

**EMPOWERING STREET CHILDREN IN KENYA: THE ROLE OF
EDUCATION**

POST DOCTORAL PROJECT

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DECLARATION

This postdoctoral project is my original work and has not been presented in any other university

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DEDICATION

To my wife Gladys and our children, **Nixon** and **Nicholas**. I would not ask for a better family. You are the best.

AND

To the memory of my late brother and friend, **John Kiiru Njoroge**, who predicted that I would get to be a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania two weeks before he tragically met his death.

RIP

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ABSTRACT

Education is an important tool that can be used to empower marginalized groups so that they can be integrated in the development of a country. This importance notwithstanding, many street children in Kenya have not been to school and are thus disadvantaged when it comes to participation in the affairs of the nation. This study set out to investigate the educational levels of Nairobi's street children specifically focusing on their literacy and numeracy skills. It further aimed to establish their career aspirations and the foreseen challenges in the pursuit of their dreams and vision. The location of the study was Nairobi, Kenya. Judgmental sampling method and social network techniques were used to reach the required sample of 120 street children. Interview was the main data collection method. The data were later analyzed, the patterns presented in tables, followed by the discussion of the results. The findings of the study indicate that street children in Kenya use Sheng to interact with one another while on the streets. They do not have mastery of English, the official language in Kenya. Nevertheless, the street children could speak their mother tongues fluently but very few of them could write or read texts in the languages. In the acquisition of numeracy skills, the street children were able to count from one to one hundred in Kiswahili. Some of them could count in English too, and also in their mother tongues. Unfortunately, they were not able to do simple arithmetic involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This is because they had not been to school where such skills are usually acquired. In terms of aspirations, the street children had great dreams of where they wished to be in the near future. Some wanted to become pilots, doctors, teachers, lawyers and others wished to be car mechanics, salonists and pastors. They also knew that for them to achieve their vision, they would need to receive quality education so that they could compete favorably with their age mates in the regular schools. The findings imply that there is need to address the educational needs of the street children so that they can access formal education. The establishment of an education for life center that would act as a transition between the streets and formal schools for the street children has been proposed. The study has also outlined a syllabus that can be followed in the teaching of the English language at the center.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Title page	(i)
Declaration	(ii)
Dedication	(iii)
Acknowledgments	(iv)
Abstract	(v)
Table of Contents	(vi)
Lists of Figures and Tables	(viii)
Chapter One: Introduction	
Background Information	1
The Term Street Children	5
Statement of Issue	8
Research Objectives	8
Significance of the Study	9
Research Scope and Limitations	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review	
Street Children Phenomenon	13
What Pushes Children to the Streets?	14
Life on the Streets	17
Stigmatized Children	21
Gender Imbalance among Street Children	24
Solidarity and Bonding among Street Children	26
What is being done to help Street Children?	27
Working with Street Children	28
Different Rehabilitative Strategies	30
The Language Situation in Kenya	33

Need for Education Empowerment

37

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design	40
Population and Setting of the study	41
Sampling Procedures	44
Data Collection Methods	45
Data Analyses	47
Research Challenges	48
Ethical Considerations	49

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Languages Spoken by Kenya's Street Children	51
Language Proficiency Levels	52
Numeracy Skills	53
Street Children's Aspirations	53
Foreseen educational Challenges	56
Kenya's Street Children's stories: A Sample	58
Summary of Chapter	71

Chapter Five: Proposed Education for Life Center

Rationale for the Establishment of the Center	72
How will the Center Work?	75
What will the Street Children achieve while at the Center?	77
Long-term Related Interventions	80
Shift in Attitude	81
Informal Education in Kenya: An Example	85

Chapter Six: Proposed English Language Syllabus for Street Children

Introduction	88
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Proposed English Syllabus

89

Objectives	89
Content	91
Learning Experiences	93

Chapter Seven: Summary, Recommendation and Conclusions

Summary	96
Recommendations	98
Foreseen Challenges	99
Inspiration	99
Stories of Street Children from Elsewhere	102
Further Research	105
Conclusions	106
Bibliography	107

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 4.1: Map of Kenya	43
Table 4.1: Language Use and Proficiency Levels	52
Table 4.2: Career Aspirations of Kenya's Street Children	54

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

“ I dream of the day when the world’s children will no longer need UNICEF. That will happen when the needs of all the world’s children are fulfilled - when they go to sleep each night well fed, healthy, confident of their safety in their homes and communities and full of the joy of youth... and it won’t happen unless we make it happen. The children of the world are waiting...” *Carol Bellamy, Ex. Director, UNICEF*¹.

The United Nations Convention (1990) (<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/uncrc/>) on the rights of children is very clear about the child’s rights. First are the survival rights, where a child has the right to adequate living standards, access to medical services and access to clean water. Second are the developmental rights that spell out the fact that every child has the right to access information, leisure, and cultural activities. The child has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the right to education. Third are the protection rights, which say that every child has the right to be protected from all forms of exploitation and cruelty, arbitrary separation from family, and abuses in the criminal justice system. Last but not least are the participation rights, which state that every child has freedom to express opinions and freedom to have a say in matters affecting his own life and a right to play an active role in the society at large. Despite these great pillars that offer hope to the world’s children, there are millions of children in

¹ Clark, C. (1996) UNICEF for beginners. New York: Writers and Readers Publishing Inc.

especially difficult circumstances who are overly exploited, are forced into child labor, are sexually exploited and abused, and are denied the right to family, education and a childhood.

