

## **TITLE**

# **Developing Evaluative Strategies for Harm Reduction Programme for Street Children in Durban: A PAR APPROACH**

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## **Declaration of Independent work**

This dissertation, unless otherwise indicated, represents the independent work of the candidate

## **ABSTRACT**

The research has been part of a larger study on developing evaluative strategies for programmes on street children in KwaZulu Natal. This study focussed on harm reduction programmes with reference to violence and crime. The phenomenon of street children has been seen to be caused by various interactive factors relating to the individual, the family, community and the society as a whole.

The research was guided by a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach utilizing multiple data sources and multiple focus groups with street children and service providers. Street children were given the space to talk about their experiences and to identify indicators of successful programmes. Shelter workers who are child care workers discussed programmes presented at the shelter and their impact on protecting and preventing children from exposure to violence and crime. They also discussed indicators of success in their programmes. Children indicated that successful programmes were characterised by consistency, fairness, non-discrimination, and that they take into account that street children are children too and that they can make mistakes. On the other hand child care workers described successful programmes as contributing to change in the life of a child, through social skills, attitude of the child and child's ability to be reunited with his family.

Programmes, which serve to protect street children from violence and crime should be monitored and evaluated so as to assess their effectiveness. Based on the findings of this study recommendations are made regarding the evaluation of programmes for street children

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The life of a street child is characterized by surviving through means of begging, prostitution and drug abuse (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 1987, Brown 1993). Street children are seen as survivors as they have to face the physical, social and emotional demands of the street without adult supervision (Swart 1988).

There were estimated 100 million street children in the world according to Brittany (2001). To date there are no official statistics available on the number of street children in South Africa. This is partly due to the nomadic lifestyles of street children as they move from one area to another (Swart 1988, Veeran, 1999). The estimated number of street children in KwaZulu Natal was 3000 (Mercury 08/06/05).

This chapter introduces the issue of harm reduction with specific reference to violence and crime. The aims and objectives of the study, significance of the problem, theoretical framework guiding the study, research questions, value of the study and definition of concepts are discussed.

This study was developed as part of the South African-Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) research study that aimed at developing evaluative methods of programmes of street children using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The SANPAD study has four main focus areas:

1. An audit of service providers for street children in KwaZulu Natal.
2. Harm reduction with specific reference to substance use.
3. Girl Child programmes.
4. Harm reduction, with specific reference to violence and crime.



This study deals with one focus area, that is, harm reduction with specific reference to violence and crime.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To explore existing programmes on harm reduction with specific reference to violence and crime.
2. To develop indicators for effective evaluation of such programmes.
3. To empower children and service providers through a participatory research method.
4. To make recommendations that would contribute to the development of manual detailing evaluation strategies for intervention programmes.

### **Research questions**

1. What programmes on harm reduction with reference to violence and crime are available for street children?
2. What are the indicators of success for these programmes?
3. How can harm reduction programmes with reference to violence and crime be evaluated?
4. How effective are these programmes in addressing exposure to violence and crime?
5. What role can children and service providers play in the development of effective evaluation on harm reduction programmes?

### **Background on street children**

Research on the life of a street child revealed that street children are constantly exposed to violence. Ordinary people, shop owners and the police perpetrate this exposure. At times street children are viewed as nuisance in

the cities and they therefore are ill-treated (Byrne 1998, Veeran 1999, Human Right Watch 1997, Swart 1988).

The international's children summit held in 1992 highlighted that street children were not treated well and they were not accorded their basic rights. They were not protected against discrimination, racism and violence. To assist in the quandary of street children, non-government organisations mostly shelters have developed programmes to address issues relating to their well being. Most shelters offer programmes that attend to the social, counselling, recreational, the formal and non-formal needs of children and make attempts at reunification with families (Tiba, Lusk cited in Veeran 1999).

### **Value of the study**

A great deal of concern has been raised about children's exposure to violence and crime in their homes, communities and on the street. Street children are exposed to crime and violence as witnesses, victims or perpetrators. Most research has highlighted the numbers of children invading the streets and their experiences while on the street. This research focused on investigating strategies to evaluate interventions that already exist in helping street children who are exposed to crime and violence. It was done through the involvement of street children as they shared their experiences in a group. Drake (1989) argued that programmes on street children fail because they do not meet the needs of the children involved. Service providers expect model-behaviour and self-disclosure from children in return for services rendered. Drake (1989) argued that no programme would succeed unless it is based on a scientific assessment of the situation the children find themselves in, as well as the real needs of the children. This argument does not call only for the involvement of children in developing programmes but also for adequate finances and for trained human resources.

Street children as well as staff input in this study will serve as a guide in the development of a manual detailing evaluation strategies for programme effectiveness. The current era has allowed children to be given a voice on issues that concern their well being. This approach emphasizes Article 12 of the United Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that children and young people have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Therefore children would best evaluate any intervention that is aimed at helping them.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE STUDY**

Street children do not live in isolation. The research has shown that there are complex factors that contribute to children leaving families and going to the streets. The ecosystems framework has been argued by Veeran (1999) and Smit & Liebenberg (2000) as providing the basic understanding of the reciprocity between the individual and the environment. Veeran (1999) mentioned that the ecosystems perspective provides the framework for understanding the contexts in which street children find themselves and the social, political and economic circumstances, which contribute to them being on the street.

Veeran (1999) noted that while it is difficult to delineate one factor as a cause of street children, it is possible to identify critical factors that contribute to the continuity of the street child phenomenon. She argued that exploring various interactive factors relating to the individual, the family, community and society as a whole, could give us answers to the street child occurrence.

These factors provide a useful framework for discussing contributing factors to the street child phenomenon.

#### **Micro Level**

This level focuses on the individual. It refers to the child's decision to leave home and to live on the street. The decision may be as a result of different

factors impacting on the child, such as poor school performance, feelings of inadequacy, a desire for freedom, peer pressure, the need to survive, experience of abuse and exploitation (Veeran 1999, Smit 1993)

It is noted that the family, community and structures in the society influence micro level factors. These structures may impact negatively or positively on the child's decision prior to leaving home. A supportive family environment where the child is protected emotionally, physical and sexually and where the child's needs are taken care of could prevent the child from leaving home. However an environment where the child is poorly supported and is easily influenced by friends could contribute to the child leaving home, either in search of excitement or in an attempt to escape ill treatment.

"A fundamental implication of the ecosystems perspective lies in its ability to add to the understanding of human development" (Veeran 1999:12). Veeran (1999) explained that for organisations to develop appropriate and effective programmes to solve the problems relating to the phenomenon of street children they need to understand the dynamics between the child, his/her family, community and environment.

### **Mezzo level**

Children leave their homes because of poor family relationships. Keen cited in Le Roux 1996 found that about 90% of street children left their homes because of alcoholism, violence and desertion by family. The mezzo level in the ecosystems perspective refers to the family environment and community. It is these structures "that serve to connect the micro systems in the child's life" (Veeran 1999:12).

Le Roux (1996) mentioned that family problems, inappropriate parenting, family breakdown and violence, poor family relationships, absence of parental figures at home, abandonment of children as a result of financial and personal reasons and

the collapse of supportive extended family contribute to factors that push children to the street.

Swart (1988) noted that unstable communities due to faction fights, hostility between the public and the police created an atmosphere where children felt neglected and feared for their own lives.

Blanc (1994) mentioned that most street children are from families who live below the poverty line. They have parents who are unemployed. Globally the family situation of a street child contributes to the child ending on the street. According to Blanc (1994) families of street children in Dehli, Philippine and Italy had migrated from rural areas to the city in search of a better life. When parents fail, children move to the street to fend for themselves.

Organisations working with street children need to understand and integrate these factors in the intervention programmes so as to address significant factors that contribute to the increasing number of street children.

The well being of children is largely dependent upon the family environment. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child recognizes that the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Family life is under a great deal of pressure in South Africa due to economic factors, poor housing, unemployment, substance use, family violence and lack of support systems. These factors lead to family breakdown and the growing numbers of families living in informal settlements and on the street (South African law commission 1998:25).

### **Macro level**

Macro level factors that have contributed to the occurrence of street children include but are not limited to; industrialization, urbanization, migrant labour laws,

influx control, lack of adequate housing and educational facilities, unemployment, violence and poverty (Veeran 1999).

Dissel (1997) identified former apartheid laws as a social factor that contributed to uneven distribution of resources. The migrant labour laws were drawn to attract labourers, particularly males from the rural areas to work on the mines and other industries. This migration of families contributed to the acceleration in the destruction of the family structure. Swart (1988) found that the movement of the families from rural areas to urban areas led to children being abandoned as a result of desperate parents. Through urbanisation and poverty it was found that families abandoned their children because they could not support them (Shelby 1992).

The discriminatory policies against the majority of the country's population prior to 1994 resulted in a high rate of poverty (Statistics SA, 1997). Poverty has been seen to be a single most important factor that contributed to the phenomenon of street children. "In South Africa apartheid laws created a situation in which people were discriminated to the extent that their socio-economic development was minimized drastically" (Veeran 1999:14).

The Government of National Unity attempted to address the inequalities of the past through the White Paper of Welfare (1997) and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994). It provided a strategic framework that informed and guided the efforts of all organisations and groups concerned with children (Zodidi 2005).

Guidelines and legislation like the Children's Charter, Child Care Act, Act 78 of 1983 as amended and the Convention on the Rights of a Child have been adopted by the South African government to address issues of children in difficult circumstances who have been denied basic human needs. The National Programme of Action (NPA) for Children provided a framework within which to

monitor the profile of the families and children in terms of their survival, development, protection and participation. Included in its policy priorities are early childhood development, child health, social welfare development, leisure and cultural activities and child protection measures. (South African law Commission 1998)

### **Research paradigm and design**

Bailey (1987) defines a paradigm as a perspective or a frame of reference for viewing the social world. A qualitative paradigm looks at developing in-depth understanding of explanations of social phenomena. It is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data (Hancock, 1998).

Qualitative research was considered suitable for the study because it allowed for in-depth discussions with participants. It reinforced the principles of PAR and did not limit the level of involvement of participants.

During the planning stage of the research, discussions arose around the use of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms and the positive implications this could have on the study. This meant that a triangulation method was to be adopted, that would allow the study to be broader and more developed. It became apparent that due to time constraints in respect of the academic requirements, this was going to extend the research and prevent the study from being completed in time.

It was also clear to the researcher that she could not use the quantitative method alone as the aim was to gain in-depth insights into participants' thoughts and ideas. The quantitative paradigm is best implemented when the researcher is identifying statistical relationship and wants to report statistical significance of findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2005). Whereas qualitative methods allow the researcher to use tools that can explore issues in detail, quantitative methods

allow for direct responses with less influence on the study as a whole. This study used the qualitative paradigm, which allowed for inductive methods in exploring and discovering new grounds on street children's views on harm reduction programmes at the street children's shelter. It is described by Ragin, Nagel & White (2003:10) as a method that involves in-depth, case oriented study of a relatively small number of cases. The primary goal is to "make facts understandable" p.10.

McBride & Schoestak (1995) describe the differences between qualitative and quantitative as the former is interested in answering the why question, whereas the latter has evidence which is both clear and powerful in statistical forms.

The study was conducted using the Participatory-Action-Research (PAR) design, which is used in qualitative research. Multiple focus group sessions were used with two data sources. One group was made up of street children the other comprised of workers at the shelter. This setting allowed the development of the study from two perspectives. This method of research has been argued to help in the resolving of a number of ethical problems in research with children and can also enhance validity and reliability (Thomas & O'Kane cited in Christensen & James (2000)). This method allows children the opportunity to explain their interpretations of what is happening in their lives. Although guidance on discussions is given, children have more control on what they wanted to talk about.

The use of the PAR design is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.



**Definition of terms:**

**Shelter:** refers to any building or premises maintained or used for the reception, protection and temporary care of more than six children in especially difficult circumstances (Child Care Amendment Act 96 of 1996: 255-6)

An open door facility providing residential care, social services, and opportunities for education and training to self-referred children/ youth living on the streets (Western Cape Street Children's Forum 1996:12)

**Aftercare:** refers to a programme that focuses on helping street children who have been to the shelter as a follow-up intervention while they return to their families or foster homes (Streetwise Marketing document, undated)

**Reunification:** refers to a "process of empowering and supporting parents, extended family and young people in care, which aims at enabling these young people to be reunited with their family and/or community of origin" (IMC cited in Veeran 1999:18)

**Street child:** A person under the age of 18, who for a variety of reasons leaves his/her family and community to survive on the street of the city and are inadequately cared for and protected by responsible adults. (Western Cape Street Children's Forum, 1996).

**Harm reduction:** is a term that defines policies, programmes, services and actions that work to reduce the health; social; and economic harms to individuals; communities; and society that are associated with the use of drugs (Newcombe 1992). Harm reduction is used in this study as referring to programmes that include harm associated with violence and crime.

**Crime:** in a broad sense is an act that violates a political or moral law. In the narrow sense, a crime is a violation of the criminal law. In this study it also refers to any unlawful act or behaviour.

**Violence:** Implies the use of force to harm, injure or abuse others (Lauer in Hoffman and McKendrick cited in Sathiparsad, 1997).

This chapter provided an overview of the phenomenon of street children, giving the objectives, research questions, rationale for such a study, the research paradigm and definitions of key concepts.

Chapter Two focuses on the literature review. It deals with the factors influencing the increasing number of street children. It highlights the programmes available to the street children and the role advocacy plays in protecting children.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology.

Chapter Four presents the analysis and discussion of results from the multiple focus groups held with street children and service providers.

Chapter Five summarises the major conclusions derived from the study. Drawing on the literature review and the major conclusions recommendations are made in respect of programmes that protect children from violence and crime in shelters and indicators that make these programmes effective.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the exposure of street children to violence and crime and to identify programmes designed by organizations that are working with street children. It will explore strategies used to evaluate social or organizational programmes. Part of the literature will discuss the role street children can play in developing evaluative strategies aimed at bettering their lives. It will highlight the structural factors that impact on the phenomenon of street children.

