

Livelihood strategies of street children in Durban; a participatory, rights-based approach to street-based interventions

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Abstract

There are a number of different factors that are increasing the numbers of children on the streets in Durban. These factors include globalisation, macro-economic policy, poverty, and HIV/AIDS. On arrival, these children are faced with abuse and harassment, yet in this tough environment, children of the street are able to make a home and live as small family units who employ livelihood strategies in order to survive. The present study investigates whether there are alternatives to the institutionalisation of street children and discusses alternative, rights-based approaches. Furthermore, this study seeks to engage with street children and overcome their homeless, minor status and believes that children of the street have valuable knowledge of their own situation, which if unearthed, can be invaluable when planning future interventions. With this in mind a participatory methodology was employed which encouraged the children to speak for themselves. The present study utilised Participatory Rural Appraisal tools as a way of generating information and insight and it also draws on Participatory Action Research in that it involved young field workers.

The present study discovered that children of the street are like other children and poor people in general but are often portrayed as deviants on a way-ward path. In spite of this, children of the street are unswerving in their efforts to survive. The presentation of data reveals that children of the street are generally ingenious and resourceful although their efforts are often hampered by dangers and threats inherent to street life. With this in mind, a community based vulnerability assessment was employed to suggest ways of reducing risk. The present study concludes that a supportive policy environment, a change in attitude and practical recommendations are all needed for improved street-based interventions and the livelihood security of street children.

Declaration

This dissertation represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where the work of others has been cited, it has been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text accordingly.

Research was conducted in the School of Community Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. The research was conducted between January, 2006 and December, 2006 under the supervision of Professor Astrid von Kotze. The opinions expressed and conclusions presented are those of the author alone.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CBD	Central Business District
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CECAFEC	Ecuadorian Centre for the Training and Formation of Street Educators
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSC	Consortium for Street Children
CYE	Children, Youth and Environments
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
ICC	International Convention Centre
ID	South African Identity Document
KZNIAPCS	KwaZulu-Natal Integrated Action Plan for Children on the Streets
MPS	Municipal Protection Services – ‘Blackjacks’
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PPCLWS	Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAHDR	South African Human Development Report
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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Chapter 1: Introduction

What I noticed is that the guys [children of the street] are like family; they love each other and they care about each other. Busi brought food from the programme for another who didn't attend and others were carrying Sanele on their backs because he was failing to walk on his own (Journal entry, TM, 19th July 2006).

1.1 Introduction

The community and family characteristics of groups of street children are often not noticed by passers by. Public perception of street children is often of homeless children in need of care and rehabilitation and who do not belong on city streets. Children of the street employ many coping strategies in their daily lives which are not always immediately apparent. The constructs of street children are indeed a complex issue which require some further investigation. The introduction to this study seeks to engage with two main questions relating to these constructs, namely: Who are these children and what has caused them to be on the streets?

1.1.1 The naming of street children

There is much debate about the naming of children who live on the street and indeed surrounding their respective definitions. For a start it seems there is no consensus in contemporary research regarding the naming of children living on the street. The term 'street children' is highly problematic for a number of reasons. Bedford (cited in Mthembu 1998, p.9) notes the racialisation of definition:

[homeless] children were called runaway children in developed countries, whereas they were referred to as street children in developing countries. Bedford further indicated that white children in South Africa were called runaways, whereas Black children were called street children.

Furthermore, according to Panter-Brick (cited in Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.2) there are five criticisms of the term 'street children':

- 'Street children' is a generic term which obscures the many differences in individual children's circumstances.
- It does not adequately represent how children see themselves.
- It is a stigmatizing label.
- It draws attention away from other children in poverty and social exclusion.
- It reflects social and political agendas more than children's reality.

However, as Thomas de Benitez (2003) notes, there is unfortunately no wide-spread agreement on an alternative. "No term has yet been coined to capture both the peculiar nature of street life and its interconnection with other aspects of vulnerability" (Volpi, cited in Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.2). The term 'street children' as defined by the Inter-Non-Governmental Organisation (cited in Schurink 1993, p.5) in Switzerland during 1983 reads:

A street child or street youth is any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults.

There is distinction given to children 'on' the street and children 'of' the street (Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994; Glauser 1990). Children 'on' the street tend to be those children who still have some kind of family connection and come to the streets to work or beg but return home on a fairly regular basis. Children 'of' the street as defined by Richter (cited in Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994, p.108) "have abandoned (or have been abandoned by) their families, schools and immediate communities"; for children 'of' the street, the street is home. This distinction is usually referred to as the 'UNICEF definition' (Ennew, cited in Aptekar & Heinonen 2003, p.1). For the purposes of this study any reference to children and youth living on the street and / or street children, the definition will be children 'of' the street.

Although the predominant focus of this study is on children of the street (those under the age of 18), there is also awareness that children of the street co-habit with older youths within their respective street communities. Thus, although the term ‘children’ by and large refers to those under the age of 18, the samples which were chosen are representative of a wider community which incorporates street youth who have by-and-large lived on the street for most of their lives¹.

1.1.2 Factors leading to increased levels of children living on the street

According to recent estimates from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (cited in Ecumenical Network for Youth Action 2003), there are 10 million children worldwide who have no connection to their family or home and rely on the street for a livelihood. There are many theories which seek to explain why such large numbers of children are currently living on the street, each pointing to a different reason. I will focus on four main factors that have led to children coming to the streets of South African cities such as Durban. They are;

1. Globalisation and macroeconomic factors
2. Poverty and unemployment
3. HIV/AIDS
4. Emotional factors

In 1994 the first democratic elections were held in South Africa and there were high hopes that the new political regime would benefit ordinary South Africans and be the people’s champion. Even in the recent 2005 national elections, the ruling party’s slogan highlighted poverty alleviation and job creation. However, a closer look at the recent discourse of South Africa’s economic policy would reveal otherwise. The original Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) document authored primarily by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) before the 1994 elections did indeed have a people-driven, basic needs focus. Conversely, when the RDP White Paper was released in September 1994, its dynamic of redistribution and growth had noticeably changed. Submissions had now been made from various agencies, development institutions and

¹ For a detailed description of the samples in this study see sections 3.2 & 3.3 in Chapter 3.

organisations and subsequently the people-focussed flavour had been substituted with a neo-liberal trickle-down fiscal policy (Hart 2002). This neo-liberal agenda was later compounded with the introduction of the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy in June 1996 and within which the term 'globalisation' is prominent. Far from promoting employment growth it has in many ways embraced neo-liberalist values and in terms of job creation has **not been** very different from the policies adopted during the apartheid era. This is supported by the South African Human Development Report (SAHDR) of 2003.

Since 1994 the government has pursued the objective of restructuring the economy through export-promotion in an increasingly liberalised environment. In doing so, it has used a host of incentives that **have continued** to foster the capital intensity of production at the expense of **encouraging** employment potential... Consequently, **employment** growth has seriously lagged behind output growth since 1995. Thus, compared to 1995, a much smaller number of jobs are being created for every one-percentage growth in total production (SAHDR 2003, pp 10-11).

At a local level, a recent presentation by the academic development community recognises this trend and poses the question of whether or not the affluent and the poor can at the same time benefit from **Local Economic Development** (Freund & Lootvoet 2004). Recent developments in Durban include the International Convention Centre (ICC), a gambling casino **complex situated on** the beachfront and the uShaka Island development built largely with city money. Freund and Lootvoet (2004, p.7) argue that "their impact on the mass of **poor people** is at best ambiguous. There is limited space and possibility of employment from these types of developments for the majority of those left out of South Africa's current economic growth". According to the SAHDR (2003, p.10) in relation to unemployment and the recent economic restructuring in South Africa;

Unemployment continues to rise unabated. **The economy** provided only 11.56 million jobs for 16.81 million economically active South Africans in March 2003, resulting in 5.25 million unemployed, or an official unemployment rate of 31.2 per cent, which is substantially higher than the 19.3 per cent unemployment rate in 1996.

In sum, the argument is that globalisation has contributed to a shift in macro-economic policy resulting in the second main factor which is increased levels of poverty and unemployment in South Africa. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (cited in Serrokh 2006) has noted similar phenomena in other parts of the world and in Bangladesh has identified poverty as being a driving force that pushes children to the streets. The current models of economic growth in South Africa, it is argued, have accentuated poverty, with the increase of children being driven out of unhappy homes into the streets an unfortunate side effect.

The third factor of significance in this study is the current HIV/AIDS pandemic which has been identified as being a sizeable contributor to the escalating numbers of children living on the streets. Not only are community structures diminishing due to economic inequalities but studies in Cote d'Ivoire have shown "that when a family member has AIDS, average income falls by 52% - 67%, expenditures on health care quadruples, savings are depleted, and families go into debt to care for the sick" (Richter 2001, p.1).

Moreover, The Health Systems Trust highlights the impact of the pandemic on KwaZulu-Natal. The Trust's statistics show that in 2005 there were 202 277 children in KwaZulu-Natal alone who had lost at least one parent to HIV/AIDS and 685 354 orphans nationwide. By 2010 it is predicted that this number will more than double to 437 651 in KwaZulu-Natal and 1 531 229 nationwide (AIDS Orphans 2002). The province of KwaZulu-Natal has by far the highest number of AIDS Orphans compared to other South African provinces which will inevitably impact the number of children on the streets in Durban. This issue is not only affecting community households but is permeating onto the streets themselves. Cheryl le Roux (2001, p.105) notes:

The country simply does not have the infrastructure to care for these children – either through institutionalisation or through foster care programmes – and it is projected that as children become orphaned and destitute through HIV/AIDS, many will turn to the streets for their livelihood.

The fourth main factor leading to increased numbers of children on the streets is the emotional one. Emotional factors are cited by many as being one of the core reasons for children coming to the streets (Gopaul et al. 2004). Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994) tell a story of a boy from an impoverished home whose grandfather chained him to a post outside his house and abused him when he was drunk or angry. For many children of the streets in Durban the above story is a tangible reality as described in the following case study.

Figure 1 - Case study

Street life: A more appealing alternative?

The first time the Street Educators took Vukani home was after they discovered he had recently been 'accommodated' by a visiting paedophile. After discussing alternatives with Vukani, he decided he wanted to visit his mother in the Inanda informal settlement.

Upon arrival the Street Educators met the mother who seemed very timid, but smelt strongly of alcohol. As they walked towards their shack an older man started shouting at Vukani. As one of the Street Educators carried on walking towards the shack, Vukani hid behind the other Street Educator, shaking, crying and urinating down the side of his leg.

The old man continued to shout abuse at Vukani. It later emerged that this man, an alcoholic and Vukani's uncle, used to regularly beat and abuse Vukani. With family reunification out of the question, the Street Educators then decided to take Vukani to a place of safety. Again he cried on arrival and said he didn't want to stay; he wanted to go back to the streets.

Vukani cannot go home and he has never settled in institutional care. Vukani has known the streets for most of his life. In Vukani's mind, perhaps the streets are a more appealing alternative? (Interview with Vukani 5th July 2006)

The reality is that an interrelationship of macro and micro factors is increasing the numbers of children migrating to the streets. Given that Vukani's story is the reality for so many children living on the streets, what should happen to street children and what are appropriate interventions?

1.2 Rationale

The issue² of street children within the eThekweni (Durban) municipality has become more apparent over recent years. Durban's warm climate and busy tourist industry act as a major draw card for desperate children of all ages who call the streets 'home'. According to the *Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets* (PPCLWS) prepared for the eThekweni Municipality (2005, pp.2-3) the number of children living or working on the streets in the eThekweni Municipality is estimated at above 3000 with the number of children not receiving services 1500.

I have been involved with work with street children for approximately six years, which has resulted in my desire to engage further in research with children of the street³. I have witnessed first-hand the lives of children living on the streets and feel passionately about interventions and relationships that seek to better their lives. My concern is that there are many children who have no family and are orphaned, or who are unaware of where their extended families are geographically located. In addition there are those who are not inclined towards institutionalisation or who have had bad experiences while in institutional care. Le Roux (2002) notes that despite the commendable work done by many organisations offering institutional care, many children cannot identify with an institution.

Many organisations and NGOs have done much to alleviate the plight of street children. They have set up institutions to meet these children's immediate needs for shelter and food and many have provided alternative educational opportunities. However, despite the commendable work done by these organisations, there are those who believe that institutions are not the answer. It is argued that children can never identify themselves with an institution; staff members cannot replace a parent, and consequently, the relationship between the child and the staff is untrue and foreign to normal life. Children are possessive and exclusive in their love and need to be loved in an exclusive way – something which is not possible in an institution (le Roux 2002, p.110).

² The word 'issue' is used rather than 'problem' as Hecht (1998) highlights to reduce street children to a 'problem' is in itself, harmful.

³ Aptekar & Heinonen (2003) believe that based on their past research, developing a good rapport and collecting long-term data from street children will reduce the distortion of facts about their lives and social world.

Phillip Dybicz (2005, p.766) highlights that “residential / rehabilitative care has been revealed to have serious limitations. It is cost-intensive and yields low success rate in re-integrating the individual back into the community”. This is not to say that institutional care is not appropriate and beneficial for many; I personally know of several children who have passed through the institutional system and are now living more stable lives.

However, while the majority of contemporary interventions dealing with street children in Durban favour removal from the street and some form of institutional care, this overlooks the choice of many children who do not want to be returned home or institutionalised. According to the local authorities children are not to be on the streets and yet, many children choose to call the street their ‘home’. In a paper written by Cheryl le Roux (2002, p.111) on urbanisation and its contribution to the street child phenomena she questions the common view that children should be removed from the streets and institutionalised.

Finding a way to address the street child phenomena is indeed an awkward dilemma. For many, the street is home and although life is harsh it is no worse than that from which they have come. One could consequently ask whether these children should be taught competencies and skills that will enable them to fend more adequately for themselves on the street, or should they be encouraged to reclaim their childhood?

In my understanding, and with current interventions in mind, this question is of significant value. With numbers of children on the streets increasing and institutional care not always suitable, would it not be more appropriate to look at ways of supporting and empowering children’s lives on the streets? Could the city management and the street children of Durban find ways of working together in harmony? With limited resources available, would it not be more feasible to reserve places in institutional care for those who genuinely desire it?

1.3 Broad problems and issues to be investigated

Currently street children face intrinsic risks while living on the streets. The incidence of unwarranted abuse persists as a constant threat. An example of this negativity towards street children were the events surrounding the 2004 Indaba tourism conference held at Durban's ICC. Reports had circulated that street children were being forcibly removed and in some cases, physically abused. This is not an isolated incident although media coverage surrounding the event highlights the way in which street children are 'dealt with' when international conferences are hosted in Durban. In an article published by Durban's Mercury newspaper Vusi Khoza, the Chairman of the Street Children Operation Siza (formerly the Street Children's Forum), said that the organisation had distanced itself from the operation.

I questioned the motive. We were aware of the operation, but we chose to distance ourselves because we believed the motive was wrong. I am told the kids were rounded up for the purpose of cleaning the city for the Indaba. I am told that the police rounded up the kids as though they were criminals (and that) some were dumped in far-off places out of the city. I am also told that the kids have now run away and are back on the streets (Newman 2004, p.1).

The removal paradigm employed by the city has resulted in a palpable gap in the provision of services for children of the street. The lack of support mechanisms not only increases risk, but fails to recognise the needs and heterogeneity of street children. For many, "working on the streets has become a vital necessity in their young lives" (Shelby, cited in Gopaul 2004, p.22). There is genuine desire amongst many children of the street in Durban to engage in legitimate income generating activities although current policy and practice are not conducive. The apparent repercussions of this are often manifested through children of the street engaging in deviant activities because of their inherent need to survive.

Removals, arrests and abuse clearly threaten the livelihood activities of street children and thus place increased stress on their coping mechanisms and survival strategies. Furthermore, the present study recognises that children of the street have a fundamental right to make decisions in matters that affect their lives. This study is rooted in an approach that recognises this right; not as charity, but in terms of the

obligation to respond to the rights of the individual (Robinson cited in Girardo, 2005)⁴.

1.4 Objectives and research questions to be asked

This research adopts a community development perspective. With the realisation that a large majority of street children do not favour institutional care, the objective of this study was to address the needs of these children through street-based interventions and hence to include children in the design, formulation and implementation of interventions. The proposed outcome would be to produce supportive policy recommendations. In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives the following key research questions were asked;

1. What do children of the street do to sustain themselves?
 - How do they make a living? How do they feed and clothe themselves?
 - What are the social links / networks / systems they draw on?
2. What are the obstacles / risks that stand in the way of securing a livelihood?
3. How can their livelihood strategies / activities be supported / strengthened / extended?
4. What recommendations regarding interventions arise out of this?
 - What social links / networks / systems would support what they already utilise?
 - What policies would enhance (rather than undermine) their survival on the streets

1.5 Structure of dissertation

The research conducted for this study is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents the literature review and theoretical framework. The review begins by looking at the global situation of street children, the policy affecting street children both

⁴ Further attention will be given to this approach in chapter 2 of this study.

internationally and locally and how this relates to some of Durban's current interventions. One of the central objectives of this study is the formulation of interventions with children of the streets in a participatory manner. With this in mind, chapter 2 introduces the rights-based approach. Chapter 3 highlights that this study uses a qualitative methodology as it seeks to try and "gain understanding and insight into the life-worlds of research participants" (Mouton 2001, p.150). The discussion then focuses on research design and highlights why particular tools were chosen. Throughout this chapter the emphasis is on participation with an aim of drawing valuable knowledge from respondents. Chapter 4 is a presentation of data collected with chapter 5 discussing data in the context of the theoretical framework introduced in chapter 2. Chapter 6 draws together the findings from the present study and offers both practical and strategic policy recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive review of literature with particular reference to the central themes highlighted in the introduction to this study. Through the review of literature, it is also my aim to build a body of knowledge which conceptualises and establishes a coherent theoretical framework.

The review begins by looking at the global situation of street children and documents some of the approaches and interventions that are currently being utilised. The policy affecting street children both internationally and locally is reviewed and how this relates to some of Durban's current interventions. This wider context is used as a backdrop for the South African context. In order to understand the issue of street children I feel it is important to look at some of the constructs of street children including people's perspectives and views of them.

One of the central objectives of this study is the formulation of interventions with children of the streets in a participatory manner. In order to achieve this, street children must be seen as active agents in the decisions that affect their lives. With this in mind, the next section of the review focuses on the rights-based approach and how this relates to current interventions and children of the streets in Durban.

In order to identify appropriate intervention strategies this study looked at the livelihoods of street children, the risks that they face and the capabilities that they employ to sustain them. The final two sections of this review will look at some of the literature focussing on these issues, with particular reference to children of the street.

2.1.1 A brief look at the global street children situation

The United Nations estimates there are over 150 million street children in the world, with the number rising daily. They are more appropriately known as community children, as they are the offspring of our communal world. Ranging

in age from three to eighteen, about 40 percent of those are homeless – as a percentage of world population, unprecedented in the history of civilization. The other 60 percent work on the streets to support their families. They are unable to attend school and are considered to live in “especially difficult circumstances”. UNICEF estimates that approximately 100 million youth work on the streets in activities such as picking garbage, hawking small goods, parking and washing cars, shining shoes, and begging. It is estimated that 10% of these youth actually live in the streets, with no connection to their family or a permanent home (Ecumenical Network for Youth Action 2003).

The global numbers of street children are currently of substantial proportions. Taking into consideration UNICEF’s estimates, there are at present, 10 million children worldwide who have no connection to their family or home and rely on the street for a livelihood. These 10 million children are children ‘of’ the street. With numbers rising daily, this is not an issue that can simply be swept under the carpet away from the public eye. The factors leading to increasing numbers of children living on the streets worldwide are not dissimilar to those described in a South African context in chapter 1. Hecht (1998, p.192) highlights how poverty and abuse have made street life more appealing in Brazil:

In their homes and neighbourhoods, children are exposed to beatings and sexual assault, but above all, they are exposed to the violence of hunger and poverty that renders the street a materially attractive alternative.

International responses to this significant issue have been diverse and have shockingly often resulted in the abuse of human rights. The murder of street children at the hands of police and security forces is not uncommon in many of the South and Latin American countries. These incidences have been well documented by many leading agencies advocating for the rights of street children. Casa-Alianza, an organisation working with street children in Latin America released some disturbing statistics through their rapid response network in May 2003:

A chilling seventy-three children and youth under 23 years of age were murdered in Honduras during the month of April. This is the highest number of murders for over a year... Twenty five of the victims murdered (36%) were children, the

youngest being just 12 years old. A 14 year old girl in San Pedro Sula was decapitated. There were forty eight victims between 18 and under 23 years old... Ninety percent of the total victims were killed by guns, four victims were stabbed to death. More than 40% of the murders were, according to initial reports, at the hands of the police and/or the military; in 15% of the cases gang members are the principal suspects and 40% of the killers have not been identified. Eighty- eight percent of the victims were males and 12 % females (Harris, B 2003, email, 20th May).

In order to eradicate such practices as seen in Honduras, and advocate for more humane alternatives, literature would suggest that there is some hope in addressing the global phenomena. At a local level, there has been a paradigm shift in a number of regions across the world. During the mid 1980's the National Movement of Street Children was founded in Brazil to empower street children and address such atrocities as systematic killings:

The National Movement of Street Children (*Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua*, or MNMMR), a voluntary NGO, was founded in 1985 by activists and "street educators" who sought to empower and organize street kids in their own environment – the public spaces of the city centres... The Brazil Project of the International Child Resource Institute (ICRI) is collaborating with the MNMMR to bring greater local and international attention to human-rights violations and assassinations of street children in Brazil (Hoffman 1994, p.1).

The radical National Movement of Street Children in Brazil concentrates on street children being the focus of their own development. "In keeping with the principle of the child as the subject of his / her own development, the agenda is developed around issues raised in discussion by the children themselves and drawn up in agreement with them" (Swift 1998, p.150). The National Movement of Street Children has given a voice to street children and has been fundamental in lobbying the Brazilian government to change pertinent legislation affecting children on and of the streets. The Movement has demanded rights, which have so often been denied and unobtainable to street children. The Ecuadorian Centre for the Training and Formation of Street Educators (CECAFEC) "calls the old paradigm the 'Paradigm of Absence' in which children and youth are 'absent' without a voice and without a recognition of

their experience” (Sauvé 2003, p.1). The CECAFEC describes the new paradigm as the ‘Paradigm of the Child as Person’ where a child’s knowledge is accepted and valued and where adults are forced to confront their judgment of children and youth’s ideas (Sauvé 2003).