The survival of a nation in the present world depends on that nation's knowledge of the environment, its economic output, the technical skills of its population in the areas of agriculture, land use, human rights, tourism and the knowledge of information technologies in order that the nation may gain easy access to global knowledge. To attain all this, the country must focus on achieving education for all citizens for it is only through education that these great goals can be achieved. Nevertheless there are many children who live in extremely difficult circumstances, some of them living on the streets, who do not have a hope of ever achieving literacy and numeracy skills because they have not been to school and they feel they are now too old to be admitted to regular schools. Such children have lost hope of ever achieving their dreams and aspirations. This trend ought to change and the society should address the plight of such children.

The need to assist children in especially difficult circumstances such as the world's street children should be a concerted effort of all parties and one should be ready to do the little he or she can to make a difference in the life of one of these children. This can be in providing means of making their lives better for them to live a fulfilled life in the future. For example, these children are in dire need of basic needs, health care, and education.

For the children to be empowered to participate in national development, they first of all must have their basic needs met since they cannot be eager to learn on an empty stomach. Thus every individual who can should chip in to help deal with the many issues that these children face if they are to lead a better life. The following illustration expounds on this perspective:

Walking along a beach carpeted with thousands of starfish washed ashore by the tides, a man encountered a young boy, who was tossing one after another back into the ocean.

“Why are you wasting your time throwing a few fish back into the ocean?” asked the man. “Can’t you see there are so many that what you do makes no difference?”

The boy replied softly, “It makes a difference for this ONE” and he threw another starfish back into the water.²

Every child, just like that one starfish, is a precious, invaluable and splendid human being. He or she can be helped to become a strong and intelligent force to help his or her community. But if one is neglected, one can become violent, destroying oneself and the society. It is therefore necessary for all of us to contribute in our own way to the urgently needed efforts to deal with the problems affecting children around us in order to ensure a dignified and enjoyable life for them in the society.

² Mickelson, R. A. (2000) Children on the streets of the Americas: Implications for social policy and education. In R. A. Mickelson (Ed.) Children on the streets of Americas: Globalization, homelessness and Education in the US, Brazil and Cuba. London & New York: Routledge

One important way of empowering children in especially difficult circumstances is ensuring that they access quality education, and making sure that they are able to function in the global arena. In this connection, acquisition of international languages, particularly, English is significant. English in Kenya, for example, is the official language of communication as well as the medium of instruction in schools. Those who master it reap many academic, social and professional benefits. It is a language acquired through formal instruction thus the children who do not attend school, such as the street children found in many urban centers in Kenya, hardly acquire competence in the language thus are disadvantaged when it comes to national and international communication.

Enrolling street children in school is a great avenue of getting them off the streets, as they will be in school full time. Many street children recognize the power and the value of education and would love to pursue formal education. Nevertheless, they do not know how they can enter the formal school system since most of them are already overage. There is absolutely no provision for allowing an overage child to join in a higher class under an accelerated program and he or she has to sit in the first class along with much younger children and often made fun of for it. That is why establishment of a center that would act as a transition camp to enable a smooth shift of a child from the street to formal education environment is ideal. It will be a center where street children who have never been to school will be prepared to enter the formal school system in classes appropriate to their age. During their time at the center, these children will be put through some

accelerated courses which will equip them with skills that will enable them to catch up with regular-school going children.

The Term ‘Street Children’

The United Nations (1985) define a street child as any girl or boy for whom the street has become his or her abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults. According to Black (1991), the term street children was first coined in the early 1980’s as an evocative term to draw attention to a growing phenomenon around the world. Several definitions have so far emerged from literature. For example, Schurink (1993) as cited in Grundling & Grundling (2006) defines a street child as a boy or a girl who is under the age of 18 and who left his/her home environment part time or permanently because of problems at home or at school. Such a child spends most of his/her time unsupervised on the street as a subculture of children who live an unprotected communal life and who depend on themselves and on each other, and not on adult for the provision of physical and emotional needs such as food, clothing, nurturing, direction and socialization.

Mugo (2004), on the other hand, uses the term street children to collectively represent different subcategories of destitute and delinquent children such as working children, child laborers, and children in conflict with the law; abused, abandoned and neglected children in dire need of help. The common denominator is that all these children are found on the street. They suffer various degrees of deprivation: familial, educational and

occupational. Most of them have lost contact with their families and have adopted the street as their home.

Street children are recognized by different terminologies in different countries. Rane (1994) notes that in the USA, they are referred to as homeless or runaway. In Papua New Guinea, they are young rascals and in India, they are referred to as street children. In Kenya, they are called parking boys. The name “parking boys” arises from their main occupation of directing motorists into empty parking slots in the urban centers in exchange of some few coins. The use of such demeaning terms to describe these children diminishes their sense of self-worth.

Black (1991) observes that the presence of street children expresses the failure of the household in which he or she belongs to offer adequate love, nurture, protection and economic security, or elicit in response a voluntary filial respect. Black adds that implicitly, a child’s abandonment of home is also an abandonment of the home-based community, which apparently offers no alternative nurture or security to the abused or neglected child. The street children then end up losing the sense of structure that a normal upbringing, with its entire adult-imposed timetable for eating, sleeping, grooming, playing and learning provides. It is not surprising that a number of street children, especially those who have lost contact with their families for a long period of time, are without a sense of morality acceptable in the wider society. Such children are very vulnerable to criminal activities and some may end up falling into self-destructive

behavior such as drug-taking and sexual promiscuity. Some of the children are very poor at self-care and feel alienated from the regular world.