#### **Street children**

There are a number of definitions given to street children. There have been academic and organizational debates on the definition of street children. Some researchers have proposed a total shift, giving a broader definition of the street child. The Inter-NGO cited in the Human Right Watch (2004) defines street children as children who might not necessarily be homeless or without families, but who live in situations where there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults. This definition does not specify the area where these children live and seems limited to protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults.

The UNICEF (1989) has suggested a distinction between "children on the street" and "children of the streets". It defines "children on the street" as those who still maintain close ties with their families. They are on the street during the day and return to their homes in the evenings. "Children of the street" are those whose

ties with families no longer exist, they often sleep on the street and struggle for survival. Veeran (1999) in her study of street children in Durban ascertained that trying to distinguish children, as on or of the street is a theoretical exercise, in practice all these children are equally disadvantaged and deserving of childcare services. Children who were on the street and have been moved to the shelters are still viewed as street children until they are reunified with their families. It is in this view that in this study there will be no distinction between children on the street, of the street, or from the street.

For the purpose of this study the term “street children” will be used as it contains all factors of children who had spent their lives on the street. Having chosen to use this term, it was noted that children despise it as it has a stigma attached to it. Street children have across the board created their own names. Research conducted by Sharf et al (1986) in Cape Town revealed that street children preferred to be called “strollers”. In the study conducted by Swart (1988) in Johannesburg, street children called themselves “malunde” meaning those on the street. In Sudan they called themselves “shamassa” meaning children of the sun (War Child Projects, 2004). During the course of this study street children in Durban called themselves “shoshoba” meaning that they move stealthily avoiding being seen when they are to snatch a victim’s bag, they use this name so that other people may not know who they are talking about. Researchers and service providers have commonly used the name street children. Academic, government departments and other structures in the society easily understand it. It is therefore appropriate and useful for this research to use the term street children as it makes sense to those working in the area.

## **Prevalence of the Phenomenon of Street Children**

### **Age**

Research has shown that street children in South Africa tend to be between 7 and 18 years of age. The majority of these children are between 13 and 16

years of age (Richter, 1991). Richter found that the ages of street children in poor third World countries differ significantly from those in the First World countries. In the Third World countries street children are generally between 11 and 16 years, and the First World countries street children are 16 years and above of age. Zingaro<sup>1</sup> cited in Le Roux (1996) also found that in her work with street children the predominant age of street children was between 15 and 16 and up to 25 years of age. Almost universally children over the age of 16 or 18 are no longer regarded as children. Even when they are still on the street, they are considered adults. Manihara (2002) noted that in the study conducted in Madras India, the ages of street children varied from 6 to 16years and older.

### **Race and Gender**

The majority of street children in South Africa are of African black origin and mainly boys. "The vast majority of an estimated 9 000 street children in South Africa are black. There are virtually no white street children in South Africa..." (Ross, 1999:70). Swart (1988) noted that in the streets of Johannesburg, the children on the streets are exclusively Black with a few Coloured. The estimated number of street children in KZN was 3000, 500 of them are estimated to live on the streets of Durban (Mercury 08/06/05).

In Durban alone, all registered shelters designed for all race groups have only admitted African black boys with the exception of Tennyson House, which has girl children. African black boys are the most visible children on the streets. Manihara (2002) in her study in India found that 82.7% of the street children are boys. It is acknowledged that girls form part of the population of street children but are very difficult to trace. In South Africa, about 90 % of the visible children from the streets are boys. Gerber cited in Le Roux (1996) and (Anderson, et al. 2000) found that the main reason South African street children are predominantly

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Zingaro a director of an agency in Vancouver, Canada which serves the need of street children in First World country

boys, is that girls stay at home and look after the smaller children in the family. In addition to this explanation Swart (1988) explained that, girls are abandoned less frequently and are easily taken by neighbours when families disintegrate. Those who end up on the street tend to become prostitutes and find accommodation rather than remain on the streets.

### **Contributing Factors to the Phenomenon of Street Children**

During the early part of this century, the former government policies of separate development led to the confinement of the predominantly black population to the poorly developed rural areas. At that time migrant labour laws were drawn to attract labour from the man in the rural areas to work on the mines and other industries. Almost all of the people in rural areas were black Africans. It is in these areas where family structures were predominantly crucial for support. Having people move from their homes to work in the mines contributed to acceleration in the destruction of the African family structure (Dissel, 1997). The government of the time developed laws that discriminated against non-white people. Even the distribution of resources was confined along racial and economic lines.

The rapid move of people from rural areas to work in the urban area led to inadequate housing facilities. This led to the development of informal settlements with poor infrastructures and social services. The impact of all these movements and the breakdown of extended family structures was severely felt by children and youth (Dissel, 1997). This was also observed in other African countries. Sudan's civil war led to massive population migration leading to food shortages. There was an increase in the number of orphans and children separating from their families. Subsequent displacement led to children being abandoned as a result of desperate parents. Children became homeless and suddenly they found themselves manoeuvring on the streets (Child War Projects, 2004).

The introduction of a democratic and non-racial society in the 1990s hoped to uplift the majority of the underprivileged South Africans. These changes were also expected to contribute positively to the welfare of children, particularly black South African children.

The issue of street children in South Africa has always been viewed as a reflection of a discriminatory political system. Ross (1991:70) described it as “merely the outcome of the political system of racial segregation that has been in place since the 1940s”. For effective interventions on the street children phenomenon it is important to attend to children in a holistic manner, considering the social, economic, political, cultural and educational realities (Le Roux cited in Le Roux, 1996).

The impact of HIV/AIDS is a significant factor in the increasing population of street children. Veeran (1999) found in her study on street children in Durban that increasing numbers of street children were orphans. They are becoming more and more affected and infected by HIV/AIDS forcing organizations working with them to look at a broader service provision, which will have sustainable solutions.

It is important to acknowledge that street children are children like any other child. They therefore will be affected by the factors concerning childhood development within their family environment and community. “ In extreme circumstances street children are the neglected, abused and rejected offspring of parents and communities benumbed by the minimum conditions of their lives.... 80% of all children we see have a history of abuse, physical, sexual or emotional” (Cockburn 1991, p.13).

The child does not exist in a vacuum. There are economic, political and social trends that impact on the child’s development, care, protection and welfare

(Brandon et. al 1998). This was noted in the study conducted by Keen, in the child's words: "When my mother drank she skelled us out, she said we were... It was so ugly we couldn't take it anymore. She used to chase us out and we had to go and find somewhere to sleep. Then she started to sleep with the man next door and they used to skel everyday. We became ashamed, my sister and I, and I thought, 'No I'm not going to stay here anymore'" (Keen 1990:11). Keen's study revealed that although some children leave home in search of excitement and personal freedom, about 90% leave home because of alcoholism, violence and desertion by family. This is common in other Third World countries like India and Kenya. Children experience family problems they are unable to solve; such problems are alcoholism, child abuse, ill treatment by parents and stepparents, unemployment and, poverty (Manihara, 2002). In the study conducted in Sudan when the introduction of reunification was started, one boy whose father came to fetch him said that he would not return to his stepmother who had clearly told him that he was not wanted (Inter Press Service 1999).

### **Family Factors**

"The institution of the family stands in a peculiarly central, crucial position. It faces inward to the individual, outward toward society preparing each member to take his place in the wider social group by helping him to internalize its values and traditions as part of himself... It has enormous creative potential, including that of life itself, and it is not surprising that, when it becomes disordered, it possesses an equal potential for terrible destruction" (Skinner cited in De Bruyn cited in Sewpaul 2005:310). Sewpaul (2005) further expanded this definition, highlighting that the family is surrounded by other systems in the society that determine to a large extent whether the family will "live up to its creative potential" or "constitute a source of terrible destruction". Families are the primary system in the development of the child.



Nzimande (1996) defined a family as a support system that is ideal for any child's needs. When the child is deprived of this support system, the child may be tempted to find fulfilment outside the family unit. Many of the street children are an example of this process. Where there are high levels of poverty, child development becomes affected. This has been seen in the high number of street children whose families struggle to support their households. Richter (1991) and Swart (1991) noted that families of street children live in poverty, which is a result of low wage, high rate of unemployment, low levels of schooling and poor or no skills. Their homes are mostly overcrowded (Brown, 1993). Other family factors that push children to the streets are family violence and breakdown, poor family relationships, stress experienced by unemployed parents, absence of parental figures at home, children being abandoned as a result of financial or personal reasons and the collapse of a supportive extended family (Le Roux, 1996).

Veeran (1999) confirmed the role of family and parental figures in the life of the child. In the face of the collapse of the family most organizations working with children are spreading the words of; 'your child is my child and my child is your child too' as an attempt to create a protective structure for children. The Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) (1989) recognized that the family is the fundamental group of the society and all its members; particularly children should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance. It recognizes that for the full development of the child's personality, the family environment should provide an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. This is the challenge facing the South African government to afford families and communities such protection so that they can raise children in a more child friendly environment. The government has developed a draft National Family policy which has been criticized by Sewpaul (2005) as "filled with ideological inconsistencies reminiscent of an apartheid era residual, albeit a non-racialized ideology"p.10. The South African government recognizes that the family is the determinant of the way South African's live. Meaning that, if the family fails to offer suitable conditions for growth and development to its children, such

generation is doomed to be unsuccessful. In chapter one, the researcher argued that, the increasing number of children on the street as its origin, not on one component but on micro (individual and family), mezzo (community) and macro (legislation, governing structures and policies) level factors. It therefore draws attention that the family and individual alone would not “remain the crux of how South Africans cope” with the problems that they are confronted with (Sewpaul, 2005:11). External forces contribute to the creation of sustainable livelihoods of families. The impact of macro systems is enormous on individuals and families. The policy on Financial Awards to service providers (2004:11) acknowledges, “social disintegration is evident in the rising incidence of family disorganization, family violence, mental health problems, crime...homelessness and children living and working on the streets “

## **Violence**

Swart (1988) conducted a study on street children in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. In her study she found that the township unrest prior to and during the 1980s, faction fights among different ethnic groups and the hostility between the public and police created an atmosphere of tension and insecurity. She found that children felt neglected by their parents and feared for their own lives. They felt safer on the streets. The insecurities among communities escalated in the 1990s prior to 1994. Townships in South Africa were engulfed by violence and many children fled from their homes. Violence was seen as “a significant factor in the incidence of children from the street in South Africa” (Veeran, 1999:78). In 1996, the Child Protection Unit of South African Protection Services dealt with 35,838 cases of crimes committed against children. In the same year the Child Welfare Societies attended to 9,398 cases involving severe neglect, physical and or sexual abuse per month (Anderson, et al. 2000). This information illustrates the reported exposure of children in general to violence and crime. It is evident that there are acts of violence and crime that are committed against children and not

reported. This indicates that child protection; care and welfare within families and communities of South Africans require extensive attention.

## **Poverty**

Poverty is defined as the lack of necessary material for wellbeing, especially, food, housing, land and other assets, feelings of being powerless and worthless and consequent inability to participate in decision-making. It is an extreme form of deprivation where basic needs essential for survival are not met (Alcock, Jones, May cited in Isaac 2002, May 2002, Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Radermacher & Koch-Schulte 2000).

The South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (SAPPA) revealed that 50 % of the population is poor and 61% of the poor are African. It also revealed that three children in five live in poor households. This meant that 54% of the poor in this country are children (SA-PPA, 1997).

The discriminatory policies against the majority of the country's population prior to 1994 had resulted in both a high rate of poverty (about 70 % of poverty rate in the rural areas) and the high levels of poverty (most families live below the poverty line) (Statistics SA, 1997). Policy on Financial Awards to service providers (2004) revealed that Africans are still the majority living below the poverty line. Although the South African government has been reporting progress in the eradication of poverty, the statistics on South African Labour Force (1995 - 2002) indicates otherwise. In 1995, the labour force was reported to be 65.9% of the working group, and in 2002 it was reported to have dropped to 56.7%. This also revealed that in 2001 the level of unemployment in South Africa had increased from 4.5% in 1995 to 29.5%. There is an inextricable link between unemployment and poverty. The South African government's role in the eradication of poverty is still a long way to go. This means that if there are no effective measures taken in attending to the lives of poor families in rural and informal settlement, the phenomenon of street children will continue.

## **Problems confronting children on the streets**

The survival of children on the streets starts as they enter the streets, for food, safety and security. Once the child is on the streets, he develops coping skills and learns to adjust to the environment. Swart (1988) views street children as survivors. They have to face the physical, emotional and social demands of the street. At times they have to perform certain activities as a rite of passage and for acceptance in a group. However within these groupings, there is a lot of frustration and expressions of violence. "There is lots of violence as we fight among ourselves" (EzaseGagasini Metro 2004:1). The study that was conducted by Brown (1993) with the street children from Durban revealed that they survived by begging, doing illegal jobs, prostitution and inhalant abuse.

The phenomenon of street children has similarities locally and internationally. They are exposed to similar situations before going to the streets and during the time they are on the streets. Be it in Durban, Pretoria, Cape Town or India, street children survive by cleaning cars, working as car guards, collecting and selling scrap metals, pick pocketing, breaking into cars to get stereos to sell and doing piece jobs. Their working conditions include long hours of work, no proper protection as workers and lack of training, knowledge and skills. The study conducted in India in 1989 revealed that 39.3% working children were paid inadequately and 34 % complained of being forced to overwork (Manihara, 2002)

Lack of protection from the justice system has been reported to be a concern in the life of a street child. Studies conducted in the African countries and abroad revealed that street children are sometimes murdered or tortured. If they survive they are left with physical and psychological scars (Ekeh 1997). In many countries torture remains a routine, which is often the first recourse for public or security forces who deal with street children (Bryne, 1998). The Human Rights

Watch (1997) in Bulgaria, Guatemala, India and Kenya had also observed this. Police violence against street children is persistent. Manihara (2002) in her work with children from the streets of India found that children have no faith in the police system. They showed no respect for the legal authorities because they rarely experience any kindness from anyone at that level. She also found that the Indian laws concerning street children were not clearly known by the police officers in the field. In the streets of Durban South Africa children are not immune to police brutality. Veeran (1999) found that children could give detailed testimony on how they were brutally treated by police. This usually happens at the time of international conferences, whereby 'cleaning' the cities becomes a priority. More than 187 street children were rounded up and put in a van by Metro Police before the tourism Indaba event in Durban. There were also reported allegations that children were beaten up for coming back to the city (Sunday Tribune, 15/05/05, Daily News 11/05/05, Mercury 24/05/04).