Henk Van Beers (1996, p.200) suggests that what is needed is consolidation and improvement of existing interventions. “Interventions should be coordinated and there should be more collaboration between the existing programmes”. Organisations such as the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) have followed this school of thought and in 2002 held a ‘Civil Society Forum for East and Southern Africa on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children’; “Representing the voice of many, we speak as one for the rights of street children wherever they may be” (CSC 2002). Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003) share this view of the need to network and debate issues concerning street children. Through the electronically produced journal, *Children, Youth and Environments* (CYE)⁵, academic researchers, practitioners and policy makers are able to engage in debate both sectorally and cross-nationally. Initiatives by both the CSC and CYE to consolidate various stake holders dealing with children of the street, can only serve to strengthen the voice of those who are so often voiceless.

In this section I have focussed on opposite extremes in the global context of street children, giving examples of interventions at either end of the spectrum. The next section of this review will look at the policies both internationally and locally which affect the way in which street children are treated.

2.2 Policy framework

2.2.1 The UNCRC and its guidelines on street children

The most pertinent policy internationally that requires some discussion in the context of this study is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989. Ennew and Swart-Kruger (2003, p.1) note that in terms of practice, in policy and the design of programmes, the UNCRC has been a major influence and one which

⁵ The *Children, Youth and Environments* journal can viewed at <http://colorado.edu/journals/cye>

establishes children as subjects of rights and active agents. Article 12 section 1 of the UNCRC (1989) states:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Although the UNCRC has often been criticised for its western partiality, O’Kane (2003, p.13) notes that there are fundamental principles which if adhered to, can serve as useful tools in working with street children:

The UNCRC has been criticized for its western bias (ethnocentrism, imposition of individual, autonomous rights versus collective, societal responsibilities) but it can remain a useful tool in working with diversity if the key principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are taken seriously, namely: non-discrimination, best interests of the child, inherent right to life and the importance of hearing the child’s voice.

Furthermore, Veeran (2004, p.362) highlights that “despite the limitations of the UNCRC, it is acknowledged to be the most powerful international voice of concern for children, especially for those in difficult circumstances”. When discussing the UNCRC in the context of street children it is worth highlighting Article 37, and in particular sections (a) and (b):

Article 37

States Parties shall ensure that:

(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age;

(b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law

and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

As noted in chapter 1 of this study, the Durban authorities have often rounded street children up during international conferences, such as the popular annual tourism conference – ‘Indaba’. These round-ups and other cases of abuse⁶ are an indictment on a country, which has in recent years prided itself on its positive attitude towards the protection of human rights. Thomas de Benitez (2003, p.6) comments with regards to round-ups that “... any government, whether national or local, which adopts a reactive approach toward street children does so in contravention of its obligations assumed under the UNCRC”. In sum, the UNCRC provides a supportive framework for work with street children and has theoretically, given them both recognition and a voice. However, much of the policy regarding the rights and protection of children contained within the UNCRC is yet to be realised at a grass roots level.

2.2.2 Policy regarding street children in South Africa and Durban

The UNCRC has been adopted by most countries across the world and was ratified by former South African President Nelson Mandela in 1995. “The Western Cape Street Children Forum (1996) in South Africa argued that the cornerstone of service provision to street children was acknowledging their rights as individuals” (Veeran 2004, p.361). With the ratification of the UNCRC and a general shift in policy geared towards vulnerable children, street children became “no longer a matter of humanitarian and charitable concern, but a legal responsibility at local, national and international levels” (Panter-Brick, cited in Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.6)

The care of street children emanates from various levels of South African policy and legislation. On a national level, both The Children’s Charter of South Africa and the South African Constitution provide important guidelines and legislation that are applicable to children of the street. The Children’s Charter of South Africa was drawn-up in 1992 by representatives from all South African provinces at the International Children’s Summit. Article 10 of the Charter pays special attention to homeless children:

⁶ The cases of abuses in this study will be presented in chapter 4

1. No child should be forced to live on the streets.
2. Homeless children have the right to be protected from harassment and abuse from police, security guards and all other persons and every person has the duty to report any abuse or violence against children.
3. Homeless children have the right to a decent place to live, clothing and a healthy diet.
4. Street children have the right to special attention in education and health care.
5. Communities and families have a duty to protect their children from becoming homeless and abandoned.
6. All persons should be made aware of the plight of homeless children and should participate in programmes which act to positively eradicate the problem of homeless children.
7. The government has the duty and responsibility for homeless children.

The charter pays further attention to the rights of all children and in part II, article 3, section 1 the charter states: “All children have the right to express their own opinions and the right to be heard in all matters that affect his / her rights and protection and welfare”.

Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution (1996) covers extensively the Bill of Rights and states in section 7(1) that “The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom”. Furthermore, Section 28 focuses specifically on the rights of children and in subsection (1)d states “Every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation”.

The Constitution in “chapter 7 also provides the legal parameters for local government competences, powers and responsibilities, such as the provision of goods and services, e.g. health care, social services, water, shelter and social security” (PPCLWS 2005, p.3). The care of vulnerable children firstly resides with the National Department of Social Development; with the Provincial Department, working in partnership with NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisation), delivering services to this particular group of children. In the context of the aforementioned policy and legislation, this section will look at, and discuss, two current policies:

1. A current draft of the *KwaZulu-Natal Integrated Action Plan for Children on the Streets*, (KZNIAPCS) produced by the Department of Social Development.
2. *Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets* (PPCLWS) prepared for the eThekweni Municipality by The Maurice Webb Race Relations Unit, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

2.2.2.1 KwaZulu-Natal Integrated Action Plan for Children on the Streets

The second draft of the KwaZulu-Natal Integrated Action Plan for Children on the Streets at present has minimal detail with the main body of the action plan spanning 5 pages. The five main objectives as stated in the KZNIAPCS are:

1. To identify role players and the promotion of networking
2. To draft a provincial policy and framework for the management of services to children at risk and children living on the streets
3. To facilitate the establishment of drop-in centres
4. To implement educational awareness programmes and campaigns in the communities
5. To ensure intersectoral collaboration in responding to issues of homeless children

There is little to comment on in the KZNIAPCS due to its sparse detail, although some remarks were noted from a recent provincial street children's alliance meeting that I attended (KZN Street Children's Alliance meeting, August 2006). These remarks concerned the fact that even though NGOs have been identified as stakeholders within the Action Plan, there had been little consultation or feedback on how and when the stated objectives had been realised.

2.2.2.2 Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets

The Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets prepared for the eThekweni Municipality acknowledges that although the welfare of street children is legislatively a provisional responsibility, the existence of children living and working

on the streets in Durban has a direct impact on the environment of the Municipality; “the criminal behaviour of children living and or working on the streets also affects the social and economic activities of the Municipality” (PPCLWS 2005, p.1).

Although in the introduction to the policy paper street children are acknowledged to be a ‘nuisance’, there is also a plea to care for street children and for them to be recognised as ‘our’ children representing our future. Perhaps, the most worrying aspect of eThekweni’s current policy is that although the complete document totals 44 pages (including prefaces, appendices etc.) the actual policy itself consists of 12 pages. Considering the length of the policy, it is a little disconcerting that the policy “is an outcome of a long process of multi-sectoral collaboration with other stakeholders” which spanned a two year period (PPCLWS 2005, p.ix).

The policy itself focuses on three broad areas:

- a. prevention;
- b. intervention; and
- c. reintegration.

The goal of prevention is to strengthen family and community structures with an aim of mitigating the number of children resorting to street life. This policy response is an important factor in reducing the number of children on the streets of Durban. The strategies identified in terms of prevention are initiating / facilitating training programmes to equip parents and caregivers with relevant skills to improve interpersonal relationships within the family and initiate youth activities to the well-being and full-potential of children (PPCLWS 2005, p.8).

The second main focus of the PPCLWS concentrates on intervention. “Intervention services relate to services for children in the event that they move away from their homes and communities to live and work on the streets” (PPCLWS 2005, p.8). The proposed strategies include outreach, drop-in centres and shelter services. The goals of intervention are noted in section 2.2.2.1 and they are as follows:

- (a) To ensure that there is no child on the streets;
- (b) To ensure that children living or working on the streets are prepared for reintegration.

The third main focus of eThekweni's PPCLWS is reintegration; "Reintegration is about ensuring that children are reunited or reintegrated with their families, communities and mainstream society" (PPCLWS 2005, p.12). One of the main critiques of reintegration is that of a child being reintegrated into a dysfunctional or abusive home environment (Gopaul 2004; Van Niekerk, cited in le Roux 2001). The policy addresses these concerns proposing programmes that engage with the child's respective family and community. The policy proposes to utilise the Family Preservation model which entails a values based way of working with families and makes extensive use of the family group conferencing technique:

Family group conferencing is a new and extremely responsible way of working with families and young people in an empowering participatory manner. It reclaims the indigenous ways of resolving conflict within the family and within the community (PPCLWS 2005, p.13)

The prevention aspect of the policy as noted is commendable. Efforts need to be increased within communities and families which address interpersonal relationships and the migration of children to the street. However, prevention efforts need also to address the widespread poverty within the province of KwaZulu-Natal in order to be effective. Poverty, as highlighted in Chapter 1, is an underlying factor causing increasing numbers of children to the streets (Hecht 1998; Serrokh 2006).

Furthermore, I would argue that the policy goals of intervention are unrealistic because they do not consider the current and increasing numbers of street children in Durban. The costs involved in removing and reunifying the current numbers of children on the streets would also be quite considerable. I am yet to see any empirical research that highlights and / or supports successful initiatives to *completely* remove street children from city streets anywhere in the world. In addition, these policy goals forgo the right of children to have a voice and make choices in decisions that affect their lives. This conflicts with the rights and voice given to street children in the UNCRC and The Children's Charter of South Africa. Moreover, the removal approach adopted by the Municipality is fundamentally inconsistent with the view of many contemporary authors who argue that interventions should be child-centred (see Sauv  2003, Swift 1998, le Roux 2001, Veeran 2004, Van Beers 1996 and others).

In terms of reintegration, le Roux (2001, p.111) questions whether the ideal of reintegration is possible at all:

With the increasing number of AIDS orphans on the streets, the ideal of reintegration with the family or community is often impossible to achieve since whole families are being wiped out by the pandemic.

Furthermore, many children of the streets live in street communities which they consider a better alternative than 'home' (Hecht 1998). In a study conducted by Alessandro Conticini (2004, p.9) in Dhaka he noted that;

Love and friends are what makes children feel at home on the street. According to Shoel (13 year-old-boy): 'Home is not where you sleep but is where you feel loved' and the feeling of being part of a street group can be so emotionally deep that some children simply refuse to accept opportunities to leave the street for the fear of losing their friends.

In sum, the main themes contained within the PPCLWS do not consider the following key points. Firstly, the PPCLWS does not take into account the increasing numbers and already large existing population of children on the streets in Durban; the removal approach as I have argued is unlikely to work. Secondly, the methodology of the policy fails to show familiarity with the UNCRC, The Children's Charter of South Africa, The South African Constitution and approaches argued by contemporary authors. Therefore, one has to question the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current policy framework in the eThekweni Municipality.

2.3 Children of the street in Durban, South Africa

As noted in Chapter 1 of this study, the number of children living or working on the streets in the eThekweni (Durban) Municipality is estimated at above 3000 with the estimated number of children not receiving services 1500 (PPCLWS 2005, pp. 2-3). In 2004 a census conducted by a coalition of local Non-Governmental Organisations determined that there were 1247 children 'of' the streets in the eThekweni Municipality (Mdadane, L 2006, pers. comm., 16th July).

Children of the street in Durban are highly stigmatised and treated as either perpetrators or victims. Although the South African authorities have not resorted to systematic killings to reduce increasing numbers of street children, police round-ups during international conferences, as described in chapter 1, are not uncommon. The story of Thulani, highlighted in the case study below, emphasises how the abuse of street children extends beyond round-ups.

There is also recognition within Durban that street children are victims and in need of care and rehabilitation. This was highlighted in the introduction to the PPCLWS where there is a plea for street children to be recognised as our children, representing our future and additionally in local newspaper article titles such as the ‘Moral responsibility to care for children’ (*Daily News* 16 May. 2005, p.7).

Figure 2 - Case study

Experiences of Street Life – Thulani’s story

When Thulani was 15 years old, he lived in the North Beach area of Durban. He had run away from home due to adverse poverty and the death of most of his family from AIDS. Living on North Beach, Thulani managed to survive mainly by scavenging in the bins of the fast food restaurants and begging from many of the passing tourists. Life was tough, but it certainly was better than home. One day, the Beach police drove past in their van and saw Thulani and his friends smoking cigarettes. They shouted at the boys to get in the back of the van and come with them to the station.

At the station, one of the policeman demanded that Thulani give him the cigarettes. Thulani explained that he didn’t have any; it was just a single cigarette someone had given him. The policeman then ‘pistol whipped’ Thulani across the side the head and gave him numerous kicking’s to the head and face.

The next day, Thulani was found hunched in an adjacent park by two Street Educators. When the Educators asked what happened, Thulani was very incoherent. Thulani spent the next couple of months in the safety of a local shelter for street boys where child care workers said he slept solidly for the first two weeks due to concussion and the injuries he had sustained to his head. (Interview with Thulani 7th July 2006)

Locally in Durban, children of the street are perceived as a ‘problem’. Local media coverage of street children has furthered the negative perception that many already have of these children. Titles of recent newspaper articles include *Street children Samaritan stoned and stabbed by those he is trying to help* (Gounden 2006) and *Street kids wreak havoc in Durban’s amphitheatre* (Louw 2006). One particular article titled

Street children targeting Isipingo shopkeepers states “Isipingo business people, many of whom have been in the area for decades have fallen prey to criminals, believed to be a gang of street children”; a businessman interviewed in the article stated that “They’re terrorising us” (Naidoo 2006, p.7). There is obvious stigma attached to street children in Durban with the predominant response being removal to places of safety or residential care.

2.3.2 Interventions with street children in Durban

Although the responsibility to care for street children resides at Provincial level, the provision of services for street children by the state has often been implemented by local government and city authorities. In recognising the demand on government to provide services in many sectors, NGOs have by and large assumed the role of filling gaps in service provision. In a recent study of service provision for street children in the eThekwiini Municipality, twelve organisations were interviewed and it became clear that only two of the interventions were directly provided by the Municipality (Trent 2005). Veeran (1999, p.259) supports these findings and notes from her review of empirical studies and the literature on children from the street that NGOs have assumed primary responsibility for service provision.

Service provision by the Municipality has a history of closures which has been evident with the Thuthukani Phase 1⁷ shelter which was closed down in early 2004, the Waterloo House Shelter which closed in early 2005 and the Reception Centre which Veeran (1999) included in her study. The Reception Centre was launched by the Street Children’s Forum in 1997 but closed down a few years later. The inception of a new Reception Centre by the Municipality in 2005 located on Victoria Embankment could also be heading for the same fate, as in 2005, the centre was utilised by fewer than 10 children a day (Trent 2005, p.21). Since figures for the Municipality are estimated at 3000, the centre is presently seriously under-utilised. Schurink (1993, p.236) notes that the problems faced by service organisations in terms of sustainability are not due to a lack of initiative but “rather from a lack of sufficient funds, present government policy, lack of resources, lack of trained staff and a lack of proper planning”. He describes these programmes as “much like

⁷ A phase 1 shelter can be defined as a place where street children are assessed and referred

flickering lights, when one fades out, another will shine in its place” (Schurink 1993, p.237).

On the whole residential facilities are the most prominent type of service provision for street children in Durban. Rather than seeing street children as the subject of their own development, as in the case of the National Movement in Brazil, interventions in Durban have a welfarist approach. Street children are seen as children needing to be cared for and protected, and often due to their minor status, as unable to make their own independent decisions.

2.4 Contemporary research in Durban

The first modern attempt to conduct research on street children was conducted by Jacques Meunier in 1977 and focussed on describing their characteristics (Dybicz 2005). Contemporary research in Durban has similar themes and predominantly focuses on theory, policy and nominal participation from children rather than a strategic approach to seek alternative answers to the phenomena at street level.

2.4.1 The phenomenon of street children in Durban

Sandra Gopaul (2004) provides a comprehensive, in-depth overview of what the causes are, both locally and globally, of children being on the streets and their lifestyles on the streets. The main aim of her research is to offer a better understanding and knowledge of the reality of the situation by identifying and exploring a range of different problems such as the causal factors leading to a life in the streets, responses offered by society and government, strategies and interventions and gaps in research (Gopaul 2004, p.15). Gopaul argues that the legacy left by the apartheid system for many in South Africa is one of poverty and inequality, which leads many children to a life on the streets:

... most street children believe that they have a better future if they move away from their situations into the land of ‘milk and honey’, which to them means the streets of the cities. Whether they live in the rural areas or in the streets of the city, they are trapped in a world of poverty. Although there are clear differences

between the old and new governments, there is a distinct continuance of poverty, which in turn forces children to pursue life on the streets (Gopaul 2004, p.94).

She collected data through informal and formal interviews which focused on street children's backgrounds, lifestyle, activities, experiences and relationships. Data from her study suggests that a substantial number of street children have no option but to resort to street life and that most of the street children interviewed in her study did not want to live in shelters.

The study examines the relationship between children's rights and children's needs and concludes that "children's rights are based on their needs" (Gopaul 2004, p.31).

In terms of intervention, Gopaul recognises that there are numerous NGOs and voluntary organisations that play an essential role in providing services for street children. Gopaul highlights that national governments have often failed to recognise potential experts from these organisations and NGOs. "The government has to learn to work with these people rather than trying to control them" (Gopaul 2004, p.33).

Gopaul concludes that for street children the street is home:

They portray an image of self-sufficiency and prefer to control their own lives. They do not conform to rules, regulations, or discipline. They enjoy the freedom that they experience. Life is cruel and harsh on the streets and yet they leave their families at home only to make new ones on the street. Life at home is no better since care givers and parents are mostly abusive. In fact to many street children life on the streets is more preferable than their homes" (Gopaul 2004, p.190).

She then suggests that a medium term solution would be to remove children from the street environment. However, Gopaul (2004, p.190) notes that children are aware that this is a medium term arrangement and that re-integration is not advisable since most street children come from dysfunctional families. I would argue that removal is only an appropriate solution for those who choose it. Any kind of forced removals are in fact a breach of the rights of children to be active agents in decisions that affect their lives. I would suggest that if there is recognition that for many street children, the

street is home, and this is something they have chosen, shouldn't we look to finding ways of supporting the 'home' environment that they have chosen?

2.4.2 A social profile of street children in the Durban Municipal area with special reference to their deviant activities

Vanitha Chetty (1995) has three main themes, namely; causation, victimisation and deviance. In terms of factors contributing to the street child phenomena, Chetty reiterates poverty as one of the main causes:

Deprivation, poverty and disorganisation are some of the characteristics evident in the families and communities of street children. The decision to opt for street life in exchange for the grinding poverty and hardships of family and community life, is a stark illustration of children who have no other options, but a life on the streets (Chetty 1995, p. (i)).

In continuing with the main themes of her study, Chetty contends that street children are doubly victimised, both through their existence on the streets and the deviant activities that street children engage in. "Victimisation in the streets sets in motion the process of engaging in deviant careers, which engenders further victimisation" (Chetty 1995, p. (i)). The aim of her study is underpinned by the belief that victimisation and deviance are interlinked and also a desire to understand why some children assume a street existence.

It is believed that cause (victimisation) and effect (deviance) are entwined, and if it is understood why some children assume a street existence, steps can be taken to halt their gravitation to the streets and the deviant activities which invariably follow (Chetty 1995, p.15)

The methodology of Chetty's study included a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods as she felt that this enhances both the reliability and validity of the findings. Data collection was conducted through questionnaires and interview schedules. In relation to my present study, Chetty found that street children undertake a great many legitimate and illegitimate activities in order to generate an income. These included parking cars, washing cars, pushing trolleys, selling small

commodities, theft, prostitution, begging and gambling (Chetty 1995, p.197). Furthermore, with regards to alternative future methods to deal with the street child phenomenon, Chetty found that more than half of the service providers interviewed felt that legislation should be changed to allow disadvantaged minors to work:

Thirty seven (52.1%) felt that the law should allow disadvantaged minors to work. Given the fact that the large number of children currently on the streets will not be integrated into formal schooling, they must be equipped with skills which will enable them to support themselves and their dependents (Chetty 1995, p.280)

In terms of service provision Chetty states that little has changed in terms of intervention since the provisions of the Society for the Protection of Child Life in 1917. Chetty (1995, p. 4) cites Schurink as noting that “the solution to the problem was to pack street children off to institutions for rehabilitation and safe keeping”. Chetty argues (1995, p.4) that “the attitudes of the public and officials towards street children influence policy and management practices and provide the impetus for deviant activities and crime”. It is interesting to note that when service providers were asked about inadequacies within the provision of services for street children a selection of responses included:

“Institutions are not aiding the rehabilitation of the street child” (Bayhead Place of Safety, cited in Chetty 1995, p.266).

“The Council and Durban’s citizens are not aware of the problem or even care” (City Council, cited in Chetty 1995, p.267).

“There are too many street children and not enough places of safety for them” and “The responses here are in favour of places of safety, thereby indicating a custodial and punitive approach rather than a rehabilitative approach” (City Police, cited in Chetty 1995, p.268).

Chetty (1995, p.311) makes recommendations at many levels and included in these she highlights the need to recognise more informal interventions as firstly, there is a

lack of institutional capacity and secondly, there are many children who choose to live on the streets.

2.4.3 Recreation Patterns of street children in Durban

The aim of Michael Mthembu's (1998) study was to ascertain the recreation patterns of street children, specifically the activities they participate in, their preferences, constraints they encounter, and their attitudes towards recreation in the context of socio-economic characteristics. Mthembu justifies his study by noting a lack of research on recreational aspects of disadvantaged children.

Data on street children's recreational activities was collected through interviews using a prepared questionnaire. The questionnaire focussed on respondent's recreation patterns, constraints in their preferred recreation activities, attitudes towards recreation and the demographic characteristics of respondents.

Mthembu (1998, p.181) found that street children both participate in recreational activities and enjoy recreation despite their socio-economic characteristics. "When the socio-economic characteristics are considered it seems that they only have effects on selected activities within the broader recreation clusters".

Their recreation pursuits and preferences are varied within the broad recreation clusters which include: socio cultural, entertainment / mass media, nature-related / outdoor, arts / crafts and sports activities (Mthembu 1998, p.181).