UNICEF (1985) distinguishes between children on the streets and children of the streets. Children on the streets are those whose family's support base has become increasingly weakened, who must share in the responsibility for family survival by working on the streets and market places. For these children, the home ceases to be their center for play, culture and daily life. Nevertheless, while the street becomes their daytime activity, most of these children will return home most nights. While their family relationships may be deteriorating, they are still definitely in place and these children continue to view life from the point of view of their families. Children of the streets, on the other hand, refer to a number of children who daily struggle for survival without family support, alone. While often called abandoned, they too might also have abandoned their families, tired of insecurity and rejection and aged-up with violence. Their ties with home are usually broken. This distinction was not made in this study and the focus was on the street children found on the street regardless of whether they maintained ties with their families back at home or not.

Street children generally are children who in most cases are out of place, having been dislocated from places generally regarded as being normal for children: school and a family. Dallape (1987) captures the reality of the world's street children. They live alone; are undernourished since birth; are denied affection, education and help; live without

love; survive by expedience, by theft and by violence; coalesce into gangs and reinvent a family, a structure they have never known. They are children who are used unscrupulously by others, mistreated, imprisoned, and even eliminated; children whom the world tries to forget or ignore; children who see grown-ups as their enemies; children nobody comforts. Tomorrow, these street children will be men and women. They need our love. They need our attention. They need a father. They need a mother. They need a friend.

Statement of the Issue

Education is a cornerstone to successful life and for survival of children in the real world. Indeed as an American educationist J. Gibbs (2004) observes, education is the principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values preparing him/her for later professional training and helping him/her to adjust normally to his/her environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he or she is denied the opportunity of an education. Yet education is something that is often lost to the street children and other children in extremely difficult circumstances in Kenya and elsewhere. Despite the various studies and research conducted to uplift the life of street children in Kenya, little has been done to address their literacy and numeracy needs, with an aim of empowering them for integration in national development.

It is against this backdrop that this research project sought to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of street children in Kenya, determine the children's aspirations and start

to design a curriculum for them which they can be exposed to while being housed in an educational center in Kenya.

Research Objectives

- a) To identify the language(s) in which Kenya's street children are competent in relation to the national language policy.
- b) Establish the level of literacy and numeracy among street children in Kenya.
- c) Outline future aspirations of street children.
- d) Determine the place of education in empowerment of street children.
- e) Begin to design an appropriate curriculum for street children that will facilitate access to quality education and ultimately their integration in national development.

Significance of the Study

Kenya, as a signatory of the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child, must ensure that no child is discriminated against in whatever way. All children have a right to food, shelter, clothing, education, information, and life. UNESCO, of which Kenya is a member, stresses the right of human beings to a language of communication. Street children, though disadvantaged, are entitled to all the afore-mentioned rights. In-as-much as street children in Kenya are not adequately being prepared for academic pursuit, they need life, literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to operate in society hence the need to study and document their literacy and numeracy levels.

A human being is a social being. The street children are also social beings. It is possible that they live in seclusion or in isolation because of their inability to associate with other people linguistically. An educational curriculum for street children that will expose them to standard Kiswahili and English languages, Kenya's principal languages, will be a big step in enhancing their integration into the rest of the society. Unfortunately, the current curriculum is for children in regular schools and does not address the special educational needs of this minority group.

Many street children in Kenya lead a life of desolation and total neglect. As a result, they engage in anti-social activities in their endeavor to survive. Some of the anti-social activities that they indulge in, unfortunately, leave them exposed to a lot of dangers. A popular practice is drug abuse. The type of drug mostly abused is made up of hydrocarbons, which have very far-reaching effects on the speech faculty of the brain. As a result, many street children end up with drooping lips; they stammer and stutter, and talk at quite an abnormally slow pace. This makes the street child a case that needs special consideration when education policy is being considered. It will be very hard for the street children to fit in the regular classes and compete favorably with other "normal" children. This situation needs to receive our constant attention as a curriculum for the street children in Kenya is designed.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate effectively in the society empowers individuals socially and economically. If the street children are empowered linguistically through the

language and literacy program, there is high possibility that they will be able to adjust socially and be able to integrate within the wider society. Eventually, they will be able to involve themselves in economically viable activities such as trading, sales and marketing, thus be able to positively contribute to national development.

The lack of proper specially tailored curriculum for the street children makes it very hard for street children who had intended to leave the streets to fit into the regular classrooms (Eshiwani, 1993). In most cases the frustration leads them back to the streets where they continue to involve themselves in anti-social activities that are not healthy for the economic growth of the country. Perhaps, having a center for these children where they will go through an acceleration program and receive basic counseling to prepare them to transit from the streets to the regular schools will impact on them positively and discourage them from engaging in anti-social behavior or returning to the streets.