Having been exposed to different harsh conditions at home and on the streets, children develop various coping mechanisms. They sniff glue – which they say offers them warmth and a carefree attitude, they work as car guards – where they fight each other over customers. They lose hope of ever reaching their dreams and develop low self-esteem (War Child Projects, 2004). They find it difficult to build trust with outsiders. Veeran (1999) explains in her study that street children do not readily divulge information to adults due to high levels of mistrust. Organizations working with street children stated that the entry level in helping a child is allowing that child to trust you. Brown (1993) found that children became inevitably impulsive. They had unrealistic expectations of the future. She also observed inappropriate crying was common among the children. There was inability to trust and almost all of the children she worked with were exposed to chronic psychosocial adversity. The fact that street children work long hours using excessive physical and social strain, starting at an early age in their lives impact negatively on the development of their psychological and social well being (UNICEF, 1986).

Smit warns that not attending to the real needs and situations of these children can, from a psychological and educational point of view become a form of abuse itself (Smit & Liebenberg 1999).

### **The Role of Advocacy in Child Protection Issues**

Historically child involvement in decision-making has never been known in many societies. Traditionally black culture in South Africa had no room for child participation in any matter. Many countries advocate current laws and conventions on child safety and welfare. Organizations and groups lobby for child protection, freedom to participate and empowerment. For such organizations and groups to be effective in working towards child protection and welfare, Brandon, et al (1998) noted certain considerations that have to be kept in mind.

- Children have rights and needs, just like adults, to have their views and feelings heard and to be treated with respect. They need to be able to talk to adults they trust. Adults working with children need to be trained and be willing to acknowledge such needs.
- Children say that they want the opportunity to have their voices heard
- If children are able to communicate well with social workers, child care workers or any adult in general, people working with children will become more knowledgeable about the children's experience and their perception of things around them. This is important when assessing or intervening in the child's life.
- Children who have experienced separation and loss, abuse or neglect or have grown up without their families, need extra help to understand their experiences. These children will require emotional support (counselling) to come to terms with their experiences.

- Children who are in serious trouble in areas of their lives, for example being involved in delinquency or drug use need to know that there is someone prepared to talk and listen to them recognizing their worthiness.
- Children need to develop self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy. They need to know that their views are taken into account during decision-making.
- When things become too complex, children need adults to advocate on their behalf.

The above statements illustrate the importance of recognizing children's needs from the child's perspective in order to help them deal with their difficulties. Swart (1988) referred to these statements when she said that intervention programmes should be motivated by a desire to provide children with the opportunity to gain more control over their lives, not just simply to provide them with shelter.

It has been suggested that any project that is developed to assist children should be child-centred. There have been guidelines and legislation like, the Child Care Act, Act 74 of 1983 and the Child Care Amendment Act, Act 96 of 1996 that state that children in difficult circumstances, who have been denied basic human needs, such as children living on the streets and children exposed to violence and conflict need to be protected and their rights promoted. UN Convention on the Right of a Child, The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Children's Charter of South Africa promote empowerment, child involvement (participation) and non-discrimination. They indicate the need for children to be taken care of by the adult (Zodidi, 2005).

More than 150 countries around the world are signatories to the Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC) (Brandon, et al. 1998). South Africa became a signatory to the CRC on 16 June 1996 (Matthais, 1996). Therefore it has an

obligation to ensure that its provisions are adhered to. These rights fall into four categories:

1. The right to care and protection.
2. The right to participation.
3. The right to anti-discrimination.
4. The right to the best possible development, (Hammarberg cited in Brandon et, al. 1998).

Grant cited in Veeran (1999) had noted that the CRC had distinguished three principles that were of particular significance to street children.

- First principle advocates special safeguard for children
- Second principle identifies the need for nurturing and protective environment to cater for the child's development and survival needs
- Third principle highlights the need for commitment to the best interests of the child by government

Less than 12 months after the ratification of the CRC, the Cabinet approved the National Programme of Action for Children Framework (NPA) (Children's Directory 2001). The researcher would like to highlight two goals of the many of NPA where sectors of government structures (SAPS) are constantly reported to be failing. 1. To promote justice that is sensitive to children, with an emphasis on the training of personnel who work with the children in the justice system. 2. To promote the CRC within a broader framework of human rights culture and to make the public and people in the justice system aware of it. They also recognized that attending to children's needs require collaboration with other government structures as well as non government organizations. The rate at which the current government is working on to rectify what was done in the past cannot indicate exactly the forecasted period where children would enjoy their benefits of being children of South Africa. The government needs to attend to contributing push factors like violence, criminal acts or abuse towards children, the breakdown of families leading to neglect, and poverty. Clarke-McLeod cited in Veeran (1999) noted that lack of service provision and unequal distribution of wealth are contributing factors to the continuation of poverty among the masses in developing the lives of many children (cited in Veeran 1999).



The Children's Charter of South Africa realized that all children are created equal and are entitled to basic human rights and freedoms and that they all deserve respect and special care and protection. Article 3 of CRC emphasizes that all States and private organizations should have the best interest of the child as a primary consideration throughout their work. The government has to ensure such protection and care is adequately provided, taking into account the right and duties of caregivers or parents. On the same wavelength, article 19 states that government should assure that effective procedures for prevention, identification, investigation and treatment in cases of maltreatment are in place (through appropriate legislation, administration, social and educational measures).

CRC reinforced child involvement in decision-making, taking into account the age of the child. Hammerburg (1995) mentioned this as acknowledging the child as an independent human subject rather than just a passive object (cited in Brandon et, at. 1998). Article 12 states that government and organizations should ensure that children are allowed to express their views freely in all matters pertaining to their lives. Article 3.1 of the Children's Charter of South Africa reinforces the UNCRC provisions stating that all children have the right to express their own opinions in matters pertaining to their rights, protection and welfare.

The Convention required that all children be treated equally without discrimination of any kind (Article 2). The South African government, recognizing that children in the past have been subjected to discrimination, made appropriate measures to prevent discrimination due to the child's family, parent, race, sex, religion and language through the Bill of Rights. Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights emphasizes that every child has a right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The CRC recognized that children are best cared for within their own families, but requires government to offer appropriate assistance to parents or legal guardian to develop services to care for the child. This could be done through the development of institutions and other necessary infrastructure that promotes child development. The commitment was made clear by the South African government in its Children's Charter article 8, where it emphasized the importance of both formal and informal education and of the provision of structures to facilitate such development.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994), which was developed by the first democratic government of South Africa, focused on redressing the social imbalances created by the apartheid government. It provided a strategic framework that informed and guided the effort of all organizations and groups concerned with children (Zodidi, 2005).

RDP contained a series of national goals for children, which formed the basis of a cross-sectoral national programme of action. Two of those goals are directly relevant to attend to the phenomena of street children.

- To provide improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances and to tackle the root causes leading to such situations. Children in especially difficult situations included, children displaced by violence, victims of crime, children in custody, homeless or street children, children living in institutions and children orphaned on account of HIV/AIDS.
- Pledged into improving the general well being of the South African children, ensuring that all children have the right to develop physically and mentally to their full potential, to express their potential freely and to be protected against all forms of abuse and exploitation (Zodidi, 2005).

These goals were however compromised by a macroeconomic strategy – Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) as it introduce 1<sup>st</sup> world ideologies in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, where high levels of unskilled labour 'competes' with high technological developments. Sewpaul and Holscher (2004:71)

described GEAR's impact as "The corporate sector's obsession with first world efficiency and high capital intensity has constrained job-creation capacities as they preclude large proportions of the population that are unskilled". South Africa is challenged by its own policies, which are resolute in two streams – Fulfilling the 3<sup>rd</sup> world's needs vs accomplishing the 1<sup>st</sup> world's demands (RDP VS GEAR). RDP has to date failed to rise above GEAR as "the right wing economic policies lead to widespread and escalating unemployment..." (Desai cited in Sewpaul & Holscher, 2004:72)

### **PROGRAMMES DEVELOPED BY ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN THE FIELD OF STREET CHILDREN**

Kofi Anan, Secretary of the United Nations advocates children's rights:" To look into the future we do not need supercomputers. Much of the next millennium can be seen by how much we care for our children today..."(cited in Metrobeat 2003:27)

This introduces us to the attempts organizations worldwide have made in fighting the phenomenon of children from the street.

The South African government recognized that children have not been treated with respect and dignity, but as a result of Apartheid have been subjected to discrimination, violence and racism that has destroyed families and communities and has disrupted education and social relationships.

Having noted that children from the streets are continuously exposed to violence and crime, any programme that looks at child safety and protection should be geared towards preventing such exposure. Where exposure had occurred they look at helping children deal and cope with their experiences.

In South Africa, organizations like Streewise in Durban and Johannesburg, Ons Plek in Cape Town, Friends and African Kids in Soweto and other shelters work

on a common goal to protect and care for the children. They aim at reuniting children with their families with the hope to sustain their relationships. These organizations acknowledge that street children need more than a roof, food and clothing (Chris Gumbi at African Kids 2004).

To reach such a goal they have to recognize the push and pull factors that had put children on the streets. Realizing that requires such organizations to continuously involve children in making decisions that impact on their lives. It is important to recognize that a shelter, on its own, serves to protect children from crime and violence provided that it is safe and meets the children's needs. In the past Thuthukani, a shelter in Durban was used as a drop-in centre for children removed from the streets. Police mostly removed these street children and their removal was viewed to be aggressive and uncaring. Mai Aime Lawetz in her work with the children in this shelter realized that children need food and shelter and a social worker to talk to, but at the same time removals were done because children were seen as driving the business away particularly when there are tourists around (Lawetz, 2002).

It is observed that globally the street children phenomenon cannot be tackled by one sector of the ecosystem's structure. Government, community and family and children themselves need to take part in protecting the life of a child.

Organizations working with street children develop programmes in one of the four areas; prevention, outreach, shelter and aftercare (War Child Projects, 2004)

## **OUTREACH**

### **Intervention on the street**

The street is characterized by different groups of people. There are street families, gangsters, prostitutes, street adults and children. They are all on the

streets for different reasons (Smit et.al. 2000) Therefore one can assume that street children are exposed to violence and crime by just being on the street.

Almost all organizations working with children see shelters as one of the paramount needs for children. It has also been noted that some children defy going to shelters as they see them as resembling another form of authority. In trying to balance the adults view with that of the child, organizations begin by doing outreach work, where they work with children while on the street, making them aware of the benefits of being in a protected place, at the same time leaving it to the child to make a decision.

In India a programme for children on the street called Butterflies has a team of street educators who play an important role in contacting children on the street. Therefore regular visits to their places of work or habitat is crucial. These activities are aimed at giving children the opportunity to realize that there are other alternatives than being on the streets.

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, War Child working with organizations dealing with the challenge of street children ensures that children have continued access to drop-in centres and facilities to help with healthy daily living, including medical treatment, informal and formal education, skills training, counselling and at least a meal per day (Relief Web, 2002). Such programmes are also observed in Vietnam, where an organization called Can Tho Children Program not only offer a drop-in centre but also provide remedial literacy classes, food and basic medical services. Outreach programmes act as the initial step in helping a child from the street. An organization in Durban called Youth For Christ as well as Streetwise engage in outreach programmes in an attempt to develop relationships with children and helping them with immediate needs as they make their decisions about going to a shelter. Organizations working with street children have learnt that unless they develop relationships with the children, it is difficult to motivate them to come together and discuss problems with them.

Once children have taken the step of leaving the street to go to the shelter, a number of projects are developed to help the child with adjustment. Besides offering material needs, care workers and social workers in shelters need to work with children to adjust to a new environment. It is at this level where other sectors like schools, families and communities need to be involved to prevent children from going back to the street.

An interesting feature in Brazil is the amount of involvement from all sectors of society. In the study conducted by Levenstein (1994) on street children, she found that major corporations involve themselves by offering financial assistance to projects and employment for street children. Local companies, universities, the army, football clubs, government, NGOs and volunteers engage themselves in tackling the phenomena of street children.

In India, Kolkata police initiated an education programme for street children who have been denied access to formal education. Seeing that street children become stigmatized and find it difficult to join the formal school in communities, this programme gives all round basic education that prepares children to join societal mainstream education. The entire programme is learner-centric and participatory. The involvement of different partners in this project makes it unique and displays the commitment of other sectors of the community (Vikramshila Education resource society, undated).

## **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY REUNIFICATION**

Families play a critical role in the socialization, development and education of children and youth. When families are able to care for their members, the burden on the state is reduced in terms of the long term costs in addressing the social problems that might arise from the failure of families to perform their

expected roles (Richter, 2003). Where conditions that led to the child leaving his/her family has not changed, the child's return to the family bears no significance. The cycle will continue. It is therefore important to create an enabling environment for families to care for their children. This is one of the most challenging roles in recreating the relationship between a child and his or her parents. Taking the child back to his/her family without proper and in-depth consultation with the child is a recipe for failure in reunification. Therefore organizations need to have well trained staff to facilitate this process. Working directly with children reinforces the terms of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Care Act, 1983, stating that children not only have the right to have protection but also have the right to be consulted and have their wishes and feelings taken into account. As Lady Justice Elizabeth Butler – Sloss was quoted saying, "children must be treated as 'persons' and not as 'objects of concern' (cited in Brandon et, al. 1998:1)

The reunification process requires that the previous conditions that have contributed to the child leaving home are dealt with. The child's negative coping mechanisms are discussed and positive ones reinforced. It also requires that community resources are linked to help the family and the child work out a sustainable relationship. "Ons Plek" believes that with more families able to resolve conflicts positively and having more elements to seek social assistance to their problems, children could return to a safer environment (Global Ministries, undated). This implies that parental skills, conflict management skills, problem solving and understanding of children's needs and rights by families and community is necessary in attempting to unite children with their families and communities. In the nutshell, child protection is concerned with the nature and balance of relationships between the responsibilities of various state agents and private households, parents and primary caregivers in the rearing of children. If these relationships are shaky, the child's development and safety become more at risk.

