as it tends to depend entirely on the institution of marriage. When marriage fails the main sufferers are the children and thus Onyango comments that, 'Africans were wise to entrust the welfare of their children not only to parents and relatives but to the entire society³⁸'. This ensured that children were protected from any kind of maltreatment.

Therefore although a child today has been protected from preventable diseases and thus reducing infant mortality, and people have been sensitised on nutritional needs of a child, millions of children are still suffering today. The rate of change has been too rapid and many people are not able to keep pace with it. As a result the children have been left to suffer as street children; in the sex industry, abandonments and all sorts of child abuse. To many people today a child is an economic burden and a liability which can be done away with any time. The present situation of a child demonstrates lack of child care. 'It also demonstrates the paradox of modern development compared to traditional ways of life where a child was valued as the greatest asset of a nation requiring everybody to take care of³⁹'. Child abuse then was not there as the extended family acted as a check and balance of this. They could never allow a child to be maltreated.

2:3:2 RIGHTS OF A CHILD .

Children are also bearers of human rights. It has been argued that 'if children are human beings then they are bearers of human rights⁴⁰'. It is also noted that the concept of child's rights is fairly recent in the legal theory.

According to Catholic Encyclopedia, a child has a right to life. This is the most essential, to the Catholic teaching. The child has a right to spiritual direction for he is destined to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It is noted that religion is an integrating principle helping the child to develop sense of God, sense of mission and sense of responsibility and a sense of belonging. A report by UNICEF, Rights of a Child: a Kenyan Perspective, notes that Declaration of the Rights of a Child by UN states that:

"Every child had a right to opportunities, to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially; to a name and nationality, to health and social security, to love and understanding under the care of parents".

A child has a right to protection against cruelty, exploitation and discrimination in every form.

The current UN Draft Convention (1988) on the rights of a child reflects the latest thinking on the subject. It protects such rights of a child such as freedom of expression, freedom of thought and conscious and religion, freedom of association and protection of privacy.

This Draft Convention was an outcome of ten years of consultation involving Government, UN agencies, and some fifty NGOs. The UNICEF Report, Rights of a Child: A Kenyan Perspective, concludes that:

"This document brought together in one comprehensive code, the legal benefits and stipulations concerning children previously scattered through scores of other international agreements".

It applies to all persons below the age of 18 except where children attain their majority at an early age according to their national law.

The rights enshrined in the convention apply equally to all children without regard to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions; national, ethnic, disability, birth or other status.

The provisions of the convention apply to three main areas of children's rights; survival; development and protection. Survival is the inherent right to life. Therefore the draft convention says that 'States must ensure to the maximum possible, the survival and development of the child'. The convention recognises the right of access to health care services such as immunization and oral dehydration therapy, access to adequate standards of living including food, clean water and a place to live. In addition a child has a right to a name and nationality.

In development, a child should be allowed to develop his or her own potential. The convention also contains a child's right to

education, rest and leisure, freedom of expression and information and freedom of thought and conscience. It stipulates that parents shall give due weight to the view of the children in accordance with their age and maturity.

Many of the convention provision are designed to provide protection for children in wider range of circumstances. This could be children in difficult circumstances like mental or physical disability, the refugees or orphans. It also recognises that in some cases children need to be protected from their own parents or in situations where parents may be unable to take care of them.

The convention also covers economic, sexual and other forms of child exploitation and requires that appropriate measures be taken to protect them. In addition, it sets out the rights of children in times of armed conflicts and children who are in trouble with the law.

2:3:3 A CHILD IN THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Christian attitude regarding a child takes its form from the words of Jesus 'let the children come to me.... for such belongs to the Kingdom of God' (Mk 10:14). In the epistles children are commanded to obey and honour their parents. Parents are also commanded not to provoke their children, (Col 3:21) but to bring them up in the discipline and instructions of the Lord.

According to Christians this reference supports the basic concern of a child; life, his welfare, his spiritual and general nurture.

According to the New Catholic Encyclopedia, it is the right and duty of the parent to educate their children. This emanates from the institution of marriage directly from God. The parents are supposed to teach under the guidance of the Church which is the appointed mother and teacher of men. They are supposed to mould lasting personality in children and to help in developing children's habit of piety and prayers until the Church begins to teach directly when the child reaches age of reason. According to Vatican II resolutions 'those who give life to children must also look after their bodily and mental development⁴¹'. It has also noted that sound sex education and protection from harmful entertainment and companionship are also a parental responsibility.

Christians are concerned with child rearing. The Christian child is baptised under the new covenant thereby belonging to Christ. The obligation is placed upon those who present him to bring him up as a Christian. They should teach him obedience, respect for adults honour towards nature and reverence for God.

The Christians also teach the importance of a family institution to a child. The family is given great weight in the Scripture for it is rooted in creation. According to Christian teaching, children should be loved because they are born in a family and not because they have certain characteristics.

It is also noted that the Christian community should be concerned with the increasing physical mistreatment of children by parents or guardians. These parents or guardians themselves could be under emotional stress, mental cruelty or emotional deprivation. According to the Dictionary of Christian Ethics, 'these deprivations point to an area which Christian action is needed⁴²'.

Therefore, the Christian attitude towards a child is guided by the Bible. To Christians, a child needs nurture by parents who love him, who give him satisfying childhood and who help him grow into maturity. He also needs legal protection to safeguard life and health. The care which God treats mankind with is the basis of Christian attitude towards the needs of a child. Child raising in the Christian perspective is an essentially moral act involving the formation of character appropriate to Christian life and presenting basic hopes in God's care for God's people in the future.

2.4. THE PLACE OF A CHILD IN BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW

2:4:1 GENERAL

In the biblical world view, like in African societies, a child was highly valued. According to the Dictionary of the Bible 'The Hebrew language has a rich variety of words adapted to the different stages by which the infancy passes into manhood and

womanhood⁴³'. This wealth of description indicates the importance of what is being described - a child.

Children were viewed as gifts of God and token of divine favour. Hastings says that 'No word in the Bible contains so much of God's goodness and human happiness as is found wrapped up in the word child⁴⁴'. In the Bible there are expressions of childhood features such as simplicity, tenderness of a child's life, helplessness of a child, etc. The beauty of a child's humble simplicity is acknowledged by the psalmist who likens his own soul to a weaned child with its mother (Ps.13:2).

In the Old Testament we have the doctrine of men as children of God. This is portrayed by God's providential dealings with his people.... Israelites. This is also manifested by God's protection and love. Hosea declared that 'God loved Israelites and called his son out of Egypt (Hos.11).' (Ex.4:22) In the New Testament, the self revelation of Jesus Christ as well as in his teachings, the characteristic name of God is 'Father'. Paul also talked of 'Children of God'. 'The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God'. (Rom 8:16). It is as children of God that his converts have a moral mission to the world. (Phil.2:15).

Hence the word 'child' in the Bible expresses humility, tenderness, and simplicity. It is also an expression of God's love, providence, authority and protection to His people. This usage of the word 'child' to denote love, simplicity, humility,

attests to the fact that children were highly valued in the biblical world view.

2:4:2 BIRTH AND RITUALS RELATED TO CHILD BIRTH

The mystery of birth and procreation is expressed in the Bible by the word 'Knowing'. 'And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain (Gen 4)'. This is the first statement in the Bible regarding conception and birth. However, a little earlier God had laid out conditions for birth. "I will greatly increase thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shall bring forth children", (Gen.3:16).

According to Exodus (Ex. 1:15) especially trained women assisted in childbirth which took place on a birth stool. On these stools the midwife placed the child in order to check out if it was a boy or a girl. There were cases of dangerous and difficult births as Hastings has noted. In some of these cases, the result was fatal to the mother. This was the case with Phincaeus wife who died giving birth to a son. (1 Sam. 4:19).

While in the womb children were believed to be fully conscious. 'Jacob and Esau 'struggled within her' (Gen.25:22)'. "And when Taman was delivered of twins, the children came out not like Jacob holding the heel of Esau in his hands, but one put out his hand first and then drew it back and then the brother came first". (Gen.38).

The birth of a child made the mother unclean for seven days in the first place. Then if it was a son she was unclean for thirty three days and if it was a daughter for sixty six days. At the end of the period purification took place and a woman brought an offering to the temple. During the period of uncleanness abstentions are only from holy things and sanctuary. According to New Catholic Commentary on 'Holy Scripture, the number thirty three had no other meaning but that of a remainder after subtracting seven from forty⁴⁵. Seven and forty are two symbolic numbers indicating two stages in the period of recovery from childbirth.

When a female child was born, the period of seven and forty are doubled and hence the mother remains unclean for sixty six days. It is suggested that the reason why the mother of a female child is unclean for a longer period was the belief that the birth of a girl was physiologically more dangerous for her mother and therefore required a longer period for recovery.

At the end of the purification period, the mother had to bring a lamb in its first year, for holocaust, a pigeon or a turtle dove or two pigeons, one for the holocaust and the other for the offering. This was in accordance with the levitical law which had religious significance. There were some offerings that were set for the poor women and according to the records, Virgin Mary is said to have offered offering allowed to the poor women (Lk. 2:24). The birth of a child was found to be a religious event because God was seen to be the source of life and therefore

holocaust was accordingly offered to Him in recognition of origin of a new life from him.

However, although the mother becomes unclean after the birth of a child, none of the uncleanness attaches to the baby. Also, the sin offering does not mean that child birth or conjugal intercourse were considered morally wrong or sinful. The only thing is that the mother becomes ceremoniously unclean and that is why an atonement had to be made by a sin offering.

The first born, that which opens the womb had to be consecrated to God; be it human or animal (Lk. 2:23). Also Hastings notes that 'the first born enjoyed special privileges and in the patriarchal ethics had a right of leadership⁴⁶'. It is also probable that the first born had preference inheritance above all the other members of the family. In the story of Jacob (Gen.49) Reuben is deprived of privileges of double portion, which according to Mosaic law was given to the first-born, and had been given to Joseph.

The first-borns were also at times invested with sacramental rights but later on his place was taken by the Levites. The male first born was originally the family priest. The dedication like in the case of Samuel was evidently to the service of the temple.

2.4.3 NAMING

The period of lactation as mentioned in the book of Second Maccabees (II Mc 7:27) was three years. After this period, the child was weaned and the occasion was marked by some public festivities (Gn 21:8, Ex 2:9). From the time of Abraham onwards the male child was circumcised on the eighth day. Hastings however says that 'It is not clear from the Biblical account whether names were given on this occasion'. Names given to children expressed some aspects of God's relation to the father or to the entire family groups at times (Gen 4:1, 25:28). In many occasions names were settled before the birth of a child and carried a symbolic meaning. On other occasions, names had commemorative character being connected with events at birth e.g. Isaac (Gen 21:6) Immanuel (Is 7:14) which meant God be with us.

2.:4:4 VALUE SET ON POSSESSION OF CHILDREN

Throughout the Bible, there are expressions of importance and happiness assigned to possession of children. Likewise there was intense sorrow and disappointment of childless parents. Children were regarded as God's gift (Gen 4:33); pledges of God's favour, the heritage of the Lord (Ps 127:3).

It followed naturally that barrenness was looked upon as reproach, i.e., punishment inflicted by God and involving for the woman disgrace by her more fortunate maid Hager (Gen 16:4).

Racheal in envy of Leah cried 'Give me a child or I will die (Gen 30)'. Elizabeth laughed when the Lord took away her reproach among men (Lk 1:25). 'He gives the barren women a home, making her the joyous mother of a child' (Ps 113:9) cried the psalmist.

In the Bible there are also expressions of parental affections and material advantages of possessing a child. A man who was a father especially of sons was a rich man. His position was dignified and influential. His possessions were secured to his family and his name perpetuated. The covenant community was to have abundance of children as a sign of God's favour (Gen 16:10). They also had been commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. (Gen 1:28). Throughout the Bible this was a desired blessing - multiplying and filling the earth.

The position of a child however was one of complete subordination to the parents. Children were supposed to be obedient to their parents (Ex 20:12, Lv 19:3). Anyone striking or cursing his father or mother was to be put to death. Anyone who was to be disrespectful to the parents was accursed (Dt. 27:16). The outcome of the dependence of children upon their parents and of their subordination to them was an intensely strong sense of closeness of the family bond. A son who could bring himself to defy his father and break away from his home was indeed no longer worthy to be called a son.

On the other hand it was the task of the parents to teach the children diligently in the ways of the Lord and the traditions of His people through which these ways were known. Hence parental training is highly praised in the book of proverbs. Children were supposed to follow the footsteps of their parents. The word 'child' was also used to convey the idea of love, trust and obedience.

2:4:5 CHILD SACRIFICE

Child sacrifice was a common practice done by nations living in Palestine. This was usually done on the first born male, human or animal. The practice however is said to have been condemned by the Jewish Law. According to Peaks Bible Commentary 'The extraordinary instances of Abraham (Gen 22) do not imply a father had powers of life and death over his children⁴⁷'. Although this practice maybe reflected by Abrahams attempt to sacrifice his son, in later times child sacrifice was abhorred as a pagan rite (Lv. 18:21) and parental training was highly praised.

Since the practice of child sacrifice was condemned by the Jews the first borns took the role of Levities and hence were redeemed after thirty days following birth. The succession of the high priest went to the first born. Therefore instead of child sacrifice, parental training including religious nurture was emphasized. However, there were incidences when children were victims of torture. When Herod realised that a king had been born in his land, he ordered the killing of all male children in

Israel with the hope that the king would perish in the massacre (Matt 2:16). When Jews were in Egypt it is recorded that the King of Egypt ordered the midwives to kill all the male children born of the Israelite women. This was due to the fear that they would increase in number and take over their land. Hence as a result the Hebrew male children were killed immediately after birth (Ex. 1:15).

2:4:6 JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

Jesus illustrated the goodness of childhood in his own life as a child. He manifested the tenderness of his affection for children by conferring blessings upon them in every stage of development as he was occasionally brought into contact with them. He asserted for children and recognised this in his kingdom and dealt faithfully and lovingly with each age as it presented itself to him in the course of his work.

Jesus chose those conditions of childhood as a type of fundamental character of the recipient of the Kingdom of God. He developed the relation of childhood as the most vivid earthly image of the relationship of God's people to him.

Mothers brought their babies to him for benediction and when they did so, Hastings says that 'He was not content until he had taken them into his hands (Mk 10:16). His allusions to children in his teachings reflected the closeness of his observations to

them. Jesus talked about the delights of the mother and her baby obliterating even the pangs of birth.

A number of his miracles worked for the benefits of the young. The noble man's son at Capernaum who was healed by Jesus (Jn 4:46-54) was a child. The possessed boy (Matt 17:18, Lk 9:42) whom Jesus healed as he came down Mount of Transfiguration and whose affliction had dated from the earliest infancy was a little child. Jairus, little girl also an only one who Jesus raised from the dead was also a child. The only son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7:11-18) is addressed to as a young man. All these miracles manifest situations when Jesus showed compassion to the growing up children.

Finally, Jesus on that great day on the shores of Genesaret, appeared to his disciples and gave them his last exhortations. He commanded them not to merely feed the sheep but also feed the lambs.

Later on in the early church, 'children were to be held in tender regard as Jesus himself had set the example⁴⁸'. Paul while commanding children to obey their parents he commanded that the fathers should not provoke them to wrath but rear them in the nature and admonitions of the Lord. As Christianity spread in the early days, it fought the pagan practice of infanticide and forbade destruction of young life by all means, e.g. abortion.

Therefore in the Bible children constituted a woman's purpose of life. A barren woman was looked at with disdain by her fellow women and the society (Gen 16:4). Children were also seen as manifestations of God's favour and blessings, while grandchildren were the crown of old age (Sam 128:3). Children were also seen as expressions of God's relationship to his people. As a result they were recipients of good gifts. It was the duty of the parents and guardians to teach children the way of God and the traditions of their people through which God was manifested to the people.

Therefore in both the Bible and African tradition, a child evoked the best from the parents and the guardian. They were a manifestation of God's love, blessings, compassion and goodness. As a result they were highly valued.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Children ought to be introduced gradually to the physical, religious, social, economic and spiritual life of the community and particularly to the life of the children's families. Love, authority and discipline ought to be the virtues that provide the atmosphere for care and nurturing the psycho-social and spiritual development of a child.

Traditionally it was the role of the parents to look after the physical development of a child. This was viewed as a sacred trust which called for sacrifices. While the children owed their

obedience, respect, gratitude and love to their parents, they also grew up with full awareness of the presence of a God who was a provider of all things and hence they developed profound respect for him. In both biblical and African tradition a child evoked the best from the parents and guardians. They evoked love, compassion, kindness, generosity, goodness, truth and beauty from the communities where they found their full identify. There are no records of child abuse in Biblical or African traditions.

Today's situation of a child especially the situation of street children paints a dull picture of the societies concern for the child. The question raised is why has the contemporary society failed its children? This is going to be the main concern of the next chapter on the phenomena of street children.

2.6

NOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

3. THE PHENOMENA OF STREET CHILDREN

3:1 THE INTRODUCTION

The term 'street children' describes all those children who live in the streets permanently. It also covers categories of children who spend most of their time in the streets but go home in the evening. In these two categories, there are some who are delinquent and who are in search of freedom and there are some who have been pushed there by poverty.

So little is understood about these street children. For many people the word street children evokes images of care free children, pick pockets, dirty children and children who should not be allowed to live. It has been noted that in some countries, like Brazil, these children are being executed to stop them from being public nuisance.