Research Scope and Limitations

The study sought to investigate educational needs of the street children and not of any other group of children because the street children are the ones who have been the most marginalized group in Kenya. The research confined itself to only street children of between ten and eighteen years. By the age of ten years, they are assumed to have developed linguistically and after 18 years, they are no longer children even in the eyes of Kenyan law. The research topic implies that the study should be carried out in the whole of Kenya. However, this would have been too expensive in terms of finances, time, and

human power. The solution was to carry out a case study, using Nairobi, the capital city, as the model. Moreover, Nairobi has the largest number of street children in Kenya (UNICEF, 2000).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Street Children Phenomenon

Available studies on children in especially difficult circumstances categorize them into three (Pallana and Sinab (1994). First there are orphans; they have lost both parents or one parent and the remaining parent is unable, due to a variety of reasons, to care for the children. Second, there are the destitute children: those whose parents are alive but are unable to support the family due to disabilities, illness, old age and extreme poverty. Third, there are the wanderers: those whose parents are still alive and not very poor but for want of anything better to do with their time, pass their time in the streets. Such are the children who finally adopt the streets as their homes.

The problem of street children still remains among the greatest challenges facing the people and the government of Kenya (Mugo 2004). The rate at which the number of street children has been increasing despite the numerous interventions by government and NGOs is a major concern. The phenomenon of street children in Kenya dates back to the colonial days (between 1890s and 1963). With the emergence of large urban centers, street children have now become a part of the new development. It is estimated that Kenya has over 300,000 street children (UNICEF, 2000) and the number is rising.

With the volatile situation in Kenya following the disputed 2007 presidential elections, one major town in Kenya, Naivasha, was reported to be bursting at the seams with street

children and even adults (Mwangi, 2008). The children would station themselves at major shops soliciting for alms from shoppers, while others survived on dumpsites from which they foraged for food. They would beg, bowl in hand. They were about 400 in a base they called Salmonde, and had a leader, Pilato. They openly smoked bhang without fear of arrest. This scenario was replicated in all urban centers in Kenya. Soon these could be tomorrow's criminals and prostitutes.

The health state of most street children is poor. The street children are often thin, pale, and too short for their age, malnourished and suffer from scabies, permanent coughs and runny nose. In fact more hardened street children often have fresh wounds or scars, hair lice, dental cavities, and speech difficulties (Black, 1991).

What Pushes Children to the Streets?

Several factors lead children to leave their homes and migrate to the streets of large urban centers: war and conflict, abuse and neglect, domestic violence, single parenthood, the AIDS pandemic, loss of parental control, rebellion, weakening of traditional family systems, orphan-hood and poverty. Coupled with these factors is the fact that majority of the street children come from large families with severe financial hardships. Half a million children in Kenya today have lost contact with their families as a result of these factors (Suda 1997). Such children are currently living under very difficult circumstances as orphans, refugees, child laborers and street children. As these children grow up, the

girls gradually drift into prostitution while boys tend to become hardcore criminals if nothing is done to rehabilitate them.

Street children are essentially an urban phenomenon. With growing industrialization, the process of rural-urban migration has caused disintegration of family leading to many social problems including juvenile vagrancy (Rane, 1994). As a result of the disintegration, children are unhappy, often neglected or mistreated by their parents and step-parents; ultimately, they run away from home. Many street children interviewed for this study reported that they left their home as a result of exploitation either at home or in workplaces. Some of them had worked as domestic or farm workers and they suffered abuse and maltreatment from their employers.

Poverty has been cited as one of the main push factors that drive children to the streets and the migration trends are enhanced by increased globalization (Mugo, 2004). The effects of absolute poverty in families are usually dehumanizing and devastating. Poverty affects not only the family and the community, but also the physiological well being of the child. Older siblings in poor families must care for the younger ones and they often find themselves pulled to the urban centers in the hope of finding greater opportunities.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the family and society in general is another contributing factor. Many children are left orphans and in abject poverty. The disease continues to attack the most productive age groups among the population, thus leaving many children

without one or both parents and adding stress to grandparents who have to support growing numbers of orphans. The children, seeing the situation they are in, think of alternative means of supporting themselves and go to the streets. Thus, the connection between HIV/AIDS, poverty, abuse and homelessness has been documented as contributing to flow of children to the streets (Mugo, 2004).

The effects of industrialization have been felt both in urban and rural areas and have contributed in one way or the other to the migration of children from their homes to the streets especially because of the pull of people from rural to urban areas, thus bringing about many slum dwellings and in turn the phenomenon of street children. A number of the children who come to the streets originate from the neighboring slums, where there is overcrowding in the house, violence, physical abuse and a number of domestic stresses and broken marriages. Children are pushed to the streets by especially physical abuse and lack of basic necessities such as food, shelter and clothing. Thus with time, children leave their homes and start to adopt streets and other public spaces in the urban areas as their permanent abode.

Black (1991) observes that the sight of the growing numbers of street children shows that for more and more families, migration, poverty, low pay, early marriages, rapid child bearing, and crowded slum living were putting pressure on key value systems. Black further observes that as the process of urbanization and industrialization move ahead, the street children become familiar figures of the urban landscape.

Life on the Streets

Street children in Kenya and elsewhere are compelled to live in sub-human conditions. They lack facilities for safe drinking water, sanitation, immunization and other facilities that children their age require. Most of the time, they beg, scavenge in garbage heaps to collect rags, paper, plastic and bottle caps to earn some money for food and clothing. A majority of them work and even live their entire life on urban streets struggling with ignorance, abuse, exploitation and neglect of adults who should in reality be their protectors and their guardians. In many markets in the urban centers, street children carry too heavy loads for their size and do jobs that destroy their physical and mental health.