Their attitude towards recreation is extremely positive. They feel that participation in recreational activities can help them develop interpersonal relationships, enhance their competence and provide them with diversion and relaxation. This is irrespective of their socio-economic status (Mthembu 1998, p.182).

Mthembu recommends that recreation is important to street children and that the availability of recreation for street children in Durban needs improvement. Recreation providers should also be aware of the financial and skills constraints of street children.

“Lack of participation in programmes should not be simply dismissed as ‘lack of interest’” (Mthembu 1998, p.183).

2.4.4 Perceptions of policy makers service providers and children from the street: policy guidelines and intervention strategies

Dhanabakium Veeran’s (1999, p. abstract) study states that:

This research was designed to identify the range of services available to children from the street and to highlight the impact of policies on service delivery. The major developmental objective was to develop guidelines for the formulation of policy and intervention strategies for children from the street.

Veeran’s methodology used qualitative techniques and used a triangulated approach incorporating three sample sources, namely children of the street, service providers and key informants. Veeran’s (1999, p.23) empirical study had a developmental purpose which was to “generate guidelines to formulate intervention strategies in order to address the needs of children from the street in the Durban Metropolitan Region”. The data for her study was collected through the use of in-depth interviews with the aforementioned sample sources. Veeran does acknowledge that using interviews as a method for data collection has its limitations, although steps were taken to minimise these. “One possible limitation to using the interview as a method of data collection is the tendency for interviewees to tell the researcher what they thought he/she wanted to hear” (Veeran, p.54).

During her review of literature, Veeran (1999, p. 68) highlights the increasing incidence of children living on the street in South Africa; a summary of which is provided in table 1.

Table 1 – Estimated figures for the increasing numbers of street children in South Africa

Date	Estimates	Authors
1986	5 000	Sunday Times, 23/3/1986
1989	9 000	Race Relations Survey (in Ross, 1991)
1995	15 000	Saturday Paper (in Bedford, 1995)

Veeran's review of literature also touches on public perceptions of street children:

The public's perception of children from the street is primarily dominated by prejudices against them. The media has, to a large extent, contributed in conveying particular images around children from the street. Frequent media reports in local newspapers depict children from the street either as victims of an uncaring society or as villains to be avoided like a plague (Veeran 1999, p.112)

There are a number of points worth noting in the findings of Veeran's study. Firstly, she noted that for some street children, spending money on glue was seen as a necessity and that the majority of respondents were addicted to some form of substance (Veeran 1999, p.241). Secondly, Veeran (1999, p.247) highlights that respondents were often subjected to harsh treatment by the police. "Although, there was acknowledgement of some positive encounters with the police, by and large, the dominant view of participants was a negative one". Thirdly, in terms of service provision her study noted that "despite the intention and motivation to provide for all the needs of children from the street, gaps in service provision were evident" (Veeran 1999, p. 259).

When discussing recommendations, Veeran raises the issue of participation from street children. She notes that "the primary resource of any intervention programme are the children from the streets themselves" (Veeran 1999, p.380).

Local, provincial and national level participation can contribute to the formation of a Children's Rights Forum and/or a Children's Rights Commission which is initiated and run by children themselves. Initial adult support and guidance might be necessary to channel and strengthen ideas (Veeran 1999, p.381)

2.4.5 Conclusion

From the study of contemporary research in Durban it can be concluded that there is comprehensive literature describing street children, their reasons for being on the streets and what they do on the streets. It can also be generalised that most of the data collected for the aforementioned studies was through interviews. It was noted by Veeran (1999) that there are some drawbacks to interviews. The next chapter of the

present study discusses the methodology employed and highlights how the data collection tools used will hopefully overcome these drawbacks.

While building on existing knowledge, the present study considers the participation of street children not just as a recommendation but a central theme throughout the research process. If it is acknowledged that street children know best their own reality, then surely they must be the ones to identify how best they can be supported?

As a final point, I would question the position that “children’s rights are based on their needs” (Gopaul 2004, p.31). It is argued that ‘rights’ are separate from ‘needs’ and that they are in fact separate approaches (Robinson, cited in Girado 2005); although not mutually exclusive (CIDA 2001). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (2001) recognises the ‘needs approach’ as emphasising meeting needs, with the ‘rights-based approach’ emphasising realising rights. This approach is especially appropriate to the livelihoods of children of the street owing to their low status in society. As Moser *et al* (cited in Mitlin & Patel 2005, p.10) note:

Rights form a valuable strategic entry point to address the ways in which power imbalances deny the excluded access to the assets necessary for a secure and sustainable livelihood.

2.5 A rights-based approach

Contemporary interventions and planning strategies with street children have by and large favoured a nominal level of participation and excluded children from having any real leverage in decisions that are made about them. Participatory Community Development favours a Rights-Based Approach (RBA) as opposed to a Needs Based Approach. Mary Robinson (cited in Girardo, 2005, p.1) defines the RBA as “describing situations not in terms of human needs, or areas of development, but in terms of the obligation to respond to the rights of the individual... This empowers people to demand justice as a right, not as a charity”. Furthermore, Mitlin and Patel (2005, p.10) note that:

These 'rights' extend beyond human rights, and incorporate economic, social, cultural and political (including participation) rights... Rights form a valuable strategic entry point to address the ways in which power imbalances deny the excluded access to the assets necessary for a secure and sustainable livelihood.

The recognition of these rights is supported both by the aforementioned UNCRC (1989) in article 12, section 28 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) and article 3 of The Children's Charter of South Africa (1992). Therefore, the theoretical starting-point is thus this; that street children have a right to participate in the decisions that are made about their lives and thus to be supported in securing sustainable livelihood strategies. This means that with regards to any interventions in their lives they should be involved in the processes of design, formulation, and implementation.

It is argued that participation can exist at different levels and these are articulated in the following way. Nominal participation is used by institutions to legitimise their support base or prove that they are doing something. This only serves street children to the extent of them being included, but is a far cry for them having any real say in decision making. Instrumental participation is more inclusive as street children are more involved in the practical implementation of projects, although again still lacking in any kind of substantial management and planning decisions. In representative participation, street children are given far more voice in the decision making process. Participants are encouraged to plan and shape their own project which in turn would reduce dependency on the agency / NGO and encourage sustainability. Finally, transformative participation encourages empowerment. The idea of participation as empowerment is that the practical experience of being involved in considering options, making decisions, and taking collective action to fight injustice is itself transformative (White 2000).

These points are also recognised by the CIDAs action plan on promoting the rights of children who require special measures:

- The rights-based approach gives serious attention to children's rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and to have their views duly considered, according to their age and maturity. Encouraging children's

participation as “stakeholders” in the development, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives that are meant to help them will result in better programming.

- It places great value on listening to children and identifying their coping strategies as a starting point for donors and NGOs when they develop interventions for children. It emphasizes children’s resilience and strength, instead of focusing only on their vulnerabilities (CIDA 2001, p.24)

2.5.1 Contemporary interventions and the rights-based approach

In the context of RBA, interventions with street children can be conceptualised in the following three ways; reactive, protective and rights-based (RBA). Reactive approaches see “street children primarily as a threat or potential threat to public order and safety. A key policy manifestation is the use of the juvenile justice system as a way to clear the streets and punish offenders against the common good” (Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.6). A “central characteristic of the Law and Order approach is that the phenomenon is individualized and is viewed only in terms of its possible consequences for public order” (Council of Europe, cited in Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.6).

Durban has frequently exercised the reactive approach when dealing with children of the street. These events have been observed by both the media and those working with street children during international conferences. In the introduction to an article published in Durban’s Daily News, Sookha & Mthembu (2005) noted “Durban's street children have been rounded up and taken out of the city while Tourism Indaba 2005 is on”. This approach is not only used during international conferences but on a customary basis by municipal law enforcement agencies to dissuade children from staying on the streets. Thomas de Benitez (2003, p.7) argues that street children in this context are being perceived simply as delinquents.

Policies of rounding up children to frighten them away from the streets and imprisoning “vagrants” may be symptoms of “authoritarian populism” in countries living through political chaos or economic decline, when governments draw on particular prejudices and discontents to attract support and legitimacy

(Stuart Hall 1982). Underpinning such treatment is the concept of street children as delinquents. “The problem of street children is therefore often perceived solely as a criminal problem” (Council of Europe 1994, 48).

Another approach employed by the eThekweni authorities is the ‘protective’ approach to working with street children which is highlighted in the city’s *Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets*. “The focus of the protective approach is on outcomes, rather than process; on immediate causes of problems rather than on their structural causes” (CIDA, cited in Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.8). The protective approach perceives street children;

... to be both “incomplete” and “our future,” thus needing different treatment than adults; protecting them from potential social evils is seen as imperative. A key policy within this approach is the focus on specific “problems,” including integrating children into formal education and withdrawing them from work. A central characteristic is that street children are perceived as individuals in need of extra attention to reintroduce them to traditional socializing systems of school and home (Council of Europe, cited in Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.8).

The protective approach focuses on the removal of children from the streets as this is not deemed appropriate for them. Street children are minors in ‘need’ and unable to make their own independent life choices. The final approach to intervening with street children is rights-based. Underlying a RBA is the attitude that street children are minors but subjects as well. They have both the right and ability to consider options, make decisions and take collective action. Having already discussed what the RBA is, this section will be summarised by highlighting the RBA as a method of working with street children; a fundamental goal and conceptual aspect of this study.

A targeted initiative for street-living children under a rights-based approach is similarly likely to involve homeless street children primarily as participants in finding ways to gain access to their human rights. The main emphasis is likely to be on empowerment outcomes, using participatory strategies. Rather than aiming to reinsert children into mainstream society, a rights-based approach may seek to change the way society operates for children. NGOs may work in this context to

foster social movements and forums to enable street children to voice their concerns and needs (Thomas de Benitez 2003, p.10).

2.6 Livelihood security

I have suggested thus far that there are always going to be children on the streets, some of them don't want to go to institutional care and unfortunately some street children are unable to go home⁸. Furthermore, questions have been raised of whether through a RBA children of the street can be active agents in interventions that affect their lives and not incomplete individuals, ill-equipped of independent thought. The reality is that many children living on the streets of Durban engage in livelihoods activities and defend their right to work. Aptekar and Heinonen (2003 p.16) note that street children have chosen to be agents of their own destiny;

Almost two decades of research and work with street children have shown that there are a number of common factors that can be identified when one speaks of street children. All street children regard their form of obtaining income as "work". Most defend their right to work. Secondly, the range of work that is possible on the streets is limited. There does not seem to be much variation from one city to another. Finally, most street children have made a conscious decision to be on the streets, whether as working, home-living children, or as working, street-living children. They have chosen, therefore, to be agents of their own destinies.

There are two approaches when looking at work in the context of child labour. The first is the 'abolitionist perspective or child-centred approach' (Serrokh 2006). This approach contends that child labour is inherently problematic and "that childhood should be reserved primarily for study and play, with work consisting (only) of light chores in the home" (Myers, cited in Serrokh 2006, p.16). But does this approach consider the vast economic disparities of many developing countries? This study aligns more with a 'subject-orientated approach' (Serrokh 2006). This approach

⁸ A monthly report produced by local Street Educators states that over a nine month period, 202 street children were interacted with, 31 were placed in residential care and 33 were taken back home (Mdadane, L 2006, pers. comm., 20th November).

understands that 'work' is a reality for many juveniles, but places a central premise on ensuring healthy development in a safe environment.

(Here), the work, under appropriate protection and supervision, is an essential vehicle of juvenile socialization, training and self-esteem... The economic participation of children is therefore acceptable as long as it is consistent with healthy development and that the real problem is the special vulnerability of children when they enter the labour market. Although they support the elimination of child participation in hazardous work, they feel that youngsters wishing to work should have the right to do so... To them, the central issue is how to protect the safety and development of children who work (Myers cited in Serrokh 2006, p.17)

The 'subject-orientated' view of work is fundamentally rights-based. It understands that for many street children, work is a reality and that they have a right to choose whether to participate or not.

2.6.1 Livelihoods Analysis

"Livelihoods are defined as the activities, means and entitlements by which individuals make a living" (Lawrence 1998, p.65). A living can be broken down into smaller parts consisting namely of food and financial capital. This study endeavours to comprehend the livelihood strategies of street children in Durban and by means of a Livelihood Analysis will attempt to ascertain how children of the street are economically active. A Livelihood Analysis in the context of the present study seeks to understand;

1. The way in which street children mobilise and allocate the assets and resources at their disposal;
2. Their strategic use of resources to produce, exchange, or in some other way earn a living (income / cash or in-kind);
3. The constraints, stresses and shocks that street children and their immediate communities face. (adapted from CARE 2003, p.5)

A Livelihood Analysis focuses on capacity and in this way is consistent with a community based vulnerability assessment. Mitin & Patel (2005, p.16) have noted that “vulnerability is a characteristic of the poor”. Street children, who live in levels of high to absolute poverty, are vulnerable both in their everyday lives and within the livelihood strategies that they pursue.

2.7 Risk analysis

Within the context of this study and the aforementioned Livelihood Analysis, one of the main objectives is to reduce risk and vulnerability and thus increase the capability of street children (see figure 3). This study acknowledges three approaches when mapping risk and vulnerability of street children in Durban. The first of these is the ‘taxonomic approach’ which tends to break vulnerability down into different elements (social, economic, environmental, informational vulnerability etc) (Wisner 2004). Within this approach Cannon (cited in Wisner 2004, p.186) identifies five ‘components of vulnerability’;

- Initial well-being
- Livelihood resilience
- Self-protection
- Societal protection
- Social protection (social cohesion, rivalries)

The second approach is the ‘situational approach’, with the key question being “not what kind of group a person or family belongs to, but the nature of their daily life and their actual situation” (Wisner 2004, p.186). This question is particularly relevant in the current study due to the heterogeneity of street children and their unique livelihood strategies. Finally is a ‘contextual and proactive approach’ where the community in focus “defines its own vulnerabilities and capabilities; outsiders don’t” (Wisner 2004, p.187).

Davis (1999) and von Kotze (1999) both agree that for risk to be reduced, the knowledge needs to emanate from those directly affected by the hazard. Supporting this argument, Wisner (2004) notes that social vulnerability is to some extent linked to

or the result of a blockage, erosion or devaluation of local knowledge and coping practices. This approach aligns with the rights-based / community development approach and participatory methodology of this study.

Figure 3 - Community Based Vulnerability Assessment

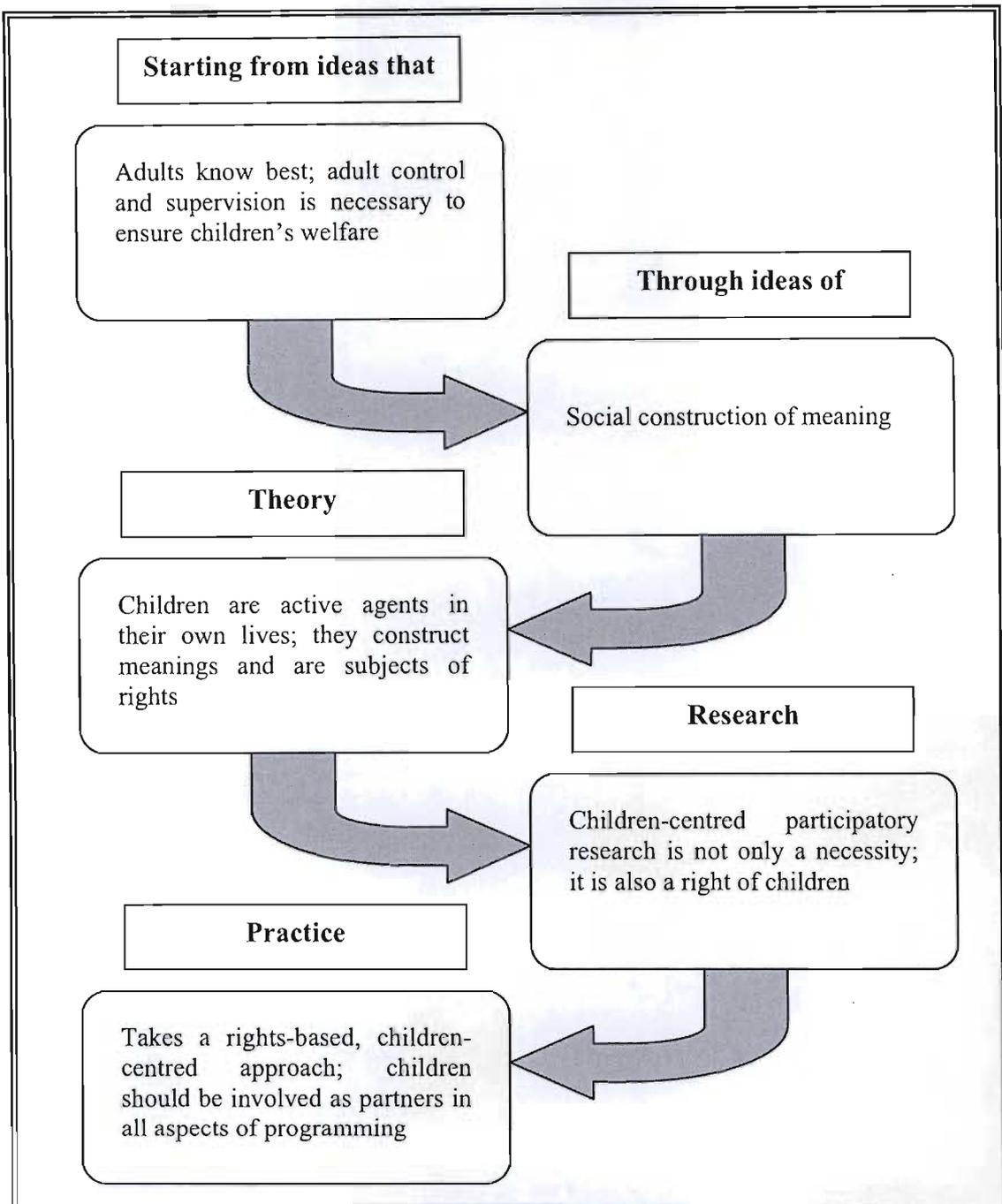
<p>H + V = R (Hazard + Vulnerability = Risk)</p> <p>Example; Hunger + Low nutritional status = High health risk</p> <p>Reducing the health risk would either mean mitigating the impact of the hazard (for example through the provision of regular balanced meals) or decreasing the vulnerability.</p> <p>Example; C = Capability H + V / C = ↓R</p> <p>(If C = ability to identify food sources such as ‘shisa nyama’ restaurants)</p> <p>Therefore; Hunger + Low nutritional status / Ability to identify food source = Lower health risk</p>
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The purpose of doing a livelihoods analysis and community based vulnerability assessment is to identify both **capacity and vulnerability** and hence determine risk. The assumption is that if you can increase capacity, decrease vulnerability and / or address the hazard, the result is a reduction in risk.

2.8 Conclusion: A paradigm shift

Within the rights-based framework, contemporary authors writing on approaches to working with street children have highlighted a paradigm shift (Ennew & Swart-Kruger 2003, Sauve 2003). Street Kids International “suggests a critical paradigm shift as the basis for being responsive and effective and describes its approaches for working with street youth as participants and assets **within** their present communities” (Sauve 2003, p.1). This study aligns with the thinking **of** organisations such as Street Kids International and conceptually can be summarised in figure 4.

Figure 4 - A rights-based conceptual framework of the present study (adapted from Ennew & Swart-Kruger 2003)



Conceptually, the present study argues against the statement that adults know best. It has been noted by many involved in contemporary research that the children themselves know best their own reality (Johnson et al., cited in Van Beers 1996; Veeran 1999). This study distances itself from the notion that adult control and supervision is necessary to ensure children's welfare and recognises children as having the right and ability to participate. Street children are active agents, not simply

minors and are viewed as 'subjects' of their rights. The present study recognises that contemporary research, policy and intervention have forgone the right of children to participate and proposes a paradigm shift. Child-centred participatory research is not only a necessity to understand street life; it is also a right of children. Therefore, this study recognises the right of children to participate as partners; to be intrinsically involved in interventions that affect their lives.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology used in this study included methods that seek to engage and encourage street children to participate during data collection. The study is qualitative in nature as it seeks to try and “gain understanding and insight into the life-worlds of research participants” (Mouton 2001, p.150). Furthermore as Mouton (2001, p.151) notes, studies of this nature have “an explicit (political) commitment to the empowerment of participants and to changing the social conditions of the participants”.

The methodology of this study is in many ways a culmination of my ideas and experiences from the last six years of working with street children in Durban. Careful consideration was given when deciding which methods to employ in order for both the participants and research assistants to benefit. As we have seen in chapter 2, street children have a right to be taken seriously and for their voices to be heard. It is my belief that children of the street should be instrumental in the design, formulation and implementation of interventions that affect their lives. Thus, for the purposes of the present study, a qualitative approach was most appropriate.

3.1.1 Research design

This study used Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools as a way of generating information and insight and it also draws on Participatory Action Research (PAR) in that it involved young field workers. The research assistants involved in the study are what are often known as ‘Street Educators’ and were chosen from YFC⁹, a local NGO working with children of the streets in Durban. There were two women aged 22 and 33 and two men aged 20 and 29. All four had completed secondary education with matric and had also attended various child and youth work courses. Two of the

⁹ YFC (Youth for Christ) is a child and youth organisation working nationally in South Africa. Their Durban branch has specific projects focussing on homeless youth. These included primary prevention at community level, a street outreach programme and residential care for homeless girls. More information can be found at <http://www.youthkzn.co.za>

research assistants are employed full-time by YFC and two are completing internships as part of their youth work training.

Throughout the study the research assistants participated in data collection and gained valuable, applied knowledge of PRA research tools. The research assistants are all reasonably new in the field and although they have a relatively good relationship with the children of the street, they were eager to gain skills in participatory methodologies. The processes that they have participated in during the research will be readily employed in future interventions. Nieuwenhuys (1996, p.3) recognises this link with PAR and the Street Educators work with children of the street.

...our thought was that both children and educators are sources of knowledge and do research every day of their lives. What they would need to make this research 'scientific' were tools to map, record, analyze and act upon their environment.

At this stage, it is important to note that in order for data collection to be successful and PRA activities to work trusting relationships are a decisive factor. With the absence of trust, results will often be worthless. Gopaul (2004, p.23) notes that "it is a known fact that street children are prone to lie and present fictitious information for fear of being victimised". The element of having trusting relationships with street children is essential if valid and realistic data is to be collected. Anthony Swift (1997, p.158) has highlighted this imperative;

Only by establishing an element of trust can the educators hope to get beyond the shield of compensatory thinking with which the children protect themselves from the full import of their circumstances.