Various terminologies are used to describe this phenomena. Agnelli records that in Naples, they are referred to as 'Scugnizzo' derived from the word for spinning top which is always on the move, as they are always on the move. In Peru the term 'Pajaro Frutero' 'fruit bird' is used. This term is derived from the way street children look out for police in the market places. In Columbia, the term 'gamin' (kid) is used. It is borrowed from French and has a negative connotation. The same

name appears in Rwanda in the form of Saligoman (Nasty Kid). In Zaire, street children are 'Moineux' (Sparrows). In Cameroon 'Poussin' (chicks) is used and also 'Mosustigues' (mosquitoes) by police. In Kenya they are known as 'Parking boys' because of directing motorists into empty parking places for a small fee. They are also referred to as 'Chokoras' which is derived from the way they look for food from dustbins. It also carries a very negative connotation.

This chapter will try to reflect on street children as a global problem; will also try to examine the historical background of the phenomena of street children. It will assess the factors behind the emergence of the phenomena and finally it will discuss the plight of street children.

3.2 A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON THE PHENOMENA OF STREET CHILDREN

Agnelli traces the history of street children in the 12th century. She notes that, 'in the middle ages, after the failure of the children crusade in the year 1212 bands of youngsters are said to have roamed the countryside. These youngsters are said to have been living in pillage. The older cared for the younger before they were sold to slavery in Southern France¹'. Also according to records in the early days of Russian revolution and in conditions of famine and civil wars, children and youth were said to be a common sight surviving by begging and theft. They

were estimated to number between six and ten million. Today's situation however is as a result of the 19th Century industrial revolution.

✓ In Kenya the genesis of the phenomena of street children can be traced in the colonial periods and the events that followed the European settlement in Kenya. These events however do not point to the emergence of street children but the whole history of street children involves a complex of issues and events which more or less overlap.

When the Europeans came to Kenya, they found the land especially in Central Province suitable for farming. This is as shown by words of Sorrenson who says that 'the highlands of Kenya had temperate climate like that of South Africa and provided a scope for high veld pastoralism²'.

European settlers were invited to come and take up the land. It is said that 'applications poured in Europe, Australia, South Africa and America by every mail and also by cable'. Every steamer that came according to records brought its share of intending settlers and the result was that some thousands of square miles of country lying to the North of the railway were alienated. The land had also been proposed to be a national home for the Jewish race that was scattered all over the world, an offer that was turned down. However, there were some Europeans who had felt that there was not much land for European settlement. This was the view of Hobley who felt that, 'there

was not much room for European settlement, certainly not in Kikuyu which is a small country, thickly populated³'.

Thousands of square miles of Kikuyu land were taken away. Sorrenson reports that between 1903 and 1906, approximately 60,000 acres of Kikuyu territory in Kiambu, Limuru district were alienated to the settlers'. Furedi also records that by '1948 40% of the population in the Kiambu district was without land and by 1953 almost 50% of the population of the Kikuyu reserves was landless⁴'. With the crownland policy of 1917, all Africans became tenants of the land at the will of the crown. Hence Africans no longer had any legal rights to the land. According to records 'by 1948 thousands of people migrated into the bigger towns like Nairobi in search of unskilled labour'. Some got jobs as house servants. Most affected were the Kikuyus as it has been explained by these words of Ross; 'Next to the Kamba and Maasai tribes who were cleared off their land, no tribe in Kenya has had its old territory more seriously invaded than were the Kikuyus⁵'.

x It can be argued that the problems sparked off by landlessness and hence pushing many to the urban centres could have rendered many children vagrant as their parents were unable to support them adequately. This fact is verified by a report made in 1961 by Child Welfare Society of Kenya. The report noted that "there were about 1500 African children between 15 and 20 years found without any homes, trying to live by such means as illegal hawking, selling stolen scrap metal, or hiring out hand carts but

Although the squatters had carried out the traditional rites of passage and their other rituals like circumcision with them, these were badly interfered with. In fact Kanogo argues that 'Kikuyu traditions began to die away with extinction of goats and cattle because the traditions necessitated slaughtering of livestock¹⁰'.

As a result of reduction of livestock, it can be argued that children were no longer fully assimilated into the community as the rites of passage which tied them to the society were no longer there. They therefore could wander freely looking for labour. This fact is supported by a child welfare report 1961. While trying to explain the presence of a large number of homeless boys in big towns, the report noted that 'the breakdown of tribal discipline which has resulted to traditional training being abandoned¹¹' was a major cause of this phenomena of vagrant children. The report further says that, with breakdown of traditional discipline, boys of warrior age had been released into an environment which provided few restrictions over their conduct. They were therefore free to roam around unlike in the olden days where they were fully assimilated into the society and there were clearly defined roles each of them performed daily, like looking after the animals.

The emergence of street children can also be traced at the time of the Mau Mau uprising of 1952-1956. This period is described as one of the hardest periods experienced by the squatters. It has been noted that during this time 'raids in rural and urban

areas continued throughout 1952 often involving screening of up to 3000 Africans at a time and subsequent detainment of any offenders and people without proper documents¹². There were cases where both parents were detained and children left on their own. This was the case of Wanjau Gakara whom in his book, Mwandiki Wa Mau Mau Ithamirio-ini, dedicates it to his children whom he says were left on their own after he was detained together with his wife.

Maina notes that "during this struggle men were killed for 'sport' just as in the same way a hunter would go out to shoot wild game in the forest¹³". Campel also acknowledges that men died in large numbers at this time. 'Of all the families who come to these villages only a small number includes a husband and a founder. With an estimated 40,000 men in detention camps, 8,000 are known to have been killed while fighting with the gangs, further 2,000 loyalist murdered by Mau Mau¹⁴'.

At the same period of Mau Mau, it is recorded that settlers had become very suspicious of the squatters as cases of squatters assaulting the settlers increased. As a result squatters were repatriated to the reserve. In all, about 100,000 Kikuyus were repatriated to the reserve according to Kanogo in her book, Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-1963. These reserves could barely support their own indigenous population let alone the arrivals from the Rift Valley. This repatriation made a bad situation desperate. Again there was a mass movement to the urban areas especially Nairobi. This led to overcrowding in the

urban centres as it is shown by these words of McVicar, 'During 1953 there was overcrowding in Nairobi as a result of immigration from the reserve areas and destruction of several squatter villages¹⁵'. It has also been noted that 'at the same period, thousands of Kikuyu women and children flocked into Nairobi, some because of drought and crop failure, others because of increased Mau Mau activities¹⁶'. Reports have it that at this time children were displaced, abandoned and thus rendered homeless due to hardships experienced at this time.

The Child Welfare Report - 1958 says that 'The Kenya Child Welfare Society was formed in 1954 and established places of safety where boys and girls suffering from the effects of the Mau Mau were cared for and either returned to their homes or placed in mission'. This report verifies that children were actually rendered homeless. A report by Child Welfare Society - 1961 also verifies this fact. It states that the 'presence of large numbers of vagrant children in Nairobi was as a result of disruption of family life in Central Province due to Mau Mau rebellion¹⁷'.

+The report also mentions overcrowding and poverty as other factors behind emergence of vagrant children. This could have been as a result of mass Exodus of Kikuyus from the reserves after they were repatriated from the Rift Valley. McVicar observes that 'by 1953, overcrowding in Nairobi had reached fantastic proportion'.¹⁸ At the same time he has noted that thousands of Kikuyus were thrown out of work by implementation

of various pass laws. This again aggravated the situation. All these hardships generated a generation of children who had to fend for themselves and thus the genesis of street children.

The villagization policy designed by the colonial government to act as a machinery to contain the Mau Mau rebellion also was one factor behind the emergence of homeless children. This policy according to records involved collecting all the Kikuyu families in the reserves into villages which were known as 'Native' reserves and were guarded by the loyalist homeguards. Most of the crops were destroyed to cut off those in the forest from any access to food. Banana plantations were cut down, and the granaries burnt. To the Kikuyu people villagisation meant upheaval, disruption and compulsory abandoning of their old customs for a life of considerable restriction, involving a degree of regimentation which was entirely foreign to them. One writer Campel compared the villagization process 'to the dreaded Nazi concentration camps¹⁹'.

There was a lot of suffering in these villages. There were children according to Campel 'who wandered from one family to the other and had no home of their own or any security of existence other than the pickings they could get from the nearest of kins²⁰'. Campel also records that there were those children who would 'stay inside the huts all day because they had no clothes²¹'. Others are said to have spent their day wandering in the villages because there was "no one to send them to school

and even if they had mothers, these in most cases got out to work and did not come back until the evening²²".

The kind of suffering children went through during this time of villagisation policy is further brought to light by Campel. She records that in some villages, the inhabitants had formed a children's welfare committee and contributed towards a soup kitchen for the children. At times they would be given free milk. There were those children who depended wholly on this kind of feeding as is expressed by Campel, "it is known that there are children who have no other regular source of food other than this²³". There are also mentions of displaced children at this time of villagisation and emergency. A report by Child Welfare Society, 1958, talks of 'displaced children inherited by Child Welfare Society from Save the Children Fund as a result of emergency²⁴'.

During the Mau Mau struggle, women took an active role. While some supplied food and necessary information there were others who opted to go to the forest and fight. Although as Kanogo has noted, *wives and mothers of young children were not allowed to go to the forest to fight*, there were some who went in order to escape harassment by the home guards and to avoid being arrested for previous Mau Mau activities. It is probable that some children were abandoned. As noted earlier there were cases where both parents were detained and homes burnt rendering children homeless.

There was also an increase of widowed women or mothers whose husbands had either been detained or were fighting in the forest. With all these hardships at that time, it would be correct to say that it was hard for these mothers to support their children adequately which could have acted as a pushing force, making children to seek employment. Others would just wander away as there would be no one at home to care for them because their mothers would work all day. A report by Child Welfare Society of Kenya in 1958, mentions a situation where many African children had found refuge at Quarry Road.

Lack of adequate education during the colonial time induced many children to take to the streets. Without formal education it meant that Africans could only work in the informal sector where they provided unskilled labour. This could not give them enough and many of them lived in appalling conditions. Colonial government built first class schools for their children but provided few for the Africans. Sorrenson reports that 'the settlers wanted the Africans to have practical education which meant teaching them skills which would be useful on the farms²⁵'. He further notes that they tended to favour the Catholic Mission which did not circulate the New Testament with seditious doctrine or equality. The intention was to create ready labour in the farms.

Girls who had undergone the customary ritual of circumcision were banned from attending the mission schools. "Only a few of those who secured places in schools were allowed to go beyond the

fourth year of primary school²⁶". Majority were thrown out of school before they knew how to read and write to provide cheap and unskilled labour in European homes, farms and plantations.

Without skills and adequate education, Africans found themselves in very poor conditions. Many parents could barely support their children even after providing unskilled labour in European homes and farms and this again pushed thousands of children to the streets. A report of Child Welfare of Kenya, 1961, saw poverty as one major cause of vagrant children in urban areas.

Even after independence, the problem of poverty and landlessness still lingered on. The dream Africans had after independence that they would simply occupy the settlers land was quashed when a land purchasing programme was set up. Land was being sold to willing buyers (Africans) by willing settlers. The freedom fighters did not expect the government to subscribe to this land purchasing programme, and so when they did, they felt betrayed in connection with this. It is reported that for the freedom fighters who had given everything they had for fighting in the forest, or wasting away in detention camps, this was a great betrayal. Although the independent Kenya Government introduced cheaper schemes for settling landless people, the joint problem of poverty and landlessness still lingered on. For the landless the crowded shanty areas in the urban centres continued to be their permanent houses. These shanty houses which are often crowded have continued to be the source of street children.

To verify this fact, most of the children interviewed (96%) came from the slums of Nairobi. Majority seventy nine (79%) were from the Kikuyu ethnic society, sixty per cent (60%) of them were born in Nairobi and they know no other home other than the slums. Their grandmothers were there and their mothers were also born there. Some of them even claim that their grandmothers were born in these slums. All these problems were triggered off by the colonial policy of land alienation which rendered many Africans landless, a situation that continued even after independence.

Land has continued to be a problem in Kenya, which is reflected by the current grabbing of land by the rich. Land that has been set aside for public utility is today being taken by private developers who in most cases put up houses which the poor cannot afford. Although the problem of street children may have been a problem of colonial land policy, it has been accentuated by poor government policies, and other social and economic problems as reflected in Section 3.4 of this Chapter.

In the early seventies the reality of street children in Kenya was brought into light by Father Grol who is the founder of Undugu Society of Kenya. He is a Dutch Catholic Father who was posted to Nairobi in 1972. He was attracted by a large number of street boys who are commonly referred to as 'parking boys' on account of their function of directing motorists to empty spaces for parking. The number has continued to swell up the urban streets and it is approaching an alarming level with estimates showing that Nairobi alone has over one hundred thousand.

Therefore the phenomena of street children in Kenya is not new. While history shows that it was a creation of colonial land policy, it can be argued that the problem was not properly addressed in independent Kenya.

3.3. STREET CHILDREN AS A GLOBAL PROBLEM

X The phenomena of street children is global problem. It is estimated that there are 30 million street children world wide with the highest concentration in Latin America where Agnelli says 'they are a traditional sight'.

In Latin America, the town of Sao Paulo, Brazil, statistics have it that there are 500,000 abandoned children; four fifths of the prison population of Sao Paulo is composed of former street children. In Venezuela, over five million children are between ages 0-6 years. Of these, only 600,000 are taken care of making all the rest potential street children.

X In Africa street children is a recent phenomena. However their number is increasing day by day due to rapid urbanization and armed violence. In Sahel where drought, famine and violence have had an overwhelming impact on the social structure of the people, street children are on the increase. Khartoum now has many street children. In Kenya the number is increasing steadily. India has a very large population and given its economic base and rapid urbanization the presence of street children is inevitable

and the number is still on the increase. Reports have it that 'in Calcutta it is estimated that there are over 300,000 people whose families live permanently in the streets²⁷'.

In the industrial countries, however the problem is not as serious as the third world countries. 'Majority of street children are victims of inner moral decay, chronic unemployment and extraordinary high divorce rate²⁸'. In the European cities, there are known cases of thousands of gypsy children sold into virtual slavery, exploited by gangsters as professional beggars.

Therefore the phenomena of street children is neither limited to the poorest nor the richest of the countries, but the problem is more serious in the developing countries.

3.4 FACTORS BEHIND THE EMERGENCE OF THE PHENOMENA OF STREET CHILDREN

* The factors behind street life are as complex as street life itself. These factors are very hard to analyze as many children have found themselves in the same circumstances and yet have not taken to the streets. Many people ask, why these children and not the others with the same problems. Others argue that, if poverty is a definite pushing force that commits children to the street, then so many of them would be there. The proponents of these arguments cite delinquents as the pushing force behind the flight of children to the streets. However, it is not until one

gets a clear picture of the magnitude and scale of suffering experienced by each household in the low income settlement areas (slums) that one would appreciate and understand why some are in the streets and not others.

To explain the plight of children to the streets, Agnelli records that 'some psychologists speculated that children are not too much abandoned as abandoning²⁹'. They suggest that some hereditary predisposition irrespective of family conditions actively pushes some to take to the streets on their own initiative to make an early bid for independence. After being away for longer and longer intervals they are assumed to know fairly clearly where they are going, according to this theory. The theory supposes that there is a complex of motivation which makes them want to seek out a greater autonomy and to be actively involved with social environment.

To Agnelli, 'proponents of this theory are impressed by the positive qualities they detect in this group that the society despises³⁰'. These children, once they are in the streets, become healthy, positive and they are able to adopt to the environment very fast. This is also supported by this study carried out in Nairobi. The data showed that 56% of the street children interviewed claimed that the streets were better than home for various reasons. This fact however cannot verify the view that they are better off in the streets than in the homes as they only look healthy from the outset. Social workers report that these children have all kinds of diseases and all of them

suffer from worms because of dirty feeding habits. Nevertheless the factors behind the flight of children to the streets are many and often overlap. These are social, cultural and even political factors, like broken families, unemployment; rural urban migration; demolition of slums; wars, conflicts and ethnic clashes, among others. To give a clearer picture of these factors each one of them will be discussed briefly in this section.

3:4:1 BROKEN FAMILIES

Most of the street children are the by-products of loosened or broken families. Some are victims of divorce or separation while others are victims of unrest in the families where parents are always fighting. The study carried out in Nairobi shows that 9% of the children interviewed lived with their mothers as their parents were either divorced or separated. Seven per cent (7%) of the children lived with their fathers. In total 16% were victims of divorce and separation.

A broken human relation is aggravated by many factors relating to social environment. Poverty may cause stress in the household which may lead to partners not tolerating one another. At the micro level, a child is pushed to the streets because the family unit is in crisis. If it has not fallen apart already, it is about to do so. In such cases social unrest which is manifested by constant fighting is present.

The data collected shows that seven per cent (7%) of the children interviewed were in the streets in a bid to secure some peace as there was always fighting and noise in their homes.

Once the family as a basic unit of the society is destroyed the child is robbed off the joy of being in a home. The streets out there appear to give a better home than the family. With time they become accustomed to being alone fending for themselves and having no one to order them around. In short they become masters of their own destiny. Once children get a taste of this unsupervised form of survival which they take as freedom they become very reluctant to return home to their fighting parents or to the divorced parents who may not be able to provide for them adequately.