The place of abode for street children is the streets, bus stops and railway stations, bridges, beneath flyovers, bazaars, shop pavements and disused buildings in the urban centers. This is their “home”; where they retire to at the end of the day. They protect themselves against cold with plastic sheets or cardboards. They smoke cigarette stubs, bhang and sniff petrol to help them forget their squalid existence for a while (Undugu Society, 1980). They then grow up in such harsh conditions without love, care and supervision of the adults.

The children abuse drugs while on the streets because they wish to let go the stresses and unhappiness in their lives. When sober, they are always thinking and worrying about how they can change their lives. They thus sniff glue and petrol to stave off hunger pains, to help them not feel cold, and mostly to forget what their lives are like (Makope 2006).

With drugs, the street child has the illusion of entering a different world, escaping from the real world; the child convinces himself or herself that something better awaits him or her. The street child has been neglected, rejected, hit, abused and even raped by some members of the society. Under the drugs' effect, the children see visions, and may start to hallucinate, getting high and believing they can even fly away to a land far from all their problems.

The older street children bully the newcomers and fights are frequent. Girls on the streets, on the other hand, quickly lose their virginity and imitate the bad habits of the older street girls; many of them already established prostitutes who talk about their patrons, looking for men who will pay them money to have sex with them. Young street girls get initiated into the trade of selling their bodies for their survival on the streets. Sadly, before running to the streets, most of the girls have been raped by their step fathers or step brothers (Klich, 1990) and they fall into worse problems when they escape to the streets.

Klich (1999) captures the life that street children in Mexico City lead: everything is thrown in their faces- aggressive nicknames, ruthless laughter, plunder, sneering, ridicule, the scar that never heals, manhandling and all sorts of crudeness. In the streets, the children wash windshields, and swallow fire. They are jugglers, clowns, prestidigitators; they put balloons on their behinds and dance until the balloons blow up. Sometimes they fly to the skies under a yellow balloon. Almost all passers-by are indifferent to the magic in their faces and their hands. The red light never stops for them and the show goes on till

early in the morning. Amidst all they try to do to interact with the immediate society, the street children in Mexico City are isolated in every way.

Poniatowska (1999) observes that street children in urban areas are skinny, dirty and with dilated eyes. When they suffer broken bones, they do not go to hospital and they wait for the bone to heal itself. When it rains, the streets get flooded and everything is soaked. Nevertheless, the street is an addiction to the children. They own it. It compensates for the loneliness, rejection and lack of love that they have to face every day. The street lures them. It gives them money they never got while at home. It gives them rhythm, tempo, and immediate retribution. In the streets they find a replacement family in street gangs, which offer them friendship, security, recognition and even employment- things missing at home (Dunford, 1995)

Yet despite all this, they are both heroic in their quest for a better life and quietly prophetic of a tragic tomorrow if we do not defend their rights and respond to their needs. Their message often goes unheard and their lives go untouched as the government plans and initiates programs of community development, urban basic services and international cooperation (Dallape, 1987). The urban societies treat them as social outcasts and for this reason, the street children mistrust society and look at any outsider or stranger with suspicion. The public uses words such as hooligans, delinquent and vagrant to describe the street children (Ayuku, 2001). Alienated and insulted by society, the children suffer

from low self-esteem despite their considerable achievements in surviving in the face of terrible odds.

A proportion of street children have lost contact with their families, sometimes because they are not wanted, sometimes because 'home' is so distressing they have left on their own accord. However, a number of the children find themselves on the street of a big city without being aware of what is happening to them. Dallape (1987) notes that in countries hit by drought and famine, young children are sent to town with friends and once there, they are abandoned and do not know how to get back. Others are sent to the streets by their parents in order to get money and they must bring back some money home by any means. Still a few children do not know where they come from and can hardly remember their parents or siblings. They only know the street as their home, their school, their playground and as their place of work. Many of them engage in risky behavior, developing a sub-culture of their own and adopting the street as both a workplace and habitat (Black, 1993). Divorced from a stable social environment, these street children easily descend into petty thieving, which often develops into more serious criminality

Contrary to common beliefs, street children are not always harmful and maladjusted; some street children have been identified to possess sound and healthy personalities. Aptekar (1996) observes that street children are not lazy and idle as many think. Some of them work and survive by justifiable income-earning methods such as car washing and errand running. They also have identifiable abodes and families in form of street groups,

and they only live and work on defined territories. This shows that the street children are fully functioning human beings.

On a positive note, street children have a great attitude towards work, a lesson that the society can borrow a leaf from. They know how to survive and they seem to have the strength to deal with all sorts of problems, to cope with them and to solve them and/or prevent them (Nieuwenhuizen, 2006). They see their work as a way of earning one's living through offering service to people. Because of living on the streets for so long, most street children are capable of doing almost everything. No work is humiliating to them provided it brings money at the end of the day, and the child is therefore assured of buying some food.

As Mugo (2004) observes, the eventual solution to the never-ending dilemma in the streets lies in prevention – at the heart of every community and in the conscience of every society- and asks us all to work together upon this long term agenda as well as within our local hands-on with the street children themselves. It should be a common cause that we should all come together for. If we were to do so, the problem facing the children of the street would surely remain silent no more.