Although I had had contact with a number of the participants before, a number of weeks were spent relationship building with the sample groups prior to the study commencing. This time was spent chatting, having fun and getting to know the participants better. Conducting research with street children involves a lot of preparation work. It would be foolish to think that a research project could be conducted on an ad-hoc basis and produce valid results; if any at all.

Furthermore, the benefits to the children themselves were utmost in my mind during the research design of this study. Children of the streets in Durban have lacked any real voice in the design and formulation of interventions affecting their lives and often do not see any fruits of their participation. Chawla and Kjörholt (1996, p.1) have stated that in their experience “even though there is more and more rhetoric about children’s inclusion at both local and regional levels, it is difficult to realise children’s *actual* participation in practice”.

In sum, the design arose out of the recognition of the need and right of children to participate. Furthermore, not only will the Street Educators be equipped for participatory interventions, but the data collected and the needs identified by the children in this study will be utilised when formulating future interventions. If the fruits are evident to the participants from studies such as this, perhaps street children will be more willing to participate in future research.

3.2 Sample design and sample methods

The samples of street children were chosen using non-probability sampling methods and employed a combination of both availability and purposive sampling. With these criteria in mind the sample of participants chosen for this study were children ‘of’ the street as discussed in the introduction to this study. The two sample groups are from different geographical locations within the city of Durban. The two samples included:

- 29 males and 8 females. This is consistent with the wider population of street children. “Street children throughout the world are mostly boys. In Rio de Janeiro about 87% are boys (Sanders 1987), and in South Africa Richter (1988b) reports about 90%” (cited in Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994, p.109).
- Range in age from 10 – 25 years.
- Participants have been on the street for differing amounts of time ranging from 2 days – 15 years. Ideally it would have been better not to include children who had been on the streets for 2 days but the majority of participants had been on the streets much longer than this.

Table 2 – Umgeni Corner sample

Name	Sex	Age	Home	Time living on the street
Sipho	Male	11	KwaMashu	6 years
Thulani	Male	12	Newlands East	2 years
Siya	Male	15	Marianhill	Data not available
Kongo	Male	18	Spencer	2 years
Michael	Male	18	Ndwedwe	2 days
Bongani	Male	18	Marianhill	5 years
Nathi	Male	18	Mandeni	7 years
Xolani	Male	19	Umlazi	8 years
David	Male	19	Ntuzuma	3 years
Thami	Male	20	Umlazi	4 years
Zakhele	Male	20	Hammersdale	10 years
Eugene	Male	21	Port Shepstone	7 years
Lindani	Male	21	Ntuzuma	Data not available
Lindo	Male	21	Marianhill	4 years
Lucky	Male	22	Marianhill	n/a
Nkosi	Male	25	KwaMashu	4 years
Lindiwe	Female	16	Inanda	2 years
Buhle	Female	17	Mayville	Data not available
Cebo	Female	20	Inanda	5 years
Thanda	Female	20	Mayville	6 years
Eunice	Female	22	Marianhill	Data not available

Figure 5 - Percentage of Umgeni Corner sample by sex

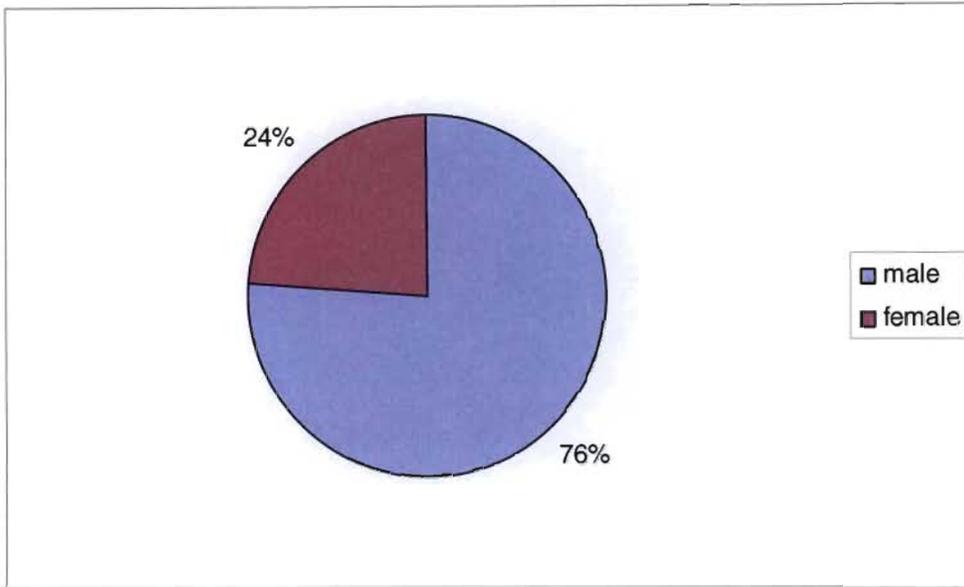


Figure 6 - Percentage of Umgeni Corner sample by age

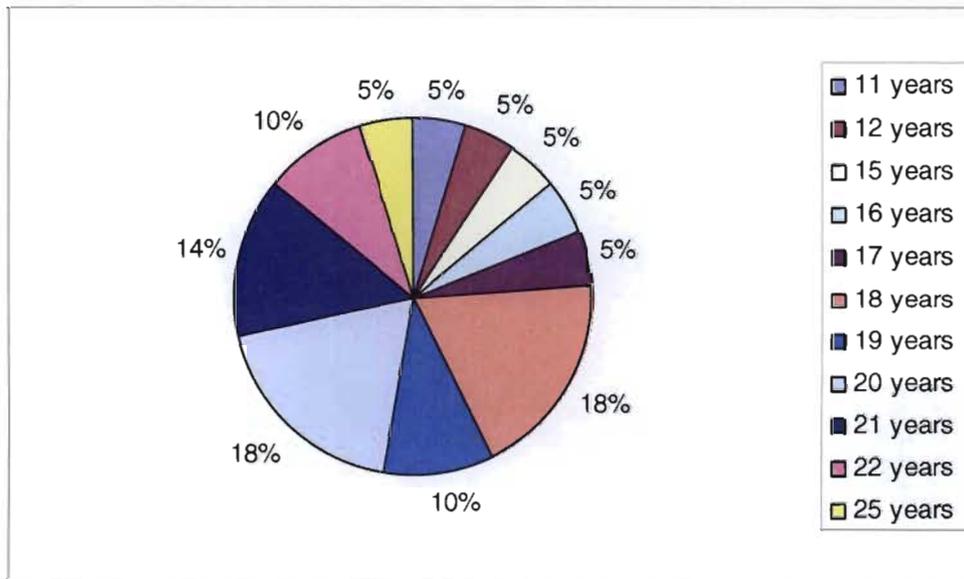


Table 3 – Mayville Street sample

Name	Sex	Age	Home	Time living on the street
Sanele	Male	10	PMB	Data not available
Deon	Male	11	Sydenham	1 week
Lebo	Male	11	Chatsworth	Doesn't remember
Andile	Male	13	Chatsworth	1 month
Thando	Male	17	Inanda	Data not available
Dumsani	Male	17	Ntuzuma	14 years
Mfana	Male	17	Hiberdeen	3 months
Phumlani	Male	17	Mzinto	Doesn't remember
Sfiso	Male	20	Amaoti	15 years
Nkosinathi	Male	21	Hammersdale	5 years
Sbu	Male	21	Gauteng	7 years
Thokozani	Male	21	Hillcrest	Doesn't remember
Sandile	Male	22	KwaMashu	8 years
Zanele	Female	16	Mayville	6 years
Nosipho	Female	17	Inanda	5 years
Busi	Female	20	Inanda	7 years

Figure 7 - Percentage of Mayville Street sample by sex

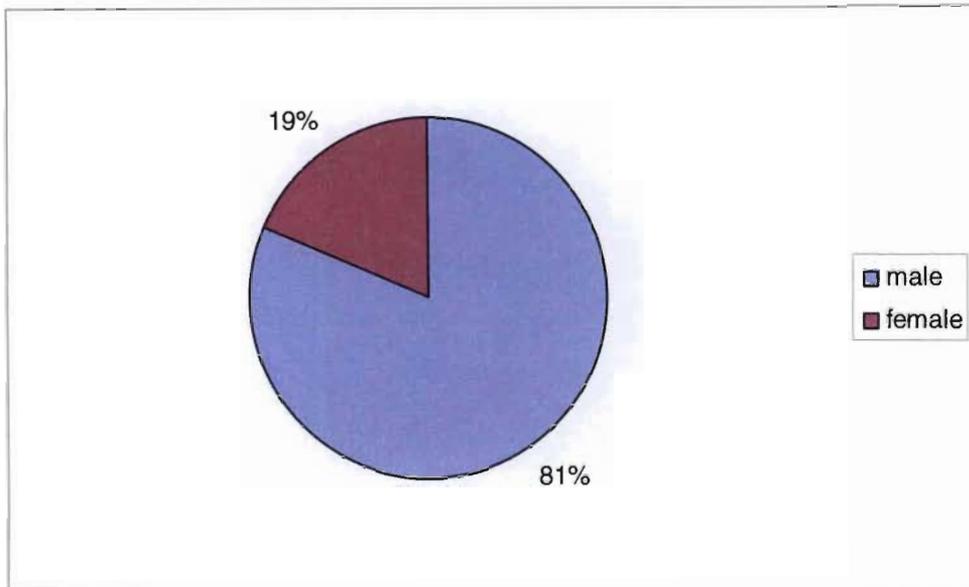
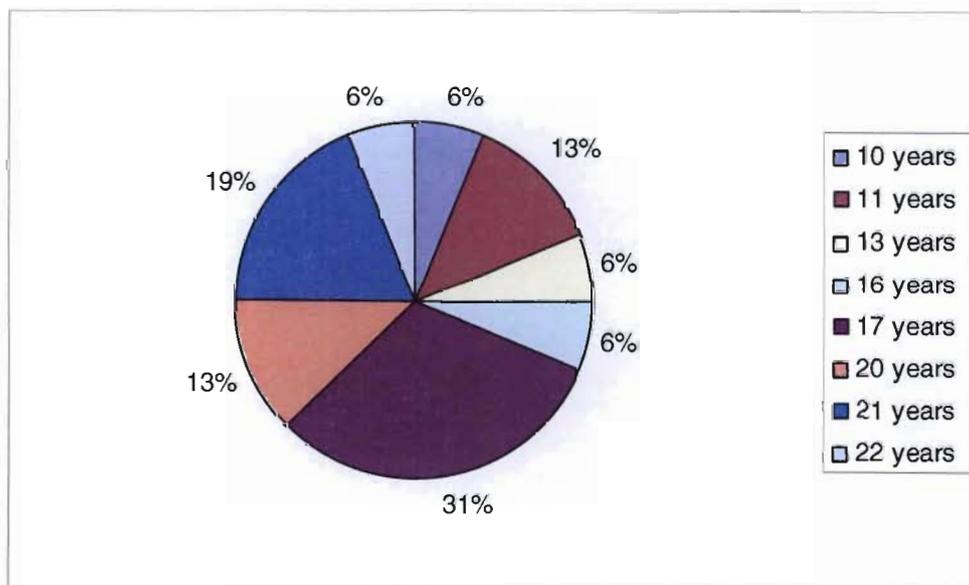


Figure 8 - Percentage of Mayville Street sample by age



3.3 Sample profiles

From the demographic profiles in the previous section one can ascertain that the two sample groups were of similar age, number and gender demarcation. During the research the two groups displayed similar characteristics which ranged from glue dependency to obvious closeness and camaraderie. However, it is worth noting that children of the street are not homogenous groups and that group dynamics and characteristics are often influenced by the geographical location of their respective 'home' or territory. It was noted during the research that the Umgeni Corner sample were generally more disruptive than the Mayville Street sample and often struggled to concentrate in group discussions¹⁰ (JT, journal entry, 18th July 2006).

3.3.1 Umgeni Corner sample

Umgeni Corner is a hive of activity and the area is a mixture of residential, commercial and retail business, with a scattering of fast food outlets.

Demographically, Umgeni Corner houses a predominantly lower / working class Indian population. The majority of residential properties in the immediate vicinity are blocks of flats, and are in need of repair. The Umgeni Corner sample group live directly opposite a busy intersection where taxis, buses and cars pass frequently. Their 'home' is highly visible and can be compared to a proscenium arch stage. Their only physical border is a brick wall at their back of their home and as a result they can easily be seen by traffic and passers-by alike. The busy robots at the intersection are used predominantly by the younger children for begging activities. The sample group use their limited space for, amongst other things; sleeping, cooking, socialising, washing and quite often to urinate. The street corner they occupy, owned by the municipality, houses a small electricity station and is littered with a large amount of refuse.

The aforementioned lack of concentration and fractious behavioural characteristics of the group were discussed with the research assistants who believe these behaviours exist because the children at Umgeni Corner migrated there from the Point area of Durban's Central Business District (CBD) where life on the streets can only be

¹⁰ The possible reasons for this will be discussed in section 3.3.1 and 3.6

described as chaotic; the area is alive 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The reasons for this migration differ, but it is often because they have had conflict with other street children in Point or are in trouble with the Police and / or security services¹¹.

3.3.2 Mayville Street sample

The Mayville Street sample group reside in the harbour area of Durban's CBD and like the Umgeni Corner group they live and sleep next to a busy intersection. The area is predominantly made-up of commercial businesses whose interests are connected to the harbour. Examples include; car terminals, custom and excise, clearing and shipping agents. There is a scattering of small retail businesses and petrol stations. Demographically the surrounding area is quite mixed, although predominantly poor, and is also renowned for drugs, prostitution and criminal activity. The sample group resides on the outskirts of this activity, but will often venture into surrounding areas. Many of the sample group purposely chose to stay in this area as it generally quieter and safer than places nearby.

The group by and large have quite separate areas for sleeping, eating and socialising; however these areas closely surround the four corners of the traffic intersection. They are less visible at night and use shrubbery running alongside the road to hide themselves from view. Their possessions are generally also less visible than the Umgeni Corner group, utilising the space under drainage covers as storage. The group had a very good attention span and were able to concentrate for relatively long periods of time.

3.4 Data collection methods and fieldwork practice

A number of methodologies were employed for data collection in the context of this study namely:

- PRA activities
- Focus groups

¹¹ The livelihood strategies and activities of both sample groups will be discussed in greater length in Chapter 4

- Observation

3.4.1 PRA activities

The participatory nature of the PRA tools utilised not only produces comprehensive data but allows the participation of participants who might not necessarily be literate. Furthermore, PRA acknowledges the subjects as experts;

A principal starting point of PRA is that people know best their own personal, social and environmental reality. PRA attempts to elicit the knowledge and views of local people anywhere for the purpose of their development through their empowerment in conceptualising, planning, formulating, implementing and evaluating developmental actions or projects... These [methods] allow people, literate or not, to express their own perceptions and thinking to engage in a process around issues of concern to them (Redd Barna Regional Office Africa 1993, p.16).

In addition, the informal nature of PRA activities allowed participants to feel relaxed and engage in a dialogue about the data they were producing. The tools selected were identified on their strengths of obtaining information on livelihood strategies and the factors that pose risk to these strategies. The tools were;

- Activity clock – a drawing to indicate the activities that the participants engage in during the course of 24 hours. The activity clock easily identifies different tasks that participants engage in such as livelihood strategies.
- Mobility map – the outcome of an exercise using drawings to highlight the movements of the participants used to establish a sense of routines. This PRA tool provides geographic information for the activities identified in the activity clocks. Places of social interaction and resource are also noted on the maps. Further distinction is given on the maps as to which of these interactions and places of resource pose risk to their livelihoods.

3.4.2 Focus groups

Focus groups were used both to validate the data and discuss if there were any gaps in the data collected¹². Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981) tell us that because of the informal nature of interactive discussion within focus groups, participants are less on guard to personal disclosure. Because of the group dynamic and often lively dialogue, a focus group with 10 participants yields much more information than 10 individual interviews. Moreover, “even though such a permissive atmosphere may seem to distort the information obtained, group pressure acts as a deterrent to possible exaggeration” (Folch-Lyon & Trost 1981, p.445).

3.4.3 Observation

Observation was a key element of the study and observations were recorded in journal form throughout the research process. The type of observation used can be conceptualised as ‘participant’ observation which is mainly descriptive, largely informal and is flexible on information collected (Gillham 2000). The research was conducted with Zulu speaking research assistants who were asked to keep a journal of their observations. This information was used to triangulate both the data collected and my own thoughts and observations.

3.4.4 Dates and settings of data gathering

The data was collected over a three week period during July and August 2006; although there had been a number of weeks of preparation beforehand, mainly spent relationship building and observing the sample groups. The data collection was conducted with individual sample groups on the same day of the week, for three weeks, to promote routine and thus encourage attendance (Umgeni Corner – Tuesday; Mayville Street – Wednesday). The schedule was as follows;

- Week 1 – Activity clocks
- Week 2 – Mapping
- Week 3 – Focus Groups

¹² The focus groups were also used as part of a participatory data analysis discussed in section 3.5

During discussions about a possible venue with the research assistants it was highlighted that the children and youth really enjoy trips away from their daily surroundings. Moreover, it would have been problematic to both conduct the PRA activities on the street, and for the participants not to be distracted by the busyness of their surroundings. Being that one of the core premises of this study was participation a venue was suggested, but not decided upon until it had been discussed with the groups. It was proposed to both sample groups that we could use a multi-purpose room at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Both groups were very excited about the prospect of going to the University and so the venue was agreed.

The order of events for each data collection session at the University had a similar schedule. On arrival to the venue the group were given some fruit and a sandwich to eat. Shortly after eating, group games were played. These games encouraged interaction and added a fun aspect to the research process. Following the games, participants were settled and the data collection activities commenced. The session concluded with a substantial lunch before the participants were taken back to their home on the streets.

3.4.5 Data collection process

During week 1 of data collection we were looking for information on a random day and so participants were asked to think about what they did the previous day. Without trying to pre-empt the results, a brief example was given of an activity clock as the concept was totally new to participants. For this task, participants were asked to work individually, unless the children specifically requested to work in groups. The information for a random day was consolidated from the groups' activity clocks which were produced on the 11th July 2006 (Umgeni Corner) and 12th July 2006 (Mayville Street). My observations are also included and were noted in journal entries dated 11th and 12th July 2006. Times are approximate and are used to highlight an order of events rather than specific time scales.

Week 2 of data collection focussed on mapping with the participants. Once again, because of the new nature of PRA, the participants were given a brief example of a mobility map. Ideally, mapping is supposed to be performed as a group activity

drawing on the collective knowledge of participants, however, a number of participants expressed the desire to work individually. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of some of the data this request was granted without contestation. Participants were first asked to draw a general geographic map of their home space and surrounding areas with a black pen noting general patterns of mobility. Subsequent to the basic mobility map, participants were asked to mark with a blue pen the places of resource that they utilise. Finally, participants were asked to mark hazards and threats on their map with a red pen. The maps were produced on 18th July 2006 (Umgeni Corner) and 19th July 2006 (Mayville Street).

Although a substantial amount of facilitation was needed during the activities, many of the participants were able to work independently and diligently. After the data had been initially consolidated with the research assistants, focus groups were conducted with participants to discuss the data and make any additions that participants felt were missing.

3.4.6 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of this study were not just an academic requirement but a human requirement, owing to the vulnerable situation of many of the participants. To protect the autonomy of respondents and to prevent social stigmatisation and / or secondary victimisation of respondents I changed their names. The respondents were asked to sign a consent form explained to them by the research assistants in their home language of Zulu. The consent form included a research agreement entered into between myself (the researcher) and the respondents which included the following;

- The names of respondents will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used where appropriate.
- All the information will be treated confidentially.
- The respondents are free to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Food will be provided as the research is taking valuable time otherwise used for securing food.

Throughout the study I submitted to the supervision of YFC who acted in loco parentis.

3.5 Data analysis

After the first two sessions of data collection it was decided in consultation with the research assistants that a collective, preliminary analysis¹³ was required before conducting the focus groups. This entailed the clarification and consolidation of data with the research assistants with an aim of giving some initial feedback so that;

1. The participants do not again feel that they are being exploited.
2. The research assistants gain valuable practice in basic PRA data analysis for use in future programmes.

Not only were the focus group¹⁴ sessions used to both validate the data and discuss if there were any gaps, but in the spirit of PRA, a participatory analysis was conducted to discover which of the data was important to the participants. Common themes were identified and questions were asked such as;

- What do you consider to be the greatest threats to your livelihood strategies?
- What resources do you think are missing?
- What could you do to support your livelihoods on the streets?

Throughout the data analysis process triangulation was used. Triangulation has been identified by those specialising in PRA research with street children as being a key factor in validating data collected. “Triangulation is particularly important. Rather than using a single method in isolation it is better to supplement research with more than one method in order to cross-check the validity of the information collected” (Sapkota & Sharma 1996, p.64). In sum, for this reason not only were different PRA tools applied, but the observations of both the research assistants and myself were used to triangulate the data collected in order to produce valid results and recommendations.

¹³ See figure 9 - Collective, preliminary analysis with research assistants

¹⁴ See figure 10 - Focus group session

Subsequent to the participatory analyses of data with the research assistants and respondents, the theoretical tools of analysis were applied. Chapter 2 describes both a livelihoods analysis and community based vulnerability assessment which were used to examine data. These tools of analysis were employed to find ways of strengthening existing livelihood strategies and to formulate relevant recommendations.

Figure 9 - Collective, preliminary analysis with research assistants



Figure 10 - Focus group session



3.6 Limitations of the study

3.6.1 Attendance

It is commonly known by those involved in research with children of the street that it is often difficult to maintain regular attendance of participants throughout the entire study. As Baker suggests (1996, p.60) “It was evident to me that for such research [PRA] to be effective in action programmes the children’s regular attendance and participation are vital”. The majority of participants in this study attended both of the PRA sessions and subsequent focus groups; however, some participants in the draft register of names from Mayville Street were missing due to arrests on the day(s) previous to the programme commencing.

3.6.2 Time keeping

Ensuring that participants were on time and available for the activities was often easier said than done. On each occasion, quite a substantial amount of time was spent preparing the participants for the trip to the University resulting in less time being

spent on the activities. By the final focus group session many new children wanted to participate. However, in order for them to participate in the focus groups they must have had attended both of the previous two sessions and negotiated and signed the consent forms. The Street Educators from YFC encouraged them to attend future programmes.