The 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) drafted solutions to youth involvement in crime. It recognized that non-delivery of effective social services contributes to crime, and this should be seen as a matter of concern. It acknowledged that structural problems such as lack of housing, education and employment opportunities need to be addressed along with the psychological factors. It further recognized that any intervention has to take into account the issues of human development with an understanding of the nature of childhood, youth and adult issues (Dissel 1997). NCPS emphasizes the importance of attending to the causes of the problem in both a proactive and reactive manner.

The need for preventative work is paramount in working with children from exposure to crime and violence. Having noted the factors that lead children to the streets, it is important that organizations in this field of practice equip themselves with knowledge and skills in the strife to protect children. In Brazil an organization working with children from the streets embarked on dealing with the root of the problem. They divided their work in four different groups:

- Prevention – they work with children who are at risk of being abandoned or who are living in below human conditions. Children who can participate in forms of work engage in training and develop skills, preventing them from leaving their homes due to poverty.
- Contact – they approach children who enter the streets and give them immediate assistance that is necessary
- Assistance – they work with children who are already on the streets, by helping their families where possible supporting them in restructuring their family ties. Food, clothing and other basic needs are taken into account. The main goal being to reintegrate children with their families.
- Training – they go out to teach children how to read and write, giving them some form of trade so that they may work and help themselves and their families when necessary.



## **CONCLUSION**

South Africa is not alone in the plight of children from the street. This is a global phenomenon, which has made states to come together in developing strategies on child protection. Despite the organizations that are trying to solve the problem of street children, the number of children on the streets seems to be increasing. Street children come from different societal backgrounds with similar experiences. Throughout the work on street children it is noted that, macro-economic factors, break down of families, displacement and informal settlements, abandonment and neglect are major contributors to the increasing number of children on the streets. It is also noted that full participation of children from the street in developing problem-solving strategies regarding their lives is crucial for the success of any intervention. Government structures, NGOs, Community projects including small structures and youth organizations where street children are represented need to come together in developing effective programmes for the safety of the children.

This chapter discussed the exposure of street children to violence and crime, the programmes available and the structural factors that impact on the trend of street children. The following chapter will discuss the methodology used in the development of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter explains the research paradigm, the research design, how data were collected, the sampling strategy used and how the obtained data were analyzed.

Choosing a research design relies mostly on the research problem, its purpose and the nature of the data to be collected (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). A qualitative research paradigm was used in this study as it allowed for the effective implementation of the Participatory Action Research (PAR), which was a suitable design for the study. The qualitative method guided the researcher in collecting, analyzing and interpreting observed facts (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). This was a strategic framework that served as a bridge between the research questions and the execution and implementation of the research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

Data was collected through the use of multiple focus groups. The focus groups allowed for reflection and feedback on discussions as the process unfolded. The sampling method that was used was a convenience sample (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995, Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Participants' availability and willingness to volunteer guided their involvement in the study. This is a form of non-probability sampling that does not select participants according to the principle of statistical randomness.

The data analysis was based on the transcripts from the focus groups. Categories were identified to sort responses into themes. These methods will be discussed in depth in this chapter.

## Research Paradigm

Bailey (1987) defines a paradigm as a perspective or a frame of reference for viewing the social world. A qualitative paradigm looks at developing in-depth understanding of explanations of social phenomena. It is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data (Hancock, 1998).

Qualitative research was considered suitable for the study because it allowed for in-depth discussions with participants. It reinforced the principles of PAR and did not limit the level of involvement of participants.

During the planning stage of the research, discussions rose around the use of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms and the positive implications this could have on the study. This meant that a triangulation method was to be adopted, that would allow the study to be broader and more developed. It became apparent that due to time constraints in respect of the academic requirements, this was going to extend the research and prevent the study from being completed in time.

It was also clear to the researcher that she could not use the quantitative method alone, as the aim was to gain in-depth insights into participants' thoughts and ideas. The quantitative paradigm is best implemented when the researcher is identifying statistical relationship and wants to report statistical significance of findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2005). Whereas qualitative methods allow the researcher to use tools that can explore issues in detail, quantitative methods allow for direct responses with less influence on the study as a whole. This study used the qualitative paradigm, which allowed for inductive methods in exploring and discovering new grounds on street children's views on harm reduction programmes at the street children shelter. It is described by Ragin, Nagel & White (2003:10) as a method that involves in-depth, case oriented study of a

relatively small number of cases. The primary goal is to “make facts understandable”

McBride & Schoestak (1995) describe the differences between qualitative and quantitative as the former is interested in answering the why question, whereas the latter has evidence which is both clear and powerful in statistical forms.

Below are differences on how data are handled by both paradigms as explained by McBride & Schoestak (1995).

**TABLE 1. : QUALITATIVE vs QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

<b>Qualitative method</b>	<b>Quantitative method</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much attention is given to individual cases and the human understanding that features on those cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to know the percentage of people</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges that people change and the social situation is too complex for numerical description</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptions are numerical and precise</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings cannot be generalized to other social situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a tendency for conclusions to be drawn from the numerically largest group</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search for pattern, themes and holistic features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify statistical relationships</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Particularistic findings, representation of the insider present multiple perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings are generalized</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report is narrative with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting is statistical, with correlations, comparisons of means and reporting of statistical significance of findings</li> </ul>

## Research Design

There are different forms of qualitative research such as ethnography, case study, action research and evaluation research. Each form is effectively used when obtaining information relevant to its study (McBride & Schoestak, 1995, Bless & Higson-Smith (1995). This study focused on the recommendations that would contribute to the development of a manual detailing evaluative strategies for harm reduction through the inclusion of service providers and street children. The evaluative strategies are only to be developed once indicators of successful programmes are identified through focus group discussions with street children and service providers.

Although this research aims at developing evaluative strategies, it is not in itself an evaluative research. Evaluative research aims to test interventions to see how effective they are. The research design used in the study is participatory action research (PAR). PAR is defined as “ a research approach that consists of the maximum participation of stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the problem under study, in the systematic collection and analysis of information for the purpose of taking action and making change” (Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin & Lord cited in Bostock & Freeman, 2003: 465). It has two distinguishable characteristics i.e. “the relationship between the people involved in the research and the use of research as a tool for action as well as for increasing human knowledge” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995: 55). Nadsworth (1998) further explained that PAR involves all relevant parties in actively examining current action in order to change and improve it.

This research design emphasized the output and process of the research problem, which was to develop strategies that would best evaluate the effectiveness of harm reduction programmes for street children with respect to crime and violence.

This design has been argued to help in the resolving of a number of ethical problems in research with children and can also enhance validity and reliability (Thomas & O'Kane, 1999a). During the process of the PAR, street children were allowed the opportunity to explain their interpretations of exposure to violence and crime in their lives while on the street as well as at the street shelter. Although guidance on discussions was given, children had more control on what they wanted to talk about.

The use of this research design is consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which states that children and young people have a right to be involved in decisions which affect them. Children are more than willing to say what they think provided they are given the space to do so (Scott, 2000). The best people to provide information on the child's perspective, actions and attitudes are children themselves. It therefore makes sense to ask children to contribute and participate in activities for the improvement of services rendered to them. PAR had the potential to empower them to be involved in the whole process of the research. Children were given the opportunity, together with the researcher, to investigate the problem and its underlying causes as well as take collective action in order to bring about solutions to problems (Scott, 2000). The primary obligation in this approach was to allow participants to act on their own behalf (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2002). Children are continuously being recognized as entitled to take part in decisions that affect their lives (Lansdown cited in Bostock & Freeman 2003). Through PAR, children were able to take active roles in talking about their lives.

## Rationale for using PAR

PAR is the research design, which takes into account knowledge, problems and environment as understood and defined by the subjects under study (Huizer, 1997). It has a purpose to find solutions to problems and conflicts, at the same time contribute knowledge. The researcher's approach was not of an expert but that of a person with the intention to guide and learn from the children (Whyte, 1991).

Huizer (1997) describes three elements that distinguish this research design from other approaches:

1. The researcher has to be aware of his/her own limitations, a sense of insecurity and some level of ignorance acknowledging that the participants have more to offer in the study.
2. Having acknowledged one's ignorance the researcher tries to learn from the participants concerned, their problems, needs and feelings through empathy and friendship – this is done through data collection from the official records and through group discussions
3. Once knowledge has been acquired, the researcher involves participants in discussions searching together for possible solutions.

PAR is a powerful tool to advance both science and practice, and acknowledges the interdependence between science and politics (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 1999, Whyte, 1991). It evolved out of three streams of intellectual development and action. Those streams are:

- (a) social research methodology, which has the view that the researcher should aim at discovering basic scientific facts or relationships and not get directly involved. A process of change is observed with the limitations of the professional expert model.
- (b) participation in decision making by low ranking people on organizations is influenced by democratic values and is more in

line with the quality of life for humans. Decisions are made through the involvement of people at grass roots level.

- (c) socioethical framework acknowledges that understanding human behaviour at work depends on integration of social and technological factors. It allows for the invitation of different sectors to participate in the process under study (Whyte, 1991:40)

PAR is a continuous mutual learning strategy, where researchers are offered the opportunity to check the facts with those with first hand knowledge. It is recognized as a process not only to achieve results of current benefit to organizations, but can lead to a rethinking and restructuring of relations (Whyte, 1991).

PAR is a cyclical process. Its processes exist interdependently and follow each other in a spiral or cycle. It requires partnership in all phases. It allows for the feedback discussions also known as the feedback loop, which may lead to further developments in the study. It is a “collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social...practices” (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:5). One way of undertaking PAR study is observed in this table below as explained by Kemmis & McTaggart (1998).

**TABLE 2. : THE PAR PROCESS**

<b>Cycle</b>	<b>Process / Moment</b>	<b>What is happening?</b>
Cycle One	1. Reflection – participants examine and construct, then evaluate and reconstruct their concerns	Participants identify the concern through discussion and reflection
	2. Plan	Participants plan to undertake an examination of the concern and the social situation, in order to define and describe them accurately
	3. Action / Observation	Plan is put into action and the group



		collect their observations and reconvene
Cycle Two	Reflection	The group reflects on their findings to accurately define their concern. This reflection will also include self-reflection by participants.
	Plan	Participants plan a change in practice to improve the social situation. Methods of critical evaluation are utilized and potential problems need to be dealt with
	Action	A change in practice is affected and the research is commenced
	Observation	The consequences of the change in practice are observed and use the research method outlined in the plan to examine the results
CYCLE THREE	Reflection	The study could go through a number of cycles until the group is satisfied with the outcomes. This may consume a lot of time.

### **The principles and values of PAR**

Principles and values of PAR set PAR apart from other traditional research designs. Those are participation and collaboration, empowerment, supportive relationship, knowledge and social change (Hughe & Seymour-Rolls, 2000, Nelson et.al cited in Bostock & Freeman 2003, Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

- PAR attempts to mediate between individual and collective needs. During the research process individuals raised concerns in relation to violent experiences, at the same time the whole group collectively felt the need for stronger intervention in protecting their lives. A more egalitarian and authentic relationship and trust was developed mainly with the children in the focus group. Children became more sensitive to others' needs, wanting to have protective structures for those who were viewed as more vulnerable, the younger ones.

- PAR insists on communal participation in the process of knowledge creation and sharing.
- PAR emphasizes the empowerment of the least powerful groups and individuals in society. The comments from participants, which indicated that it did not matter anymore to report incidences of violent act, as nothing seemed to be done about it disempowered the group. Having such an intervention had allowed them the opportunity to try again and talk about issues and programmes in the shelter. Engaging children in analyzing data became impossible as the researcher ended at the time when they were about to return to their families. This exercise would have empowered them in giving them more insight on the study as a whole. Although it was impossible to engage children in the analysis, the focus groups allowed for the researcher to reflect with the group and check information ensuring that there was a feedback loop from one session to another. During such reflections the group would emphasize certain points, explaining them in-depth. This method allowed reconstruction of issues, which were not thoroughly discussed, in the previous session.
- PAR encourages full involvement of those researched.
- Participants became full partners in the research process and committed to its success. Children in the group were interested in knowing how this research was going to help them, as they were going to leave the shelter at the end of the term. This was explained and discussed with them on how their input could bring change for the other children in future.
- Approach was bottom up sharing of information, participants informing the worker about their experiences and needs from the system.

### **Data Collecting**

Data were collected from children in the shelter and from staff members.

## **Data collection with Children**

In qualitative methods the interviewer can collect data by taking notes during the interview and/or tape record the interview. The research interviews were conducted through the use of 9 focus group sessions. The tape recorder was used during group discussions. This was helpful in a sense that the interviewer did not have to worry that she might miss some information during the process. She could concentrate on listening and responding to the group and not be distracted by trying to write down all responses. The tape recorder ensured that the whole session was recorded to provide complete data for analysis (Hancock, 1998). It had very minimal interruption of the process, and produced good quality data. It had a built in microphone and had an auto reverse facility, which prevented interruption in the flow of conversation. The negative component of the tape recorder was that children focused on the tape-recording rather than what was discussed. They made different noises for them to hear themselves afterwards. It took a while for them to see it as a tool that would assist in the capturing of their thoughts and views.