Stigmatized Children

The street child in Kenya has been stigmatized. He is called a thief, a prostitute, public menace, idler and the like and such social labels belie the behavioral complexity and

personal variation behind each street child. Donald & Swart-Kruger (1996:202) reports of a street boy who felt that people did not want to see street children; that it was as if they were a bad dream. He felt that people did not love them; that they treated them worse than animals. The boy added that such people forget that the street children are people too, with feelings. Such feelings show that the street children feel alienated from the rest of the society. They feel that the society does not care whether they die or live. There is need for mutual understanding and communication between the two parties and language should play a significant role.

Apteker (1996) observes that street children all over the world are treated badly and that they have been sold into what amounts as servitude and have been murdered for no more than committing petty crimes or simply being naughty. Boyden, as cited in Apteker (1996), puts forward the idea that street children become the objects of moral judgment because they violate the norms of society by not being under the same roof as their parents, by working instead of being in school, and by assuming the right to enjoy the fruits of their work as they choose (consuming drugs or alcohol). But is this indeed the case?

The public perceives the street children as social reprobates in need of correction. Some members pity the children while others despise them. As Black (1991) notes, such perceptions are influenced by the street children's looks and behavior, as many are dirty and ill kept. As a result, many street children are subjects of harassment and many are

arrested and taken to jail, where they stay for long alongside many adult offenders, brutalizing surroundings of the cell notwithstanding.

In Kenya, as elsewhere, street children have come to represent the moral decay and large-scale social problems in the society, including inequality of income, and changing family values. As Lugalla and Kibasa (2003) note, when people look into the eyes of impoverished street and working children, they are confronted by the breakdown of their society and insecurity of their future. Thus, there are many suspicions and misunderstandings between street children and the wider society.

Most people pity the street children and think of them as abused and neglected but do not do anything beyond that. The common reaction is that of contempt and animosity due to their tricks, ragged appearance and general unmanageability. It goes without saying that the uses that street children make of the street do not agree with what people regard as normal, acceptable or common. Thus the street children are seen as a representation of a deviation from society's norms resulting in all sorts of negative reactions- physical mental and sexual abuse and limited access to a variety of amenities including public buildings and government services (Dallape, 1987).

Street children are difficult to accept among people who do not understand them and their tribulations. A case in point is when they go to hospital, and they are either turned away or handled with suspicion, probably because they are dirty and dressed in tatters. One

wonders where they are expected to go when they, just like any other human being, fall sick. In Mexico, many street children are killed and none is arrested for the killings (Klich, 1990). For example, drivers run over them but they are never caught, as if the life of a street child does not count.

A particular group that street children dread most is the police, with their infamous swoops and the resultant harassment. Most street children are reported to fear police officers that they feel regard them as thieves, beggars and criminals. Many street children are arrested without evidence and detained in juvenile prisons, institutions that at times are unfit for the children's health and general development. They talked of police mistreatment once they get arrested. They are robbed off their possessions; they are abused; and sometimes they are killed. As Dallape (1996) observes, since street children have no political power and often have no relatives to intervene, they are an easy target for the arbitrary power of the police. There is some extent of violence applied on the children and the whole exercise of arresting them comprises to some degree child abuse.

Gender Imbalance among Street Children

Most of the street children are boys. Black (1991), for example, observes that there are considerably more boys than girls in Manila, and that most of these boys engage in scavenging cans, bottles, and other non-degradable trash. Some wash cars, while others sell recycled plastic bags. Some of the girls are pushed to go to the street to vend or beg due to the state of the poverty in their homes. The parents encourage them to beg so that

what the girls earn can supplement the little the parents are able to get from their simple trades. With time, the girls get introduced to prostitution and some tell of the molestation they endure from men on the streets, and the sadistic handling they receive from policemen who seem to enjoy arresting and punishing them (Black, 1991). These girls even end up being prostitutes to foreigners who pay more for the services than the locals. But as Black (1991) argues, the girls suffer worse than the boys the impact of acute urban poverty because their exploitation is more often hidden and except in the case of prostitution, is less financially rewarded.

Dallape (1996) estimates that only between 10% and 30% of street children in Kenya are girls. He notes that girls are fewer than boys on the streets because of the existing social norms and values. For example, in an African setting, housekeeping is still regarded as fitting for women and girls whereas public locations are considered the male domain. Boys generally tend to be given greater independence, whilst girls are protected in the home and play central roles domestically. The street, being a public space, is therefore an inappropriate location for females, especially teenage girls. Thus relatives try their utmost to keep the girls at home even when families break up.

In addition, there are cases when girls are picked up from the streets to work as prostitutes thus making their number on the streets less. Further, most of the conflicts that happen at home thus pushing children to the streets are between boys and their step-fathers than between step fathers and the girls and this makes the number of boys on the

streets to be higher than the girls'. Girls generally, in contrast to boys, keep in touch with their relatives more than boys do, and with time they are able to re-unite with them and get off the streets.

Solidarity and Bonding among Street Children

Street children everywhere maintain a very close-knit relationship with one another (Klich, 1990). They learn much from one another, where to go for supplies, who to trust and who not to, and with time they develop great bonding as they seek companionship and mutual protection. They learn how to protect one another from the police and those in authority; those who could be a threat to their survival on the streets. As Black (1991) notes, some street children become hardened survivalists, giving false names to police or authority figures, responding to questions with as little information as possible and keeping most adults effectively at arm's length.