3:4:2 UNEMPLOYMENT

Street children are also a result of unemployment or under-employment. In many homes, unemployment may lead to loss of self esteem, alcoholism and depression. Some parents take out their frustrations on the children as unemployment brings physical, psychological and emotional stress. The parent is not able to meet the basic needs of a child. Under this stress, relationship between a child and the parents deteriorates as the child sees the parents as if they are refusing to provide for him and on the other hand, the parents view the child as a liability. Under

these circumstances, the home is rent asunder and the obvious victim of such a situation is the child.

This is clearly illustrated by this study carried out in Nairobi. The data collected shows that seven per cent (7%) of the interviewed street children said that their fathers do not work; 8% of the mothers also do not work. Those parents who work do very odd jobs. 6% of the mothers are said to be beggars, 6% of the mothers brew changaa (Illicit Brew); 5% of the mothers do some unspecified work at night and go home drunk; while the other jobs done by parents are, Barmaids, House Maids, collecting and selling papers, selling fruits, casual labours, pushing mkokoteni (hard carts); shoe shines; watchmen; drivers; small scale farming and other odd jobs.

High unemployment rate is the single unmistakable characteristic of most slum dwellers. Statistics show that in Kenya 'there are over 60,000 new entrants (both skilled and unskilled) into the labour market each year. The formal employment sector, in contrast creates a little over 50,000 new jobs annually³¹'. It is definite that the informal sector cannot absorb all the other entrants into the labour market. Hence unemployment continues to be one single factor that has pushed these children to the streets.

3:4:3 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The urban poor are forced by their financial capabilities to live in the slums where they have to do with substandard shelter. Poor housing not only creates tension but also affects the attitude of those living there. Statistics show that Nairobi has a population of about 2.5 million people and a growth rate of about 10%. According to Undugu Society records, 'of this total population, only about 40-50 per cent live in formally established structures and designated residential areas³²'. This means that over a million residents of Nairobi are forced to survive as squatters in squalid conditions with no services. In fact it is lamented that no one acknowledges the presence of these citizens and many refer to these slums as forgotten areas.

The land where they squat is still considered open for future development and they always stand a risk of having their shelters demolished. The study carried out in Nairobi showed that 96% of the street children interviewed came from the slums of Nairobi. These are, Mathare, Kibera, Kariobangi, Mukuru and Korogocho. The other 4% were from the rural areas. Those from the slums claimed that their families are squeezed in one room or they do not have proper shelter for a home. To these children, the streets are a better place as they are spacious for playing and sleeping.

3:4:4 SINGLE PARENTAGE

Majority of street children come from families of single parents and especially single mothers. In fact the study carried out in Nairobi showed that 56% of the children interviewed are from single mothers. While some of these mothers have never been married others are victims of divorce and separation.

With no spouse to provide, the mother must try to bring up the family alone and at the same time earn a living. This is a difficult task to carry out especially without the help of relatives. In most cases those mothers engage in activities which are geared to survival, e.g., brewing illicit brew (changaa), prostitution and selling beer as barmaids. In most cases they look for replacement for the husband she lost or never had. As a result she may start changing partners which is not in the best interest of the child.

Many children informants claimed that their mothers' men friends usually beat them up or force them out of the houses at night. At the same time a small number of street girls (4%) claimed that they have been victims of rape by their mothers men friends in case they would find their mothers absent. Another situation where street girls claimed that they have been sexually abused is when one of the mother's partners would come home and find the mother with another partner. This is not in the best interest of a child. They find it better to be in the streets than to be at home.

3:4:5 SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE

The UN Draft Convention on the Rights of a Child stipulates that every child has a right to basic education. Proper education is a guarantee to a child's future. 'Mathare alone, the school dropout rate is close to 80%. Most drop out as a result of poverty while a small proportion succumb to peer pressure³³'.

Dropping out of school denies a child of his childhood years. The study carried out in Nairobi shows that 79% of street children interviewed had gone to school and either dropped out in standard one, two, three or four, with only two having dropped out after class 8. 21% of the interviewed street children had never gone to school. They claimed that their mothers or guardians had no money to take them to school. Those who went to school where they were not required to pay fees dropped out because of hunger. They lamented that when they came from school, they would find no lunch for them which made them take to the streets in an effort to solicit for money to buy food.

Lack of free education especially for families in difficult circumstances has continued to aggravate the problem of street children. Street Children Committee of the Catholic Arch-diocese of Nairobi in their meeting (4/5/1993) noted that 'it was unfortunate that the government policy of free education in primary schools does not work anymore'.

Even though parents are not asked for tuition fees, they pay building fund, buy books and uniforms. This has become a heavy burden to the poor parents. If children are not in school, they have to be somewhere. Ten per cent (10%) of the street children interviewed said that they were in the streets because they get bored at home as they do not go to school.

Those who drop out of school become desperate, find themselves useless and see no future for themselves. One child interviewed took to the streets after failing KCPE. He knew there was no future for him.

3:4:6 RURAL URBAN MIGRATION

The influx of people in the urban centres especially the cities, increases the demand for food, shelter, education and employment. These migrants to the cities often in search of employment end up in the slums where they have to do with poor shelter.

In the cities maintaining a child is very expensive. Also, the children become very dependent on the parents as the extended family is left in the rural areas. The radical change from rural to urban life puts a child in a vulnerable situation. City life limits him. For rural community a child who for some reasons could not get normal support from the parents, the extended family is always there. Out of frustrations, the unattended

child ends up in the streets where they are attracted by the freedom of not being ordered around.

3:4:7 PARENTAL NEGLIGENCE

Due to economic pressure some parents end up neglecting their children or forcing them to cater for their needs. Many children interviewed claimed that their parents forced them to go to the streets and look for money to buy food. They are given the option to either earn the money somehow, or get beaten. With time many of them find it better to earn the money and use it all by themselves which would mean not going home. The data collected shows that eleven per cent (11%) of the children interviewed fall in this category. They claim that they were forced by their parents to look for food as they were old enough.

A social worker narrated a case where a child of about twelve years of age said that he was thrown out of the house by the mother who said that she could no longer feed him as he was a grown up. To verify this the Social Worker took the boy home, but the mother stood by her decision, she could not feed a grown up.

Such children end up in the streets permanently as they do not have anywhere else they could turn to. As a result they become frustrated and bitter with the society.

3:4:8 MARGINALISED STATUS OF WOMEN TODAY

The problem of a child are the problems of a mother. This is because you cannot separate a child in difficult circumstances from a mother who is in desperate situations. It follows then when the mother is marginalised the child is marginalised too.

A woman alone trying to get a fair access to jobs, housing services, social security still faces serious discrimination. Agnelli argues that 'despite the impressive legislation, the status of women during the decade has been marked almost as much by retrogression in some areas as by advancement in others³⁴'. It has also been observed that the social protection of women has an adverse effect on the condition of children.

The higher the number of children single mothers have to support, the greater the possibilities of them ending up in the streets. Agnelli further observes that 'a significant proportion of street children in Latin America are the eldest of large families of six to ten children with no supportive father figure³⁵'. Also the study carried out in Nairobi shows that 56% of the children interviewed came from families with no supportive father figure. 43% came from families of one to five children with majority being five children in a home. 48% came from families of 6-10 children. 9% came from families with over ten children. These children are sent to the streets when they reach about ten years of age so that the mother can look after the younger children.

17% of street children claimed that they were in the streets so that they could help their families. However with time these children graduate into street youth and their brothers and sisters at home become street children and the problem of street children becomes a cycle.

However it has been argued that single motherhood does not mean that children cannot be given adequate care. Many people believe that if resources were available women would be able to take care of children. Studies that have been done show that the earliest family units were mothers and children. Permanent male parentage did not exist. Agnelli also notes that 'ancient Indo-European languages apparently had no word for father³⁶'. She also says that classical writers record that matriarchal societies existed in ancient Egypt and Greece and among the Etruscans in Italy. In all these societies, it has been observed that negligence of children was not known. No child was considered illegitimate. Therefore if resources were available and women were given the same opportunity as men, they can take care of children.

3:4:9 REJECTION AND ABANDONMENT

There are some children who have ended up in the streets after they have been rejected. Some have been abandoned by respectable parents unwilling to recognise the embarrassing outcome of unwanted pregnancy. Some parents also abandon their children when they realise that they would not be able to take care of

them. In this case it has been observed that some children in the streets do not come from the poorest of parents. Agnelli records that 'Field workers in Togo have come across a son of a taxi driver, a nephew of a dentist and even the grandson of a former minister³⁷'.

There are also cases of rebellious children who feel rejected by their parents when certain privileges they previously had are curtailed for their own good. Pastor Enos of Southern Baptist Dagoretti and who is the Director of Dagoretti Street Children Rehabilitation Centre cites such a case. He is said to have picked a teenage boy by the name Gichina from the streets of Nairobi. Through rehabilitation the boy is said to have narrated his side of the story and agreed to take the pastor to his home. To the surprise of the pastor, the boy was a son of a doctor at Gatundu and the mother was a business woman. He was the only child for a long time. Trouble started when the mother got another child. He felt that the mother no longer loved him. When another child followed the second born, the boy felt completely rejected. He took to the streets where he felt loved by his peer group and did not want to think about his home. He experienced the freedom which he never had at home. Parents and relatives were unable to trace him.

This is an example of a child who imagines that he is rejected when in actual fact he is not. However, there are a number of children who are in the streets as a result of genuine rejection and abandonment. At Kabete juvenile remand the researcher came

across three children who were abandoned by their mother in Limuru.

3:4:10 NATURAL CALAMITIES

Natural calamities like drought, floods, sickness and death also induce a child to take to the streets. In Sahel and North Eastern Brazil, drought and floods are responsible for displacement and disintegration of communities and families.

Death of either or both of the parents also perpetuates the phenomena of street children. Such children might end up in the hands of relatives who mistreat them. Three street children interviewed claimed that, after the death of their mothers their fathers remarried, but they were mistreated by their step mothers which made them take to the streets.

Also according to the data collected, four respondents (street children) said their fathers were insane and they would often threaten them with beating.

These natural calamities cause emotional frustrations to a child and the alternative is the streets.

3:4:11 WARS AND CONFLICTS

Wars also bring their inevitable aftermath, of disintegration of family unit, orphans and even displacement of children. Onyango

notes that, 'approximately 4 million children are victims of armed violence in Africa either as refugees or displaced persons³⁸'. The UNICEF report 1989 notes that 'in our time governments are still recruiting children to fight wars³⁹'. Agnelli also notes that war in Italy in 1950 rendered so many orphans as street children. She further states that 'in Columbia, for example the civil war of 1950s known as la violencia drove many people into overcrowded capital as does continuing insecurity in Central America'.⁴⁰ Also during the wars of Indonesia, cities like Phnompenn and Vientianne are said to have had large numbers of street children.

Likewise in Kenya during the Mau Mau rebellion of 1952-1956, many children were left homeless. A report for Child Welfare 1961 estimated the number to have been 1500 street children in Nairobi alone. The present ethnic clashes in Kenya have also produced their share of street children.

According to the Daily Nation Newspaper (27/10/93), the Kibarage Good News Centre 'following the tribal clashes in Molo' received children whose parents were killed and were rendered homeless. The report claimed that the centre received 122 children (homeless) from the clash area. These children are further described as indifferent, sensitive and would not like to be reminded of Molo where their parents were killed. Also, the data collected shows that one respondent (street child) was in the streets after his parents were killed in Narok clashes.

Being in the centre of war and also a child being in training to handle weapons gives him war mentality. Therefore they learn violence and hatred at a very tender age. As a result, they grow up with a mentality of revenge and of the right to use force in solving ones differences. Even in the streets, they continue with this war mentality and often hurt one another as theirs is a life of revenge.

3:4:12 UNFAVOURABLE ECONOMIC POLICIES

In more recent years, the situation of poverty in developing countries has been made worse by economic policies like structural adjustment policies. This requires that the populations meet a greater proportion of the social services like health and education previously met through public funding. These policies together with debt problem in the third world has made the situation worse.

According to UNICEF Report 1989, the rising debt in Third World has dominated the economic deterioration. In many countries according to the report, annual repayment of interest and capital amount to more than the total of all new aids and loans being received each year. The developing countries also depend on raw materials for majority of their export earnings. But for the last ten years prices for developing world's principle commodities have fallen by approximately 30%. Therefore for most developing countries the economic situation has darkened

drastically. As a result, most of these countries have taken up the structural adjustment policies in an attempt to stave off balance of payment crisis while at the same time meeting debt obligations. With these adjustments, it can be seen that the heaviest burden is falling on the shoulders of those who are least able to sustain it, the poor. It is the poor and vulnerable who are suffering the most. The services that are pruned by this adjustment are health services, free primary education, food and fuel subsidies. These are the services on which the poor are most dependent and which they have least opportunity to replace by any other private means.

The result of all these is lack of basic needs like food and education which are the main factors behind the flight of children to the streets. UNICEF Report (1989) records a very important question asked by the former President of Tanzania Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, 'must we starve our children to pay the debts⁴¹?' According to this report the answer to this question is yes as 'hundreds of thousands of world's children have given their lives to pay their countries debts and many more are paying with their malnourished minds and bodies⁴²'. Hence street children are victims of the economic situation in the developing world.

Therefore it is as a result of these collective factors which lead to lack of basic needs that push a child to the streets.

3:5 THE PLIGHT OF STREET CHILDREN

Once children are in the streets, they try to survive by all means. This street survival has been fictionalised by Meja Mwangi in his book, Kill Me Quick. Most of them live by theft and Agnelli says that 'those who live by theft consider themselves legitimate workers'⁴³. Dallape Fabio in his book, An Experience with Street Children, records a situation where Father Grol, the founder of Undugu Society in Kenya asked street boys whether they were parking boys. All of them refuted this. When he asked them whether they were thieves, they all raised up their hands to identify with stealing. To them stealing is not wrong, what is wrong is being caught.

The other form of surviving is collecting and selling papers. Many of the boys interviewed in Nairobi said that they collect and sell papers. They also collect pieces of charcoal and sell.

Some also collect foodstuffs, like potatoes, carrots and fruits from the city market and then sell. There is also a small number that collects plastic and metal containers for sale. The other forms of survival are guarding cars for small fee, directing motorists into empty parking spaces, begging and also helping to carry shopping from the supermarkets. The study carried out in Nairobi shows that 67% of the children interviewed get between 10-50 shillings after doing all these odd jobs. 27% get Ksh.60-100 and 6% get over a hundred shillings each day. 51% of the

interviewed street children said that this money was enough for their meals while 49% said it was not.

The street replaces school and helps a child forget the horrible past. To them only the present matters. The future is also not certain. When they wake up in the morning, street children cannot be sure where their next meal is coming from or indeed whether they will get any. They have to take anything in their way however bad. 'This kind of existence where nothing is stable can produce certain distortions of the mind'. Many youngsters lose track of time and do not know how long they have been wandering. With no structure to make time pass, they are unable to describe clearly their activities on a given day. Most informants (street children) could not tell for how long they have been on the streets. They could only remember the year they joined the streets otherwise they had lost count of time.

Since these children are unprotected, they have designed survival mechanisms to ensure survival in such unprotected environment. One of these defense mechanism is the gang. This street gang provides protection and comradeship of a substitute family status, excitement and a sense of identity. This sense of identity is reinforced by esoteric slangs. Each hideout has got its name. In Nairobi city centre, there are several gangs and one of them stays at Aga Khan Walk opposite Nairobi Cinema Hall. This gang is highly organised and it is very hard to extract any information from them. The other gang that is also highly organised is found at the junction of Valley Road and Kenyatta

Avenue. This gang of children is pretty dangerous as the area is lonely, off the city centre. The other prominent gang is found near Hotel Ambassador. This is a very dangerous gang that specialises in snatching handbags and watches from pedestrians at the traffic lights between Hotel Ambassador and Kencom House. There are many more gangs in Nairobi. The gangs form territories which are highly guarded.

Of late human excreta is being used as a defence mechanism in Nairobi by some street children. People in Nairobi walk under threat of being smeared with human dung. A daily newspaper recorded that two policemen on duty around the city market in Nairobi wanted to apprehend two street children for one reason or the other, according to the report, 'while one of the juveniles engaged the two men of the law by resisting arrest, the other lad rushed into the public latrine in the market, scooped a generous helping ready excreta from the unsanitary latrine and was soon dressing up the police with the slimy stuff⁴⁴'. The police were forced to run away.

In their conditions, physical danger is all too real as they have no protection. The possibility of violence is in the form of stabbing, beating and even summary execution is ever present. They have been exposed to violence that even when they are together they fight and hurt each other. They also suffer brutality at the hands of the general public. Also, they are often knocked down by vehicles when they are running away. On the Uhuru highway in Nairobi there is a crippled boy who usually

approaches motorists for help. He informed the researcher that he was knocked by a vehicle when he was running away after snatching a watch.

Drugs are also common in street life. They are consumed as a temporary escape from the unbearable reality. The effects of drugs create a kinder world that becomes a reality in his euphoria. Others take drugs in order to accomplish acts which basically go against their nature or to overcome fear. According to the data collected, majority (81%) of street children take drugs. These drugs are taken in different forms - cigarettes, glue, bhang (cannabis sativa), inhaling petrol, shoe polish and others. Several reasons were given as to why they take drugs.