Focus groups were a primary source of collecting data. Focus groups take the form of an interview in which communication between participants generate data. The researcher guided topics under discussion (Bostock & Freeman 2003). Information on demographics were taken from the participants as well as from records in the organization. Focus groups are defined by Christensen & James (2000) as group discussions organized to explore a specific set of issues. The purpose of the focus groups with children was to learn from them, their experiences and exposure to violence and crime, giving indicators of evaluating the effectiveness of programmes in a shelter. In the focus group the interaction of participants was observable and a wide range of communication was encouraged. Focus groups were conducive to the study as they provided insights to social processes and encouraged open conversation about embarrassing subjects, while the researcher was able to explore differences, use

conflict to clarify behaviour and assess the influence of peer communication (Kitzinger, 1994). Children would tease and push each other while the group was in process. This was reflected and discussed, reflecting on their behaviour in the group and what they said about how they wanted to be treated was explored in depth. They emphasized that they wanted to be respected yet they were not respecting each other. This gave them the opportunity to think about what they were saying and doing at the same time, thus reflecting the use of the technique of reflection-in-action (Freire, 1970).

This method of data collection acknowledges that children are not little adults but are developing and growing beings that have their own specific characteristics and therefore working with them requires different and distinct skills (Greig & Taylor, 1999). As a social worker, the researcher was able to listen attentively, use reflexive skills and observe both verbal and non-verbal communications.

Nine focus group sessions were held with the children over the period of three months. Each session lasted one to one and a half hour. Where there were more discussions in the session it took just about two hours. The researcher was aware of the concentration span of the group and had to guard against overwhelming them for her benefit.

Group discussions with children were guided by highlighting the following issues for children to talk about.

- Situational analysis of programmes in shelters that focus on harm reduction with reference to crime and violence.
- Crime and Violence Chart exercise - this activity allowed children to talk about violent and criminal activities that they are exposed to on the street and in the shelter
- Service / Programme Chart – looking at risk reduction methods and harm minimization interventions
- Indicators of success and failure of such programmes

- A Diamond Ranking Exercise – Looking at the most and least important strategies on attending to the issue of exposure to crime and violence in respect of street children.

O’Kane cited in Christensen & James (2000).

### **Data collection with Staff members**

Members of the staff were called in and the researcher discussed the study with them; its anticipated value and how much their involvement would assist in the development of evaluation strategies. Initially there were difficulties in arranging meeting times as some workers worked out of the office and on different shifts. Out of twenty-one staff members, eight were able to directly take part in the study.

Discussions were done through the use of focus groups. The group was also concerned that what they were going to say might reach their management. They were not comfortable with what was going to happen to their taped discussions. The group was made comfortable after discussion of how their input might help in the development of change in the areas of their concerns. It was discussed how important it is that all relevant parties actively examine current situations in order to change and improve it (Wadsworth, 1998). They were informed that the research outcome would be discussed with them and they will have a copy of the study. This process was able to empower them into at least talking to a researcher with the hope that issues would be discussed that might help them and the children provided assurance that their names will not appear in the research report.

The purpose of the focus groups with staff members was to get information from them on the types of programmes they render and on the manner in which programmes on violence and crime are evaluated. Nine focus group sessions were conducted, allowing for reflection and explanation of activities and

programmes in the shelter. Multiple focus groups allows for a feedback loop in which initial findings generates possibilities for change, reviews and further investigations (Denscombe, 1998). Participants shared their experiences with children, the difficulties they come across when street children are being oriented to the new structures.

Focus groups were relatively unstructured, but focused on the topics at hand allowing the participants to talk about their thoughts and experiences. Understanding group dynamics, the researcher acknowledged the participants' priorities, with the motive to listen and learn from them (Morgan, 1998).

Discussions with staff members were on the programmes they provide, which are focusing on violence and crime. They discussed how they evaluated the effectiveness of their intervention by looking at the impact each programme have on the development of the child while on the street and in the shelter. Four sessions were held with the staff members at the shelter. Each session lasted approximately two hours. The focus groups were done over the period of two months.

During the discussion the researcher was made aware of the positives and negatives of focus groups as discussed by Boeree (2005), Kreuger (1994) and Kitzinger cited in Bostock & Freeman (2003).

**TABLE 3.: POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF FOCUS GROUPS**

Positive	Negative
The synergy among participants as they build on each others comments	Participants with strong personalities could dominate focus groups, which may bias the results.
The engagement of participants in group discussion process, encouraging participation to those who are reluctant to be interviewed individually	Groups can focus in one issue and not move on. Personal and sensitive issues may not be discussed, especially if certain participants feel they are different from others

Focus groups allow the researcher to probe beyond initial responses.	Sometimes groups appear more consistent than they are, because individuals who do not agree don't want to disturb the peace
They offer the opportunity for the researcher to observe, record data using participants' feelings, perceptions, opinions and interpret non-verbal communication, as part of the respondent's feedback	When it is a hot issue and group cohesion is strong, focus groups can generate into something resembling a talk show.

The researcher, as an experienced facilitator was aware of the impact the negatives could have on the group and used the skills of acknowledging each participants' input while drawing in for other participants' ideas. The researcher would probe for elaboration and invite others to share their experiences on similar issues, thereby preventing some from dominating and controlling the views of others

### **Data analysis**

All data obtained from children and staff members through the use of the tape recorder, were transcribed and reduced to meaningful information. The researcher was challenged while transcribing recording from children, as they tend to speak at the same time or secretly make noises to be recorded. There were those who spoke in high pitch voices making it difficult to hear the soft-spoken ones. It was through listening and re-listening to the tapes that helped in creating understanding of the group's discussion. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggested that data be analyzed after it has been reduced, through the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data that is on written field notes or transcripts. The reduction of data allowed the researcher to select relevant data that would answer the research questions.

Throughout the analysis, Miles & Huberman (1994) suggested that the researcher be guided by the following questions as she analyzes the findings.

- What patterns and common themes emerge in responses dealing with specific items? How do these patterns (or lack thereof) help to illuminate the broader study?
- Are there any deviations from these patterns? If yes, are there any factors that might explain these responses?
- What interesting stories emerge from the responses? How can these stories help to illuminate the broader study?
- Do any of these patterns or findings suggest that additional data may need to be collected? Do any of the study questions need to be revised?
- Do the patterns that emerge confirm the findings of any corresponding qualitative analyses that have been conducted? If not, what might explain these discrepancies?

Data analysis in qualitative research is fundamentally an iterative set of processes. There is no one clear-cut way of analyzing and presenting data, “the researcher must find the most effective way to tell the story” (Janesick cited in Sewpaul, 1995:41).

Attempts were made to identify themes and organize them into coherent categories. When introducing participants, a brief profile is used to describe the child's demographic details. In certain instances, data was grouped and analyzed by both question and individual or group responses (Tylor-Powel & Renner, 2003).

### **Sampling**

In the introduction chapter it is explained that the research is part of a broader multi-phase study, which involved different sectors that work with street children. An initial inception workshop was designed to involve the participation of people in the research process, with encouragement of equal relationships between researchers and participants. The main objectives with key role of the workshop were to outline the aims, objectives and philosophy of the research project to the



participants, establish a relationship with key role players and secure their collaboration on the project, gain an understanding of the various programmes that key role players are involved in, and how they think such programmes should be evaluated and to jointly map out a way forward (Sewpaul, 2004).

The workshop conducted became part of the planning stage of the study. Structures from Kwa Zulu Natal, which work with street children, were invited. It was through the discussions at this workshop that certain groups were excited and willing to work in the area of violence and crime. The workshop allowed the researcher to gain access to subjects through gatekeepers (Hek, Judd & Moule (1996). Hek et.al defined gatekeepers as people who attempt to safeguard the interests of those to be studied. In this study, gatekeepers were shelter managers or directors who have registered themselves to care for the need of such children. It was in this workshop that shelters showed interest in working with the researcher.

The shelter where the research was conducted was chosen to focus on harm reduction programmes with specific reference to children's exposure to crime and violence. This selection was a convenience sample also known as judgment selection. The strategy was to select units that are judged to be typical of the population under investigation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2002), Bless & Higson-Smith (1995), Ghauri, Grønhaug & Kristianslund, 1995).

This kind of non- probability sampling has been seen as not very scientific since it does not make possible to determine the likelihood of the representation of the population into the sample. Nevertheless the convenience sampling was deemed appropriate for an in-depth qualitative research, which is not aimed at generalizing the findings (Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2002), Sewpaul, (1995)).

A presentation at the shelter was done, informing children and staff members about the type of the research, its implications and benefit to the shelter and the researcher. Children volunteered to be involved in the study. Out of 19 children who were at the shelter 11 took part in the focus groups. Not all of them were

present in all sessions, which led to an average of 8 children per group. This group formed one focus group.

### **Participants Characteristics**

Boeree (2005) suggested that focus groups should have the following characteristics:

1. In respect of the size of the group between 6 and 10 members is considered manageable. Although the smaller number limits the potential on the amount of information to be collected, it allows everyone to participate and interact. An average of 8 street children and 6 staff members formed the size of the focus groups in the study.
2. Several focus groups allows for diverse views. The concern is that views of one group may be subjected to internal or external factors, leading to limited insight gained. In the study the limited resources and time could not allow for a number of focus groups. Only one focus group with multiple sessions was used for both children and staff members. The sessions with children and staff were held separately.
3. Members of the focus group should have common characteristics, which are important to the topic under study. All children in the study were teenage street children and were living at the shelter. The staff members were people who were currently working with street children.

### **Validity and reliability**

Qualitative studies need to meet certain criteria to ensure their credibility and validity. According to Patton, cited in Veeran (1999), the researchers' experience, perspectives and qualifications brought to the study; the techniques and methods used will determine the value of the findings. Unlike quantitative research, which looks at the statistical findings of the study, validity in qualitative studies look at the value of a research instrument and a research process.

The whole notion of validity, which looks at content, construct and criterion validity of research instruments, is not a foremost issue with qualitative research (Sewpaul, 1995). Marshal cited in Sewpaul (1995: 47-48) argued, "we need to re-cast the traditional concept of validity to apply it productively to knew paradigm, qualitative research"

He offered the following checklist on three areas that may be used in the assessment of validity.

**TABLE 4.: VALIDITY CHECKLIST**



<b>How the research was conducted</b>	<b>The relationship with data</b>	<b>Exploration of alternative interpretations</b>
Was the researcher aware of his/her own perspectives?	Is the level of theorizing appropriate to the study and the data?	How do the conclusions relate to other work in the area?
How did the researcher handle him/herself?	Is the theorizing of sufficient complexity to reflect the phenomenon being studied?	Is the researcher aware of relevant contexts for the phenomena studied?
Was the researcher open to new encounters? Did he/she tolerate and work in the chaos and confusion? Has the researcher grown personally from the experience?	Are alternative interpretations explored?	Is the material useful?

In this study, an effort was made to attend to almost all the questions raised above.

The reliability of the information may be questioned, as there are no statistical findings. The use of one focus group in one shelter had limited information. Research conducted in other shelters may reveal different results. As meaning is paramount in qualitative research, the researcher attempted to achieve depth and richness rather than any widely applicable or replicable simplified statement

(Sewpaul, 1995). A goal in qualitative research is not to generalize across populations, rather it seeks to provide understanding from the respondents' perspectives (Taylor-Powel & Renner, 2003).

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher relied on the willingness of the shelters to allow for such activities to take place. Researchers working with street children have highlighted that working with this group is a limitation on its own (Veeran, 1999). The fact that children often view adults as symbols of authority may hinder the flow of communication. Discussion tools that allowed children to engage in activities without feeling judged were used in an attempt to overcome some limitations. Activities that were done while having meaningful conversations with children helped in developing good rapport, which led to more open discussions.

The time frame was a challenge. Academically the study had to be completed in a set period of time. The processes of the PAR, which are time consuming, were at times not applicable, for example involving participants in data analysis, which is an empowering component in the study. It also limited the development of extensive trustworthy relationship with children.

Children were seen during their third term at the shelter and were going to be placed with their families at the end of the year.

Conducting focus groups meant that children and staff members might be tempted to tell the researcher what they felt she needed to hear. Probing, observations and further exploration was used to contextualize responses.

The researcher acknowledges limitations of the participatory research with children where participants are given more control over the focus agenda. The discussions may be limited to what children find significant to them and a large amount of time may be required to facilitate the whole research process. To

attend to that, a framework of participation was designed to ensure an appropriate level of discussions to meet the objectives of the research. The researcher was constantly on guard to direct the process.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The study aimed at involving children in guiding the process of developing evaluative strategies in respect of interventions aimed at harm reduction. It was then necessary to consider the following ethical issues:

### **Informed Consent**

Emmanuel, Wendler & Grady (cited in Khanlou & Peter, 2004) defined informed consent as the provision of information to participants, about the purpose of the research, its procedures, potential risks, benefits and alternatives so that the individual understands the process and can make a voluntary decision to take part and continue to participate. This ethical consideration that calls for ethical practice was declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organizations (UNESCO), UNICEF as well as the Declaration of the Right of a Child.

In the current study the following was done to uphold this ethical requirement:-

- It was emphasized that participation was voluntary and that the shelter did not force any one to participate.
- Consent was obtained from shelter managers and they were been briefed about the details of the study.
- Participants in the group were informed about how the process of the research was going to unfold and that the shelter would have access to the results.
- Participants of the study were made aware that the research was a process and that it may not immediately benefit the current group but the larger group of street children.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Respect for participants autonomy and welfare are demonstrated through the protection of confidentiality and anonymity. Tapes used were only for the purpose of the research and names of participants and the name of the shelter are not be mentioned in any writings. Where names are required for the analysis of the results, pseudonyms are used.

### **Potential harm**

In line with the fundamentals of PAR and social work which are directed towards improving people's wellbeing, the researcher was prepared to extend her availability in cases where, children may require individual intervention as a result of issues that surfaced during the study. Children were informed of the availability of the researcher to help them deal with issues they would rather not discuss in the group. None of the children showed the need for such intervention.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher documented the research paradigm and design guiding the study, sampling techniques, method used to collect and analyze data, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The following chapter analyses and discusses the results as gathered through the PAR method.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **INTRODUCING PARTICIPANTS – CHILDREN**

This chapter analyses and discusses the results from the focus groups. It begins to discuss the results from the children and later in the chapter it introduces the analysis and results of the staff members, which are also referred to as child care workers or care workers.