Street children have a great sense of solidarity with one another, and look out for each other. The weak ones among them are protected and cared for. As Dallape (1987) observes, street children's values for justice, discipline, education, love, concern for others, joy among other things, are no different than ours, but the environment in which they have been born, grown up and lived is the point of reference for their values. Indeed it is the environment that molds our personalities and then gives us the values in which we base our lives. It is not surprising then that the street children often have different

conceptions and perceptions different from people who do not understand the environment in which they live.

What is being done to Help Street Children?

Several approaches have been adopted in addressing the plight of the street children all over the world: charity, integration, rehabilitation and community based. The charity approach aims at giving gifts to the children, thus temporarily alleviating the need. However, charity approach does not help the children to become self reliant, but instead makes the children more dependent upon the giver. Thus poverty is still sustained.

In Kenya, there has been establishment of a number of rehabilitation homes, rescue centers, day care centers and community schools to try and address the basic needs of street children. The services provided include feeding, temporary shelter, informal education and training, adoption and street work. The street children help the social workers in establishing contacts with their peers on the streets for provision of health care services and HIV/AIDS counseling. It is noted that there are about 138 non-governmental organizations that focus on the street children in Kenya.

Undugu Society is one of the most established NGOs that are doing a lot for the street children. For example, their reception centers in two regions in Nairobi (Eastleigh and Dandora) offer shelter, food, clothing; security and health care; parental and brotherly love and a sense of belonging to the children (Dallape, 1996). The children are introduced

to sports, meal preparation, music and some basic education. Further, Undugu has rented a house in a place called Rioki where street girls receive counseling to help them overcome their past traumas and with time go to school. An emphasis on positive behavior change helps these girls realize their potential to achieve and lead decent lives. Girls on the streets usually beg and engage in prostitution, at times exchanging sex for some food. They are often passed around among the street boys for sex and a number of them end up contacting sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. They end up suffering severe psychological trauma from the sexual abuse they have faced and resultant stigmatization that follows. Dallape (1987) notes that removed from the pressures of street survival, the girls at Rioki are able to rediscover their gentleness and hopefully their wholeness. This is a testimony that street children can be rehabilitated and that they can be helped to lead decent lives, but it requires patience, strong will, financial help, and a strong desire to help.

Working with Street Children

Dallape (1987) advises on what steps to follow if one intends to work with street children. First, one must initiate contact. At this level, one should not treat the children with fear because they will feel it and will resent the person. Instead one should treat them with respect. One should not underestimate their intelligence. Street children are clever and capable of coping with life. One must also refrain from imposing one's values on them without understanding theirs and should try not to be put off by how they look physically and should readily feel free to touch them or take what they offer him or her.

The second step involves establishing a warm relationship with the children that will facilitate being able to analyze problems that they face. One should get to know the children well, where they come from, and their major problems while on the streets, some cultural background; their strengths, all that could form the basis for developing their future. This will be useful later on when one is planning the intervention measure for it ensures that he or she takes into account the strengths and weaknesses of the different categories of children and to work out solutions that meet their real problems.

In order for one to learn more about the street children and thus help to establish a working relationship with them, it will be important to share with them love and attention. The children are all in need of affection, care and love just like any other human being. With time, the children will develop trust because before giving themselves to somebody, they want to make sure that they can trust him or her.

Helping street children should be a mutual venture between the helper and the children. The one helping should involve the children fully in order to discover their resources thus helping them to discover and develop themselves. The children in turn should be ready to allow those helping them to learn more about their own potentials. For example, street children are capable of organizing themselves and have a great sense of solidarity amongst themselves. They also know how to survive in very hard conditions. In addition, they are not only creative but also intelligent.

One should get professionals to work in the project with street children. Such professionals should be of high quality and willing to go an extra mile to help the children in behavioral change. Other institutions such as church, the police and other NGOs are also important in helping the street children so one should make connections with them.

Different Rehabilitative Strategies

A number of rehabilitative strategies have been adopted to help address the needs of street children (Mbogori, 1992). First is rehabilitation through institution. Its objective is to offer residential care to the children by offering the best possible facilities for them. For example, there can be provision of educational, medical and recreational facilities. There is usually enforcement of cleanliness, law and order in such institutions and the children are allowed to enjoy good education and training for their future while there.

Street children are able to deal with their vented emotions while at the rehabilitation centers. For example, in a center in Brazil, the children are given dolls and knives and the street children grab the knives and plunge them into the dolls with vengeance (Poniatowska, 1999). They seem to enjoy killing and the ones who have been sexually abused go for the dolls' private parts. Some of the children "kill" their mothers, fathers or other people who have hurt them in the past. They kill to unleash the anguish of childhood. Most of the children have sad stories. They say that some adults threw them out on the streets while others say that certain adults abused them sexually. The

counselors help these children to deal with their traumas so that they are able to move forward in their lives.

Though costly, institutional rehabilitation offers a good range of facilities and services, which the children share. They thus learn the virtue of sharing and living as an organized family. In addition, the relatives of the children in the rehabilitation institutions feel comfortable to have the children in places where they can easily visit them and know that they are safe and being taken care of well.