Some succumb to peer pressure. Majority took drugs so that they did not feel hungry while others took to stand the harsh conditions they had to put up with like sleeping in the cold, eating dirty food and finally they took drugs in order to forget their problem.

In some countries, 'marijuana' is treated as a parallel currency in the streets. Cocaine and heroin are also used. These are highly addictive and they tend to drive the victim to more daring acts. In Latin America street children are said to be the couriers of these drugs and with time they become full fledged criminals.

Street children unknowingly run the great risk of growing into adults who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. Drug addicts live in a kind of sleepy mood always yearning for more. They are unable to react to anything positively. They cannot work, study or talk sense. They thus become a liability to the society.

Street children especially girls get involved in prostitution at a very early age. This is because living where they do, they are prime candidates for sexual exploitation. They are likely to be exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and many grow into unhealthy and bitter adults. Research carried out at Tunza Dada, a rehabilitation centre for street girls in Nairobi indicated that 'one out of six children are HIV positive or have Aids⁴⁵'.

Prostitution of the boys is also on the increase. The smaller boys fall victim of the bigger boys. The study carried out in Nairobi shows that 36% of the interviewed children of ages 5-18 claimed that they were harassed by the bigger boys. According to social workers, some of these harassment included sexual exploitation of the smaller boys by the bigger ones.

Imprisonment is another kind of terror that the street children go through. When they go to juvenile remands most of them only come out embittered and hardened children ready to revenge. This is because many are unconvinced of any crimes they are said to have committed as anything they do in the streets is geared towards survival. Thus Agnelli has argued 'these prisons are deformatories not reformatories⁴⁶'. Most of these street

children spend their later part of life in prison. 'In Sao Paulo, 80% of the prison population are ex-street children⁴⁷'.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Therefore the phenomena of street children is widespread and global. History indicates that the problem was there and hence it is not an impending calamity of our time. However the current problem of street children is the result of rapid urbanization which is manifested by explosive growth of modern cities, transition from extended to nuclear families, extreme poverty, and high rate of migration from the country side to the cities straining the urban management.

The street children go through very difficult times without anybody to guide them. It has been observed that in normal family life, the shock of adolescence is cushioned allowing a gradual emergence into society. When this is lacking, 'the youngsters cannot get their bearing and are vulnerable to the first influence they meet⁴⁸'. Although a child's natural protector are the parents, in case of their absence, the society should quickly replace them so that the child does not grow into a misfit. A child who grows up in the streets uncared for at an adult stage will still demand for his rights whatever means.

This chapter has discussed the phenomena of street children. It leads to the next issue which is the various responses to the

problem. The next section tries to find out the response of the concerned persons, governments, NGOs and even the Church.

3.7 A CASE STUDY

Kamau (not his name) is about 17 years of age. He comes from Kikuyu division of Kiambu district. He collects and sells paper. He looks hardened by life. Always dirty, rough and with a cap that always covers his eyes. He says that the cap separates him with the rest of this world. He is always carrying a stick which makes other people afraid of him.

Kamau comes from a family of six and he is the first born. The father was a driver before his death. During his stay at home there was always unrest in the family as the parents were often fighting. The main cause of fighting according to this boy was his mother's unfaithfulness. The father being a driver would spend weeks before coming home. The mother would take advantage of this and would entertain other men. Somehow the father would get to know and this would spark off fighting.

When the father went back to work, the young boy would fall victim of the mother, who assumed it was the young boy who was reporting her to her husband. He claims that many times he would spend nights outside or on trees in fear of being killed by the mother. Most of the times the neighbours came to his rescue.

Unfortunately for the boy, his father died in 1989 through a motor accident. Immediately after the fathers burial, the mother abandoned them. Efforts by relatives to trace her were futile. The young ones were left under the care of this young boy. Some relative took the smallest two children. The other three were left under his care. He had to drop out of school so that he could maintain his brothers and sisters. He confesses that they survived by stealing food. Later the mother was found and forced by law to go back to her children.

Kamau claims that it was worse with the mother around. He had to continue winning bread not only for the children but also for the mother and her male friends. The house also became small, he would either be sent out or is beaten up by his mothers male friends. Other times these male friends would force the children to call them father and failure to do so they were beaten.

These multiple problems made the boy to run away from home. He initially stayed with relatives at Kibera but was mistreated. Finally he met a friend who introduced him to the business of collecting and selling papers.

He claims that he cannot steal as he grew up as a regular Sunday school goer. He takes drugs so that he is able to sleep in the cold and also so that he does not get hungry. He would wish to do a course like mechanic so that he would have a better future. When he is happy he looks very different from the first impression he portrays when one first meets him. He has a good

sense of humour and he is able to get along with people. At the feeding centre he does not scramble for food, he patiently waits for his turn to get his share. Surprisingly he is able to express himself well in English.

There are times he gets very bitter in his narratives especially when he recalls some incidences of arrest and imprisonment, but as soon as he is diverted from such memories he goes back to his old nature. Kamau is only a victim. Given a chance he can change and develop into a good citizen.



3:8

NOTES

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CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESPONSE OF THE PLIGHT OF THE STREET CHILDREN

4:1 INTRODUCTION

In Kenya today, efforts are being made to create awareness of this social problem. Intellectual studies in the universities highlighting the causes and consequences of street children are being carried out. The local media are sensitising the society on the needs of a street child. 'Do not give them money to buy glue, give them hope' has been a common appeal by the local media. Non governmental organisations have been formed to combat the problem from the roots. The government has also been fully involved in efforts to eradicate this social problem. But it seems like the forces which commit children to the streets have not been fully identified since despite all the efforts the problem has continued to grow in magnitude. This chapter focuses on the response to the problem of street children by the government, society, NGOs and the street children to their plight.

4:2 RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THE PLIGHT OF STREET CHILDREN

In the Old Testament it was the duty of the government to defend the Torah with its emphasis on the rights of the poor, and when

they failed to do so, the prophets condemned it. The presence of a large number of unprotected children in the urban streets world wide is a challenge to the governments concerned. This study raises the question as to what the government is doing, has done or hopes to do to contain the problem in Kenya.

It is very hard to assess the response of the government to the plight of the street children, as most of its services are not specifically to street children, but to all those children who are in especially difficult conditions (CEDC) including street children. Its services to the CEDC is through the Children's Department in the Ministry of Home Affairs. The services are mainly through institutions like approved schools, Borstal institutions and children's home. Other services are provided by the Ministries of Culture and Social Services, Health Education, and Local Government.

As it has been observed in Chapter 3, the problem of street children is not a recent phenomena. It was there in the 1960's and 1970's. The government efforts to eradicate this problem dates back to 1970s. This period witnessed a crisis of primary school dropouts. The dropouts remained unemployed and in the urban centres they would stay idle in the streets. To stave off this crisis, the government established, rural based training appropriate technology, popularly known as village polytechnics. The objective of village polytechnics was to provide vocational skills to primary school leavers and hence slow down their migration to the urban centres and more notably Nairobi. This

idea, as Onyango has noted, 'was adopted in Nairobi to meet the needs of slum boys¹'. It aimed at helping these children to have self employment as village artisans, so that they could keep out of town and even out of the streets.

During 1980s, there was a lot of concern for Kenyan children 'the period witnessed introduction of the short lived school buses in Nairobi²'. At the same time the school milk was introduced. Also 'it was at this period in 1986, when some lone voices in parliament called on the Attorney General to introduce measures that would curb the menace of street children in Nairobi³'. But there are no records of tangible action towards eradication of the problem.

The problem of street children has continued to grow especially in 1990's. In view of the escalating problem especially in the city centre, the children's Department, particularly in Nairobi formed a District Children Advisory Committee (DCAC) which is chaired by the District Commissioner.

The objective of this committee according to Provincial Children's Officer, is the coordination of all activities related to CEDC by all the relevant agencies. The committee is in charge of activities related to children at district level. It mainly focuses on CEDC, including all those in the streets and also the potential street children. These are children who are normally abandoned, child workers, destitutes and others who undergo various child abuses and exploitation and would end up

in the streets if their conditions are not improved. Due to high population of, CEDC and particularly street children in Nairobi, this committee was extended to locational level where it is chaired by the chiefs.

The committee also aimed at reducing the number of CEDC and advocating full participation of the communities. This would be done through intensive advocacy on the plight of street children and sensitising the public on the need to come up in support of projects meant to assist them.

Finally, the major government services geared to protection and rehabilitation of CEDC are through institutions. These are institutions like Approved Schools, Borstal, Juvenile Remand and Children's homes. The study showed that most of these children found in these institutions are ex-street children.

There are ten Approved Schools run by the Ministry of Home Affairs Children's Department. Two categories of children are found here according to Director of Getathuru Approved School. There are those with criminal behaviour and secondly those who need protection and discipline. These include children who are delinquents and beyond parental control or children whose parents cannot be traced or even those ones whose parents are themselves destitutes and may not be able to take care of their children. Some street children fall in this category and are taken to these institutions for protection and rehabilitation as well as

discipline. There are those street children who end up in approved schools due to their criminal behaviour like rape, theft, assault, drug trafficking and other criminal offenses.

The Director of Getathuru Approved School said that 'the main objective of approved schools is to help children reform⁴'. This is through vocational training and education in preparation to returning to their families. To him, 'rehabilitation is based on the understanding of a child's history, abilities and aptitudes of each child and knowledge of family situation which may contribute to delinquent tendencies of being in the streets⁵'. All attempts are being made to help the child, through counselling and formal education suited for their individual needs.

However, approved schools have been criticized for not reforming many of these children. They are mostly characterized by children escaping, and being returned or transferred from one approved school to the other. At the time this study was being carried out, it was going down in records that children were smearing themselves with human waste and daring the authorities concerned to stop them from escaping.

The other problem is that hardened street children who most often than not have criminal tendencies are grouped together with those who require care and protection. This leads to criminal behaviours being learned through peer influence.

The next category of government rehabilitation institutions are the Borstal Homes. Currently there are two Borstal Institutions in Kenya. These are designed for older boys of ages 16-18. They emphasize punitive remedial and educational treatment based on closed in study of the individual. The system tries to develop the boys fully in character, moral and physical. This is mainly for the boys especially for street children who are beyond approved school control. They are granted leave during training period.

Release from Borstal institutions is followed by a period of supervision by the probation officer. This may be for a period of upto two years from the date of release. Those who fail to comply with the requirements of supervision may be recalled back to Borstal and maybe liable to further stay in the institution.

The Children's Department also runs ten juvenile remand homes. These handle mainly children with pending court cases. This is supposed to be a temporary measure before a child is reinstated to his parents with whom he may have lost contact with or he then is committed to either approved or Borstal Institution.

There is also the children's home. This one caters for children of ages 0-5 years. Those could be abandoned or neglected children. After five years those children are taken to Approved Schools.

The Juvenile Court also serves children. The study showed that majority of children brought to the Juvenile Court in Nairobi

were street children. Most of them are charged with vagrancy while some have criminal offenses. The Children's Officer studies the background of each child and then recommends to the court necessary action to be taken.

With all these institutions the problem of street children has continued to grow in number. This shows that institutions are not the final solution to the problem. Hence rehabilitating street children even though noble and necessary undertaking is merely a superficial solution. It only addresses the symptoms of a deeper rooted problem rather than the causes.

4.3 RESPONSE OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGO'S) TO THE PLIGHT OF STREET CHILDREN

Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) are also responding positively to the plight of street children. But as it has been remarked 'unless government takes serious interest in these youth anything NGOs and others do will just be scratching the service⁶'. The NGOs who are well known to be in this field are, UNICEF; Red Cross, Christian Children Fund; Starehe Boys Centre; Undugu Society and others.

Many NGOs actually operate from the slums/squatter settlement areas. Their services remain uncoordinated and unintegrated. They are fostering, rehabilitation, counselling, vocational training, feeding and school sponsorship projects.

Most of these NGOs are notable for outreach of street work which facilitate contact with street children. They provide reception centres where street children can go for basic shelter and food while having a chance to decide if willing to join their families. They also care for children's health and usually take them for treatment when they fall sick. In fact at the time of the study, UNICEF in conjunction with Kenya Government was involved in inoculation of street children.

There have been efforts to rehabilitate street mothers by the NGOs. They also try to work directly with the poor communities who tend to generate the street children. They provide integrated services which improve the general welfare of the community. This is by giving the family direct support in educating their children and improve their capacity for survival. Notable in this field is the Undugu Society.

4.3.1 THE UNDUGU SOCIETY

The name 'Undugu' is drawn from the Swahili word 'Undugu' which denotes blood relationship. It was therefore interpreted to mean brotherhood. The history of this society goes back to 1972 when the founder, Father Arnold Grol - a Dutch Catholic priest from the White Fathers Congregation arrived in Nairobi to take up his first urban posting. In Nairobi, this priest was asked to take charge of the apostolate to the youth of a parish in a relatively low income, densely populated part of the city. At that time he

was attracted by the presence of street boys - more commonly referred to as 'parking boys' on their account of their function of directing motorists to empty parking spaces. Father Grol began to spend most of his time with these boys in 1973 attempting to develop a rapport with them. As the relationship grew, these boys started to explain their conditions to him. Most of them came from single parents headed households. In order to build their confidence further, Fr. Grol together with others concerned, acquired a modest shelter within the city limits which he decided to run on an open house basis for these youngsters. He advised them that this facility would always be available for them to use especially when it was raining if they were under threat of being arrested. He would always have food for them to eat on any day they had not been able to get a meal in some way or the other.

As the number of boys increased, he raised the question of education. Most boys were enthusiastic about the prospects of going back to school and being able to lead a normal life. Fr. Grol offered to buy them uniforms and to pay whatever money that might have caused them to be dismissed from schools. Many schools were not ready to re-admit these boys. The schools felt that the boys could not fit back in the normal school routine after being in the streets for sometimes. This refusal caused Fr. Grol a lot of frustrations. He felt that these children required literacy and numeracy skills. He then requested the use during weekdays of a few Church halls and other community oriented facilities. With the help of some volunteers, he began

to give literacy and numeracy training to these parking boys at what came to be known as Undugu Youth Centre. More boys joined the Centres. To crown his achievements, Father Grol put up together one Undugu Jazz Band made up entirely of ex-street boys.

As the boys gained literacy and numeracy skills, it became necessary to channel them to a variety of vocational skills training opportunities as the next step towards completing the rehabilitation cycle that was now beginning to take shape. Recognising that most of these boys came from the slums, the Undugu began by equipping them with skills that they could use in these home environment (slums).

With time it became clear that rehabilitation of street children was not enough. The Undugu saw a need to pursue the rehabilitation effort while also consciously developing strategies for addressing the root causes of the problem. They established operational field offices from the slum areas from which boys relating to Undugu were known to come. They tried to help the community in the slum to improve their living conditions. They helped them put up affordable shelters.

Today Undugu maintains field in the slums where the organization's staff relate with the community in a manner that stimulates the community to creatively address their development problems. The organization pursues a network of community development activities geared towards mobilizations for social economic improvement. They embrace such aspects as

employment creation; small enterprise development; informal skills training; the pursuit of affordable shelter; community nutrition and health.

Therefore, the activities by NGOs, towards rehabilitation of street children are noble and commendable, but, there is need for all of them to corporate. This is in order to avoid duplication of activities. At times the NGOs create an impression of competition. From the outset it may appear like their aim is to boost their own prestige other than serve the children. Lack of cooperation between the NGOs brings confusion to those they wish to serve. Cooperation between NGOs makes it easier to study the causes of poverty, identify and formulate a common strategy to combat and encourage the full participation of the community concerned.

4:4 RESPONSE OF THE SOCIETY TO THE PLIGHT OF STREET CHILDREN

There has been both negative and positive response to the plight of street children by the Kenyan society. The negative response includes hostility and child abuse of all kinds. Positive response includes rehabilitation and provision of basic needs like shelter, education, access to health facilities, food and clothing.

There are those in the society who are taking advantage of this large number of children in the streets with nothing to lose to

perpetuate their criminal activities. As such street children are used by adults to traffic drugs. Because of their tender age, these street children can least be suspected by the authorities. In the course of trafficking these drugs, they learn how to use them. In fact the study carried out in Nairobi showed that majority of the children do use these drugs. When asked how they get access to them, they said they are given as payment after trafficking them from one end to the other.

These children are normally also used as thieves by other people. It has been said that if there is no market for the valuables these children steal, they would not steal. The parts of the vehicles they steal are either sold to people who own vehicles or with spare part shops.

Besides stealing, street children are also used to perpetrate malicious activities. There was a report in the local dailies that street children were using HIV tainted blood to punish those who refused to give them money. The report stated that 'It was suspected that a clandestine exclusive club of Aids sufferers, comprising of the wealthy could be the source of HIV tainted blood. Also in 1987 when the Kenyan Government broke diplomatic relations with Libya, reports had it that there was assumption that street children had been transported to Libya for military training so that they could return to destabilise the government. All these are negative responses. Of course street children are perfect recruits for such activities because they have nothing to lose and others are bitter with the society.

The positive response from the society has attempts to rehabilitate the street children. This kind of activity though it has good gesture, its authenticity depends on the motive. Some have genuinely set up homes to rehabilitate the children. However some of the homes leave a lot to be desired. While they are poorly managed with unqualified staff, the congestion in these homes makes the streets a better place. In most cases children are exposed to serious health risks in these homes. Most of those who start children's homes do not know the legal requirement for running a children's home. Besides, some of these homes are used as money making ventures to benefit the proprietor of the project. As long as they are able to show the donors a handful of children, and present a convincing proposal, they get a lot of money which they use for their own benefit.