3.6.3 Glue addiction

The main obstacle to the children's attendance and participation is often their addiction to glue. Some children refused to come because they were either going to buy glue or were so high that they were disinterested in attending the programme¹⁵. Often participants would have been sniffing glue for a period of time before the programme commenced which thus led to sometimes chaotic behaviour. The glue issue proved difficult in terms of both the facilitation of activities and its direct affect on the concentration span of a number of glue dependent participants.

3.6.4 Sample

From the demographic profiles in section 3.2 one can ascertain that the two sample groups were of similar age, number and gender demarcation. However, it is important that while there are similarities among children of the street all over the world, they are also heterogeneous groups. Although this study can give a good indication of the livelihood strategies of the sample groups described, it may be a little presumptuous to assume that this study represents the entire population of street children in Durban.

3.6.5 Previous experiences of research

The Mayville Street sample tends to be less visible in both their daily activities and sleeping habits than the Umgeni Corner sample. Due to the visibility of the Umgeni Corner samples' home, they have had much more attention from potential researchers and are thus very aware of exploitation and empty promises of reward offered in return for their participation. Although both sample groups had had contact with

¹⁵ The participants were asked to surrender their glue for safe keeping when starting the programme on the understanding that it would be returned to them when the programme finished for the day. Again, the element of trust is imperative to this process.

researchers, a number of the participants from the Umgeni Corner sample asked “why do we have to sign consent forms?” and were anxious when the activities became more formal.

Many organisations / researchers have promised IDs (South African Identity Documents) to the children in order to get information and never returned to make good their promises. They [participants] told us that social workers wanted to interview them and they would help them obtain IDs; this never materialised. A local NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) came to see them and shot a video and again promised to help them with IDs; this again never materialised (JT, journal entry, 11th July 2006).

In order to mitigate these concerns both the PRA and PAR nature of the research was discussed in length with the participants and it was explained to them that the consent forms were also there to protect them from any harmful practices. Furthermore, previous street-based programmes had been run by myself and the research assistants with a number of the participants present. Within these programmes no empty promises were ever made, and so previous participants were able to strengthen / confirm the research teams’ credibility within the group. The relationships of trust highlighted by both Swift (1997) and Aptekar & Heinonen (2003), which are often built over many years, were fundamental in overcoming the damaging mistakes of others.

3.7 Conclusion

The methodology of this study seeks to engage with street children and overcome their homeless, minor status. Children of the street have valuable knowledge of their situation, which if unearthed, can be invaluable when planning future interventions. Van Beers has also noted the value of children as key informants in participatory research:

The participatory action research undertaken by Actionaid in Nepal, used academic collaborators in the UK and Nepal, together with field research project staff from both countries to research with working children, their families and communities, as a basis for policy development. The publication which gives

account of the results provides numerous examples why it is essential that children should be included in research as active participants. Many aspects of their lives would never have become clear if the children were not seen as key informants. The authors therefore state that the first step to improve the quality of life for children is a better understanding of the roles of children (Johnson et al., cited in Van Beers 1996, p.195)

Understanding the livelihood strategies of street children is a complex issue, which PRA has helped unpack. Apart from the noted limitations, the PRA methodologies employed in this study are a positive model for understanding the livelihood strategies of street children. This is noted by one of the research assistants who when asked about their perceptions of the research process, said the following:

Sometimes the participants tell the truth without realising it due to the fact that they are so engaged in the activities. If they were questioned straight about some of the issues addressed, they would not tell the truth (Comment by research assistant on 17th August 2006).

Chapter 4: Presentation of data collected

4.1 Introduction

People driving past in their cars, or walking on the pavement, have an extremely visual impression of street children. They are seen sleeping on the streets, begging at robots and walking unsteadily while continuously sniffing on their bottles of glue. From an outsider's perspective, common perceptions of street children are of homeless, desperate, and deviant youth. We know little of their lives as our interactions are often brief and withdrawn. Whether they are perceived as a nuisance, or victims of harsh circumstances, their presence is removed from our consciousness. Hence, although highly visible, children of the street are also invisible. Therefore, this chapter aims to give a voice to street children with regards to what they do, the places they go and the people they interact with.

This chapter will present the main findings of the study with reference to the research questions asked in chapter 1. For each sample group the findings will be introduced by describing the activities which participants engage in. As described in chapter 3, the main sources of data are activity clocks, maps, observation and journals. The discussion of data will be drawn together by highlighting the main findings of both sample groups in terms of livelihoods and risk and vulnerability.

4.2 Photographic examples of activity clocks and maps

Figure 11 - Activity clock drawn by Siya from Umgeni Corner. At 8am Siya wakes-up, washes and smokes. At 11.30 he changes his clothes. In the afternoon Siya plays on a broken bike, washes cars to make money and then meets his girlfriend. At 17.45 he sniffs glue.

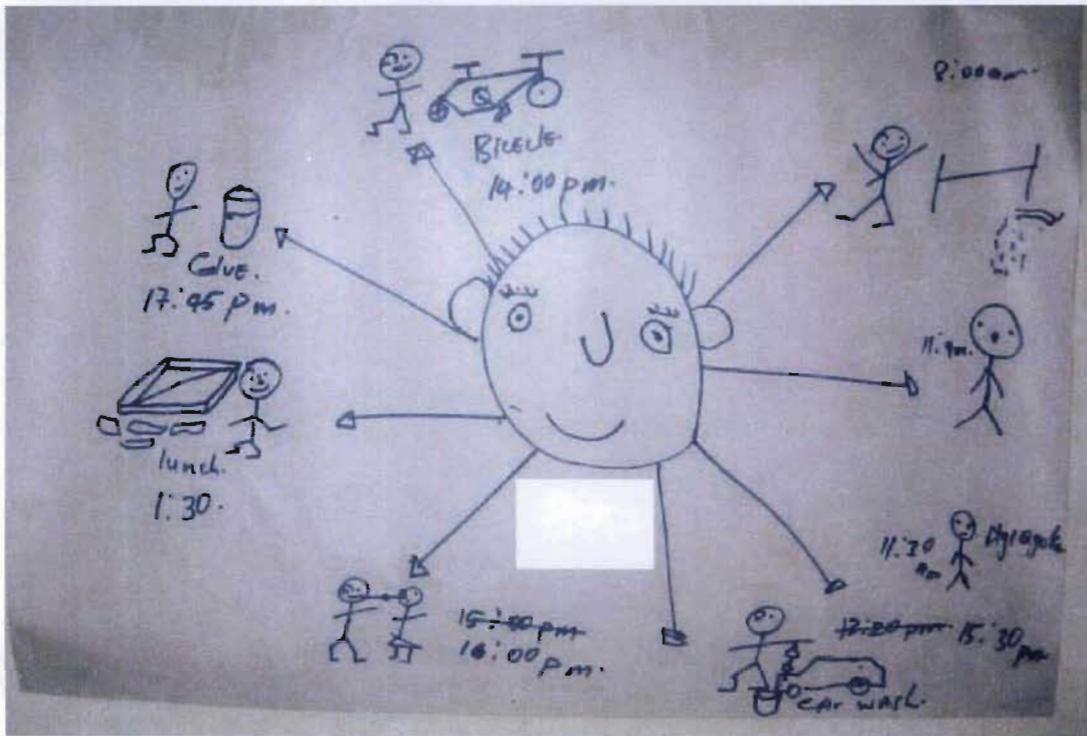


Figure 12 - Activity clock drawn by Xolani from Umgeni Corner. Xolani wakes up at 7am and sniffs glue. After eating breakfast he is 'cising' (kissing) his girlfriend. At 10am he goes to the shopping centre to guard cars.

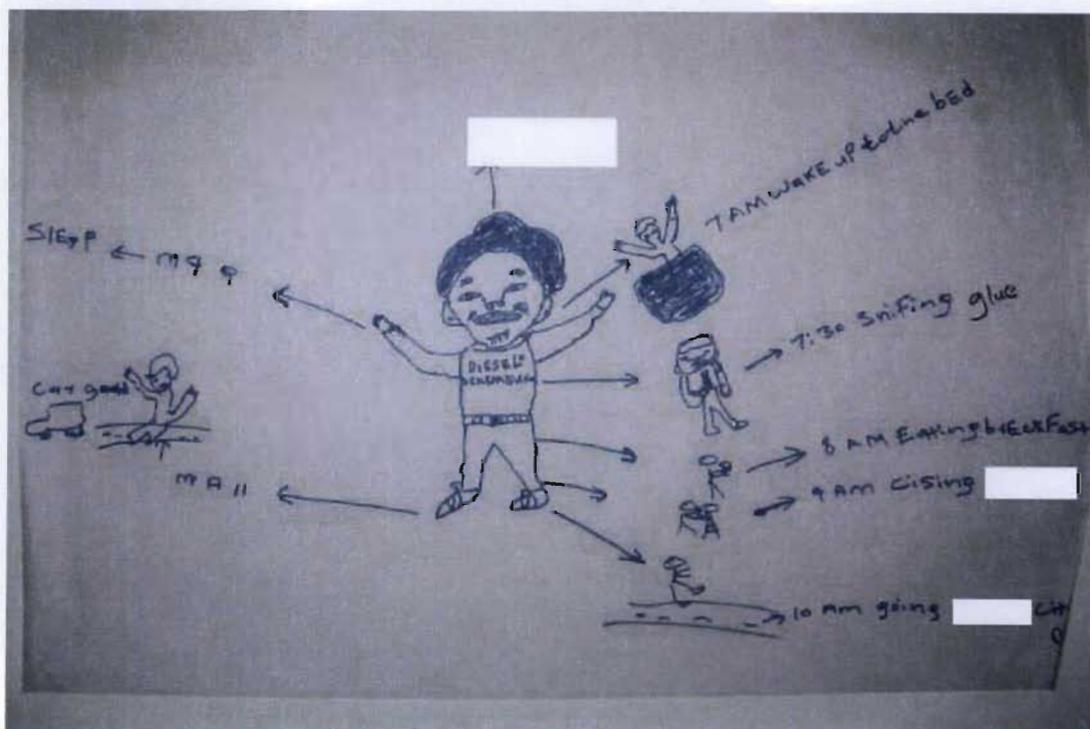


Figure 13 - Map drawn by Michael, Bongani and Nathi from Umgeni Corner. 'Apartety' means Apartheid. The participants used this word to describe their relationship with the Police, Blackjacks (Municipal Protection Services) and Indians. They feel that they are discriminated against by these groups of people.

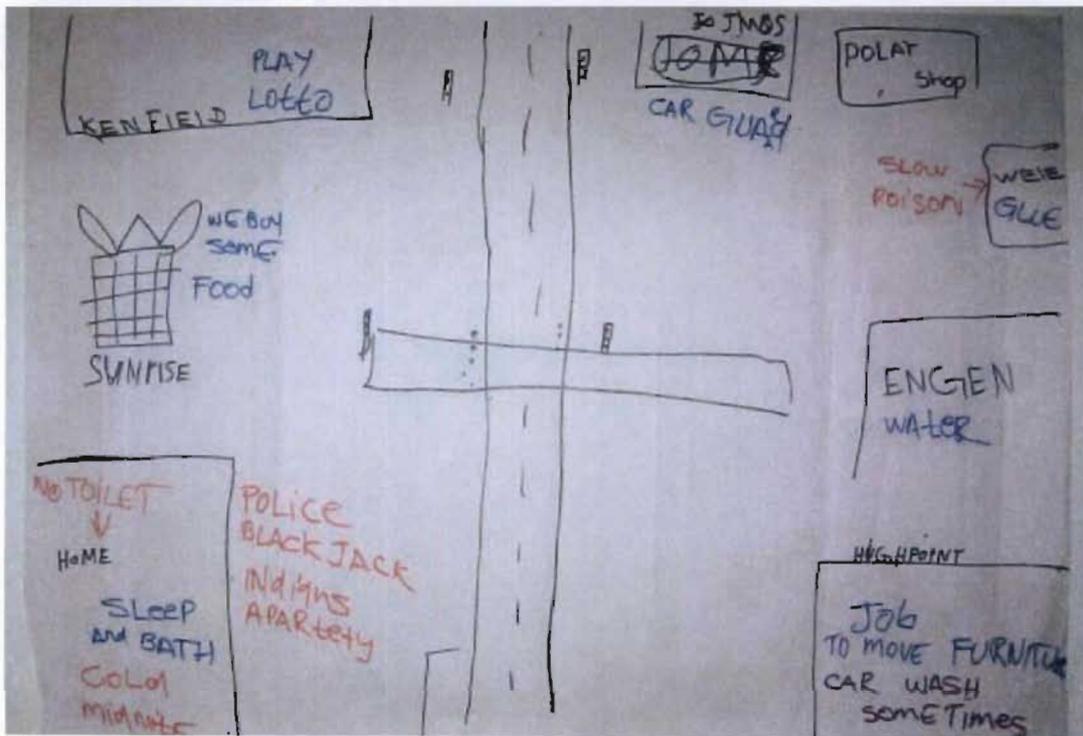


Figure 14 - Activity clock drawn by Sanele from Mayville Street. In the morning Sanele wakes up washes and begs at the robots. At 13.00 a passing car gave him some clothes. In the afternoon he is sniffing glue and begging at the robots.

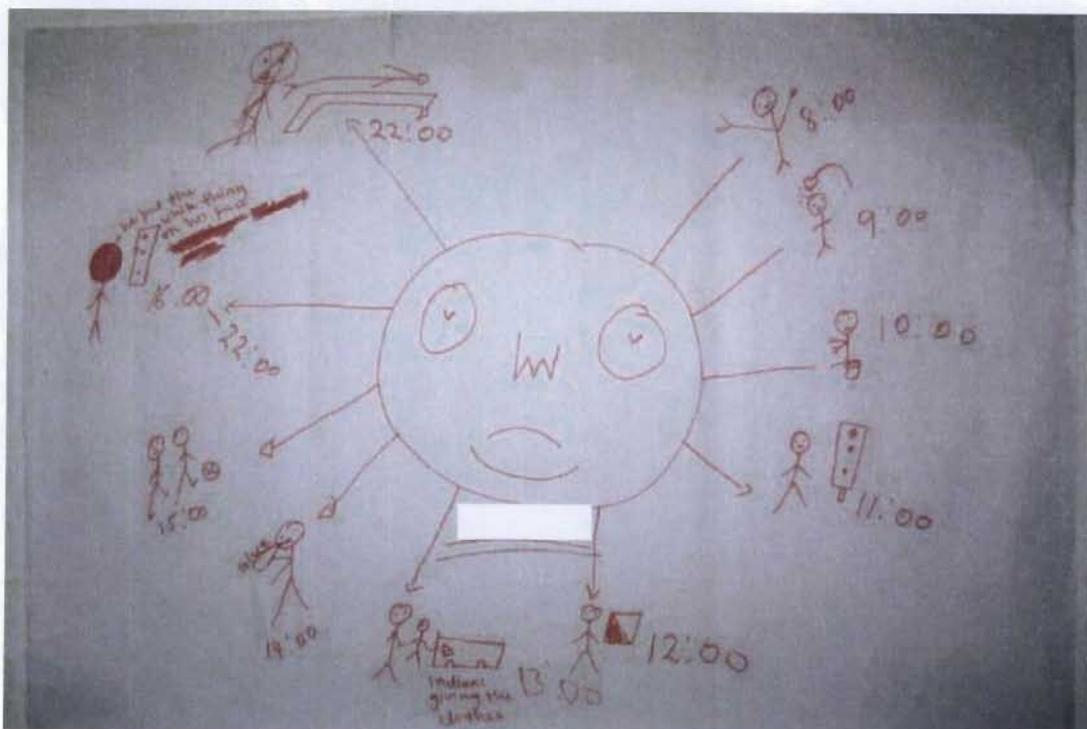


Figure 15 - Activity clock drawn by Thokozani from Mayville Street. At 12pm Thokozani is arrested by the police and taken to the police station.

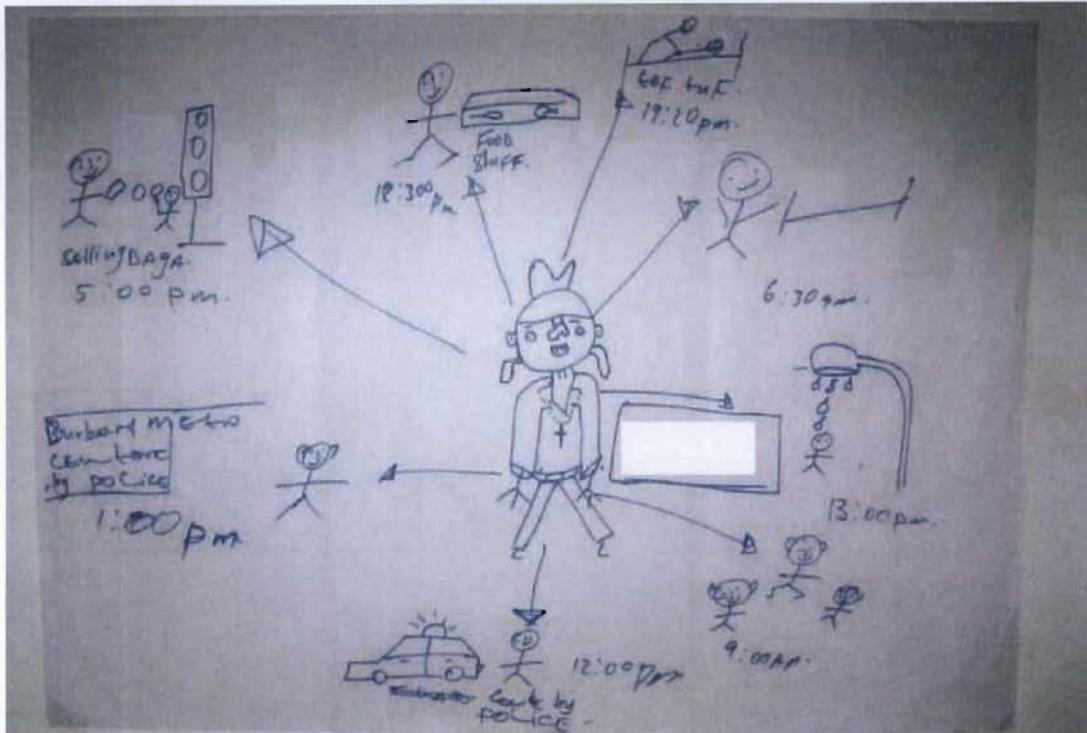
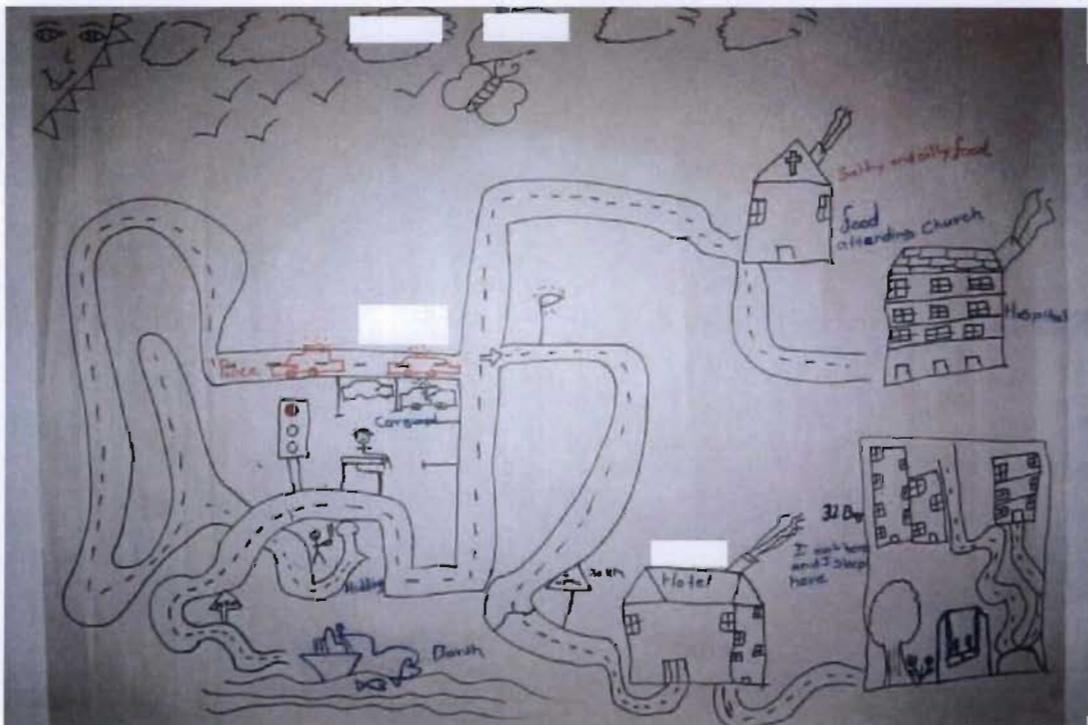


Figure 16 - Map drawn by Zanele from Mayville Street. Zanele noted that the food donated from the church is salty and oily.



4.3 Umgeni Corner

Figure 17 - Children of the street sleeping at Umgeni Corner



Due to the geographic position of the Umgeni Corner, the busyness of daily life begins early for many in the surrounding community. Some of the group wake early to go and look for work although generally the group can sleep through the noise and wake-up between 7am and 8am. The present study was conducted during the winter months and so the first task for the group was to build a fire. The older males take responsibility for making the fire, with the younger males collecting materials to burn as fire wood. Many of the group will sit around the fire for their morning 'fix'. For some the fix is smoking cigarettes, others smoking dagga, and if available, many will start sniffing glue. Some of the group members commented that they couldn't start the day without their morning fix.

While the fire is being prepared some of the girls and younger boys will go to the nearby petrol station to fetch water for washing. From approximately 9am – 9.30am, many of the group members will wash themselves in the immediate area. Others will walk to what is known as the 'washing pipe' to 'shower'. At 9.30am if money is

available or donations have been received by passing commuters, the group will eat. I observed that the food is generally left-overs if it is donated by passers-by. After smoking, washing and eating many of the group will then leave to engage in some kind of income generating activity. These range from begging, car guarding, washing cars and on the odd occasion, a temporary job helping to load furniture onto cars and vans. These activities generally span for most of the morning until 12pm. Depending on the day and the availability of work, some of the group may remain at 'home' to wash clothes. These are hung out to dry on the fence of an electricity station in the area where they live. One older male participant cited "thinking what he must do the whole day" as a mid-morning activity (Eugene, activity clock, 11th July 2006).