#### **Names have been changed to protect the identities of children**

Kwenzu was a 12 year old boy who had been on the street for about three months before entering the shelter. He left his home after he had endured several beatings from his father. On the day when he decided to leave, he had been with the neighbours watching TV and had not informed his parents. When it was late, he feared going home. The next morning he headed for the roads. He first stayed in Stanger and was later reported by neighbours and was taken home, where he was again beaten up. The second time, he decided to go to Durban, so that no one could trace him. He took a train to Durban with other boys. Both his parents are alive. He has been at the shelter for 7 months.

Solwazi was a 14 year old boy. He left home with friends to the Durban beaches. They swam until late. When he realized he could not get back home, he joined other boys on the street. His friend had been on the street before. He spent less than a month on the street and has been at the shelter for 5 months. He had no significant problems at home, but feared that he will be beaten if he had to go home.

Sizwe was a 12 year old boy, who stayed on the streets of Overport for less than a week. He has been at the shelter for 4 months. He left his home with friends after being beaten by his father.

Buhle was a 13 year old boy. His stepfather chased him out of the house. They lived in an informal settlement. He stated that at the end of the term, he would not have a home to go back to. He cannot go back to where he lived with his stepfather. When other boys said they wanted to go back to their families he would say, "talk for yourself".

Mat was 15 years old. He left his home after his father accused him of stealing, which he had not done. He could see that he was going to be beaten and decided to seek refuge with his grandmother. This happened during school holidays. When schools were about to re-open, his grandmother informed him that she was going to take him back home. On the following day, he left very early to avoid being taken back home. He was not sure where he was going but had to run away from his father. He hitch-hiked until he got to Durban. His home is at the deep rural area in KZN. On the day he got to the street of Durban, he was robbed of all his belongings. He despises being on the street. He has been at the shelter for 5 months.

Lolo was 12 years old. He ran away from home after being beaten by his mother. He said he could not stand it anymore and left with friends to the street of Durban. He has been at the shelter for 7 months.

Lethu was a 13 years old boy. He left with friends to the beaches of Durban. They swam until late and realized they could not go back home. They met other boys and decided to stay longer. He has been at the shelter for 7 months.

Thando was 14 years old. He had no problems at home. He left home to go to the beaches in Durban. He spent all his bus fare and could not return home. He



met other boys and joined them. He was later afraid to go home, fearing that his father would beat him. He has been at the shelter for five months. He was on the streets for less than a month.

Theo was a 13 year old boy. He was living with his aunt. He left home after being beaten by his aunt. He had difficulty remembering the period he spent on the street. He has been at the shelter for 7 months.

All children in this study have spent some time on the street before they were referred to the shelter.

They were all enrolled in the on-site education system. The profiles of these children indicated that 66% of them left their homes with the fear of being beaten by their parent or guardian. Though there were children who were on the street as a result of pull factors, they became aware that they had acted irresponsibly and decided not to go home in fear of being beaten. Keen cited in Le Roux (1996) stated that although some street children leave their homes in search of excitement and personal freedom, 90% leave their homes because of alcoholism, violence and desertion by family.

**TABLE 5.: Below are commonly reported pull and push factors for street children (Le Roux, 1996)**

<b>Push factors</b>	<b>Pull factors</b>
Poverty and lack of economic stability	Leisure and entertainment
Rural underdevelopment	A sense of adventure
Hardship, abuse, violence, family breakdown	Peers reporting positive experiences
Parental death – leading to child headed households	Job opportunities – making your own money

### Demographic details

All participants in the children's group were Black, male street children. This was due to the fact that the shelter was for boys only and that led to the sample being bias. Studies have shown that in South Africa 90% of visible street children are boys (Anderson, et. al. 2000). This is also found in India, where about 83 % visible street children are boys (Manihara, 2002)

Table 1 provides a list of participants with the age, period on the street and at the shelter.

**TABLE 6.: DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS - CHILDREN**

No.	Names of children	Age	Period on the street	Period at the shelter
1	Kwenza	12	Has been on and off the street. First time was about two weeks, second time, longer, date unclear. His guess was three months	7 months
2	Solwazi	14	Less than a month	5 months
3	Sizwe	12	Less than a week	4 months
4	Buhle	13	Could not remember	5 months
5	Mat	15	About three months	5 months
6	Lolo	12	Not sure of length	7 months
7	Lethu	13	One month	7 months
8	Thando	14	Less than a month	5 months
9	Theo	13	Could not remember	7 months

The above table showed that the average age of respondents in this group was 13 years. This was similar to what Richter (1991) found that the majority of street children are between ages of 13 and 16. The average age of children in the study reflect the bias of the convenience sampling technique used. The shelter

catered for boys between the ages 11 and 16 years. Their involvement was voluntary. Children who were on the streets and not referred to the shelter would have posed a challenge for the PAR due to their itinerant nature; feedback during sessions would have been impossible.

It must be noted that it was difficult to get an exact period children spent on the street. Most of their days were guessed or could not be remembered. The inability to recall the correct time street children spend on the street had been found by Richter (1991) who argued that street children tend to lose sense of time.

### **Exposure to Violence at the shelter**

Participants stated that, it became difficult to sleep peacefully on Fridays, as boys tend to burn and hit one another. They put a piece of toilet paper in between toes of the victim while he is asleep, and lit it. They said they do not feel safe during this time. One member, describing how difficult it is said:

“Fridays are bad days, one is on guard throughout the night. We hit each other and engage into fights - others hit some with slings. There are constant fights here”. Participants expressed their anxiety particularly on the eve of the weekend. They said that people “*bashova ibhayisikili*” at night, meaning that they burn each other between toes forcing the victim to shuffle his legs. A frustrated member of the group said that, he will not shuffle his legs; he will let the paper burn until it burns the blankets, if these other boys do not stop this behaviour.

Apart from burning each other, they hit one another with a metal stick and planks on the ankle. One member of the group even said: “I prefer being burnt than hit on the ankle. It is very dangerous and one will mistakenly hit ones head thinking that it is an ankle. No, no, no, it’s not safe”

Another boy said, “weekends are difficult times. You will trust your neighbour thinking that he will not burn you. The next thing, you will be surprised that he is the one that burnt you. You will support him during the day when someone is teasing him, and he will just say to you *foetsek* . At night, he will hit you with a plank”.

Mat mentioned that, it is not peaceful at the shelter. There is always someone teasing the other. “When you are seated quietly, someone would just come and hit you, with no particular reason. If you report him to the aunties, he will hit you again”. One could get the sense that Mat felt hopeless about the situation he was describing.

When they were asked how they fight, they said they use fists and sticks. “We switch off lights, pull the main switch down. When this happen, Aunties can’t come out because they will be hit as well.” Children were saying that they do not respect childcare workers because they do not treat them well. Mat said, “They do not treat you well because you do not respect them. You treat them as if they are not there”. Speaking between his teeth, he responded saying ‘they are not my parents’. Mat elucidating their behaviour said, “You must see them (meaning other children), they hit each other till blood split, but when they are beaten by an adult, they scream and complain.”

One child reported the following: -

“Sometimes we make rings like boxing matches. It starts from a minor thing. When you find others playing and you join them without their permission, they can start hitting you, they influence each other, even when you step on the other person by mistake, other boys will say ‘he cannot do that to me, no one steps on me like that.’”

While children detested beatings and violence from adults, it was common practice among themselves.

### **Exposure to Violence on the streets**

Human Rights Watch (2004) reported that street children are exposed to risky situations where they were shot, raped and assaulted.

When they were asked if they had observed or participated in any kind of violence on the streets, five members of the group said that there is a lot of violence on the streets. They said they expect it on the streets, but not at the shelter.

“It is different, sometimes on the streets you are protected by your friends, but other times, when ‘*oshoshoba*’ (street children) are drunk, they don’t mind stabbing you. Some boys would just pull and shuffle you around with no clear reason of doing that. If they want money, they can stab you for not giving them. You are only protected when you are with your group, people who can help you”

Kwenz said in a distressed voice, “it was bad, hard knock outs, very hard. They take your stuff there. They took all my clothes; I was taught to *phanta* (ask for money). On the street, there is difficulty, but it is not like at home. On the street, you get beaten very strongly, fights are there, but you do meet right people and stay with them for a long time. Once, one of them get bored, he can start beating you.”

The group explained that there are a lot of different criminal and violent activities that occur on the streets. All participants had witnessed different kinds of violent behaviour on the street. One participant said that he once saw people shooting at each other; one ended-up dead on the street. “I have seen people stealing cars, breaking in the car to steal a radio. Sometimes we do a ‘*bomb explosion*” This is a term used when breaking the window of the car, with the intention to steal a bag. One of the participants explained the impact of sniffing glue on their thinking capabilities and how it influence their behaviour. He said:

“Once *oshoshoba* are under the influence of glue, they think they are powerful and other people are nothing. It is easy to just stab another child, especially when they are in a group.”

One member of the group explained his ordeal with other street children: “*Oshoshoba* hit me when I arrived on the streets. They took my clothes. It was not nice. It was difficult. Others sodomize young boys”.

The other boy added, “*insansa* (sodomy) happens on the street, doing business, ja, other boys do it”.

When the researcher tried to probe more on the sexual behaviour, the group did not want to comment, saying they were not going to talk about it.

They were asked to list types of violent or criminal acts they encounter on the street. They mentioned: robbery, cell phone, clothes and car theft, rape, fights, and housebreaking. There was little mention of violence from the public. Children had different views on violence inflicted by the police and the general public. They mentioned violence inflicted mainly at the hands of street children.

### **Resources on the Street**

While on the street, children form small groups. They stay together and support each other. When they are out looking for money, they keep to their spots and would assault anyone who comes to their territory. If an older or tougher boy came to their territory, he could take over.

The group was asked who helped them when they were in danger. Kwenza who had been on the street on two occasions, running away from his family with the fear of being beaten said; “it depends if you have your group around. Not everyone will help you”.

Two boys mentioned that certain policemen and security guards would help them if they saw them on the street. Although none of them came with examples where police beat them, they said that not all policemen would help them. They

would just tell them to go back where they came from. Lack of protection from the justice system had been reported to be of concern for street children (Human Rights Watch, 2002, Mercury, 2004, Daily News, 2005 & Sunday Tribune, 2005).

They mentioned that while on the street, there were people who were informing them about living a better life.

One participant described how other people tried to help them;

“On the street they tell you. A priest will come and tell you to change, you say yes. Thuthukani<sup>2</sup> teaches us, we say yes. Once you leave, we do what we please. But not everyone, others benefit”.

They mentioned that there are “Sirs<sup>3</sup>” who talk to them on the street informing them about Streetwise<sup>4</sup>. They are given time to think about their lives and decide on whether they would like to start the streetwise programme. They said that it was through “Sirs”, that they ended up coming to the shelter. They also emphasized that, they were many when they came to the shelter, but later, some could not stand the rules of the shelter. They wanted to smoke. They needed *tapoti* (glue).

When they are sick they go the Addington clinic or buy *muti* from hawkers on the street. Theo mentioned that when a car hit him, he was taken to Addington hospital. After recovery he went back to the streets.

Participants realized that being on the street was not a good choice, but at times they do not know which is the better place to be in. One member said: “When you are at the shelter, you start comparing shelter– home – street. Sometimes there is no better place. The solution, we do not have. The problem Aunt is us, we do not listen”.

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<sup>2</sup> Thuthukani was a reception centre for street children in Durban. It was administered by the Durban municipality and was closed. Service providers at the inception workshop and other stakeholders working with street children verbalized frustration and great concern at the closure of Thuthukani

<sup>3</sup> Male child care workers who are working with street children while on the streets as well as in the shelters

<sup>4</sup> A shelter for street children in the Pinetown area

## **Ideas proposed by participants on a better functioning and protective shelter**

Organisations working with children lobby for child protection, freedom to participate and empowerment (Mercury 2005, Brandon et al. 1998). Through the PAR approach, children were given the opportunity to express their opinions on how to better their services.

### **Child Care Workers**

Participants were concerned about their safety particularly in the evening in their dormitory. They felt that it might be better if childcare workers would not sleep before them. If they are experiencing a problem at night, they do not want to be ignored when they knock at the doors of the child care workers. As one participant explained: "When you knock at night, they just shout, go to sleep! They do not even open their door." Brandon et al. (1998) noted that adults working with children needed to be trained and be willing to acknowledge their needs.

The children verbalized a need to be taken seriously. They also acknowledged that, care workers are females and may put their lives at risk if they try to intervene at night when the children are fighting. Participants felt that a male care worker may be more appropriate to attend to them at night. They associated a male figure with authority, which they currently saw as lacking.

"There is a need for a male who will stay here ... a male worker will be able to discipline boys because females, they just fold their hands while children are hitting each other, they shout, hey stop!!!"

There was a plea that workers need to treat children like their own. They should not treat them with an attitude labeling them as 'from the street'. One child answered back while the childcare worker was talking, the childcare worker said



according to Mazwi “Don’t talk to me like that, I am not from the street”. Children wished that they could be respected and supported, and that care workers be patient with them.

According to the Children’s Charter of South Africa realized all children are created equally. The Bill of Rights recognized that children in the past were subject to discrimination and made provisions that all children regardless of race, gender or creed should be treated equally (Constitution of SA, 1996).

The need to be treated equally was echoed by participants. They felt that some workers were fond of certain children and this led to preferential treatment. This was further discussed when the group was exploring ways to deal with unacceptable behaviour.

### **Buildings**

One participant mentioned that the architect of the building makes it easy for boys to disturb others in their sleep. “Even if doors are closed, boys climb by balancing their legs on the passage walls and jump to another bedroom. Pipes are big enough for boys to crawl to another exit.”

They felt that it might also be better if doors are locked at a particular time and opened in the morning. However the concern was that if an accident occurs it would take long to open doors and keep everyone safe.