Others aim at acquiring prestigious names like Director, Manager, Managing Director and others. It has also been observed that most of these children's homes, are built on private land and hence are run like private property.

~~The~~ The other notable response from the Kenyan community has been formation of community based projects for rescuing the street children. Such is the example of Nairobi Cares For Its Children (NCC) which was formed in September 1993. The aim was to rehabilitate street children without institutionalization. It started by highlighting the plight of street children in Nairobi and appealing to the residents of Nairobi to contribute to their rehabilitation. They hoped to sensitize the Nairobi community

on the plight of street children and thus creating a more responsible society. Together with other well wishers like Barclays Bank and Nairobi Corporate Community, they established four rescue centres in Nairobi's poorest areas. These rescue centres offered any child that came, with a bathe, clothing donated by well wishers and a hot meal.

This was a good gesture from the Nairobi community which shows that they are fully aware of the plight of the poor. However, success of such projects fully depend on the support of the society.

However, the problem of street children is growing at a fast rate. This shows that their interest has been on the 'victims' (street children), but have not fully identified the forces at play, i.e., the causes. Also major responses have been curative other than preventive. This draws us to the question of what the street children are doing about their own predicament.

4:5 RESPONSE OF THE STREET CHILDREN TO THEIR OWN PLIGHT

Many of these children are involved in a struggle to make their lives better. They aim at self reliance so that they can free from dependence. Their activities have been discussed in Chapter Three and cannot be discussed here. Despite these activities they are too young to achieve enough to free themselves from

dependence. This is mainly because they are limited by age and experience.

Other than the criminal activities some of them engage in, there are those who have been able to utilise their talents in order to earn a living. There are the acrobats who entertain the public for a small fee. There are some who sing and dance for a small fee. An example of a street child who has developed his talent of singing to earn a living is Benson Karanja.

His original home is Murang'a. He claims that his father sold their small piece of land leaving them landless. He was born in Makongeni. His mother is sick (insane). Benson entertains customers in the city hotels with a self made one stringed musical instrument (wandidi). He produces very good music. This way, he is able to earn enough for his daily use and for his sick mother.

The government and the general public are trying to eradicate the problem. The street children are also trying to make a living. The main concern of this study is the role played by the Church. Has it done anything to eradicate the problem? The next chapter will focus on the attitude and activities of the Church to the problem of street children.

4:6

NOTES

1. Onyango, P.A.; A Study of Street Children in Kenya; A Report Submitted to the Attorney General's Office by ANPPCAN, 1991, Page 56.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Mr. Kooro, G.; Director Gitathuru Approved School 12.05.94.
5. Ibid.
6. Dallape Fabio; An Experience With Street Children; Nairobi, Mangraphics, 1988.

CHAPTER FIVE

5: RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH TO THE PROBLEM OF STREET CHILDREN

5.1 BACKGROUND

The question raised in the first chapter of this study is whether the Church has responded to the problem of street children. This Chapter makes a critical assessment of the various activities of the Church towards the problem. It highlights the role of the Church in their rehabilitation and its various attempts at finding long and short term solutions to the problem. The study was carried out from an ecumenical perspective. Four categories of Churches were visited which are the Pentecostals, Protestants, Independent and Catholic Churches.

The Catholic Churches visited were, St. Teresas - Eastleigh, Holy Cross Church - Dandora; Our Lady Queen of Peace - South B; St. Lwanga Brothers - Kariobangi North, St. Benedict Church - Rwaraka; St. Peters Cleavers' - City Centre; St. Martins - Kibagare (Kangemi); St. Joseph's Kangemi; Our Lady Queen of Quadalupe - Adams Arcade; St. Michaels - Kibera; Christ the King Church - Kibera and Langata Catholic Church.

The Pentecostal Churches visited were; Nairobi Pentecostal - Valley Road, Redeemed Gospel Church - Mathare. All Nations Church - Gikomba; Free Pentecostal Church - Kawangware; Gospel

Assemblies of God - Mlango Kubwa; Kibera Church of God; Kangemi Church of God Pentecostal; Nairobi Lighthouse Pentecostal; All Nations Church - Donholm; Dandora Full Gospel Church and Gospel Outreach - Ngara.

The Protestant Churches visited were; C.P.K. Church - Kariobangi; Southern Baptist Church - Dagoretti; P.C.E.A. Community Centre - Eastleigh; P.C.E.A. Community Centre - Dandora; Salvation Army - City Centre, P.C.E.A. Community Centre - Bahati, Shauri Moyo Baptist Church; Dandora Baptist Church, Kariobangi P.C.E.A. Church; Kangemi P.C.E.A. Church, P.C.E.A. St. Andrews - City Centre; All Saints Cathedral - City Centre.

The Independent Churches visited were: Bahati AIPCEA Church, Mathare AIPCEA Church; Kawangware AIPCEA; African Divine Church - Kawangware; African Jerusalem Church - Kawangware, and African Divine Church - Dandora.

Each of these categories of Churches, responded to the problem of Street Children in their own unique ways. Although the history of these Churches is not the concern of this study it is necessary to look into their background to establish whether it could have some influence on their social activities. Hence this study would not go into the details of their history.

All the Independent Churches visited did not have any rehabilitation programme. They justified their position by saying that they did not have the necessary funds to start such

a project. Many factors contributed to the rise of African Independent Churches. These are political, social, economic, liturgical and theological. Barret in the Kenya Churches Handbook says that 'the beginning of African Independent Churches was prompted by a desire for self determination - the right to establish policy and to become genuinely Africa¹'. The earliest Independent Churches in Kenya emerged out of political and cultural struggles of 1920's and 1930's. They were dissatisfied with the kind of education offered by the missionaries. This factor, however, does not explain every independent movement in Kenya. Many factors contributed to independence. These are political, social, economic, ethnic, cultural, liturgical and theological.

Many Independent Churches to date want to maintain that independence. When asked why they could not start a street children project and approach donors for funds like other Churches were doing, the Independent Churches said that they would not do that because it would mean they are no longer independent. This was the stand of all the AIPCA Churches visited, which were, Bahati, Mathare and Kawangware AIPCEA.

Other Independent Churches had needy people in their congregation. The leader of Jerusalem Church (Kawangware) claimed that some members of the Church needed help. Therefore the Church would help such people instead of starting a children rehabilitation programme.

All the twelve Pentecostal Churches visited had street children rehabilitation programme. The 'Pentecostal Movement originated in the revolt against weakening of Methodist doctrine of perfection and revivalism current in the United States in the early 20th century²'. However, the whole awakening began in the revival movements in Europe from the middle of 19th Century.

In its development the Pentecostal Movement has made full use of Afro-American special gifts of communication and understanding through spiritual manifestation, thus helping build up a community and a fellowship. These means of communication include hymns, speaking in tongues, dreams and spontaneous forms of worship. These forms of worship appeal more to the sentiment other than the intellect.

Pentecostal groups are numerous and by no means similar in their theology. There are some that are Jesus only while others are Trinitarian. However, the bible is their doctrinal authority. They also emphasize on good works which includes visiting the sick, strengthening the weak and helping the poor.

In Kenya the Pentecostal Movement made their first appearance in 1937. In this year a revival team visited Kenya. Towards the end of 1938, a second revival team visited Kenya and made a successful preaching. Barrett notes that "Some present day Pentecostal Churches trace their origin to this period".

All the Catholic Churches visited had street children rehabilitation programmes. Most of these programmes were under direct supervision of the Church Fathers. Most of these programmes were sponsored by the Mother Catholic Order e.g. St. Benedict Street Children Project was being aided by Benedictine Fathers. A historic review of the Catholic Orders shows that they have been involved in social activities e.g. The Reformed Franciscan Order was formed in Italy in the 16th century with the objective of returning to observance of St. Francis. It is recorded that they had resolved to live a life of service to the poor and unfortunate.

The Barnabite Order was founded in 1530. This Order is said to have carried out all kinds of charity. They were reputed for taking the word of God 'to ordinary people by all means⁴'.

Also the early Catholic Saints were reputed for their concern for the poor. Philip de Meri is described as the most attractive of the Catholic Missionaries. He formed a Brotherhood in Rome for prayers and to help the poor. Vincent de Paul (1576-1660) is known for his activities among the poor. He founded the Sisters of Charity who helped in hospitals and the care of homeless children.

Yet another type of devout mission to the poor was shown by Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622). He founded the Order of Visitation of Blessed Mary. This Order was devoted to visiting the poor and the sick.

Most Protestant Churches visited had street children rehabilitation programmes. Majority of them had invited donors to fund their projects e.g. The PCEA Kangemi Church had invited the World Visions International to fund their programmes.

The term Protestantism, is derived from the 16th Century Reformation of Western Christianity. The New Catholic Encyclopedia says that 'the Protestant Movement is known for its philanthropic activities'. They try to create an ideal society. It is further noted that the anti-slavery movement that helped in the abolition of slavery and slave trade had protestants among its outstanding pioneers. On the same note, Temu in his book British Protestant Mission says that it was the protestant missionaries who began 'Campaign for the abolition of slave trade in 1860's and at the same time established settlements for freed slaves'.

In their mission work in Kenya 'the Protestant Missionaries had realised evangelism alone was not enough⁶'. They introduced practical training e.g. Agriculture, Education and skills that would make Africans self reliant.

It is against this historical background that these Churches have built their base in their task of helping the street children. There are some Churches that are involved in just rescuing the street children and then sending them to rehabilitation centres. Other Churches are doing both rescuing and rehabilitation.

5:2 ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TOWARDS THE PROBLEM OF STREET CHILDREN

The majority (90%) of the Church Leaders contacted felt that the Church has a role in the rehabilitation of street children. This is because the Church ought to serve humanity in all areas of life. Paster Kingoina of Maxwell SDA Church, Milimani particularly argued that 'any theology that does not address the social problems of the society like street children is wrong theology'. It was further argued that, social involvement should not put at a bay the spiritual and moral life of the society which should be of major interest to the Church. Therefore the Church involvement in rehabilitation of street children was fully justified.

To further justify the Churches involvement in rehabilitation of street children, it was argued that the Church is community based and hence it is part of the society, that is faced with the problem of street children. The Bible was also used to justify this involvement. It was observed that Jesus was a social being and was involved in the social life of the people. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, attended funerals and preached good news to the poor. Hence according to the Church leaders, the Church today ought to emulate him in their endeavours to rehabilitate street children. The whole Bible according to ten per cent of the informants depicts a social political life of a people and therefore the Church cannot be divorced from the social life of the society today.

According to the study, the Churches position on the problem of the street children indicates full solidarity with them. It was argued that the Church should fully identify with the suffering of street children and should be involved in their struggles for a better life. Pastor Kingoina, especially, said that 'no one should spiritualise the suffering of street children; their suffering is real and visible and what they need is real and tangible help⁸'. The Mexican Fathers were very vocal on this idea of full solidarity with their suffering. All the Presbyterian Churches visited however, felt that identifying with street children and even rehabilitating them was not enough. They felt that there should be efforts to raise the social economic life of the communities that generate street children. Finally, there are those that felt that street children only needed spiritual nourishment. This was mainly the position of all the Independent Churches visited. They based their arguments on the teachings of Jesus on happiness 'Happy are the poor for the kingdom of heaven is theirs'.

While the Church leaders (70%) blamed the phenomena of street children to the government and the society, there are some (50%) who felt that the Church should share in the blame. It was argued that 'for a long time in Kenya the Churches have concentrated on the spiritual life of the people ignoring their social plight⁹'. The Church was also blamed for not condemning, in the name of God, some unjust policies that have continued to oppress the poor and especially the urban poor. It was further observed that many Churches have not realised that part of the

society 'street children' is suffering. Finally, the Church was also blamed for not giving the government a prophetic warning concerning the problem of street children before it got out of hand.

However, since the problem of street children has gone out of hand, all Church leaders contacted felt that the Church can be a useful resource for the rehabilitation of street children. 40% of the Church leaders said that the Church should do so because it ought to be a sign of hope to the street children. As such the study shows that seventy five per cent of the Churches contacted had rehabilitation programmes. In these programmes, street children, are rehabilitated in all aspects of life, i.e., physical, social and spiritual. Ten of the Churches visited had invited international donor agencies like Compassion International, Dorcas Aid International and World Vision International to set up rehabilitation programmes in their Churches.

There are some Church leaders (70%) who felt that lasting solutions to the problems of street children can be found.

However, a few leaders (30%) were sceptical and viewed lasting solutions to the problems of street children as utopian dream. Those who felt that lasting solutions can be found argued that this would only be achieved if poverty and especially if urban poverty was eradicated and if all persons in the society had access to equal opportunities. However, in an attempt to contain

the problem of street children, the Churches have designed both rehabilitation and prevention strategies.

5.3 REHABILITATION STRATEGIES

The analysis of the study carried out in Nairobi shows that the Church has taken full stock of the problem of street children. It has therefore taken action towards restoration of the health of street children by enabling them to have an adequate diet, shelter, sanitation and clothing. It has also tried to give street children basic skills for employment and basic knowledge for growing up children. Finally, the Church is working towards integrating street children to the society through behavioural change from street unprogrammed and unsupervised life to normal programmed and supervised life. For detailed analysis of this rehabilitation activities, this section will deal with each at a time.

5.3.1 REHABILITATION THROUGH EDUCATION PROGRAMME

In view of the fact that basic education is a right to all children the Church has adopted it as a major step towards rehabilitation of street children. In fact, thirty per cent of the Churches visited are offering numeracy and literacy skills to these children. To those however who have had numeracy and literacy skills, and are beyond schooling age, they are given

vocational skills like carpentry, masonry and others which will enable them to cater for their future.

When these children are first brought to rehabilitation centres, the major task is to identify those who had been to school and dropped out at one stage or the other and those who had never been to school. According to Father Okumu 'they have realised that these children had gone to school, but, dropped out at one stage or the other¹⁰'. In fact, according to the data collected in this study, seventy nine per cent of the children interviewed had gone to school but dropped out due to several reasons. It was therefore necessary to design an appropriate programme that would cater for their education from the time they left school.

The Church also observed that learning in most cases was not popular with street children. This was the case with St. Teresas Church 'Watoto Wetu' street children programme. To contain this attitude towards learning, this Church has adopted a curriculum that would be able to rehabilitate street children to learning activities. At St. Teresas Church, they initially taught them for one hour a day. They would spend the rest of the time playing. Teacher Omoto however said that, 'With time slowly and through counselling, street children were able to appreciate and enjoy learning¹¹'. At the time of the study, the street children at St. Teresas 'Watoto Wetu' programme were learning for three hours a day. The subjects taught were Mathematics, Kiswahili, English and Christian Religious Education. At Holy Cross Dandora, the street children were attracted into learning through

video shows. According to Muiruri, 'the street children would come to watch video shows and in between the shows they would be introduced to learning activities¹²'.

Father Okumu argued that for these children to appreciate learning, 'there was need for proper counselling in order to reconcile the child's psychological state with the classroom environment¹³'. The Church is also trying to help these children appreciate a teacher, a blackboard, books, pens and pencils. Therefore, as Father Okumu argued, 'The Church rehabilitation programme aims at helping a child by taking him through a journey of writing notes, reading as well as doing simple mathematics¹⁴'.

The Church has also been involved in reinstating a child to normal school and meeting all their requirements. The children who are reinstated are those who show interest in learning and are able to adapt to normal school life after rehabilitation. The St. Teresas Church has two former street children at Karura Primary School and are doing very well according to Omoto (street children teacher). The Brothers of St. Charles Lwanga have reinstated fifty former street children to normal schools in Kariobangi North. The St. Charles Lwanga Brothers meet all their financial needs including tuition, uniform and even the stationery. The Worlds Visions International in their Neema Project at Kangemi PCEA Church has sponsored about five hundred and twenty needy children including former street children to normal schools in the area. The 'Mission Hope' street children programme by Donholm All Nations Church has sponsored one child

to Malezi Academy and according to the Programme Coordinator, the boy was doing well.

The Church is also considering the older youth in the street who are beyond the age of going to school. To meet their needs the Church has set up vocational institutions to offer them skills in different trades like carpentry, masonry, metal works and others. At St. Benedict Parish, this institution was enlarged so that it would cater for street children. Also at the time of the study, St. Teresas Parish had six (6) boys in their vocational training centre doing carpentry, mechanic welding and others. Also the Free Pentecostal Church Kawangware at the time of the study had ten former street children in their vocational institute. At Kibera Christ the King Catholic Church, Fr. Arturo said that they were training twenty former street children of ages eighteen to twenty (18-20 years) in masonry and carpentry.

Education is not only a guarantee to a better life but it helps a child live a better life in a modern world. As it has been argued, if a child was not in school he was to be somewhere. The street therefore offers an alternative to school. As a result of spending more and more time in the streets, the Church has observed that many street children find it hard to adjust to a programmed classroom life or to correcting the faults. This comes as a result of leading unsupervised and unprogrammed life in the streets. As a way of rehabilitating them, the Church is trying to help these children appreciate programmed and supervised life and correcting of faults as a way of taking them

back to a normal life which they missed while in the streets. Together with formal and informal education, the Church has been able to rehabilitate many street children.