The data collected shows that afternoons are generally reserved for activities more recreational in nature. Many of the older males will build another fire and drink alcohol. Some of the group go to the park to play, and others will go to meet their boyfriends / girlfriends. If they have money available some of the females will cook on the fire. One of the girls cited going to town to buy some stock for her small tuck shop business which she runs adjacent to their home (Thanda, activity clock 11th July 2006).

From about 4pm in the evening, the group generally reverts to income generating activities. Most of the males go to an area where there is a shopping centre to guard cars. The younger males will go to the robots to beg for money to buy glue. The latter part of the evening is spent relaxing and getting high through various means. For the majority of the Umgeni Corner group, sniffing glue is a continual activity engaged in throughout the day. I observed that this appears to be a necessity for many of the group and coincides with most of their other daily activities. The group will sleep between 9pm – 10pm depending on the events of the day.

Although this introduction gives some idea of the daily life of the Umgeni Corner group, it is important to note that there is no such thing as a 'typical' day. There are many variables which can change the course of daily proceedings, such as money, food and other external social forces. These factors will be given further attention in the following sections as Umgeni Corners' livelihood strategies are discussed in greater detail.

Figure 18 - Much of the day is spent sniffing glue in Umgeni Corner



4.3.1 Livelihoods strategies of Umgeni Corner¹⁶

One of the main questions asked in this study was ‘What do the children of the street do to sustain themselves?’ Answers to this question were sought by the collection of data based on the following sub-questions:

- How do they make a living? How do they feed and clothe themselves?
- What are the social links / networks / systems they draw on?

During the early stages of data collection, one of the research assistants made assumptions about the Umgeni Corner group engaging in criminal activities as a source of income:

Umgeni Corner they do tell the truth but not the whole truth, like robbery. I think they do rob people because they are using drugs. What do they do if they don't

¹⁶ Unless stated otherwise, the information for the following sections was consolidated from the groups' activity clocks produced on the 11th July 2006 and risk/social maps which were produced on the 18th July 2006.

have money or didn't find a temporary job? What I know is if someone is using drugs that person can do crime. I think they are shy to tell the truth (HZ, journal entry, 18th July 2006)

Although the Umgeni Corner group have had a history of engaging in criminal activities as a source of income, currently the data would suggest that the group do not engage in crime as a livelihood strategy. There was no evidence of criminal activity in data from the activity clocks or mapping exercises. Furthermore, informal interviews noted:

I asked Thulani some few questions like how do they get money especially the boys. He said by being a car guard and even the bigger boys do this. I asked him about the robbery and he said no-one do the robbery. Those who were doing robbery they left Umgeni Corner and others got arrested. (HZ, journal entry, 2nd August 2006)

I asked Thanda about the people who are doing the robbery at Umgeni Corner and she told me that there is nobody who is doing it, even the older guys. She told me that the guys who used to do the robbery were all arrested. She told me that they just do car guarding, begging and selling Dagga. I believed her very much because I have never seen or heard anyone talking about robbery at Umgeni Corner. (NM, journal entry, 2nd August 2006)

Adjacent to their living space, Thanda runs a tuck shop in the morning selling cigarettes, chips and popcorn. I observed during the study that the females were the main holders of money; almost operating as an informal bank for the group.

The first thing I noticed today was that the girls were the main holders of money. In the morning when they were waking up they wanted to smoke before going anywhere. Thanda had a purse with coins which she gave money to another boy to buy cigarettes. Buhle also had a plastic bank bag with both notes and coins (JT, journal entry, 11th July 2006).

When this issue was investigated during the focus group session, respondents stated that the girls hold the money because the boys get robbed; but they normally only do this for their boyfriends (Focus group, 2nd August 2006).

The data collected from activity clocks suggests that members of the group are not engaging in prostitution or 'selling the body'. Most of the female members of the group have boyfriends who assume some responsibility for providing for them. An informal interview with a respondent however, revealed that some of the females engage in prostitution: "[Thulani] told me about the girls who are selling the body. He mentioned their names; they go to town to sell the body, but if the boyfriend find out they beat the girls badly" (HZ, Journal entry, 2nd August 2006).

Mthoko¹⁷ is running a protection racket for younger group members. Mthoko provides protection for younger group members in exchange for money (JT, journal entry, 2nd August 2006). Thulani said that Mthoko protects them from being sodomised, which is a common threat to younger street children (HZ, journal entry 2nd August 2006). Siphso, an 11 year old male, decided to leave Umgeni Corner during the course of the study as he said that Mthoko takes their money and hits them if they don't give it to him (JT, journal entry, 2nd August 2006).

In terms of social links and networks, we observed and recognised the social skills within the Umgeni Corner group of street children. The research assistants noted that the group are always very welcoming to them whenever they visited Umgeni Corner (Consolidation of data with research assistants, 24th July 2006). These social skills were further highlighted by observing friendships that many group members engage in outside of their immediate group.

Many of the males within the group operate as car guards in the surrounding retail areas. Car guards earn an income by watching parked cars with an aim of deterring potential thieves. Car guards will also guide drivers in out and of parking spaces with the hope of receiving a tip. Sometimes the older males will get temporary jobs at the furniture shops loading furniture onto cars and vans.

¹⁷ Mthoko is a 20 year old male who lives with the Umgeni Corner group although he did not wish to participate in the data collection phase of the study.

Many of the younger males stand at the busy robot intersection begging for donations from passing cars. However, Thulani doesn't beg in the evening because the police beat him (Focus group, 2nd August 2006).

The Umgeni Corner group receive donations of food and clothing from various sources within the surrounding community. Some of the churches and mosques are supporting them with clothes and blankets and they get food every Thursday from a church in the locality. Most days, passing cars will give the group clothes and food.

In sum, many of the older male participants earn money through guarding cars and looking for other temporary work opportunities. The younger street children beg at robots and will more often than not, spend their earnings on glue. My observations at Umgeni Corner during the course of the study were that the female group members do not beg. I observed that begging was an activity performed only by the younger males and on occasion, older males. While the boyfriends of female group members take some responsibility for providing for the girls, data suggested that the girls are also involved in prostitution and selling small consumables. The females also take responsibility for washing clothes and cooking. The roles of men, women and children within the group are evidence of how contemporary African family values have been integrated into their street livelihoods.

4.3.2 Mobility, places and facilities utilised

The groups' mobility is predominantly functional. With no basic amenities at their immediate disposal they generally leave their home space for a specific purpose. The group sometimes utilise public toilets which are near-by their home. On occasion group members will travel a further distance to use the toilets at a local shopping centre. However, the security guards at the shopping centre do not allow them entry if they appear dirty (Focus group, 2nd August 2006). It was also noted that some group members will both urinate and excrete in the vicinity of their home (JT, journal entry, 11th July 2006). Water is obtained from a local petrol station which is accessible 24 hours.

Many of the group members regularly visit the shopping centre for income generating activities, namely car guarding and begging. The group members also utilise a number of smaller retail outlets in the area surrounding the shopping centre. Younger respondents cited begging opportunities at fast food outlets, while some of the older male group members use one particular shop to play lotto.

West of the Umgeni Corners' home is another cluster of retail shops. This is an area regularly visited by children of the street for the purpose of purchasing glue. A group of respondents identified a fruit shop as a place where they buy oranges. A number of group members said that they were trying to keep healthy.

The group often venture into residential areas that are not in their immediate locality. As mentioned previously, mosques and churches are a source for donations of food and clothing. Some residents of flats will also donate food from time to time.

A nearby clinic was identified on the mobility maps drawn by participants and respondents were asked if this resource is regularly utilised. The focus group (2nd August 2006) revealed that they don't use the clinic often as they only seek medical attention when it is serious; they then call an ambulance to take them to Addington Hospital on the beachfront.

The farthest resource cited as being utilised on a regular basis is the 'washing pipe'. There was some concern about the washing pipe and with mixed responses. During the focus group, some respondents described the pipe as consisting of three pipes, two are dirty and one isn't¹⁸ (Focus group, 2nd August 2006).

Recreationally resources are limited for the Umgeni corner group. Data suggests that much of the groups' free time is spent sitting and getting high. Some of the older group members said that they do visit bars and shebeens. Some of the children go to the local park to play and meet their friends and if cards are available group members will play at home.

¹⁸ The washing pipe can be seen in figure 19 and will be discussed further in section 4.2.3

Figure 19 - The 'washing pipe'



4.3.3 Obstacles, risk and danger

Although risk was apparent from the data contained within the respondent's activity clocks, participants were specifically asked what they consider to be the greatest threats to their livelihood strategies. What are the obstacles / risks that stand in the way of securing a livelihood? Risk mapping provided valuable data on the presence of risk in the everyday lives of street children living at Umgeni Corner. Further discussion surrounding these issues during the focus group emphasised how emotive the group were about threats. Data suggests that the risks and obstacles street children face when performing livelihood strategies is a significant issue for them.

Although the majority of group members are heavy glue users, the glue was identified as a risk when living on the street. During the focus group (2nd August 2006), respondents stated that the glue is a danger because it makes them high and that this increases the risk of being hit by traffic, especially when begging at robots. Younger members of the group will prioritise buying glue as soon as they have money.

In terms of work, three main issues were identified. Firstly, numerous respondents highlighted the absence of South African Identity Documents (IDs) as being an obstacle to being involved in any formal work activities. These IDs are required by most potential employers when hiring workers for purposes of confirming identity and for their own financial / taxation records etc. Secondly, there are drawbacks when working in the informal sector. Respondents complained that when they work as car guards, the car owners don't always pay. This means that they have wasted their time and not gained any income; thus returning home without money to buy necessities. Thirdly, any involvement in income generating activities involves some amount of mobility. Respondents in the focus group (2nd August 2006) highlighted that not all of the group can work concurrently as some group members have to stay behind to guard their possessions. The latter point was highlighted on the risk maps which showed both the police and other street dwellers stealing their clothes hung out to dry on the electricity station fence.

Although data would suggest that there is an abundance of donations from the local community and passers-by, risk mapping revealed a drawback arising from this type of support. The food that they receive is sometimes rotten, which respondents said made them sick.

The police and 'Blackjacks' were noted as being an inherent risk to the livelihood strategies of the Umgeni Corner group. 'Blackjacks' were identified as being members of the Municipal Protection Services unit, and were regular visitors to the area. As one member of the focus group said: "They normally come once a week, but always in the evening" (Focus group, 2nd August 2006). The group complained that the Blackjacks take their money and possessions. On a follow-up visit to the group after data collection, I arrived with a research assistant to find little evidence of the groups' existence:

Lucky told me that the Blackjacks had visited them the previous evening. The Blackjacks had arrived with a van and taken all their bedding, clothes and possessions. The Blackjacks put poisonous chemicals in the pans that they use for cooking and beat some of the group members with Shamboks (JT, journal entry 18th August 2006).

Further incidences of physical abuse and stigma were reported by numerous respondents. Local Indian gangsters often come to Umgeni Corner and physically beat group members. While begging at robots, people swear at them and call them 'Kaffirs'. Furthermore, the immediate residential community complain about them which contributes to the stigma surrounding street life. Even as consumers, risk maps revealed that some of the local shops say that "they don't sell to street kids", or refuse them entry altogether resulting in group members buying glue instead (Lindo, Thanda, map, 18th July 2006).

As noted earlier, there are no toilet facilities immediately available to the Umgeni Corner group and some members of the group defecate in close proximity to their living space. The data showed that respondents complain of the smell from the area used as a toilet. Although not reflected through data produced by participants, there are some apparent health issues surrounding this issue. On arrival to pick the participants up for the first week of data collection two younger males were urinating against a wall located in the living space of the group. Ten minutes later one of the female group members washed her body next to the same wall that males had earlier urinated against. There is also much debate in the group regarding the 'washing pipe'. It is highly possible that the pipe utilised by the group is a sewerage pipe. One group member complained that he had seen "shit" in the water (JT, journal entry, 18th July, 2006). In addition, another respondent noted on his risk map that he got a rash from washing in the pipe (Lindo, map, 18th July 2006). Although data would suggest that there are obvious health issues present, poor health was not identified by participants as a risk or obstacle to the Umgeni Corners' livelihood strategies.

Issues of rape and sexual abuse are sensitive issues for the Umgeni Corner group. The activity clocks drawn by participants only reveal sexual activity among boyfriends or girlfriends. Unfortunately, sexual abuse and rape is a common reality for children of the streets and it is understandable that respondents did not want to overtly disclose these events. However, an informal interview with one of the participants revealed the following:

Thulani told me that there are boys who rape new girls at Umgeni Corner; those who don't have girlfriends like Lindani and others. And if your boyfriend is

visiting somewhere and left you at Umgeni Corner the boys rape you. Sometimes they are not scared of the boyfriend; they take the girl in front of the boyfriend and promise to stab you if you get in the way.

Thulani told me about the boys who were sodomised at Windsor River and the grown-up boys tried to do that to him and he ran away. That is why he came to Umgeni Corner. He said at Umgeni Corner there is no-one who sodomise boys because Mthoko (Cebo's boyfriend) protect them and he hits those people who do that (HZ, journal entry, 2nd August 2006).

Inherent risk and abuse associated with prostitution were also apparent. One respondent confirmed during an informal interview that there are "girls who are selling the body. He mentioned their names; they go to town to sell the body, but if the boyfriend find out they beat the girls badly" (HZ, journal entry, 2nd August 2006).

4.3.4 Supporting livelihood strategies

One of the questions asked during the focus group session was how can their livelihood strategies / activities be supported / strengthened / extended? The participants were asked

- What resources do you think are missing?
- What could you do to support your livelihoods on the streets?

Responses were limited from participants regarding how they could strengthen their livelihood strategies. However, identity documents were identified as being important to respondents. As the name would suggest, these documents give an identity to their holder and enable them, for example, to access formal work opportunities, access government grants and open bank accounts. Respondents also cited education and schooling as being important to them. Lindani said "he wants to work for Durban Solid Waste as he can't work in an office because he doesn't have an education" (Focus group, 2nd August 2006). One respondent has aspirations to run her tuck shop in town, but needs both a space to sell and start-up income. The casual and insecure nature of work, income and goods is not conducive to livelihood security for the

Umgeni Corner group and, as you will see in the next chapter, this translates into high risk.

4.4 Mayville Street

The Mayville Street group wake anytime from 6am – 8am. Once awake, group members will generally collect **water** from the nearby petrol station and wash their faces. With regards to early **morning activities**, data in the activity clocks of the Mayville Street group show similar characteristics to that of Umgeni **Corner**. After waking, group members will smoke cigarettes, dagga or glue. Succeeding these events, some group members will wash clothes and allow them to dry for the rest of the day on fencing near the road where the group congregate.

From about 9am onwards a number of group members engage in income generating endeavours while others will pursue more recreational activities. The younger **male** members of the group go to beg at **the robot** intersection adjacent to their home. After they have acquired money it will be used to buy glue and maybe some food. One of the females cited going to the beach with her boyfriend who is also a member of the group (Nosipho, activity clock, 12th July 2006). One older male in the group spends most of the day robbing people in different parts of town (Sbu, activity clock, 12th July 2006).

Depending on the particular day, the afternoon commences by a trip to a local church, where the group receive food and clothing donations. At any point during a typical day, events can occur at Mayville Street which disrupts their daily activities. The data from the groups' activity clocks for this particular day showed a raid by the police in the early afternoon. Some of the group members were taken to the police station but were later released.

Activities vary from 3pm – 5pm. Some of the older males will drink, while another sells dagga to passing traffic. One of the female members of the group went to a nearby area to sell her body (Busi, activity clock, 12th July 2006). Younger male group members will play, sniff glue and prepare for begging.

In the early evening begging activities for younger male members commence while the activities of others include reading the Isolezwe newspaper and going to the petrol station to watch television. As it gets dark, two of the older group members cited robbing people in nearby areas and then going to local nightclubs with their girlfriends (Sbu & Sandile, activity clocks, 12th July 2006). Depending on the events of the day, by 10pm the group will prepare for sleeping.

Figure 20 - Research assistant facilitating mapping with one of the male participants. In the background a group is working on their map.



4.4.1 Livelihoods strategies of Mayville Street^{19,20}

Through my observation of the Mayville Streets daily livelihood strategies, subtle skills were noted, with one particular example being resourcefulness. During the course of data collection, one of the participants expressed a desire to take some of the juice used in the programme for Mayville Street group members not attending. Both

¹⁹ Unless stated otherwise, the information for the following sections was consolidated from the groups' activity clocks produced on the 12th July 2006 and risk/social maps which were produced on the 19th July 2006.

²⁰ The presentation of data in the following sections refers to research questions asked in this study as previously highlighted in the presentation of data for the Umgeni Corner sample.

the research assistants and myself were unable to find suitable containers to transfer the juice back to Mayville Street.

While looking for containers in the venue, Zanele suddenly appeared with four empty plastic bottles which she had got from the bin outside; I would never thought to have looked there. They were washed and used for the juice. The waste of others was utilised by the participants which I'm sure is often the case in many scenarios (JT, research journal, 19 July 2006).

Data suggests from both the activity clocks and maps of younger males that begging at robots is their main income generating activity. One of the younger males, Thando, whose health and mobility have drastically deteriorated from his glue addiction, works as a car guard. There are a number of car parking spaces near the groups home which enables Thando to work without having to travel any real distance. Besides begging, the robots provide income generating opportunities for one older group member who sells dagga.

Two of the older male group members are involved in criminal activities on a regular basis. This generally involves robbing people of chains, bags and rings (Sandile & Sbu, map, 19th July, 2006). The respondents stated that the income obtained from selling these items is for their own personal use rather than for the benefit of the wider group.

Data from the activity clocks and maps showed that at least one female member was engaging in prostitution. However, during the focus group discussions it was noted that it is "not only the girls who sell their bodies, even the guys sell their bodies and this happens often" (Focus group, 3rd August 2006). During conversations with Dumsani regarding data in his activity clock, one of the research assistants observed that Dumsani was an 'insansa'²¹.

I think Dumsani is 'insansa' because in the activity clock he mentioned that the car he had drawn there was someone and him and the driver. The person in the car was his love who was taking him to their home and this person told him to

²¹ 'Insansa' means a heterosexual male who is either forced to have homosexual sex or receives reward.

bath and give him clean clothes and brush his teeth. After some time I came back to him and asked him again about the car and the people who are inside. He said it was him and he mentioned the name of a male and the driver. Then I knew that this person was a male (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

Other group members are aware of Dumsani's activities. During one particular week of data collection Dumsani was teasing one of the female participants who reacted by teasing Dumsani about his insansa activities.

Dumsani was teasing Zanele. He was touching his private parts and he then touched Zanele with the same hand. Zanele replied by saying a male name which then silenced Dumsani (JT, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

Today he was teasing Zanele and she got angry and she said to Dumsani "You think I am ... [a boys name] and then he was quiet. (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

One group member demonstrated initiative for income generating activities through informal business. I observed during data collection that Thando was selling loose cigarettes at various times to other group members (JT, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

Observation and data collection suggests that for the most part, the Mayville Street group have a good relationship with the community in their immediate locality. Respondents stated that they receive donations of food and clothing from both the business and residential community.

4.4.2 Mobility, places and facilities utilised

The mobility of the Mayville Street group is predominantly functional, being that they generally leave their home space for a specific purpose. During the night and early in the morning the group are generally together. When visiting the group prior to data collection, I observed during mid-morning that a number of group members were absent. Group members quite often go off and do 'their own thing'. Although the group operate as a family unit, there are times when they disperse; often together with

their peers and sometimes on their own. When they leave on their own this is normally for short periods, to buy glue or cigarettes for example.

The older males of the group are often together due to common interests and livelihood strategies. The older males tend not to 'smoke glue' but will predominantly smoke dagga and drink beer when money is available. Some of the older male and female group members cited going to bars and shebeens in the evening. Again, the younger males are normally together; they are heavy glue users and observation would suggest that basic hygiene is not a priority.

One of the chief places identified in data as being a place of resource for the group was a local petrol station. Here the group are able to use the toilet, collect water and watch television. This facility is available 24 hours a day. There are a number of small shops in the area where respondents cited buying glue, food, alcohol and cigarettes.

Focus group discussions revealed that the group go to the Church at 10am on a Friday where they receive food and on Monday they receive soup (Focus group, 3rd August 2006). Furthermore, respondents identified areas on their maps where they receive clothing and food donations from passing traffic and the local community. One particular example is security guards working for a car export business, located close to Mayville Street, who occasionally give the group food.

In terms of health and hygiene, the Mayville Street group have fairly easy access to toilets at the petrol station. The data from a number of respondents identified a clinic located in a public hospital on the beachfront. Respondents said that when they are sick they go to the clinic. Also located on the beachfront are public showers, provided by the municipality for the public after they swim in the sea. Some group members cited utilising the showers, although data highlighted that the use of this facility has the associated hazard of assault.

4.4.3 Obstacles, risk and danger

In comparison to Umgeni Park, data similarly revealed that the Mayville Street group were also both vocal and emotive about the obstacles and risk that they face while engaging in livelihood strategies. Data from the activity clocks and risk maps were reinforced by respondents during focus groups discussions.

Younger respondents identified begging at the robots as being a risk to them. The danger of being hit by traffic was cited as being the predominant hazard. This hazard is exacerbated by the street children's constant 'high' created by incessant glue sniffing. During an informal interview with a research assistant, Thando stated that "glue is a danger to him because it makes him sick and not to walk properly" (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

Data from the activity clocks highlighted that sexual activity among group members occurs regularly. When questioned on safe sex practices (i.e. condom use) during the focus groups, participants said that condoms were available to them, although they were non-users (Focus group, 3rd August 2006). Although many participants have some knowledge of HIV/AIDS related issues, the disease is predominantly not featured as an obstacle or hazard in data. However, while discussing her data with a research assistant one participant revealed a change in her livelihood strategies due to the risk associated with HIV/AIDS:

Busi was telling me that she just quit to sell her body because it is dangerous to her because of HIV; she is positive. She is shy about what she was doing (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

The retribution and repercussions stemming from group members engaging in criminal activities are apparent in both data collected, and focus group responses. While discussing data from the risk maps, Sandile and Sbu said that there are particular streets that are dangerous to them because it is where they rob people. Some people hit them and the police take them to jail (Focus group, 3rd August 2006). A research assistant further noted that:

Sbu and Sandile said they are robbing Kwere Kwere²² and those Kwere Kwere people are dangers to them because if they see Sandile and Sbu they chase them. (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006)

The repercussions from criminal activity within the group also affected the demographics of the original sample selected. On the first day of data collection, some participants on the original register of names were missing due to arrests the previous day(s). Ntoko was arrested for stealing a chain; Zakhele and others for possessing a knife (JT, journal entry, 12th July 2006)

Although data did not reflect repercussions for Thokozani who is selling dagga at the robots, police are a threat to Thando “because they arrested him because they saw him with the glue and dagga” (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

Data suggested that car guarding can also be a hazardous income generating activity for participants:

One day Thando saw people stealing cars near where they stay. When they saw that Thando had seen them they pointed a gun at him and said that if he can tell the police about what happened in front of him, they will kill him. He was mentioning that to be on the street is a danger to him (HZ, journal entry, 19th July 2006).