### **Activities**

Participants acknowledged that there were planned activities for the shelter. These activities were discussed at the beginning of the year and were to be implemented in that year. While they were talking about those activities, they pointed to them on the wall. There was a chart with written activities and dates. They found that time passes by without them doing certain activities. One activity that they said was important was the Camp. They felt that boys who did

not go to the Camp were extremely misbehaved. They were not disciplined. This influenced those who have been to Camp to regress to their old behaviour.

Mat explained the importance of Camp saying: "Camp allows children to talk about their experiences and make decisions whether they want to go the shelter or not".

A camp was an outing where children were taken to. It included children who have decided to leave the street, but are not yet at the shelter. Those children would go through counseling and therapeutic exercises before sent to a shelter. Children had the opportunity to review their decision and be prepared for life in a secured disciplined environment.

They stated that at the beginning of the year, they had meetings every week, discussing issues and problems at the shelter. They noted that this had stopped. They now meet when a problem has been identified, for example when one child was burnt and had bubbles on his foot.

The group seemed frustrated when they spoke about activities and promises not kept. "We wish to have activities all the time. It's just that rules here are sometimes not followed.... It's just that plans are never successful here. I put a request for a dictionary, they say, we will see, we will see, it's never happened. They complain about cars when you ask for trips". When asked what they do after school, they said they do gardening, soccer and 'chicken *bhuquza*' meaning that they are just loitering around with no proper plan.

Swart (1988) asserted that intervention programmes should be motivated by a desire to provide children with the opportunity to gain more control over their lives, not just simply to provide them with shelter. Children verbalized the need to be attended to while doing their studies. They wanted to be supervised during study time. Mat expressed his frustration that there was study time but it was not properly managed. "When it is study time, no one studies, there is no supervisor. When you are studying and you do not understand something, there is no dictionary. You are reading something you do not understand. You then realize

that its pointless, there is no one explaining to you. When you are studying and others are playing outside, they will disturb you”.

The teacher at the shelter left after her classes were completed and could not stay behind to attend to their study time. There were no care workers to attend to the children during that time. The use of volunteers and university students as part of their practical in education could assist in dealing with this problem.

### **Dealing with unacceptable behaviour**

Children felt that if everyone respected one another, there would be no problems. The kind of behaviour that boys engage in is based on disrespect. One of the participants said, “there is no discipline here”. Mat said, “boys tend to forget that they come from different backgrounds, peer influence affects them.”

There were different views on respect. The majority of children (70%) felt that Aunties do not treat them with respect. Children therefore in turn make it hard for the aunties to discipline them.

Brandon et al. (1998) noted that if children are able to communicate well with social workers, childcare workers or any adult in general, people working with children will become more knowledgeable about children’s experiences and their perceptions of the things around them.

Sizwe verbalized his feelings around respect saying “if she treats me like a dog, I will treat her like a dog. I have been beaten in front of them, but nothing has been done. You go to them asking for something, they say ‘do you see it hanging on me””.

Mat’s view was that children do not do their chores properly. They do not respect childcare workers. Other children were concerned that they are not treated equally. They felt discriminated. “One child would do something wrong and be scolded at, whereas the other will do the same, and nothing be said. When you report a problem, she will respond saying it’s not my business””. This was

against the article 2 of the CRC, which stated that all children should be treated equally without discrimination of any kind.

Erikson cited in Sewpaul (1993:194) sighted that “parents, teachers and significant others need to involve themselves as fully and as constructively as possible to provide the child with optimum stimulation and positive reinforcement.”

The reinforcement of positive behaviour was not observed from the respondents as well as discipline that empower the child to take responsibility.

The need to respect each other was clearly stated by the group. They felt that they would enjoy their stay if there was no fighting among boys. Kwenza said: “I have never seen respect in this home. Children do things at their own times as they please. At their homes, they do not do this. They are beaten and run away. Children do make mistakes and that needs to be understood.”

When the participants were asked about ways of controlling unacceptable behaviour, they said that beatings do not help. They started sharing information about how they could not stand beatings at home.

“No one will tell you why exactly they left their homes. Even at the office, I did not say everything”. The participant admitted that they did not share all their experiences.

“Me, I left home because of whipping. The sjambok!! I could not stand it. Being locked in the house! I decided if I get one chance I will *wheee (disappear)* one time. Can you stand the sjambok? Sjambok? Its cuts through your skin! That's no joke”.

“They lock you in the house; you cannot even duck and dive. You get under the bed; your mom comes and starts beating you, shouting at you saying you tell people about our life! The stick does not make you to listen, instead its makes you avoid your home” (shaking his head).

In these statements, participants were showing how ineffective hidings are in disciplining children. They also could not come up with alternative ways, but emphasized that they needed to be disciplined. Nelsen and Lott (2000) mentioned that children need guidance not external control which increases rebellion.

Key ideas that people working with children need to understand when disciplining them,

- Recognize child's behaviour as a reaction to past or present hurts. Street children have been emotionally wounded, like a child with physical wounds they are engulfed with anger and fear. Employees in this field need to be compassionate and effective teachers.
- Encourage children to talk about and express their feelings. Children at the shelter verbalized that when they report being ill treated by others, they are sometimes dismissed and they end up hitting each other.
- Children need opportunities to discover acceptable ways of expressing anger – this could be learnt in a contained, supportive environment.
- Show understanding and respect for the feelings behind the child's behaviour. It is important to acknowledge feelings and give clear information or direction on why it should not happen the way the child wants.
- Need to set clear limits and be prepared to enforce them. This requires consistency and clear judgment on decisions.
- Children need love to grow as they need shelter and food. It is therefore important that discipline and love are not used as bargains, e.g love vs good behaviour. It is necessary that the dislike of child's behaviour should not be the dislike of the child.
- Choose discipline methods that show that every action has consequences.
- Children need not be belittled or shamed in the name of discipline. The negative technique will only undermine the child's selfworth-the cornerstone of all future positive behaviour.

- It is important to understand and acknowledge that it is normal for children to misbehave.

(The State of Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare, 2001)

Below is a laconic version on the children's view on indicators for successful programmes

**TABLE 7.: CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON INDICATORS FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMES**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Safety	Regular attention to reported unacceptable behaviour. All children receive equal and consistent discipline	All children are given similar activities to do when they engage in similar unacceptable behaviour. Ongoing discussions on safety	Children feel equally treated. Children adhere to the discipline without complaining.
Ongoing support	Childcare workers /social workers attend to children when they come forth with problems.	Childcare workers/ social workers sit with the child and listen to his request or plea. Be patient with them.	Children know that they can go to the care worker/ social worker without fear of being rejected.
Equal treatment for all children at the shelter	Children and staff are aware of minimum standards of the rights of the child. All children engage into similar programmes.	Each child is involved in monthly group meetings. All planned activities are implemented or at least failure to implement is discussed with all parties involved	Children feel equally treated and as important role players in the shelter

Mutual respect between children and child care workers	Care workers and children communicate in a respectable manner	When children are reporting to care workers, their approach is respectful. When care workers see that children want to talk to them, they receive them with dignity.	Children and childcare workers communicate with each other freely. All children feel equally important and do not have to compete for attention.
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The use of focus groups allowed children to discuss openly their experiences on the street and at the shelter as well as provide their views on effective programmes as listed in the table above. They mentioned the need to be protected, supported, and treated with respect and to be treated equally.

The following part of the discussion is based on the views of staff members about the programmes that focus on harm reduction with respect to violence and crime.

### **STAFF MEMBERS' VIEWS ON PROGRAMMES DEALING WITH EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND CRIME**

This section of the chapter attends to the views of staff members who were involved in the study. They stated their understanding on how their programmes address exposure to violence and crime, and indicators of effective programmes.

It must be noted that participants in this section stated that they did not have written evaluative strategies or formats for their programmes. However, their evaluation was based on observations and recorded information on the children's behaviour.

Table 8 below indicates the profile and roles of staff members who were participants in the study

All child care workers have a basic qualification in Child Care Work which was offered by National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW, 2005). This

course provides professional training to promote healthy child and youth development and to improve the standard of care and treatment for troubled children and youth at risk.

**TABLE 8: STAFF MEMBERS' PROFILE AND DUTIES**

Position	Gender M / F	Work experience with street children	Activities / Roles
1. Social worker 2. Social worker	F F	1 year 3 years	Rehabilitation, assessment, counseling, referral and follow-up
Outreach worker	M	7 years	Involved with the street programme. Work on the street. Develop rapport with street children with the intention to link them with their families or send them to the shelter.
Aftercare worker (Child care worker)	M	12 years	Focus on reunifying children with families. Work with children and families. Redeveloping relationships
Teacher	F	2 years	Assess and educate children at the shelter. After assessment, may refer those who qualify to go to mainstream local schools. Others engage in classes in the shelter. Leaves the shelter after classes.
Child care worker	F	5 years	Focus on behaviour modification, personal hygiene, and social skills. View themselves as playing the role of a parent. There were no specific strategies discussed on behaviour modification. Behaviour in terms of manners and cleanliness was mentioned. They attend to children's basic needs like, food, clothes, health and schooling.
Carpenter	M	7 years	Teaches carpentry related skills to children who after assessment could not be sent to mainstream schooling system.



All workers mentioned that their role is to eventually link the child with his family or alternate care. For their programme to be effective they need to work as a team. They indicated that outreach workers would refer children to the shelter where social workers and childcare workers work together in the process of rehabilitation. The role of the teacher was to assess for school readiness, teach numeracy and English and other subjects as per child's level of education and report back to child careworkers and social workers on children who display behavioural problems. The teacher mentioned that she had difficulties in attending to children of different levels in one class.

The shelter has four main programmes, outreach, rehabilitation, aftercare and prevention.

### **Outreach**

The outreach team emphasized the importance of developing a good relationship with the child, prior to taking him to the shelter. They mentioned that children needed to decide whether they wanted to be at the shelter or not. Street workers put a great deal of emphasis on developing rapport with street children.

The street worker explained how they get to work with street children.

"It is important to develop a closer relationship with the child. We identify children on the street. There are lots of things we look for how they are dressed. As soon as I get out of the taxi, I start looking. We speak the street language. We develop a rapport with that identified child. The difficulty observed is the different characters shown by children. As a street team, we attempt to bring trust and respect towards adults"

Apart from developing a relationship with the child, the street workers have to create a relationship between the shelter workers and the child. This serves as a good introduction to the children's new environment.

The Child Care Act, Act 79 of 1983 as amended emphasized the importance of creating an environment that is suitable for a child and preparing the child for the new environment, where there is a perceived need for change of care.

The focus of the outreach programme was seen as to offer support to children while on the street and to refer them to appropriate resources. The outreach workers (street team) have services on the street that are accessible to children. Children would use these services while on the street. Children are invited to participate in life skills, play games and engage in literacy classes. Similar outreach services have been observed to be happening in other countries in Africa – Ghana, Kenya. In Addis Ababa drop-in centres are viewed as a primary level intervention in respect of the challenges of street children (Relief Web, 2002).

The successes on the outreach programme are calculated by the number of children who are returned to their families and never return to the street and the number of children who are referred to the shelter. However, there are no clear recordings of this work. They know that they can identify the child if he/she returned on the street. The street team mentioned that it is difficult for them to draw successes from the on the street services, because children are not consistent in using them. They rate their success when the child who has been known to them decides to go to the shelter.

### **Shelter**

Workers at the shelter explained that children are expected to spend one year with them. There are those children who are assessed and found that they could be returned to their families without having to go through the shelter programme.

Those children are returned after families have been contacted. The purpose of the shelter is to rehabilitate the child and his family. Children are offered counseling and life skills activities. These include dealing with peer pressure, norms and values of society and bible studies. The roles of the childcare workers are to assist children to readjust, learn social skills, and attend to hygiene and health. This intervention sees the individual to be the cause of the situation and therefore in need of being rehabilitated. The aftercare workers link families with resources in their communities in an attempt to prevent the child returning to the streets. These workers have verbalized frustration as they find that families become dependant on them as they cannot access certain grants as a result of lack of documents like ID, or birth certificates.

They are a supportive structure for children. If they identify areas that require social work intervention, they refer the child for such services. When childcare workers notice that the child is unmanageable and has no respect for them, they request social work intervention. They believe that street children have been through a lot of hardship that contributes to their attitude in the shelter. If the child displays psychological problems, the social worker refers him to the psychologist.

The childcare workers' explanation on how they deal with behavioural problem was: "I can say we use counseling, we speak to the child, but we found that some do not listen, then we refer them to social worker".

" We conduct group discussions on aggressive behaviour and how to socialize with other children. We have open discussions. This is where we are able to pick up their problems, their needs, and then at the end we offer them appropriate alternatives.... We do these sessions when they arrive at the shelter up until they go or when I get a chance I call them and work on the issues. There is a record book, where every worker records her/his activities, to prevent repetition.... Not all children take part in these discussions. Those who attend

school out of the shelter are sometimes left out, but we try by all means to have a group with them. ”

Participants identified a gap in equal treatment, particularly on Camp and on-site activities.

During the discussion on shelter activities, it was highlighted children are involved in a number of daily chores. This serves as a training base for them. They learn the importance of helping with family chores. They are allowed to chair meetings and develop an agenda at other meetings. Participants stated that sometimes the children’s behaviour overwhelms them.

“At night they have the tendency to play... Children do not sit still. When they are told it is 9 o’clock goodnight, lets sleep; they get the chance to play. Aunt will call out and tell them to sleep it is late. It will be quiet for 2 minutes then its start again. They play strongly. Most of the time we do not switch lights off because they say they are afraid to go to the toilet in the dark...”

On the other hand children have reported fighting at night. This was the contradictory reporting of information. Child care workers may need to get to understand the kind of games they refer to as played at night. This may have been due to lack of skills to attend to the children or ways of dealing with this behaviour and preferred to brush it off as playing.

They said that during weekly staff meetings, they talk about children’s behavioural problems and develop strategies to deal with them. This is how one respondent explained how they strategize around dealing with uncontrollable behaviour. This response did not specify exactly the strategies they used in dealing with uncontrollable behaviour.