5.3.2 REHABILITATION THROUGH FEEDING PROGRAMMES

Through field surveys the Church has identified hunger as major pushing force of these children to the streets. Many are in the streets to solicit for funds to cater for their needs. According to the study carried out, sixty seven per cent of children were in the streets to solicit for money to either buy food for themselves or their families. The Church has also observed that some parents were themselves destitutes and would not be able to feed themselves leave alone their children. Some children drop from school because after attending school they would not find ready meals. They would therefore drop out from school and make begging a full time occupation. There is even another category of children who are sent by their parents to beg for their meals. Some have to honour unsigned contracts with their parents whereby they would only be allowed in the house if they earned a certain amount of money. As such street children are what Fr. Okumu referred to them 'Hunters and Gatherers of Food'¹⁵.

Identification of food as the main cause of problem of street children prompted the Church to start a feeding programme for street children. According to the study carried out, twenty per cent (20%) of the Churches visited had street children feeding

programmes. Some conducted their programmes on Saturdays, while others did it on certain weekdays and just a few of them throughout the week. Each Church had its own unique way of conducting their feeding programme.

At St. Benedict Parish, the street children covered by the programme are offered both breakfast and lunch. For breakfast they are offered porridge, tea and bread. For lunch they are offered a variety of meals including ugali and kales; chapatti and stew; and rice and stew. They are not provided with supper so that they can join their families in the evening. At 'Christ the King' Church, Kibera, about three hundred street children are fed every Saturday according to Fr. Arturo. At St. Teresa's Parish about one hundred are offered breakfast and lunch according to Joab Omoto (street children teacher). At 'Kwetu Home of Peace' a street children rehabilitation programme by Our Lady Queen of Peace (South B) Parish over one hundred children are fed every Saturday. Fr. Michael also confirmed that there are plans to extend the feeding activities to other days of the week. The Nairobi Light House Church has been organising feeding programmes at Uhuru Park in Nairobi.

Through feeding programmes, the Church has taken up a major task of rehabilitating street children into proper and normal feeding habits. Fr. Okumu noted that at the time the feeding programme was began, they were faced with the problem of impatience. 'Many children were impatient with time, people and amongst themselves. As such they were unable to wait and the moment they felt hungry

they would go about collecting dirty garbage for eating¹⁶. The Church tried to train them not to eat in-between meals and to wait for the right time to eat. Also at St. Benedict Parish, the Church cautioned the community around the Church not to throw away any edible garbage near the Church which would tempt the children to eat in-between meals.

The Church to some extent has managed to achieve the goal of rehabilitating street children in their feeding habits according to Church leaders interviewed. Many children who come to these centres no longer eat from the dustbins. They are able to see rubbish as rubbish and not as food. At St. Benedict Rwaraka, the street children help in preparation of food which further helps them appreciate clean food and view rubbish as unfit for human consumption.

5:3:3 HEALTH REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Street children run the biggest health risk bearing in mind their living conditions. They are physically faced with dangers of infections of all kinds. According to the Coordinator of Shauri Moyo Baptist Church Child Development Programme, one hundred per cent of these street children who are brought to these rehabilitation centre suffer from inadequate intake of vitamins and proteins. Second to this is dental problem which comes due to poor feeding habits. To follow the dental maladies is Eye, Nose and Throat (ENT) problems which, is followed by isolated

cases of respiratory problems. It has also been observed that eye problems are increasing at an alarming speed and would soon catch up with dental problems.

Fr. Okumu further observes that 'it has been discovered that all street children have worms of all kinds. They also have all kinds of skin diseases while others have physical injuries which are caused by brutality of parents/guardians or the violent life they live in the streets¹⁷'. This has made some of them to have mental retardation, while others normally show a lot of fear before grown-ups and even before normal shelters like houses to an extent where they have to run away from them. This extreme fear is as a result of multiple beatings, being imprisoned or being housed alone.

As a way of rehabilitating them, the Church is offering health services to them. The Shauri Moyo Baptist Church Child Care Development Centre screen the street children in the rehabilitation programme three times a year. The children are also taught hygiene and health care lessons every Saturday. At St. Benedict Parish, all the children brought to the rehabilitation centre are de-wormed. Those wounded are taken to Kenyatta Hospital for treatment. The ones with mild problems are taken to Uzima Clinic. The Church also meets their dental problems. Many children had to have their teeth filled or extracted.

Finally the Church is helping these children maintain their health through body hygiene. At every Church Rehabilitation Centre, the Church provides clean water, soap and a towel. It has been made compulsory for them to bathe before any other activities in the centres. They are also encouraged to feed on proper food to prevent stomach ailment and dental cavities. All these activities aim at providing good health for all ex-street children.

5:3:4

REHABILITATION THROUGH MANNER OF DRESS

The Church has observed that most street children have developed a negative attitude towards normal and proper dressing. They prefer to walk in dark, dirty and greasy tattered clothes. Their bodies are also dirty and move around carrying dirty and stale heaps of collection. This presumably is their identification or trademark. When they are given new clothes, many either sell them or they are not washed from the day they get them to the day they are thrown away.

In all rehabilitation centres, the Church provides good clothes for them. They are also taught to appreciate bright and clean clothes. At St. Benedict Parish, children are provided with clothes donated by well wishers e.g. the Kenya Bus Service, Lions Club of Kenya and also the parishioners. At 'Kwetu Home of Peace', for Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, children are also

provided with new clothes from well wishers as well as from the parishioners.

5:3:5 SPIRITUAL AND MORAL REHABILITATION

According to Fr. Okumu, 'the phenomena of street children is a new-comer in the society which had not been prepared for codes of ethics and behaviour. Hence, it is rather hard to know specifically how to deal with them¹⁸'. They are a delicate people, considering their plight who need a lot of affection and understanding. Any approach towards moral rehabilitation must be soft, sympathetic as well as forgiving. They are violent and also always fighting to find a place in the society that does not accept them.

The other problem that faces the Church in its moral rehabilitation endeavours is the fact that these children belong to different ages, ethnic communities and standards of education and understanding. As such it is very hard to rehabilitate them. However, it is from the view that 'If a child does not have foundation he will make an adult without foundation¹⁹' that the Church is trying to give them both moral and spiritual rehabilitation.

In most rehabilitation centres, the Church tries to go through the Bible with these children and interpreting it to their level of understanding. At Shauri Moyo Baptist Church, they try to

help the children attain Christian maturity by teaching them Bible stories every Saturday morning. At St. Benedict Parish, according to Fr. Okumu, they try to study stories of people in the Bible who have suffered calamities and misfortunes and yet God was on their side e.g. Job. They are able to compare their miserable street life with these stories in the Bible. The intention of these stories is to give these children a vision in life so that they are able to see that life, though it may begin in the streets, should not always end there. The Bible stories therefore convince them that they can pick up their lives from the streets and have a bright future.

They are also introduced to heroes of different ethnic societies who could have began their lives in a miserable way. They are then given an opportunity to identify with the figures, time, locations and persons in these stories. This again 'gives them a positive attitude towards rehabilitation. They are then able to see that all is not lost²⁰'.

At some rehabilitation centres like St. Benedict Parish, each of the street children is given a chance to narrate their experiences and encounters in the streets. For example, they are able to narrate their encounters with other street children; people of different ages; police; juvenile prisons; rainy days; a day they were caught stealing and many more experiences. According to Fr. Okumu some feel sad when narrating these experiences, others feel like heroes while others are just indifferent. All this is supposed to make them appreciate their

past and make them focus on a better future. It also helps them appreciate their present, programmed and supervised life, which is aimed at giving them good morals. These encounters are also intended to highlight the fact that street children belong to a society that requires certain ways of behaviour, certain mode of thought, acceptable roles to play and they have to appreciate all this. If they were thieves at one time, they would share it with their friends as a past activity. This way the Church is able to shape their behavioural patterns.

Finally the Church encourages them to identify with spiritual centres of their choice. These are Churches and mosques or whatever the larger community around them finds healthy for their spiritual nourishment.

5:3:6 REHABILITATION OF STREET CHILDREN TO THEIR CITIZENSHIP

The Church has observed that although street children may look courageous, from the outset they are fragile and cowardly. They respond to anything with suspicion. A mere sign of a policeman would scare them off. They have developed strong hatred for uniformed police. They equate them to torture and pain. Whenever they hear or see a policeman, they think of being arrested. They fear that policemen do not understand their plight.

In their rehabilitation efforts, the Church has been trying to explain to these children ideas about law keeping. They also try to reconcile them with law keepers, i.e., the police. They explain that the police are peace loving and that their aim is to protect them and give them a new life. The Church also tries to explain to them that in any arrest of street children, there is a positive goal, e.g., putting them in Approved Schools where they can go through normal school life or being reconciled with their relatives.

This task however has not been easy. There are times when the Church would look like it has achieved its goal but when one of the street children is arrested, they become disoriented and they go back to their old fears. This knowledge of their peers in prison changes their attitude towards law and the role of the police. Fr. Okumu said that he had almost eradicated this fear in his rehabilitation centre until one of his street children was arrested and charged with collaborating with thieves. Despite all this, the Church is continuing to advance the meaning of law and order to the street children.

Although it is not easy to make street children appreciate law and order, it is a very important rehabilitation action which would become law keepers themselves when they grow up. Besides, their rehabilitation would not be complete without them adjusting in the society which of course has law and order. These children have to know their place in the society and the roles they are supposed to play. Therefore, rehabilitation of street children

to their citizenship is a very commendable and noble course the Church is undertaking.

5:3:7 REHABILITATION THROUGH SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

It is from a realisation that the street children are from a very poor background and might not have gotten a chance to travel or to have social gathering, that the Church has considered social activities as one step towards rehabilitation process. Hence the Church sponsors them for tours to various parts of the country which would be of interest to them, e.g., the animal orphanage and the airport. At Free Pentecostal Church Kawangware, with assistance from Compassion International, they take the street children for excursions to the Rift Valley, Lake Nakuru Game Park, Lake Magadi and many other places. The same thing happens at Dandora Baptist Church Street Children Programme and Kariobangi Baptist Church, Kibera Church of God; Kawangware Free Pentecostal Church; Deliverance Church Kawangware and others. According to the Coordinator of Dandora Baptist Church Street Children Programme, these excursions are supposed to make the street children feel that they are part of the society.

The other forms of social activities are games. At St. Benedict Church (Rwaraka) they leave the children to identify with whatever game they liked. The games offered are Football, Netball, Volleyball and indoor games which include Badminton, Scramble, Table Tennis, Word Puzzles and Biblical games. They

also have Athletics. At St. Teresas Church (Eastleigh), sporting activities were adopted as a way of re-directing their energies so that they could stop fighting amongst themselves. According to Omoto, (street children teacher), sports proved to be very popular to them. They formed a soccer team which has been representing St. Teresas Church in Inter-Catholic Church Games.

Scouting was also adopted as a rehabilitation activity. At St. Teresas Parish, they have a scouting team of about twelve former street children. These boys are fully trained in the scouting field. They are also involved in the national scouting activities, i.e., they join other Kenyan scouts in Nyeri annually for Founders Day.

Finally, street children are rehabilitated through music and cultural dances as well as drama. Together with catering for their physical fitness, these activities help the street children to live a normal life like any other children in the republic. They usually hold competitions in these activities with other children from other Church Rehabilitation Centres. This enables them to focus on a bright future. Street life becomes history to them and with time they become fully rehabilitated.

5:3:8 REHABILITATION THROUGH NON-INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH AND THROUGH ARTIFICIAL FAMILIES

In all the Churches visited except the Southern Baptist Church, Dagoretti, it was argued that it was not the Churches intention

to board these children. The Church did not want to uproot a child from the natural families. The Church identifies and studies the problems facing each child and then tries to reconcile them with their parents. The St. Charles Lwanga Brothers have given a condition that they would only help a child who is ready to be reconciled with his parents. Hence the child is taken back to the family, and from there he and the family receive all the necessary help. The Coordinator of Shauri Moyo Baptist Church Child Development Programme argued that, 'a child can be an agent of change in the society²¹'. Hence through reconciling a street child with his parents, he will be able to reach his parents, siblings and even the community around him.

In situations where a child is identified as an orphan and without relatives around, he is given natural homes by Christians in the Church. At the St. Benedict Church in Ruwaraka, members of the Christian Community agree to stay with all those children identified as orphans. While they would offer them food and shelter, the Parish would cater for their other needs.

Although the Church has tried to integrate and rehabilitate street children to the wider community, the problem however, has been on the increase. Rehabilitation of the street children though noble, and commendable course, seems only to create room for more children. The more the number is swelling up the urban streets, the more the hopes for lasting solutions seem to recede to Utopian dreams. The study is not being pessimistic whatsoever, but the question then raised is whether this problem

can be prevented? The answer could be yes or no, but as the saying goes, man-made disasters can always find man-made solutions. What then has the Church done to prevent the problem?

5:4 PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

The problem of street children is unique in that it has defied all the curative measures. It is deeper and far beyond provision of food, shelter, social activities and other curative measures that others have adopted. Despite all the efforts made by the Church and all the concerned organizations and bodies, the problem has continued to grow. The problem then requires prevention rather than cure. It is however not very easy to prevent marginalization of tens of thousands of children in slums and urban streets. This would call for a policy designed specifically and strictly for the urban poor who generate these children. This is because as it has been observed in this study, street children are the end product of a long chain of innumerable causes and effects which are themselves triggered off by urban poverty. The Church has now realised this and it is embarking on programmes that aim at prevention rather than cure.

5:4 PREVENTION THROUGH COMMUNITY CENTRES

One promising approach towards prevention of the problem of street children has been through rehabilitation of poor mothers

and young girls through community development. The Church has realized that it is difficult to separate a child in difficult conditions from a mother with the same plight. This preventive strategy was taken up by all Presbyterian Churches visited. Some Catholic Churches also had the same programme.

In these community centres, the mothers and the young girls are given vocational skills such as tailoring, weaving and knitting. By so doing they are able to earn a living and help themselves and their families. These activities go a long way in changing the attitude of these deprived people towards themselves and the society. When they have an income generating activity, they forget begging or promiscuous life. This gives them a sense of belonging in the society. With these skills and right attitudes they are able to participate in development and uplift their standards of living.

The Church is also encouraging the street children mothers to join together in women groups. The parents of St. Lwanga Street Children Programme must belong to a certain self help group where they can get help from the Christian Community of St. Charles Lwanga Brothers. The social worker of St. Charles Lwanga acts as an advisor of these groups. They are taught basic entrepreneurship and business management. Whatever self help they wish to begin, they are given the initial capital which is in form of a loan. Through this scheme, the parents are able to maintain themselves and to feed their children well. Many of them have benefited from this scheme and are able to maintain

their children with very little help from the Church. At the time of the study, a few parents only required a few stationery for their children in school from the Church. They were able to cater for the rest of the requirements.

5:4:2 PREVENTION THROUGH PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN THE REHABILITATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

The Church has realized the need to rehabilitate street children with the help of their parents. This discourages a beggar attitude which is, as Fr. Okumu observed, very prominent in the slums. While the parents are participating in the rehabilitation of their children, they get rehabilitated themselves by coming out of the environment and being made to appreciate busy, orderly and clean life. Alcohol which is common in the slums is at the same time discouraged.

St Benedicts Parish, St. Lwanga Brothers and Shauri Moyo Baptist Church, have formed a street children association. At St. Benedicts Parish, this committee meets every Saturday to discuss the plight, the progress and the future of the children. They are also supposed to organise the running of the rehabilitation project. Finally, they are involved in activities like cleaning, washing and cooking for their children.

Also at St. Charles Lwanga Rehabilitation Centre, all parents concerned are supposed to participate in the buying of food.

They are therefore made to contribute two shillings every day for the children's meals. According to Coordinator, St. Charles Lwanga, Street Children Programme, 'this would make the parents look for the two shillings instead of having a beggar attitude²²'. During this meeting the parents are discouraged from coming to the Centre with tattered or dirty clothing. Coming to the Centre when drunk is also an offence. Again, this makes them appreciate normal life. They make efforts to be clean, to be well dressed and to do without alcohol for some time.

By bringing in the parents and children together the Church has gone a long way in arresting the problem from the roots. When the parents find people who appreciate them the way they are and are ready to help them, only if they cooperate, they are encouraged to work towards uplifting their standards of living. They also exchange ideas on how the problem can be arrested from the root. Since they have brought children they cannot support, they are able to think of solutions, e.g. having small families in future whom they can support.

5:4:3 PREVENTION THROUGH PUTTING UP AFFORDABLE SHELTERS

Before a child takes to the street, he considers the situation at home. Many of them do take to the streets due to the congestion at home. According to Brother Patrick of St. Charles Lwanga Centre, 'many street children are in the streets because

there is nowhere else they can be²³. Their homes are just carton and polythene Igloos. Such children would not be convinced to go back home even if they were promised free education.

As a way of preventing the number to continue swelling up the urban streets, the Church is helping the families to put up affordable shelter. According to a social worker at St. Lwanga Rehabilitation Centre, they make the street children parents identify amongst themselves the most needy person whom they help to put up a semi-permanent home that can stand the rain and the floods. With time they are able to put up affordable shelters for those who have no shelters in the rehabilitation centres. They also help them build sanitation and drainage systems.

With proper shelters, they are able to encourage street children to join their families from where they can be helped. Affordable shelters have significantly helped to curb the flight of children to the streets.