In the near vicinity of Mayville Street is a Reception Centre run by the municipality for street children. This facility was established to provide basic services to street children with an aim of reunification to families or referral to places of safety. The Reception Centre was identified as a risk on a number of maps drawn by participants. Focus group discussions revealed that the Reception Centre tell them to come and bath; they lock them in a room and phone the Blackjacks to take them to Ohlange place of safety. Furthermore, the Reception Centre gives them bad food (Focus group, 3rd August 2006). Sandile said that the Reception Centre visited [Mayville Street] and phoned the Blackjacks and they arrested him. He was in jail for three days. Phumlani

²² ‘Kwere Kwere’ is a Zulu slang word meaning something / someone that is not understood. In this context it is used for people from other African countries who speak languages that local Zulu speakers do not understand.

said he wanted to complain to the Daily News (Durban newspaper) about the Reception Centre (Focus group, 3rd August 2006).

The Blackjacks, Metro Police and the Beach Police were all identified as being a danger to the Mayville Street group. Risk maps showed that sometimes when group members are using the showers on the beachfront, the Beach Police hit them. As noted earlier, raids by the police are not uncommon. Nosipho said that the police chase them and on a Wednesday and Thursday they often don't sleep because the Police come at night; they just go and hang around at a near-by area until the morning (Focus group, 3rd August 2006). During these raids a lot of their belongings are taken. Mfana said that the Blackjacks know that they keep their possessions under the drainage covers (Focus group, 3rd August 2006).

Even without the threat of being raided by the police, it is difficult for the group to find a safe place to sleep. Zanele said that when it rains it is a problem as they are unable to sleep in their usual place. They normally take shelter by one of the local businesses but if they are found there in the morning one of the owners and manager beat them, especially the ones who cannot walk properly because of the glue (JT, journal entry, 3rd August 2006).

4.4.4 Supporting livelihood strategies

During focus group discussions participants were asked what is needed to support their livelihood strategies / activities. In terms of available resources, Zanele identified the absence of IDs as being a drawback to securing a livelihood. Andile and Sandile said they wanted to go back to school. Poverty at home was an issue identified by one of the older males. Thokozani said that it would be difficult for him to return home until things were better. How can he go home if he has nothing to bring?

The group members are victims of many abuses and crimes while staying on the streets and they have nowhere to report it. They cannot go to the police for help and they would like somewhere to go for help.

When asked ‘what could they do to support their livelihoods on the streets?’ a number of respondents said that they would like to run small informal businesses. Thando said that if he had R20 he would start selling packets of chips. They could sell some stuff at an informal tuck shop; however, two main drawbacks were identified:

1. They have nowhere to store the goods.
2. Where would they keep the money? The Police would just take it.

4.5 Conclusions

The strengths of the two sample groups of street children to operate as a communal, family unit are apparent. All families have problems, and some of the examples within the presentation of data highlight these. Although children of the street are still ‘children’, they display remarkable maturity and resourcefulness in order to cope with their harsh surroundings.

The presentation of data in this chapter reveals that children of the street are generally ingenious and resourceful. Many of the children of the street have aspirations both to extend their informal work activities and perhaps shift their efforts into the formal sector. Unfortunately, current conditions and available resources are not conducive to this expansion or shift in human capital. Many of the group members from the Mayville Street group are involved in criminal activities, which are perhaps a manifestation of frustration, emanating from not being able to pursue legitimate livelihood strategies. There are obvious obstructions to both sustaining current livelihood strategies and engaging in more formal activities. For both groups, access to identity documents is problematic. Furthermore, the lack of storage for personal possessions inhibits livelihood activities on the street.

Data in this chapter showed that risk is inherent to group members from both the sample groups. This occurs within the groups themselves and from numerous external forces. The approach of local law enforcement agencies is both abusive and an obvious attempt to frighten them away and deny street children a place in society. As

noted in chapter 1, for many children of the streets there are currently no appropriate alternatives.

In terms of health, data did not reveal a prioritisation of HIV/AIDS within the sample groups. This is alarming when considering prevalence rates within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. HIV/AIDS is affecting and infecting children of the streets and further discussion will be given to this topic in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion of data collected

5.1 Introduction

One of the primary aims of the present study was to understand livelihood strategies of street children in order to arrive at recommendations for more appropriate interventions that reflect a broad-based approach to children's rights. This chapter begins by looking at the group dynamics of street children and focuses on interpersonal relationships, home life, family and work activities. It is my argument that children of the streets are children. However, the fundamental difference to other children is that they concentrate the greater part of their efforts on livelihood activities. Rather than supporting these efforts, contemporary interventions and policy show that the predominant response to children of the streets in Durban has been removal, primarily for the following two reasons. Firstly, street children are viewed as a nuisance and in the absence of clear ideas about what to do with them they are removed especially with the advent of international visitors, as noted in events surrounding the Indaba conference. Secondly, street children are seen as vulnerable minors who are not in a position to make decisions for themselves, do not belong on the streets, and whose rightful place is either at home or in institutional care.

The present study began by asking whether there are other more appropriate responses, given that not only are there a number of factors increasing the numbers of children on the streets, but street children should have the right to be involved in matters that affect their lives, and some children have opted to live on the streets as a preferable alternative to abusive /oppressive conditions at home or in an institution. This chapter suggests that an alternative way of addressing issues affecting children of the streets is to begin with where they are and what they do to sustain themselves. It therefore centres on livelihood security and rights.

5.2 Group dynamics of street children: A home on the streets?

What evidence is there that children of the streets are not just a nuisance and vulnerable minors unable to make decisions for themselves? And therefore, why should street children be supported in their livelihood activities?

The daily stress of survival on the streets does not mean that groups of street children do not have fun, play and respond like 'normal' children. Children of the street are children. Like many young teenagers, a number of male group members were fanatical about music with Thokozani and Mfana from Mayville Street being plugged-in to their personal radios almost constantly. Image and fashion are also important to street children. Xolani from Umgeni corner drew himself in his activity clock wearing a t-shirt with the 'Diesel' logo²³. The symbolism evident in data further supports group members' child-like characteristics. Zanele from Mayville Street drew a smiling face on the sun looking over her mobility map; a common trait in children's drawings²⁴.

Children of the street respond to love and affection. My observations were that this exists both within the group and from interactions with Street Educators. Mfana and Zanele from Mayville Street, although 17 and 16 respectively, act almost like husband and wife. Their emotional attachment is very deep and they will rarely part from one another's company.

Play is an important activity of street children. Siya from Umgeni corner cited riding his bike as one of his random day activities²⁵. The younger boys will often playfully wrestle and laugh and joke with one-another and any opportunity for recreational activity is gratefully received. This playfulness extended throughout the study, and during breaks in the PRA activities I would play regular games of football with the children using an orange as a make-shift ball. In one particular session a number of participants were struggling to concentrate and so we played a game of hide and seek in the confines of the university venue.

²³ See Figure 12 in chapter 4

²⁴ See Figure 16 in chapter 4

²⁵ See Figure 11 in chapter 4

The home space of street children is not dissimilar to that of a normal household. Although informal, Umgeni corner has quite distinct areas for sleeping, washing, cooking and socialising. The open fire place for example, was the predominant area where group members would congregate in the morning to warm-up and socialise. It has been noted by a number of authors that children of the street are 'quasi-families' in their respective street communities (Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994; Conticini 2004). Contemporary African family roles are often well defined and engendered within communities of street children in Durban. Role division is apparent with the females and younger males mostly responsible for fetching different items and cooking. There are exceptions to the rule however, as I observed that older males will often wash their own clothes. Seniority of rank is also apparent when the older male group members will harshly discipline the younger ones. This can range from disputes over money to not responding to a delegated task. There are fights as with most families, but there is also evidence of love and care. Chapter 1 commenced with a positive observation of the family characteristics of street children; something that is often not immediately obvious to passers-by.

Apart from just companionship, protection and support, the family function of street children has apparent bearing on livelihood strategies:

One of the most valuable [functions of family relationships] is shared information regarding economic activities and safety. The former includes information about places that are best for begging, for washing cars, for getting left-over food or for soliciting. The latter includes information about unfriendly shopkeepers, dangerous locations (specific alleys, bars, etc.) and, most important, how to avoid the police (Swart-Kruger & Donald 1994, p.116).

Word on the street spreads fast. If one child has a bad experience with a certain policeman for example, the rest of the 'family' will know very quickly. Often, these threats are given pseudonyms, which are easily identifiable by the children. The 'Blackjacks' are members of the Municipal Protection Services (MPS) who wear black uniforms; 'Goldtooth' was a name given to a policeman known to beat children of the street and who has a entire row of gold front teeth. Public perception of street children is often either negative or charitable. However, interaction and observation of

street children portrays a group of street dwellers who are not just like ‘normal’ children, but readily employ relational coping strategies to survive the harsh reality of street life. In sum, if children of the street live as quasi-families in makeshift homes, exhibit behavioural characteristics and lifestyle choices commonly associated with ‘normal’ children and poor people more generally, why do they get treated so differently?

5.3 Livelihood strategies of children of the street

Livelihoods strategies of street children are predominantly about food and money. A large proportion of the group members’ day is spent securing food and / or money to buy food. The donation of food to street children is common, but they still spend a lot of time and energy on securing sufficient, regular sources of food through begging, foraging and buying. These activities may entail waiting for long periods of time outside fast food outlets for patrons to make a donation or when this strategy does not succeed, scavenging in bins. From a policy point of view, The Children’s Charter of South Africa (1992) states in Article 10 that homeless children have the right to a healthy diet.

Money is an essential, direct means of support for children of the street. Money provides purchasing power and is required to buy basic goods and services. Data reflected that the girls from Umgeni Corner are the main holders of money within the group, but this is normally only for their boyfriends. Conticini (2004, p.12) refers to this role as ‘money-guards’ and notes that “above all, shared trust was the main reason for choosing a money-guard”. Moreover, in order to obtain food and money, children of the street employ work activities. Children of the street from both Umgeni Corner and Mayville Street are not lethargic. Their efforts to secure a livelihood continue throughout the day, even though these pursuits are sometimes fruitless. Work for children of the street is always casual and often insecure. As Thomas de Benitez (2003, p.3) notes:

[H]omeless street children need to earn money or food to survive. Their work is usually sporadic, marginal, sometimes criminal and always in the informal

sector. Their marginal activities put them outside the scope of any protection services geared to ensuring child labour is not exploitative or hazardous.

Data suggests that divisions of labour are apparent and these generally occur along the lines of sex and age. Begging is the predominant income generating activity employed by younger males of both sample groups and for many younger male street children it is their only means of earning an income. In the present study children as young as 10 are begging and at such a young age are often ill-equipped to engage in alternative income generating activities. Although there are people who are willing give to street children there are also those who are irritated by the sight of street children begging at every street corner. It is not that begging should be inherently encouraged, but that it should be understood and tolerated as a survival mechanism of younger children of the street until appropriate work alternatives are further investigated.

It is easier for small children to make a living by begging, or begging-like activities... [However] street youth find that their income generation potential is limited by increasing age and size... They also find that public tolerance of their street presence is reduced (Swart-Kruger and Ennew 2003, p.8).

Older street youth who have lost their look of innocence and are less able to obtain income through activities such as begging organise themselves into groups to either provide informal services and/or engage in criminal activity. Apart from the group members from Umgeni Corner who on the odd occasion manage to secure temporary work moving furniture, data suggests that older male group members do not currently have other viable work alternatives. Respondents felt that without IDs and education their chances of securing other forms of work are limited. These reasons were cited by many of the older males from both groups and two of the older male group members from Mayville Street who are involved in criminal activity on a daily basis to generate income.

A large proportion of male respondents from Umgeni Corner and some from Mayville Street cited guarding cars as their main work activity. Car guarding is a popular income generating activity among those working in the informal sector mainly because they are unable to gain access to other types of work or employment. No

documentation is required and payment is received through tips from car owners. Although insecure in nature, the pursuit of car guarding activities by group members does display a certain level of self-reliance.

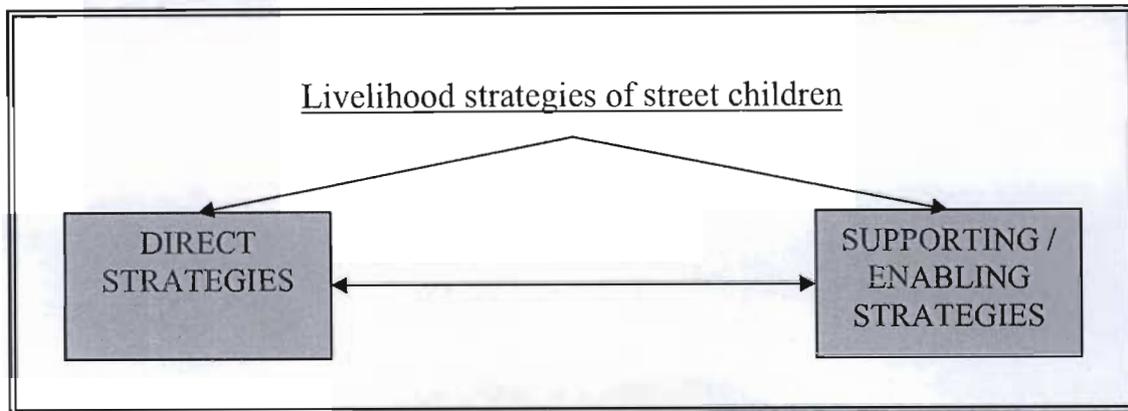
The work activities of female group members from Umgeni Corner and Mayville Street are more diversified. The sight of girls begging at robots in Durban is not a common occurrence and their livelihood activities predominantly evolve **around** the sex trade. Street Educators often complain that although they are aware of **girls** on the street, they are not as accessible as the boys because of their sex trade activities. Data showed that female group members **from** both Umgeni Corner and Mayville Street engage in prostitution to generate income. Data also showed that there are attempts to do other things such as **informal business** activities. Thanda from Umgeni runs a small tuck-shop selling sweets **and cigarettes**. When asked how her livelihood strategies could be supported she expressed a desire to expand her efforts but needed initial start-up capital.

There are apparent patterns in the divisions of labour in the work activities of group members although there are exceptions to the rule. Data showed that one of Lucky's livelihood activities involved him being an insansa, while like Thanda, Thando also engaged in informal business activities.

5.4 Livelihood strategies and risk reduction

Street children employ both direct and supporting / enabling livelihood strategies in order to obtain the food and cash they need in to survive and enjoy living. Direct strategies include work opportunities and access to money and food. Supporting / enabling strategies involve attempts at securing the conditions / acquiring **the** means and services that would make livelihood activities more secure, such as IDs, services and facilities and health. Figure 21 shows the interrelationship shared by direct and supporting / enabling livelihood strategies.

Figure 21 - Direct and supporting / enabling livelihood strategies of street children



The next section of this chapter will discuss these strategies in the context of dangers and threats to livelihood security. Therefore a community based vulnerability assessment will be employed to suggest ways of reducing risk. As noted in chapter 2, the assumption is that if you can increase capacity, decrease vulnerability and / or address the hazard, the result is a reduction in risk²⁶.

5.5 Direct strategies

5.5.1 Mobility

The pursuit of different forms of work inevitably involves mobility for group members. Apart from the small tuck shop initiative run by Thanda from Umgeni Corner, and Thando who guards cars in close proximity of Mayville Street's living space, group members are forced to travel to their place of work. Respondents from Umgeni Corner highlighted that this mobility leaves their belongings and home space vulnerable, resulting in group members not being able to work concurrently. This particular vulnerability poses risk in terms of livelihood security as children of the street need to work but are unable to leave their home space unattended. Reduction of risk in this situation requires the vulnerability being offset through increasing group members' capability. In terms of a risk analysis or community based vulnerability assessment, this dilemma can be summarised in the following way:

²⁶ When using a community based vulnerability assessment as a tool of analysis, broad recommendations are inevitable although the main practical and policy recommendations will be made in chapter 6.

Hazard + Vulnerability = Risk

Hazard + Vulnerability / Capability = ↓ Risk

Street children from both groups have very few personal belongings and lack secure storage facilities of any description to safeguard these. If group members had access to storage facilities this would offset the vulnerability of leaving their belongings vulnerable to the hazard of potential theft while they are away at work. Therefore:

Thieves + few possessions / Access to storage = Reduction in risk

Access to storage also correlates to the support of small business endeavours by group members and was raised by respondents when asked how their livelihoods could be supported. Group members from Mayville Street have aspirations to start a small tuck shop but are concerned about the feasibility of this venture if they have nowhere to store the goods.

5.5.2 Begging

Although begging does not pose high levels of danger to those involved, respondents cited traffic and harassment from the police as the main hazards and which are exacerbated by the vulnerability due to physical and mental instability as a result of sniffing glue. Glue dependency is inherent to street life for many children and will receive further discussion later on in this chapter. However, reducing the harassment by police of street children who are begging would decrease the threat and potential danger arising from attempts to escape arrest and being hit by a car. Furthermore, if safe means of work were identified for younger street children, this would reduce their need to beg. Initiatives to involve street children in recycling projects is one viable work alternative. Data highlighted that children of the street are remarkably resourceful and able to identify and utilise the waste of others.

5.5.3 Car guarding

The notion of car guarding is that vehicles are safeguarded during the owner's absence. However respondents complained that sometimes people don't pay them and

this is seen as a threat to their livelihood security. The reality is that car owners often feel pestered by car guards and do not want to pay on every occasion when they park their cars. In some cases car owners are relieved to see their vehicles intact upon return. However, children of the street are able to earn some income and are less likely to resort to other income generating activities that have higher levels of associated danger. The vulnerability in this instance is that car guards often do not get paid which could be offset if the capacity of street children was increased. Therefore, the promotion of a positive message about street child car guards could serve to strengthen this activity in the short-term. In Durban, car guards are recognisable by their fluorescent bibs often bearing some form of 'car security' slogan. The provision of bibs to street children with a more specific slogan such as 'Children of the street against crime – car guarding services' could have two-fold benefits. Firstly, the bibs would promote a positive message to car owners and secondly, make the bib wearers more easily identifiable. The long-term solution requires viable work alternatives attained through the provision of IDs and further training, hence the link between direct and supporting / enabling strategies.

5.5.4 Crime

The risk associated with crime for all those involved is high; both victim and perpetrator. The hazard associated with the victim entails loss of personal belongings and possible physical harm if demands are not met, while data reflected that the perpetrators are often chased and / or arrested. By increasing the capability of street children currently involved in crime, the level of associated hazard could be reduced. In terms of a community based vulnerability assessment:

Crime + Need to generate income / Access to legitimate activities = Reduction in risk

If we increase street children's capability by enabling them to perform legitimate income generating activities, this will offset the vulnerability and reduce both the risk associated with crime and criminal activity itself. This would partially entail access to IDs which in South Africa is problematic for vulnerable peoples. Furthermore, data showed that the criminal activity involves the theft of bags, chains and rings which

are sold-on for money. In this incidence, blame can easily fall on the street youth who commit the initial theft of items, but what of the middlemen who purchase these stolen items? Complaints of theft by children of the streets are common however it is the complainants' adult peers who are supporting these activities.

5.5.5 Prostitution

The existence of this livelihood strategy should be acknowledged as an economic activity and appropriate mechanisms to reduce risk employed. This could entail educational programmes surrounding safe sex practises however the hazards associated with prostitution will remain constant. Besides the emotional trauma of being involved in prostitution there are also implications for the health of street children and in particular HIV/AIDS. This issue will receive further discussion in the ensuing section on health.

Risk reduction of prostitution is also comparable to the criminal activities of the older males being that prostitutes face punitive measures and stigma when involving themselves in 'selling the body'. Without clients who are willing to purchase the sexual services of street children, the children would not be able to sell their bodies. There is a demand for these services, and this demand again emanates from the very adults who condemn it.

5.5.6 Money

Group members from Mayville Street and Umgeni corner complained that the 'Blackjacks' take their money. One of the most obvious problems for children of the street is that they do not have access to facilities to safely store their monies. Reduction of risk in this situation would be to make formal / informal financial services available to children of the street. Access to IDs is again fundamental in reducing risk and increasing capacity as South African banking institutions require a valid ID to open an account. The provision of informal financial services would ultimately require high levels of trust from the children and possibly need to coincide with other initiatives supporting livelihood strategies.

5.6 Supporting / enabling strategies

Supporting / enabling strategies involve the structures, resources and services pertinent to the livelihood strategies of street children. South African policy denotes that homeless children have the *right* to a decent place to live, clothing and healthy diet; have the *right* to be protected from harassment and abuse from police and security guards and have the *right* to special attention in education and health care (Children's Charter of South Africa 2002). This policy places weight on the *right* of children of the streets to receive indirect support when engaging in their chosen livelihood strategies.

5.6.1 Identity documents

With the absence of identity documents, legitimate work activities and formal services are often unattainable. The application for an ID requires a birth certificate, which many street children do not have access to. Overcoming this hurdle is only possible through an affidavit signed by a social worker or school principal, both of whom, children of the street have had limited contact. The South African Constitution states that **all** citizens of South Africa have a right to identity documentation but yet for street children, the application process is both complicated and problematical.

5.6.2 Harassment

There are laws and policy in place protecting children of the street in South Africa such the UNCRC, The South African Children's Charter and The South African Constitution and so there is often the assumption that street children are safe. However, both Umgeni Corner and Mayville Street group members cited harassment and abuse from the 'Blackjacks' (MPS) as a major hazard whilst living on the streets.

Street children ignore the rules which [law enforcers] are supposed to enforce: vending without a license, blocking parts of the pavements, obstructing traffic, harassing the passers-by, begging illegally, roaming the streets violating anti-vagrancy laws, violating anti-drug legislation. In short, street children seem to do everything the law has forbidden. Thus, in the eyes of a large proportion of society, including policy makers and implementors, street children 'disrupt the

tranquillity, stability and normality of society' (Glauser, cited in Van Beers 1996, p.195).