“Avoid being terrified when approaching them. Show them you trust that they won’t hurt you. If you show them that you are afraid, they see themselves as dangerous, they can take advantage of that. It is not easy, because when they

get out of hand, they get extremely out of hand, its not easy. In most cases we try and prevent that they get extremely out of hand. Sometimes it happens, but not all the time. When they talk back to aunt, fight with other children, you have to break them.”

As part of the rehabilitation process, children are involved in educational activities. Those who are assessed and found that they cannot fit well in mainstream school are trained in carpentry. The worker who is responsible for training children was concerned that they are no longer able to offer the best training due to poor resources.

Children who are not attending mainstream schools attend classes at the shelter. There were two educators who were responsible for onsite education. Children were separated according to their grades and examined accordingly. This was done to prepare them for mainstream schools when they are returned to their homes. This programme is observed in other countries like India, where children who cannot go to formal education are prepared through a learner-centric and participatory educational programme (Vikramshila Education resource Society undated)

To monitor the effectiveness of the activities in the shelter, childcare workers hold weekly meetings with children where they collectively look at problems and develop solutions.

### **Aftercare**

The aftercare programme focuses on supporting children who have been returned to their families after the rehabilitation process. This process involves home visits, parental support preparing the child and the family for his return and discussing his enrollment at a local school. The challenges they have on the aftercare programme are based on unchanging family circumstances. Where a child left home due to poverty, they go back and realize that the situation has not

changed. Children start comparing the shelter to home. At the shelter they get meals and nice things.

The aftercare worker explains challenges of aftercare service: "Children have a background problem. There is poverty in their homes whereas at the shelter they eat nice things. We live with them for the whole year. They only visit their families during holidays. When they are with their families they demand nice meals yet parents cannot afford it... Parents inform us during parenting meetings, requesting that we make children understand."

The influence of poverty on the street child phenomenon has been discussed in Chapters One and Three as the single most important contributory factor in the increase of the number of street children. This is attributed to number of issues including migrant labour, slums and informal settlements, unemployment and poor standards of living.

"Problems when children are returned to their homes demand to go to schools far from home, which is costly to the family.... Sometimes parents do not involve themselves to the child's education.... A child from the shelter is seen as different from his siblings. He gets special treatment from shelter visitors"

The success on the aftercare programme was seen when the child had adjusted well with his/ her family and the family was not reporting problems about his /her behaviour. To monitor this success, parents were counseled about their roles on raising a child. The aftercare worker holds meetings with parents and children to discuss the child's future plans.

### **Prevention programme**

This programme aimed at preventing children from leaving their homes to go to the streets. It was located in one of the communities in the outer Durban area. It was designed to promote family preservation. The South African draft policy on family emphasizes and encourages families to take the primary lead in protecting and caring for their members. "Families should therefore be capacitated

regarding socio-economic issues, without creating dependency” (draft family policy cited in Sewpaul, 2005:16). The focus of the prevention programme is based on the fact that most children leave their homes due to poverty and violence. It empowered the community through income generating programmes and community education on parenting skills.

The participants could not clearly state how this programme was evaluated.

The table below shows a concise version on the views of effective evaluation by staff members.

**TABLE 9: STAFFMEMBERS’ VIEWS ON EVALUATIVE STRATEGIES**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Improvement in child's behaviour	Less reported incidences of aggressive behaviour	Workshops conducted on appropriate behaviour	Well-behaved children. Respectful children
Provide ongoing support and counseling	Counseling offered to children	Children are referred to social workers or psychologist for counseling	Emotionally contained children
Parents active participation in the life of a child	Parents involve themselves in children's school progress. Parents and children communicate better	Parents attend meetings regarding parenting skills	Children are maintained in their families
Reduction of number of children on the street	More children are admitted at the shelter. More children are referred back to their families without going through the shelter	Outreach workers visible on the street for children to use. Outreach workers letting children know about them.	Informed street children on available resources
Support from management	Professional invitation to discuss issues on shelter matters	Non-judgmental reviews on performance	Motivated staff

### **Limitations of the effectiveness of service delivery**

The shelter focuses on the individual's needs and sees the child as the cause that need to be fixed. The micro level interventions are effective if they are linked with interventions in others systems, e.g. family situation, community structures. Some of these children come from the communities where "Big criminals" are worshipped. As one of the childcare workers said that some of these children see criminals who drive nice cars as role models.

Poverty has been identified as the major cause of street children. Organizations working with them are challenged when the external forces perpetuating the problem are not successfully dealt with.

The group noted the importance of working with other sectors in the community, particularly where families are unable to access services that could better their lives. This could further be developed into a structural group that lobbies for basic income grant for all children in need.

In this chapter the views of children, their exposure to violence and crime, and the staff members' perceptions of programmes that are aimed at helping limiting exposure to violence and crime were detailed. Staff members verbalized the lack of resources for them to meet the demands of the problems of street children. The following chapter contains conclusion and recommendations of the study.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research has been the beginning and part of a larger project on developing evaluative strategies for programmes of street children. It is therefore challenging to conclude on the information given by the participants. Their input on programme evaluation was based on their experiences as street children living in a shelter and as workers who are responsible for child care work.

Children's input on discussions was based on the hope that something different will happen and the possibility of change in the way they viewed their lives in the shelter. They felt empowered to share their views, yet limited to challenge themselves. At times there was a sense of despair and an element of it won't be long before they leave.

The use of PAR in the study was a challenge to the researcher as it was her first attempt. It was time consuming and had to be completed within a certain period. The exposure to this research method was supported mostly by social work skills on group work and facilitation. Children were excited to be part of the group where they were tape recorded. The chaos that was observed during tape recording was managed by recognizing the important statements that were discussed by the group.

The non-verbal communication that could not be clearly stated on script was enormous. The researcher could observe the levels of anger and irritation as they described their experiences. Despite that they could find in themselves the ability to laugh at each other and at themselves.

The input of children on how they felt unprotected was difficult to convey to staff / management as it would automatically be clear of who had raised such a concern.

Getting to know the participants was a journey. In each session the researcher identified a particular character that was not there at the beginning of the sessions. There were times when the group would agree on not commenting further on a statement. One would think they have spoken to each other before hand.

When speaking to boys at the shelter prior to each session, the researcher would observe that each boy had his own special character, which revealed his vulnerability and the need to be cared for.

When children spoke about their lives on the street, they spoke openly with minimal resistance. Their experiences on sleeping in refuse bags and using cardboards and how other people kicked them to take those cardboards would make one realise the importance of shelter and sharing. One participant who slept in a tree on his first day on the street could not bear the pain he went through.

The most interesting component was that although there was hardship on the street and the intention to go back was not there, not knowing what was going to happen after the shelter was a concern for some. Also present was the tendency to compare shelter to street and home. The element of being out of control in a contained environment was observed.

In their discussion there was a link between the need for shelter and the ability to access it through outreach workers. Participants acknowledged these workers as their lifeline at the time. What was also important was them having to make the decision to be at the shelter.

Being at the shelter gave them the opportunity to prepare meeting with their parents who had beaten them prior to leaving home. Others were informed that children were scared to come back home because they were going to be whipped (beaten). During group discussions some of the boys said that they were ready to go back to their homes, as they did not fear that they might be beaten. This was due to childcare workers working together with families preparing them for reunification. Other children had visited their families during school holidays and were prepared to return home.

The researcher was fortunate to be invited to a closing party as most of the boys were going back to their families. This function had attendees like parents, teachers from local schools (where other children attended) children and other stakeholders. The depiction of parents embracing their children and children verbally motivating each other to stay off the street and concentrate on their future was amazing.

The study was not just about group sessions. There were activities in between which added to the fact that street children are children too and have needs like any other child. They get bored, excited, and irritable and could be irritating at times.

They discussed with passion their perceptions on safety at the shelter. The issue of Fridays and weekends was devastating for them. They were able to observe their lack of respect for each other, which could have impacted on a view that they were not protected.

They verbalized the need to be cared for, treated with respect and be listened to. They wanted care workers to view them as children and be assisted where necessary. An interesting point was when they said they needed childcare workers to be patient with them. Children express the need for uniformity and consistency, particularly on discipline and activities at the shelter.

Staff members who were part of the study had a common goal to have children united with their families and not return to the streets. They acknowledged that they do not evaluate programmes to guide them on their progress. Their observations are at times limited.

In the discussion it appeared as if they were reactive in their intervention. One may also acknowledge that their programmes in the shelter would be reactive as children have already been exposed to violent and criminal acts on the streets. Having mentioned that they emphasised the difficulties they encounter in their pursuit to protect children. In the chapter on analysis it is mentioned that, they sometimes feel unsafe to intervene when children are fighting or arguing. They felt degraded the way children spoke back at them.

The need for teamwork from all levels of management was mentioned. They felt that children were seen as the primary ruler. Their rights were lifted more than their responsibilities. They felt that children lack the willingness to understand their responsibilities but were most interested in their rights. They viewed this as the gap, which was negatively impacting on their performance.

### **Recommendations:**

These recommendations have been derived after listening to the tapes and analysis of the result. They hope to bring growth and development particularly to the shelter that took part in the study. They are also extended to other shelters that might experience what participants in this study have shared. In view of the fact that there are programmes, which by virtue of their nature serve to protect street children from violence and crime, they should all be monitored and evaluated so as to assess their effectiveness.

**Outreach programme:**

It is noted that children on the street are highly mobile, yet at the same time easily identifiable. Programmes on the street should be followed up on how protective are they on the life of a street child. This could be done through involving street children as they visit the centre or spot where they are assisted. The programme could assess their accessibility to children who have just entered the street. Where children could find them quicker would prevent them from staying up to a month on the street.

**Shelter:**

At the shelter, children are exposed in different interventions. This includes accommodation, educating children on society's values, social skills, respect and manners, school readiness or enrolment to formal education. It aims at protecting the child and attending to the child's basic developmental needs like, physical and emotional needs, shelter, food and clothing. The shelter should play the role of protecting street children from violence and crime. The challenge is when children find themselves exposed to violence at the shelter with no measures taken to protect them.

From the discussions with children and staff members, there were observations / utterances of children being able to get away with certain unacceptable behaviour. This was attributed to three areas which were observed as failing the programme; (1) The camp prior to staying at the shelter; (2) female child care workers who find themselves overpowered by boys, (3) inconsistency in discipline and demotivated staff members.

1. Children have described the camp as an important tool in preparing children going to the shelter. They evaluate it as a key to decision making on the behavioural change. They mentioned that children who went

through the camp prior to being at the shelter are better behaved than those who did not.

It therefore makes sense to use an activity like a camp to instil change, as it provides an environment where children do self-assessment and make decisions about their lives.

2. If children are well prepared prior to going to the shelter, it may not be much of a problem to have female child care workers at night. If it becomes a challenge for female care workers to care for street children, the shelter may need to recruit and motivate males to enrol in this field of study.

If all child care workers could be trained particularly on street children so that they understand their behaviour as Brendon et al (1998) said, they will be able to render necessary services with minimal difficulties.

Staff development and education are vital components for effective implementation and evaluation of programmes. Well trained social workers and child care workers in the area of street children would play an important role in developing activities that are child centred and participatory. Counselling that is conducted by social workers need to embrace the individual child's needs and be child-centred rather than shelter focussed. Social work counselling was said to be used when the child arrives at the shelter and when there are identifiable behavioural problem. Proactive activities that would aim at assessing children as they are in the shelter could benefit the programme further.

### 3. Consistency and Structure

The study revealed that there were structures in place that have been developed to facilitate effective programme implementation. These structures seemed to have gaps that had a negative impact on the programme. These

structures needed to be made known to children and staff and be discussed regularly.

Inservice workshop on children's rights and responsibilities with both children and staff could be developed. These workshops must include children representatives and staff.

Discipline was seen as a major problem both by children and staff. Children felt that it was not consistent while staff believed children were disrespectful and dangerous at times. For effective child development, it is important to have disciplinary measures in place and have them monitored by staff members and children. Children needed consistency therefore staff members would benefit from discipline management skills.

### **Towards an effective intervention**

Literature has shown that successful programmes on working with children are those that are inclusive of children's views, treat children as capable beings, at the same time lobby on their behalf. They should focus on the child's interest.

Organizations working with street children confirm that forcing street children to leave the street as a way of helping them is like 'wearing a big jacket to hide a pregnancy' (my own). The problem is still there. Children have shown that the method does not help anyone, but embarrasses those who are helping children in the name of 'cleaning the street'.

The South African government has developed structures to attend to the needs of children. These structures need to be challenged by the organizations working with children, when they stop becoming functional or are contradictory to the safety and development of a child.

Children verbalized that at times they are confused as to what could be the safer place as they move from one structure to another. If the causes of the children being on the street are not attended, interventions that prioritize in returning the child to the family are doomed to fail.

International HIV/AIDS Alliance (2005), suggested features of appropriate activities for children and young people living on the street. These has been seen and reported to be effective by child care workers at the shelter under study:

- Establishing a sense of trust with the children and young people. Many street children mistrust adults, particularly those in authority. Overcoming this mistrust is essential for an effective programme and for the children and young people to be more integrated in the community.
- Building skills which enable children and young people to earn an income or to gain employment.
- Advocating on behalf of street children with those in authority. This may be done at national level. However, it is particularly needed at local level. For example, programmes working with street children will need to engage with police officers in the area to try to encourage a more supportive approach to street children.
- Ensuring that street children participate in design of programmes. They should also participate in decisions which affect them.
- Reducing their vulnerability and risk to all forms of abuse and its consequences.
- Working with families, the community and other organisations. Seeking to address the reasons why children move to the streets.
- Conducting conflict resolution and violence programmes to deal with the violent behaviour that children are exposed to, hence making shelters safer places for children. Sathiparsad (1997) developed a conflict resolution programme that can be replicated to other institutions, particularly where there are younger people who need to be empowered to express and resolve their conflicts while promoting the social value of responsibility.



What may be missing is an aggressive approach to macro economic structures at developing and creating an environment that would allow for safety and wellbeing of the child.

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