5:4:4 PREVENTION THROUGH MORAL AND SPIRITUAL OUTREACH

Many Church leaders argued that, if the society feared God and appreciated a child as a gift from God there would be no problem of street children. As such, the Church has been organising counselling and Christian outreach to the slum community. The aim of this Christian outreach is to try and build a moral and

responsible society. This is the case of Mlango Kubwa Kenya Assemblies of God Church.

The Church has also singled out the family for these Christian outreach. This is because the family is the most important single and basic component of the society. It then tries to strengthen the family bond and encouraging small families which they can adequately cater for.

All these activities aim at preventing the problem of street children. However, as it has been noted, the problem has continued to grow in magnitude. In spite of its growth, the Churches role in the rehabilitation of street children is commendable.

5:5 CASE STUDIES

5:5:1 ST. BENEDICTS CHURCH STREET CHILDREN REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

The programme was initiated in early 1993. The Parish Priests Fr. Klous and Fr. Okumu thought of ways they could help the young children who were roaming scavenging for food in the areas around the Church. They identified the cause of the phenomena as fast growth of Nairobi which had caused a lot of social, economic and spiritual stress. They also identified the slums as the major

sources of these children. These are the unplanned and unserviced settlements where poverty reigns.

These Church priests, felt they could not carry out their pastoral duties adequately and with a clear consciousness when they were always in contact with these deprived children. In February 1993, Fr. Okumu called his Parishioners for a meeting which comprised of the Youth and the Elders. They laid down a project proposal of how they could help the street children around the Parish.

They identified two categories of street children. Full time street children and those who would come to the streets during the day and go home in the evenings. They therefore decided to design ways of curbing the flight of these children to the streets. To start with, they decided to enlarge their informal school and the Vocational Institute to cater for the street children. At the Vocational Institute they teach trades like carpentry, mechanic, metal work and panel beating.

They allowed these youth to identify with whatever suited them. They also started sporting programmes like soccer, volleyball netball and others. They have started Maendeleo ya Wasichana which rehabilitates and gives trade to bigger street girls.

For the young street children, they began by trying to reconcile them with their parents. They therefore found it necessary to work jointly with these parents. This led to the formation of

Street Children Parents Association. This Association would meet on weekly basis to discuss the plight and the future of their children. The parents were also involved in the cleaning, cooking and washing of the children. They would give suggestions on what rehabilitation strategies would be taken.

The Church however did not want to put these children in an institution. It wishes to reconcile them with their parents. It would give them all the required help when they are at home. For instance, the Church offers them two meals in a day. It also reinstates the rehabilitated ones to normal schools.

Hence the St. Benedicts Church rehabilitates street children through education programmes, health programmes, feeding and others which have been discussed at length in this study. Those identified as orphans according to Fr. Okumu are given temporary natural homes by the Parishioners. The work force comprises of one trained Social Worker, one Field Worker, one Classroom Facilitator and his Assistant. Others who provide labour are the parents of the street children and also the Parishioners.

The project, at the time of the study, was being sustained by the Parishioners on Parish donation. There is also donation from well wishers like Kenya Bus Service Corporation, Lions Club of Kenya and many others. The Church had also started cultivating a garden to supplement their kitchen needs.

The Church had a future plan of taking agriculture as part of the rehabilitation activities. It has also realised that the children do enjoy weeding and planting.

5:5:2 ST. TERESAS CHURCH STREET CHILDREN 'WATOTO WETU PROGRAMME

The programme was started by Fr. John Lemay in 1989. The Church being situated in Eastleigh close to Mathare and Eastleigh slums was faced with a problem of street children who would hang around the Church sniffing glue and begging for money. Fr. Lemay was moved by their plight and the alarming increase of the number. He therefore decided to help them in all ways possible.

He began by calling all the Social Workers for a meeting and together they drew a proposal on how these young children could be helped. They decided to begin a feeding programme. Initially the children were invited to feed after which they would go back to the streets. This programme continued for about three weeks. Fr. Lemay then realized that feeding these children was not all they needed. He then raised the question of education.

Though the Parishioners applauded the idea of informal school for street children, he realised after several attempts in implementing it, that school was not popular with these children. He therefore designed a curriculum in which the children would learn for one hour a day, and then devote the rest of the time to playing and finally eat and go home. This way, they were able

to achieve their goal as children enjoy being in class for a short time and then playing. With time, the children were taught to be patient by the Instructor and by the time this study was being carried out, the children were learning for three hours a day. They were being introduced to Mathematics, Kiswahili, English and Christian Religious Education.

According to teacher Omoto, the programme started with about fifty children and by the time of the study, there were one hundred children. As they continued to be rehabilitated, the priest decided to hire some rooms for them in Mathare where they could do their study in the evenings comfortably. This is because they had complained of congestion at home which was preventing them from doing their homework.

The programme had been able to identify some children who can fit in a normal school life. These children are sent to various schools for interviews and when they pass they are reinstated back in these schools. At the time of the study, the programme had two boys at Karura Primary School who according to Omoto, were doing very well.

The Church also identified some boys who were beyond school going age. These ones were given vocational skills like carpentry and mechanic. The Church's intention is to give them a skill that will be able to help them in their future.

The programme also has sporting activities. These were started as a method of re-directing their (street children) energies so that they could stop fighting and also stop sniffing glue. They have football, volleyball and athletics. They have also organized a scouting club of about twelve boys. They go through normal scouting training and are involved in national scouting activities, e.g. going to Nyeri annually for Founders Day.

The programme also caters for the children's medical needs. The children are also taught to appreciate cleanliness by bathing and changing clothes everyday. They are also helped to stop taking drugs. They are reconciled with their families and they are given spiritual nourishment. The programme is sustained by the Church.

5:5:3 KANGEMI CHURCH OF GOD STREET CHILDREN REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

The program was begun by Church members in 1986. The Church being near the Kangemi slums, felt compelled to help children who just roamed about collecting papers and other things for sale. According to David Anambo, the Programme Coordinator, they felt that helping these children was a calling from God.

The Church members however, were unable to raise enough funds, and hence the programme could not take off immediately. They

therefore approached the Compassion International (Christian Body) and requested them to fund the project which they did.

The programme helps the children develop physically, socially and spiritually. On the spiritual side, they normally meet the children under the programme on Saturdays for Bible lessons. They also organise Christian rallies and invite other children from various rehabilitation centres. They also physically help their children by reinstating them back to school giving them vocational schools. Socially, the Church organises tours so that the children can familiarise themselves with the environment and have time to interact with other people in the society. They also organize seminars upon which they would invite different people in the society to give them theological, social or educational lectures.

At the time of the study the programme had one hundred and thirty two children reinstated in different schools. Others were in the informal sector learning skills like carpentry. All the children interviewed said that they were very happy to be in the project.

5:6 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE CHURCHES IN THE REHABILITATION OF STREET CHILDREN

Each and every Church visited sighted several problems they have encountered in the rehabilitation of street children. These are:

- (1) Health of the children. Due to their feeding habits and the physical environment they live in, they have all kinds of diseases and injuries as it has been discussed in this study. Some of the health problems would cost the Church a lot of money.
- (2) The Church was also faced with the problem of extreme drug addiction. The Church had to decide whether it had to cut off the drug intake or to encourage them to reduce the intake. Whatever method was used the children were ready to return to the streets rather than stop taking drugs. The Church had to fight a double edged war of retaining the children and at the same time discouraging any intake of drugs of all kinds.
- (3) To go along with the drug intake, some Churches like St. Teresas had to fight any sale of drugs like glue which the street children heavily rely on. Accordingly, some of the glue sellers had to be arrested, but, to the disappointment of the Church, no sooner were they arrested, than they found them in the streets again with their wares. It was like the Church was fighting a losing battle.
- (4) The other problem is that street children are used to begging and it is very hard to adopt to physical work. When they are taken to class, they get bored and lose interest very fast.

- (5) Street children are not used to programmed life. As such they are impatient with everything and amongst themselves. They become irritable as a result of this impatience and result in fighting.
- (6) It is very hard to make the street children appreciate clean and bright clothes. The Church has been faced with a problem of donating clothes which are sold immediately or they are not washed until they are discarded.
- (7) The Church was also faced with the problem of demolition of slums. When the slums are demolished they either lose their children from the project or it becomes the Churches burden to house them.
- (8) There are some parents who are ignorant and would rather their children beg in the streets rather than being in rehabilitation programmes. Such parents normally pullout their children from the projects so that they can beg in the streets.
- (9) Finally many Churches claimed to have financial problems. A lot of money is needed to keep such projects running. A times the money donated by the Church Community is not enough for running such projects. This has made the Church to look elsewhere for donations which are not always forthcoming.

5:7 CRITICAL APPRAISALS ON THE ROLE THE CHURCH HAS
PLAYED IN THE REHABILITATION OF STREET CHILDREN

It is very commendable that the Church in Kenya has recognised its role and duties towards the poor. It cannot be denied that it has been a sign of hope to the street children and this clearly indicates that it has not only been a hero of faith but a hero of compassion too. But the increasing number of street children points to the fact that much more needs to be done.

For better services to these children, all activities and services to them needs to be coordinated. At the time of the study, Church services to the street children were not coordinated. This is with the exception of the Catholic Church which had formed street children committee of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Lack of coordination creates confusion to the people being served. For better services all Religious Organizations including the Church should work as one body.

Most Church services towards these children have tended to concentrate on feeding programmes. Feeding, though an immediate need, would only create a beggar attitude. Those being fed will never be able to feed themselves adequately in the future if they are not equipped with the necessary skills. As the saying goes, for a person to keep on eating fish, he should not be given fish because he will finish and go for more, instead, he should be given a fishing net and proper fishing skills which will be a

guarantee to the future. Street children need to be equipped with skills which would be a guarantee to their future.

Some of these Church rehabilitation centres have untrained staff. Some do not have basic knowledge of handling children and they end up ruining the children instead of reforming them. Some centres visited, had staff that did not command respect from the children. Some would not know what to do when these children started fighting. For good services to these children, it is important to have trained staff.

There are some rehabilitation centres that did not have contact with the children's relatives. They would rely on the information given by a child which can be misleading. Many children are taking advantage of the fact that the Church is very compassionate, and they come up with very moving stories about their lives. It is very important for the Churches to have contact with the child's relatives as one step towards rehabilitation.

A few Churches visited have very poor outreach activities. They wait for these children to come to their centres. It would be a more authentic course if the Churches and other Religious bodies went out to the streets for those who are too hard or proud to walk to the rehabilitation centres.

Finally, the Christian community can be criticized for not being fully committed to the rehabilitation activities. Some Church

programmes heavily rely on outside donors. The first donor should be the Christian community in the particular Church that has a rehabilitation programme. When the project is large, then the other outside donors can come in. Therefore, the Christian community should be ready to fund their programmes and should not always rely on outside help.

Therefore, the study shows that the Church has a role in rehabilitation of street children. Indeed it has honoured its role and it is working towards a solution to this social problem. The success of the Church as one Church leader argued, depends wholly on the governments concerned. Whatever the Church has done so far shows that it cannot be removed from the society.

5:8

NOTES

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6:1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION

This study has been on the role of the Church in the rehabilitation of street children. In the first chapter, the problem of the study was identified as the increasing number of unprotected children in the urban streets. The study therefore set out to investigate the place of a child in the past and contemporary societies; to study the factors behind the emergence of the phenomena of street children; to find out their needs; to study what the Church was doing to eradicate the problem and to attempt to finding solutions to the problem.

All these objectives were successfully met and satisfied. Hence, from the survey, it was found that the phenomena of street children is unique in the contemporary society. It was absent in the Biblical world view and in the African traditional societies. The study observed that in both these societies a child was valued as a gift from God. He was the recipient of love and care and as such it was by bearing a child a woman could achieve her true purpose in life. In the African traditional setting the child belonged to the whole society. The extended family played a major role in the upbringing of a child. Hence,

a child in these two societies was protected unlike in today's society where a child belongs to his parents only. The study then reveals that there were no records of unprotected or street children in both the biblical world view and the African traditional societies.

The study also indicates that the phenomena of street children is not unique in any particular Nation. It is not a problem of the richest or the poorest of nations. It is widespread and global. Though the greatest concentration is in developing countries, e.g., Latin America, Africa, India and others.

A historic review of the phenomena of street children in Kenya, shows that it was there during colonial time. At that time it was the result of land alienation. The study also observes that the land problem was not properly addressed in the independent Kenya and thousands of families continued to squat in the slums. These slums have continued to generate more and more street children.

Today's problem of street children however, as this study shows is the end product of modernization and fast growth of modern cities. Rapid social and economic changes have led to the increase of urban poverty. In Africa they have led to reducing of extended family to nuclear family. As such the child is no longer a child of the society but his parents. With new life styles where by single parentage is becoming more and more common and with the strenuous economic situation, the child is no longer

an asset but viewed as a burden. This extreme urban poverty has been made worse by rural urban migration. Also this strenuous economic situation has led to loosened family bonds manifested in fighting, divorce, or separation. All these problems, as the study observes have led to the flight of children to the streets.

The study also reveals that there has been positive response to the plight of street children. The Kenya Government is making efforts through the Children's Department, Ministry of Home Affairs to come up with solutions to the problem. However, its major services are through institutions like Approved School. The society has had a wide range of responses. Some people have responded negatively, e.g., using these children to perpetrate anti-social activities like trafficking drugs. There are others who have responded positively to the plight of these children and are trying to rehabilitate them. Non governmental organizations (NGOs) have also responded positively to the plight of street children. The notable organization is Undugu Society.

Although the Government of Kenya and the NGOs have responded positively to the problem of street children the question raised is, what is the position of the Church? From the study of various activities of the Church towards the problem in Nairobi, the following conclusions can be drawn:

That the Church has a role to play in eradicating this problem. This affirmed the third hypothesis of the study.

The Church leaders said that, the Church is part of the society that is faced with this problem. It was also argued that any theology that separates the Church from the social problems is wrong theology. This argument negated the second hypothesis of the study.

The study also revealed that the Church has played a major role in the eradication of this social problem. It has designed both curative and preventive strategies in order to arrest the problem from the roots. The survey shows that seventy five per cent (75%) of the Churches visited had street children rehabilitation programmes. The few that had not started claimed that they did not have funds for such projects. This again proved wrong the first hypothesis of this study.

However, despite all the efforts by the Church and the concerned groups of people, the study indicates that the problem of street children has continued to grow in magnitude. It therefore calls for preventive rather than curative services. This study will therefore give recommendations to the Church and other concerned religious organizations in an attempt at finding solutions to the problem of street children.

6:2 TOWARDS A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF STREET CHILDREN

The emerging picture from the study suggests that the solutions to the problems of street children should be sought not in the

rehabilitation of those already in the streets but in the prevention of their flight to the streets. The study therefore suggests that the Church and any other Religious Organisation concerned, should first and seriously study the problem of street children. It should clearly identify the prevailing forces that push the children to the streets. Finally the Church should form a committee to deliberate on these forces and carefully draw a proposal on how to deal with each problem individually. Some forces identified in this study are social, economic and even political.

The Church should address itself to poverty and especially the urban poverty. Poverty in this study has been singled out as the major pushing force of these children to the streets. It is because of poverty that these children live in appalling shelters; are not able to meet their school requirements; are not able to feed properly and it is poverty that brings tension to the homes leading to fighting and separation. Therefore, talking about solutions to the problem of street children is tantamount to finding ways to eradicating poverty. The Church should aim at uplifting the socio-economic lives of the masses. It should also condemn vehemently all those unjust systems in the society that help to perpetrate poverty and hence oppressing the poor.

Lack of proper shelter, has been one of the major pushing forces, of children to the streets, as the study indicates. Many of these families that generate street children live in shelters that are not different from the streets, perhaps even worse. The

Church should help such desperate families to put up affordable shelters. It should also sensitize the Government Ministry concerned on the need to help in putting up affordable shelters for these families.

In view of the fact that education is a right to all children the Church should try to provide education to children in difficult conditions. At present, many Churches in Nairobi are running Primary Schools. These schools can be expanded to cater for a few more children in difficult conditions. The Church should sensitize the Government on its responsibility to not only make education compulsory, but also accessible to every child. This can be achieved by making education free, for all children.

The Church should draw its attention to the family unit. The study indicates that some children are in the streets as a result of loosened or broken family bonds. The Church therefore should design ways of mending or strengthening the family bond. This can be achieved through outreach missions to the affected areas. The Church can form a committee specifically for this activity. This Committee should aim at mending bonds through counselling. It should also aim at highlighting on the sanctity of the institution of marriage.

The Church should also help those families in extreme difficult conditions. Some families have no way of earning a living. The Church can therefore work out a sufficient and supportive solution using minimum resources. This could be done through

group work whereby the heads of these families are put together in groups of about twenty people. They are taught basic skills in entrepreneurship and given some funds to start an income generating activity. They should be taught how to manage their business successfully. This way they will be able to support their families and reduce the number of suffering children. Some Churches have adopted this activity as a preventive strategy but it should be adopted on a larger scale to produce better results.

The Church should condemn the demolition of slum settlement. Nairobi in the past few years has witnessed extensive demolition of squatter settlements leaving thousands of families and specifically children in the cold. This is a situation where rights of a child are trampled on. In most cases demolition of slums is followed by construction of maisonettes purportedly meant to house the poor. Those evicted from their squatting settlements may not afford such housing. The resources lying fallow, i.e., land, should be utilized to re-settle such families prior to demolition. The Church should therefore identify with the squatters and condemn any move to destabilize their day to day living.