The MPS are employed by the city of Durban and are a sub-division of the Durban Metro Police. The South African Police Service further indicated that the MPS are directed by the city managers office (Interview with MM, 27th November 2006). Data from Umgeni corner suggested that visits by the MPS are on a regular basis, while Mayville Street cited not sleeping at night for fear of being harassed. This is consistent with observations by le Roux (2001, p.109) who states that "life on the streets is often characterised by insecurity, violence and abuse – invariably at the hands of the very adults to whom they should look up to". The MPS do not only harass children of the street. A recent radio news bulletin highlighted the harassment of people from an informal settlement just outside Chatsworth in Durban who were subject to harassment from the MPS even though they were in possession of a valid court order protecting their homes. (SAFM 9am news, 26th September 2006). One has to question the abuse suffered by street children at the hands of those employed as upholders of the law and try to understand the reasons for this continued harassment. The pessimistic representation of street children portrayed by the media only serves to intensify the negative perceptions that the public hold of these children. The stigma surrounding children of the street is that they are a public order problem, but surely the answer does not lie with a harassment and removal approach? ❄

5.6.3 Health implications

There is evidence in data that group members are trying to be healthy through means such as buying oranges, but by-and-large data did not reflect poor-health as being a significant factor hindering the livelihood strategies of group members from Umgeni Corner and Mayville Street. Despite the harsh conditions in which children of the street live, it would seem that common illnesses are not a hindrance to their livelihood strategies. Data suggested that clinics and hospitals are only used when a serious problem exists. However, there are two main health issues, prevalent in data and observation that have both an immediate and long-term effect on the health and livelihoods of street children.

5.6.3.1 Glue sniffing

Throughout the study I observed that sniffing glue is not only a continual daily activity for group members from both groups, but is detrimental to the health of heavy users. According to a study conducted by Jansen *et al* (1989, p.11) “the effects of glue served primarily as a means of staving off hunger, pain, fear and freezing weather”.
Furthermore:

There is considerable evidence from interviews with street children in South Africa to indicate that the children’s use of solvents provides a means of alleviating the stress of street living and of coping with the hazards and dangers of being a child on the streets (Scharf, Powell & Thomas 1986; Swart 1988, cited in Jansen *et al* 1989, p.18).

Glue and other substances are inherent to street life all over Africa. Through my experience of working with street children I discovered that in East London street children use Benzene and in Zambia children sniff Jenkum²⁷. In Durban, cobblers glue is the predominant substance used for escapism from the struggles of street life. However, substance abuse is not just synonymous with children of the street. People of all ages utilise escapist strategies as a coping mechanism, be it alcohol or drugs.

The down side of continual, heavy glue use is that two group members from Mayville Street have almost totally lost the use of their legs. Moreover, maps from a number of respondents revealed glue as hazardous to both general health and the increased chances of being hit by traffic owing to the effect glue has on their co-ordination whilst begging. I observed that the older boys who have been on the streets for a longer period of time choose to smoke dagga as an alternative to glue. This choice was frequently made because they have been on the streets for an extended period of time and witnessed the effect that glue has on physical mobility. It is worth noting in this discussion that during the PRA sessions the desire among most participants to sniff glue was significantly reduced. By removing the pressures of street life and providing guided activities, the children were less interested in glue.

²⁷ Jenkum is a waste product from tyre production mixed with other petroleum based substances. In Kitwe, Northern Zambia, it is sold to the children by workers from the tyre factories.

Although glue was identified as a hazard in the mapping exercise it wasn't identified as being 'important' during the focus group discussions. This can be explained by the fact the children of the street prioritise other basic needs as important. Therefore, reducing the dangers and hazards associated with glue sniffing is a complex issue and does not just simply involve a period of rehabilitation. If glue sniffing is used primarily as a means of staving off hunger, pain, fear and adverse weather, these are the issues that need to be addressed. It involves strengthening the support mechanisms of street children's livelihoods including food, work and shelter. This again highlights the interrelationship between direct and supporting / enabling strategies of street children's livelihoods.

5.6.3.2 HIV/AIDS

The second point of discussion in this section on health is HIV/AIDS and its effect on children of the streets. Street children face intrinsic danger while living on the streets and often engage in activities, sometimes forced, that could put them at high risk for HIV infection. Swart-Kruger & Richter (1997, p.961) note that "Rape [is] a constant threat – by older or bigger street boys, adult men casually or part of the street scene, and in reformatories and prisons when they are apprehended by the police". Data reflected that these cases of abuse are not only committed by outsiders but also occur within the immediate groups of street children.

Street children are not only vulnerable to sexual abuse and rape, but as data suggested they will also engage in high risk sexual activity as a need to survive. According to Swart-Kruger & Richter (1997, p.961) survival sex amongst street children is described as "sex engaged in for purposes of enlisting or mollifying powerful others, and in exchange for protection, accommodation, food, glue or other goods and services". Data showed that street children engage in romantic relationships and this is often with a peer of similar age. It is also not uncommon for the girls / boys they are being intimate with to be involved in survival sex. Informal conversations and focus group discussions revealed that although street children are aware of condoms they are predominantly non-users.

The sexual activities and / or sexual abuse of street children place them in one of the highest risk categories for HIV/AIDS infection. Sondheimer & Sugerman (cited in Swart-Kruger & Richter 1997, p.957) have highlighted that available data indicates “seroprevalence rates of street children are 10-25 times higher than other groups of adolescents”. A now defunct informal shelter in the Point Road area of Durban housed both boys and girls from the street with numbers averaging 60, but often reaching 100 (Trent 2005, p.18). Because of the shelter’s informal nature both boys and girls lived in communal areas with no real intervention from shelter staff. Many of the girls residing at the shelter were involved in prostitution. At the end of 2005 a local street children’s NGO ran a programme on HIV/AIDS issues with 30 girls who resided at the shelter. At the end of the programme 10 of the girls volunteered to go for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) at the local hospital; sadly all of them tested positive for HIV. During the first three months of 2006 4 girls and 3 boys staying at the shelter died from HIV/AIDS related illnesses (Interview with LM, 15th March 2006).

Although there is some awareness of HIV/AIDS, it is not seen as a priority by street children. Like with the glue issue, children of the street will only prioritise HIV/AIDS if basic underlying needs are met. Data discussed in the present study indicates that issues such as abuse by the police and the MPS are one of the biggest threats to their survival on the streets. Poverty at home and access to personal documentation, for example birth certificates and IDs, were also identified as priorities. Until some of these fundamental needs are addressed, the high risk of HIV/AIDS infection will unfortunately remain lower down the list of priorities for street children.

5.7 Reactive, protective and rights-based approaches

5.7.1 Reactive approaches

Results from data collection showed that while sleeping on the streets of Durban, both groups of street children encounter high levels of danger when reactive approaches are employed as intervention strategies. When escaping from the rain, the Mayville Street group are abused by the manager of the building where they take refuge. The

Umgeni Corner group complained that while sleeping they are harassed by gangsters and the MPS.

Children of the street in Durban also struggle to find a safe place to bath themselves. Data from Umgeni Corner suggested that group members are currently bathing in what would appear to be a sewage pipe. Mayville Street noted on their maps that the Beach Police beat them for using the showers on the beachfront. Therefore in this context, risk is apparent at two levels. Firstly, there are obvious health implications from bathing in water contaminated with sewerage and secondly, there are the harassment issues arising from the condoned use of 'public' facilities.

5.7.2 Protective approaches

According to a recent study conducted on service provision in the eThekweni Municipality, the Reception Centre is a relatively new service provided by the municipality and operates as a phase 1 drop-in centre. The intention is that children who use this facility are able to bath, have some food and be encouraged and are by and large referred to the Municipality's phase 1 shelter in Inanda (Trent 2005). It appears that the Reception Centre could be an invaluable resource to street children located in central Durban, although data reflected some concerns with regards to the facility.

A number of maps produced by participants from Mayville Street reflected the Reception Centre as being a hazard to their livelihoods. Complaints ranged from temporary imprisonment and coerced referral to institutions and bad food. Data clearly implies that there is generally a poor relationship between Reception Centre staff and the children of the streets. This may explain why in 2005 the Reception Centre was utilised by less than 10 children a day (Trent 2005, p.15). Utilisation of this important resource by street children will only occur through a shift in approach. Clearly, the current focus of the Reception Centre is a protective, removal approach.

5.7.3 Rights-based approaches

During focus group discussions respondents from Umgeni Corner cited lack of education as a factor hindering the extension of livelihood strategies. One respondent from Umgeni Corner said his aspirations were limited because of his lack of education, while group members from Mayville Street said they wanted to go back to school. Data suggests, therefore, that children of the street place value on education and in most cases are willing to learn. In addition, this was evident through observation of the participants' enthusiasm and involvement during the PRA activities. Although PRA was new to the groups, their capacity to learn was evident as the children both engaged in and enjoyed these activities. Access to education is not just important to children of the streets, but is also a constitutional right of all children in South Africa. Chapter 2, section 29 of the South African Constitution (1996) states that *everyone* has the *right* to a basic education.

Children living on the streets are seldom able to attend formal, institutionalised schooling and so to increase their capacity to learn would require an alternative paradigm. As discussed earlier, appropriate educational programmes could be coincided with feeding schemes. Programmes such as these have been well received in other parts of the world; the *Ver-o-Pêso* restaurant for street children in Brazil is one particular example (Swift 1997). The Street Educators from YFC in Durban have also adopted a similar approach when conducting street-based interventions. Although YFC do have shelter and reunification programmes, children are never forced against their will to go into institutional care or go back home. The process of leaving the streets occurs through mutual decision making after the children have participated in street-based programmes. As noted in chapter 1, institutional care is not inherently bad, but children of the street should have the right to choose whether this is the direction they wish to pursue. Furthermore, I concur with CIDA (2001) who emphasise that under a RBA street childrens' participation should be as 'stakeholders' in the development, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives that are meant to help them. It is argued that this approach results in more effective, better programming.

In terms of the right to work, Aptekar and Heinonen (2003) have noted that most street children have made a conscious decision to be on the streets. Money earned through the income generating activities of group members gives them a certain level of freedom and independence and in their eyes is a preferable alternative to abusive homes and/or poverty. Although the local authorities do not support the income generating activities of street children, the view of local NGOs and service providers is often different. In Chetty's (1997, p.169) study of street children in Durban, she found that 78.9% of service providers stated that street children should be provided with job opportunities and 52.1% felt that the law should allow disadvantaged minors to work. The only evidence of informal employment in data was through group members from Umgeni Corner obtaining temporary jobs at furniture shops loading goods onto cars and vans. Therefore, most of the work activities of group members are informal and currently involve a substantial amount of effort on their part in order to be effective.

In this chapter I have talked about children of the streets as both children and family units. As relationships have been built over time, it is obvious to me that more often than not, these children are good children. *When given responsibility, children of the street thrive.* Organising the two groups of children for the data collection sessions was quite a challenging task and so one of the Street Educators appointed an older youth from both groups to make sure that the children were both present and ready in time to be picked-up. Sandile from Mayville Street was incredibly diligent in his appointed responsibility, and was central to the organisation of group members.

5.8 Conclusion

One of the questions asked at the beginning of the chapter was, why do children of the street get treated differently? They make a home, live as families and try to secure work, but the remarkable thing is that they are still children who play and have fun. Children of the street are like other children and poor people in general but are often portrayed as deviants on a way-ward path. It may be the case the case that children of the street sniff glue and get high but this is also common amongst adults who drink alcohol and take drugs to escape from the struggles of life. The present study suggests

that just as we support interventions with other vulnerable people groups, children of the street should also be supported.

It is also apparent that some children of the street can help themselves, while others will need more help, but most importantly they try. The group members' involvement in the PRA activities and determination to acquire a sense of livelihood security are testimony to their ability to survive. However, younger street children for example, will require more targeted interventions as apart from being ill-equipped for work alternatives they will inevitably mature and be unable to use their innocent looks to beg at robots.

Children of the street do not want charity, they want livelihood security and it is argued that this is achieved through a realisation of their rights as active participants in interventions that affect their lives. In order to realise these rights, the next chapter will look at practical ways to support the livelihood strategies of street children; both are practical, and both need strategic measures, namely supportive policies.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The present study has attempted to show through a combination of literature, data and discussion that while children of the street are generally removed from public view it is in fact feasible for their livelihoods to be strengthened. Danger is inherent in the lives of street children, although through the realisation of rights, interventions could be better targeted and have more effective outcomes (CIDA 2001). Children of the streets have immense 'street' knowledge and often see things that adult planners do not. This knowledge is invaluable and should be used as a basis for planning appropriate support and interventions. Besides the obvious benefits for research and planning, transformative participation is a right of street children and is supported by international policy such as the UNCRC.

At present in Durban, there is constant tension between the authorities and children of the street. This is perhaps because street children are viewed as either minors, unable to make independent decisions, or perpetrators of deviant activities, both of which cause public discomfort. Furthermore, children of the street are a constant reminder of the vast social disparity in South Africa which adds to the awkwardness of their presence. Hecht (1998, p.214) notes a similar phenomenon in Brazil:

Street children are a reminder, literally on the doorsteps of rich Brazilians and just outside the five star hotels where the development consultants stay, of the contradictions of modern contemporary life: the opulence of the few amid the poverty of the majority... [Street children] embody the failure of acknowledged social apartheid to keep the poor out of view.

Keeping street children out of view in Durban has predominantly equalled removal or institutionalisation and as argued in chapter 2, this forgoes the right of street children to make decisions in matters that affect their lives. I want to suggest that if existing livelihood activities are supported and extended and children of the street are stakeholders in interventions, this tension could be partially alleviated. The remainder

of this chapter seeks to make relevant practical recommendations by drawing together the results from previous chapters.

6.2 Policy implications

With the absence of supportive policy the subsequent recommendations would not be possible and therefore the first set of recommendations is strategic and involves policy that affects children of the streets. The UNCRC (1989) and The Children's Charter of South Africa (1992) have both been cited on numerous occasions throughout the present study as these are seen to promote the rights and voice of street children; however, contemporary local policy has often lacked these valuable attributes.

As noted in chapter 2, responsibility for the care of vulnerable children firstly resides with the National Department of Social Development; with the Provincial Department, working in partnership with NGOs, delivering services to this particular group of children. As the main legislated service provider, one would think that the Provincial Department would have strategic plans to implement services for street children. Apart from the sparse detail of current provincial policy, the interventions highlighted do not address the fundamental needs of street children as identified by respondents in the present study. This lack of targeted interventions has proven dangerous to children of the street as the discussion in chapter 5 has shown.

In the context of the present study and paramount to the livelihood security of street children is the realisation in policy of basic human rights. Continued round-ups of street children are not only a short-term solution but a breach of basic human rights, as outlined in the UNCRC ratified by President Mandela in 1995. There is currently an apparent gap between international and national *ideals* and local *implementation* at street level. The South African Government is understood to be the protector of the people and has a constitutional mandate to protect the rights of a child, although as we have seen, the violations of street childrens' rights are a common occurrence, by both civil society and more worryingly, state institutions.

Overcoming this policy gap is indeed a complex, multi-faceted issue, but the starting point should be policy that is formulated using a RBA. I would therefore recommend

that local policy is formulated using the following RBA principles adapted from CIDA (2001) and noted previously in chapter 2:

- Value must be placed on listening to children and identifying their coping strategies as a starting point when developing interventions for children. The emphasis must be on children's resilience and strength, instead of focusing only on their vulnerabilities.
- Serious attention must be given to children's rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives through encouraging children's participation as 'stakeholders' in the development, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives.

The participation of street children in policy formulation is critical for successful implementation. The provincial KwaZulu-Natal Integrated Action Plan for Children on the Streets and the eThekweni municipality's Proposed Policy on Children Living and Working in the Streets have failed to recognise the voices of street children and include measures to strengthen their livelihood security. In chapter 5 I suggested that children of the street are capable of being stakeholders and to some extent look after themselves. Therefore, the current reactive and protective bias of current policy is not appropriate.

Data suggested that group members do not demand institutional facilities, but rather mechanisms of support that strengthen their street-based livelihoods. In recognising these points policy planners must focus on the voices of street children and look to address the following practicable policy recommendations:

- Work is a reality for many children of the street. Agnelli (1986, cited in Chetty 1997, p.169) "believes that governments should extend greater legality to the informal sector which absorbs street children". Policy should look at issues such as the provision of access to start-up credit / capital for informal business which could strengthen the legitimate efforts of street children and thus alleviate the pressure to resort to income generating activities with higher levels of associated danger such as crime.

- The Children's Charter of South Africa states that street children have the right to special attention in education. Moreover, lack of education was cited by respondents as a hindrance to the betterment of their lives. Therefore, I would recommend that the policy focus should be on street-based education and skills training to support the transition of street children into more formal, secure livelihood activities.

6.3 Changing attitudes to children of the street

The data presented in chapter 4 highlighted how emotive group members were about elements of risk affecting their livelihood strategies. The predominant issues identified in the present study as posing threats to children of the street are harassment and discrimination by outsiders. Continued harassment by law enforcement agencies, most notably the MPS, is detrimental to the livelihood security of street children. Personal belongings that have been accumulated over periods of time are forcibly removed often leaving group members without a change of clothes. Furthermore, on numerous occasions the harassment of street children by law enforcement agencies has involved physical abuse. Chapter 5 considered how risk reduction could feasibly take place under these conditions and I suggested that the livelihood efforts of street children need to be supported and legitimised.

Aptekar & Heinonen (2003) found that most street children defend their right to work. This is consistent with the view of other studies such as Chetty (1995), Conticini (2004) and Serrokh (2006). Much of the work activities of street children are in the informal sector and I would therefore recommend that legitimate initiatives are both supported and extended. This would be consistent with a RBA, as rather than aiming to reinsert children into mainstream society, a RBA would seek to change the way society operates for children (Thomas de Benitez 2003). Therefore, as an alternative to the reactive, removal approach why not include street children in major international conferences that the city of Durban hosts? Children of the street could for example:

- Direct international guests from their hotels to the conference centre.
- Hand out flyers and literature relevant to the event.

- Utilise their street knowledge and act as city guides for visiting tourists.

6.4 Supporting livelihood strategies of street children

Group members from both Umgeni Corner and Mayville have aspirations to further their informal business activities, although they need start-up capital. Serrokh (2006, p.19) highlights four facts regarding financial services and street children with one of them being that “some street children do need credit in order to start a business activity and to improve their income”. The vulnerability in this instance is that the children of the streets in this study **do not have access** to the start-up capital required to expand their informal business activities. I would therefore recommend that the solution to this dilemma is about increasing capability by providing the necessary start-up credit.

However, the support of street children’s livelihoods is not just about securing work. Although these means of support are vital facets of survival they also require supporting / enabling means of support such as services and facilities. As noted in chapter 5, the Reception Centre could be an invaluable resource to children of the streets located in central Durban if some fundamental issues are addressed. It is therefore recommended that:

- Storage of personal belongings and goods was an issue raised by group members therefore the Reception Centre should include lockers made from chicken mesh or a similar material so that all parties are protected. This would make belongings visible, so that illegal and dangerous items are not stored on the premises. Privacy can be maintained through the provision of numbered combination locks so that the element of missing keys is removed.
- Children of the streets require specialised services which was evident from data collected. Respondents stated that the absence of identity documents hinders the transition to more formal legitimate work activities. The absence of IDs also prevents access to such things as bank accounts. I would therefore recommend that an official from the South African Department of Home

Affairs and / or a Social Worker be present periodically at the Reception Centre to assist street children in obtaining essential documentation.

- Formulation of programmes within the Reception Centre should embrace a RBA, with the children's voice and knowledge being used as a central planning tool.

Children of the street in Durban are both affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. Chapter 1 discussed how the pandemic is, and will more so be, a factor increasing the migration of children to the streets (le Roux 2001). In terms of infection, at least one participant in the present study has become recently aware of their HIV status and in chapter 5 I discussed how children of the street are in one of the highest risk categories for HIV infection (Sondheimer & Sugerman cited in Swart-Kruger & Richter 1997). HIV/AIDS is a serious concern affecting children of the street and the formulations of relevant initiatives to address this issue remain of paramount importance. I would therefore recommend that in the first instance:

- A health professional should be present at the Reception Centre who can advise children on HIV and provide information and treatment for those already infected. Infection with HIV is a sensitive issue among children of the street and would therefore recommend that building trusting relationships between the health professional and children are essential.

The discussion of data in chapter 5 highlighted how key issues of health, namely HIV/AIDS and glue addiction, are not prioritised by group members as inherent risks to their livelihood security. I argued that this is because there are other fundamental livelihood issues that take precedence such as work, money, food and shelter. This is also consistent with Swart-Kruger and Richter's (1997) study on AIDS-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among street youth. I would therefore recommend that:

- Efforts and interventions need to be co-operatively formulated with children of the street to secure, amongst other things, work, food and safe places to sleep and wash / use ablution facilities. Thoughtful co-operative planning of these

interventions would also favour those eager to reduce the presence of sleeping street children in areas highly populated by tourists.

Upon fulfilment of these requirements, as identified by participants in this study, and a basic level of livelihood security attained, then perhaps more attention will be given by the children to the aforementioned issues of health.

6.5 Final conclusions

Through my previous experience of working with street children and interactions with participants in the present study, it is obvious to me that the family and interpersonal relationships of street children are strong. For many children, the streets have become home. For them, this is often perceived as a preferable alternative to abusive / oppressive conditions at home or in an institution. The discourse of the present study has shown that children of the street attempt to look after themselves and create some measure of livelihood security by engaging in a diverse range of activities. Instead of including them as stakeholders in interventions that affect their lives they are faced with constant dangers and hazards, including deliberate harassment and discrimination.

The present study concludes that the risks can be reduced if their livelihoods are legitimised and basic services are provided to support them. Moreover, I have argued that in order for these interventions to be effective, children of the street must have a voice in matters that concern them. This does not mean that all institutional care is inappropriate. I know of many children who have benefited from institutional care. However, given that in South Africa factors such as vast economic inequality and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are prevalent, the numbers of children migrating to the streets of Durban will continue to increase. Therefore, if this is the reality, let's try and make things better for children of the streets; not just because we think it is the *moral* thing to do, but because children have a *right* to a voice.

The poignant words from the Charles Dickens' novel 'Great Expectations' are a timeless reminder of how society's actions impact on children of the street and I felt it was appropriate to end the present study using them:

**“In their little worlds in which children have their existence...
there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice”**

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