Political instabilities like ethnic clashes should also be condemned. These clashes have rendered children homeless and some orphaned. Those without relatives take to the streets. The Church should find ways of reconciling the warring communities for the sake of the children.

Finally, the Church should initiate social development programmes at community level where appropriate. Many poor communities, e.g., the slum squatters, lack self confidence. This lack of self confidence is brought about by lack of development activities in these areas. These are areas usually referred to as forgotten areas where sanitation, clean water and proper communication are absent. The Church should encourage and stimulate self confidence by initiating programmes that are aimed at opening up these areas. This way the communities will be made to realize that they have the capacity to take care of their children. This would also encourage the community to look for the causes of their problems and to be able to recommend to the Church on proper solutions. The Church should advise the Government on the need of a budget allocation in form of health and education for these poor communities to pre-empt the problem of street children.

The Church should also design activities intended to hold the rural population. Regional development projects which are income generating and can create employment for the rural people should be initiated. This would cut down the rural urban migration which has led to overcrowding in the residential areas especially the slums.

After designing the preventive measures, curative services should be provided. While trying to rehabilitate the street children, the central consideration should be the needs of a child. The Church should try to identify the needs of each child and then

give him the care that he requires. A lot of emphasis should be placed on the future of a child. Although feeding such children is a good approach, attempts should be made to give a child skills that would help him meet his needs in the future. Feeding a child would only cater for his immediate needs and leave him a dependant. Informal schools and vocational institutions should be put up to cater for their needs. Those who can be reinstated in the normal schools should be encouraged to join the schools. There should be efforts to give the moral and spiritual rehabilitation, so that they can fit well in the society.

The Church should emphasize on non-institutional approach. It should reinstate the street children to their parents through reconciliation with the rest of the family members. This is because institutions however well managed they are, would never replace a family.

Finally, to be able to tackle the problem of street children, there is need for cooperation between the Churches as remarked earlier in the study. Through this cooperation the Church will be able to study properly the problem of street children and be able to form a strong base for their services to these children. Once they have identified the causes of the phenomena of street children, each Church can deal with one cause and be able to render effective services to the community. Another Church can deal with a different need, e.g., housing, and do it satisfactorily. There is also a need for the Church/Government corporation. This is because for a development plan to be

successful it has to have backing from the Government as it is the Government that makes policies. The Government can approve or disapprove a proposed project. Hence, for the success of the Church, it should work hand in hand with the Government.

Where necessary, the Church should seek external aid for rehabilitation prospects. By doing so, a Church does not lose its independence like was purported by the Independent Churches. If this aid would help to solve the existing problem of street children, it should not be objected. The Compassion International is an example of a Christian organization that has sponsored many street children in Nairobi. This however does not mean that the recipients become dependants. With time the Church should find ways of funding its own projects.

Therefore solutions to the problem of street children can be found. The activities of the Church towards this social problem so far are commendable but there is still much more that can be done. The Church should be God's steward and should see to it that the masses are comfortable.

This study however would not purport to have exhausted all there is on street children. There is need for further research on the subject especially on the consumption of drugs by street children. Such a study should aim at finding out the sources of these drugs and whether there can be alternative to drugs.

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8. APPENDICES

8:1 APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRES

A. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE VICTIMS; I.E.; CHILDREN

A. GENERAL QUESTIONS

- (i) Name of Respondent.....
- (ii) Male or Female.....
- (iii) Age.....
- (iv) Interviewers Name.....
- (v) Date.....
- (vi) Questionnaire Number.....

B. 1. Where were you born, i.e., District?

.....

2. Is your father alive?

Yes () No ()

3. If yes, what is his occupation?

.....

4. If no, what happened to him?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Is your mother alive?

Yes () No ()

6. If yes, what is her occupation?

.....

If no, when did she die?

.....

7. Have you ever gone to school?

(i) Yes ()

(ii) No ()

8. If yes, where?.....

9. If no, why?

10. How many children were you in your family?

.....

11. Where are they now?

.....

12. When did you decide to come to the streets?

.....

13. What reasons made you come to the streets?
- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
14. What were your first experiences in the streets?
-
-
-
-
15. Do you like being in the streets?
- (i) Yes ()
- (ii) No ()
16. Give reasons for your answer.
- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
17. Do you go back home in the evenings or you sleep on the pavements?
-

18. Would you like to go back home and never come back to the streets?

Yes () No ()

19. If no, why?

(1)
 (2)
 (3)
 (4)
 (5)

20. If somebody promised to take you with him to his house, and take care of you, would you agree?

(1) Yes ()

(2) No ()

21. Give reasons for your answer.

(1)
 (2)
 (3)
 (4)
 (5)

22. What if somebody promised to take you back to school, pay your fees, buy you uniform, books and school bag, would you agree?

(1) Yes ()

(2) No ()

23. Give reasons for your answers.

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

24. Do you take drugs like sniffing glue?

- (i) Yes ()
- (ii) No ()

25. If yes, why do you take drugs?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

26. About how much money do you get in a day?

.....

27. Is it enough for your feeding?

.....

28. Do you go to Church on Sundays?

- (i) Yes ()
- (ii) No ()

29. Give reasons for your answer.

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

30. What would you like to be when you grow up?

.....

31. If somebody promised you a present of any kind,
what would you ask for?

.....

32. Is there anybody who harasses you in the streets?

(i) Yes ()

(ii) No ()

If yes, who and why?

- (1).....
- (2).....
- (3).....
- (4).....
- (5).....

33. Do you think anybody loves you in this world?

(i) Yes ()

(ii) No ()

Give reasons for your answer.

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

34. What would you like the Church to do for you?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)

35. Is there anything else you would like the society to know about the life you live in the streets?

- (i) Yes ()
- (ii) No ()

36. If yes, state your needs, hopes and aspirations for the society to know.

- (1).....
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

B. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CHURCH

A. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Name of the Respondent.....
2. Age.....
3. Questionnaire Number.....
4. Interviewers Name.....
5. Date.....
6. Name of the Church.....
7. Denomination.....
8. Location of the Church.....

- B. 1. How is the Church supposed to serve humanity in general?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

2. Can the Church be removed from the social affairs of the community?

(i) Yes () (ii) No ()

3. Give reasons for your answer.

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

4. Is there Biblical guidance to your answer?

(i) Yes () (ii) No ()

5. If yes, quote the specific parts of the Bible.

.....

6. What is your Church's position on the plight of the poor?

.....

7. According to the Church, what factors have led to young children to live in the streets and uncared for?

- (1).....
- (2).....
- (3).....
- (4).....
- (5).....

8. Who can be blamed for this phenomena of street children?
- (1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
9. Give reasons for your answer.
- (1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
10. Can the Church share in the blame?
- (i) Yes () No ()
11. Give reasons for your answer.
- (1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
12. Does the Bible teach anything about caring for children?
- (i) Yes () (ii) No ()

13. If yes, what does it teach?
.....
14. Can the Church be a home/parent substitute for these young children in the streets?
(i) Yes (ii) No ()
15. If yes, how can it go about it?
(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
16. Has the Church got any role in eradicating the problem of street children?
(i) Yes () (ii) No ()
17. Give reasons for your answer.
(1)
(2)
18. If it has a role, what has your Church done already?
(1).....
(2).....
(3).....

19. If it has not done anything already, does it have any future plans of seeking for these children a descent childhood?

(i) Yes () (ii) No ()

20. If yes, what plans does it have?

(1)

(2)

(3)

21. In what other ways can the church in Kenya eradicate the problem of street children?

(1)

(2)

(3)

22. Do you think lasting solutions to the problem of street children can be found?

(i) Yes () (ii) No ()

23. If yes, what lasting solutions can there be?

(1)

(2)

(3)

24. Is there anything else you can say about street
children and their relationship to the Church?

.....
.....

END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

8:2 APPENDIX II:

A. LIST OF INFORMANTS FROM THE CHURCH

1. Akatsa Mary : Jerusalem Church (Kawangware);
4/1/94.
2. Anambo David : Kangemi Church of God; 25/11/93
3. Ann Sister : Holy Cross Catholic Church Kariobangi;
9/12/93
4. Arrguin Father : Saint Micheal Catholic Church, Kibera;
8/12/93.
5. Arturo Father : Christ the King Church, Kibera;
31/01/94.
6. Augustus Onyango : Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic
Church, South B; 12/11/93.
7. Chekwel Sam (Pastor) : Southern Baptist Church, Dagoretti
Corner; 16/12/93
8. Don Pastor : Nairobi Light House; 16/12/93.
9. Francis Wafula : Shauri Moyo Baptist Church; 5/1/94
10. John Father : St. Josephs Catholic Church, Kangemi;
02/11/93.
11. Juma Mary : St. Peter Cleavers Catholic Church;
14/11/93.
12. Kariuki David : Bahati Community Centre; 14/11/93.
13. Kamau Peter : Kawangware AIPCEA Church; 21/11/93.
14. Kimotho Peter : Dandora Baptist Church; 21/12/93.
15. Kingoina, S. : SDA Maxwell Church Milimani; 24/11/93
(Pastor)
16. Kinyanjui David : Akurinu Church, Kawangware; 24/12/93.
17. Lusanji, N. (Captain) : The Salvation Army Headquarters,
Nairobi; 02/11/93.
18. Maromba, S. : Gospel Outreach, Ngara; 27/12/93.

19. Mungai, S. : CPK St. Michael and All Angels Church,
(Reverend) Kariobangi; 15/10/93.
20. Mwai Peter : PCEA Eastleigh Community Centre;
23/11/93.
21. Mwangi Samuel : Mathare AIPCEA Church; 26/12/93.
22. Mwiruri James : Dandora Holy Cross Catholic Church;
12/11/93.
23. Ndungu Haron : Assemblies of God, Mathare; 28/12/93.
24. Ndungu Samuel : AIPCA Church; 04/01/94.
25. Njenga John : All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi;
12/11/94.
26. Nganga Michael : Kangemi PCEA Church; 03/01/94.
27. Omondi Peter : Kibera Church of God; 05/01/94.
28. Okumu Victor : St. Benedicts Catholic Church,
Rwaraka; 22/11/93.
29. Otieno Daniel : Kariobangi Baptist Church; 28/11/93.
30. Ouma Dan : All Nations Church, Gikomba; 11/01/94.
31. Outa Fred : All Nations Church, Donholm;
08/12/93.
32. Omoti Joab : St. Teresas Catholic Church,
Eastleigh; 09/11/93.
33. Patrick Outta : St. Charles Lwanga Brothers; 15/11/93.
(Brother)
34. Racheal Nafuna : ADC Church Kawangware; 12/11/93.
35. Trudy Dorcas : Redeemed Gospel Church, Mathare;
29/11/93.
36. Wanjiru Martin : St. Martins Catholic Church, Kibagare;
03/11/93.
37. Wanjiru Ruth : Dandora PCEA Community Centre;
03/11/93.
38. Wafula David : Free Pentecostal Church, Kawangware;
14/11/93.
39. Wachira John : Dandora Full Gospel Church; 14/11/94.
40. White Sister : Pentecostal Church, Valley Road;
14/12/93.

B. INFORMANTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS -
 CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

1. Mr. Keraro Nyadoro : Provincial Children's Officer,
 Nairobi Province; 07/03/94.
2. Mr. Kabira Peter : Children's Officer, Nairobi;
 08/03/94.
3. Miss Jane Nyariki : Children's Officer, Nairobi;
 08/03/94.
4. Mrs. Joyce Wambua : Children's Officer, Nairobi;
 09/03/93.
5. Mr. Kooro George : Director, Getathuru Approved School;
 12/05/94.

C. INFORMANTS FROM THE STREETS, I.E., STREET CHILDREN

	NAME OF INFORMANT	MALE/ FEMALE	AGE YEARS	DATE
1.	Abdi Halima	Female	13	27/11/93
2.	Anembo Peter	Male	17	27/11/93
3.	Chege James	Male	17	11/11/93
4.	Deck (No other names given)	Male	10	07/12/93
5.	Gachiri	Male	17	26/01/94
6.	Kamau Antony	Male	16	18/11/93
7.	Kamau Jimmy	Male	7	07/12/93
8.	Kamau John	Male	16	08/12/93
9.	Kamau Johnson	Male	16	16/12/93
10.	Kamau Wanjiru	Male	10	10/10/93
11.	Kamte George	Male	7	07/01/93
12.	Kamae James	Male	17	06/01/94
13.	Kangara Raphael	Male	12	29/11/93
14.	Kangethe Joseph	Male	15	27/11/93
15.	Kanisa (nickname)	Male	13	10/12/93
16.	Kariuki Ezekiel	Male	13	27/11/93
17.	Kasusu Mary	Female	12	13/12/93
18.	Kiarie Peter	Male	10	06/01/94
19.	Kimani Joseph	Male	15	07/01/94
20.	Kinyanjui David	Male	17	28/11/93
21.	Kinyanjui Daniel	Male	19	20/12/93
22.	Kinuthia Peter	Male	6	07/12/93
23.	Kinyua Samuel	Male	15	07/01/94

24.	Kioko Juma	Male	8	13/12/94
25.	Kioko Daniel	Male	19	04/11/93
26.	Lekidilya Baka	Male	19	04/12/93
27.	Lillian (No other names given)	Female	13	01/12/93
28.	Macharia Simon	Male	11	22/11/93
29.	Maina James	Male	13	10/12/93
30.	Maina Kamau	Male	22	02/12/93
31.	Maina David	Male	19	04/12/93
32.	Maina Francis	Male	13	19/11/93
33.	Mathu David	Male	17	19/12/93
34.	Mbugua Michael	Male	18	14/11/93
35.	Mohammed Sheikh	Male	13	29/11/93
36.	Mukundi Peter	Male	12	26/11/93
37.	Mukundi Joseph	Male	19	11/11/93
38.	Muiruri John	Male	20	14/11/93
39.	Mumbi Jane	Female	16	12/11/93
40.	Mungai Joseph	Male	13	28/11/93
41.	Mungai John	Male	19	10/12/93
42.	Musyoka Paul	Male	14	19/12/93
43.	Musyoka Richard	Male	19	10/12/93
44.	Muthoni Virginia	Female	14	19/12/93
45.	Muthoni Nancy	Female	6	19/12/93
46.	Muthoni Mary	Female	13	03/10/93
47.	Mutiso John	Male	12	28/11/93
48.	Mutiso Tony	Male	9	04/11/93
49.	Muumbua Elizabeth	Female	11	20/11/93
50.	Mwangi Antony	Male	17	11/11/93

51.	Mwangi James	Male	16	13/12/93
52.	Mwangi James	Male	18	06/01/94
53.	Mwangi Samuel	Male	15	11/11/93
54.	Mwangi Samuel	Male	17	01/12/93
55.	Mwara James	Male	16	12/12/93
56.	Mwaura Gideon	Male	13	17/11/93
57.	Nderitu John	Male	12	27/10/93
58.	Nderitu Kagondou	Male	19	22/11/93
59.	Nduati John	Male	14	24/10/93
60.	Nduku Mary	Female	13	26/11/93
61.	Ndunge Esmael	Male	9	13/10/93
62.	Ngina Ruth	Female	12	19/12/93
63.	Njeri Monica	Female	14	15/10/93
64.	Njeri Veronica	Female	14	22/11/93
65.	Njiru Patrick	Male	13	27/11/93
66.	Njiru Sebastian	Male	10	07/01/94
67.	Njoroge John	Male	13	21/10/93
68.	Njuguna Peter	Male	16	21/10/93
69.	Njuguna Isack	Male	20	02/01/94
70.	Nyambura Ruth	Female	13	19/11/93
71.	Ochieng James	Male	13	01/11/93
72.	Ochieng Meshak	Male	17	23/11/93
73.	Ogolla Daniel	Male	15	04/10/93
74.	Okoth Peter	Male	16	22/11/93
75.	Omondi Joseph	Male	6	04/10/93
76.	Onyango Peter	Male	19	25/09/93
77.	Otieno Peter	Male	15	02/10/93

78.	Otieno Bernard	Male	18	07/01/94
79.	Owino Daniel	Male	12	16/12/93
80.	Reki (No other names given)	Female	10	04/10/93
81.	Semeti Kepha	Male	20	26/11/93
82.	Survivor (No other names)	Male	8	30/11/93
83.	Syombui Esther	Female	13	26/10/93
84.	Terry (No other names given)	Female	16	19/12/93
85.	Thuku Sam	Male	15	24/12/93
86.	Wachira Peter	Male	9	25/12/93
87.	Waithera Esther	Female	11	19/12/93
88.	Wairimu Joyce	Female	14	10/12/93
89.	Wahome Peter	Male	14	26/11/93
90.	Wambui Alice	Female	13	29/11/93
91.	Wambui Jane	Female	9	10/12/93
92.	Wambui Joan	Female	14	05/01/94
93.	Wangai Edward	Male	16	16/12/93
94.	Wangui Jane	Female	13	12/11/93
95.	Wanjiku Grace	Female	10	10/10/93
96.	Wanjira Caroline	Female	17	22/12/93
97.	Wanjiru Jane	Female	12	28/12/93
98.	Wanjiru Rose	Female	13	19/12/93
99.	Wanjohi Ndungu	Male	19	29/10/93
100.	Wanjui Abraham	Male	16	02/01/94