Nevertheless, it is very hard for the children to ever identify themselves with an institution and they always feel alienated from the rest of the members of the society. Further, they still miss parental love, as the staff in such institutions can never replace a parent. A child needs to be cuddled and loved and this is not possible in this institution as the members of staff usually play the teacher role and not parental role for the children. In addition, these children are not exposed to a variety of roles on which to model their behavior (Dallape, 1987)

The alternative strategy would be adopting street children but at the moment adoption procedures in Kenya and perhaps elsewhere are very complicated. At the same time, the children often feel that they are in artificial families and they will in most cases still miss their biological parents. Another alternative would be to deal with individual children. For example one can sponsor a street child and help provide the financial support that he

or she requires to be able to continue with education. Dallape (1987) observes that the ideology behind this approach is based on the dignity of each child. He argues that the child we meet is worth all our attention and if we refuse to give him the help he or she deserves, we betray our human responsibility.

A different strategy involves reunifying the street children with their families. Mbogori (1992) advises for caution while doing so and says the initial thing would be to find out what is there at home and why the street child left in the first place. The cause of home abandonment should be dealt with first. He also adds that stabilization of the reunion between the street children and the parents requires transformation on both sides. It requires that the street children learn new skills and undergo behavioral change and the parents to be able to provide the minimum needs for the child, making sure that they are able to establish a sense of belonging in the child. After the reunion, the street child should be encouraged to go to school. Indeed for street children who really wish to reunite with their families, and where mutual relationship is normal, their dream of achieving education and a career of their choice can come true.

Organizing the communities especially where most street children originate has far reaching positive impact. It is usual to find people living in a state of apathy and passivity where they are neither stimulated to try to improve their situation nor to change their attitude towards poverty. Such people ought to be given a chance to identify and defend their interests (Dallape, 1987). They should take initiative to fight poverty.

As noted earlier, most street children are from the slums and a great step in dealing with the root cause is to empower the slum dwellers so that they are able to take care of their children. Any effort made in helping slum population will prevent many children from going on the streets. The society can be involved in rehabilitation of their children, especially by first empowering them economically. This will be achieved by helping the members of the society in dealing with their attitude as regards their level of poverty and to collectively decide how best they can tackle it for best results. As noted by Dallape (1987) such a shift in attitude will require a decision by the people to change, knowledge of what to change, and knowledge of how to change. But it is always important for the society to be encouraged to solve their own problems for them to develop and grow in all aspects.

The Language Situation in Kenya

Seventy-five per cent of the Kenyan population speak languages belonging to the Bantu family, which include Gikuyu, Kamba, Luhya, and Kisii (Njoroge, 2006). About 20% speak Nilo-Saharan languages such as Dholuo, Maasai and Kalenjin. The rest speak Cushitic languages, which comprise Somali, Oromo and Rendile. These ethnic languages serve as languages of group identity at the sub-national level.

Kiswahili is the nation's language of pride and identification. Alongside English, it is used in parliament and in the publication of official government documents such as

passports, birth and death registration documents. Kiswahili is the language used for cross ethnic and cross border communication in Kenya and generally in East Africa. It is also the language that politicians use for interaction with the public. Kiswahili, being a national language, gives majority of the Kenyans a sense of belonging, national loyalty and common identity. It serves as language of solidarity because it functions to establish among speakers a “common ground, a sense of unity, a degree of intimacy and closeness or shared fate” (Githiora, 2008). In the East and Central African region, Kiswahili is a tool that facilitates unity and motivates integration among the different language communities.

Except for Kiswahili, the rest of the indigenous Kenyan languages are mostly confined to domestic, local and traditional non-literate domains. For example, they are used for intra-ethnic communication and for expression of ethnic identity and solidarity. These languages are used as media for the promotion of diverse cultures and through them, Kenyans continue to preserve and transmit cultural values of their linguistic groups. Over 90% of Kenyans use indigenous languages in their day-to-day transactions. Indigenous languages are normally used for communication with family and friends. Some Kenyans, however, believe that the languages cannot be used for any serious conduct of global scientific and technological affairs (Okombo, 2001). In the school system, they are used as media of instruction during the child’s first three years of primary education. Still at this level, reports of unavailability of instructional materials in indigenous languages are common.

English is used in a multilingual environment in Kenya. Unlike those who use it as their only code, Kenyans use English as only one of several codes. For example, most Kenyans have a proficient command of their ethnic language, Kiswahili and English while others even speak French, German or other Kenyan indigenous languages. Because of this phenomenon, there is bound to be much code-mixing and switching, as well as lexical and phonological influences as these languages interact. This language situation results in the majority of Kenyans being multi-lingual.

English is the language of education and in the civil service. Moreover, it is the language of both intra- and inter-ethnic communication. English is also used as the language for international communication in Kenya. It is the language of the media, parliament, legal system, judiciary and most publications in Kenya. English is also the language that is used in the military and is the language of diplomacy and through which modern styles of life, science and technology are introduced.

In Kenya, the importance of English increased after independence. It played a secure role as the language of education, administration, commerce and modernization in general (Njoroge, 2006). It is exclusively a high status language. It is associated with white-collar jobs and major responsibilities within the government and the private sector. Mastery of English is a ladder to success and therefore, there is motivation for learning English language. Thus, English is used as a measure of a person's educational achievement and success in life.

As far as the learning of English in Kenya is concerned, children are introduced to the language at lower primary. By primary standard four, the child is assumed to have developed enough skills to enter into an immersion programme in which all the learning now occurs through English. As Nyamasyo (1992) observed, the commonly held intuition is that by the age of ten years, a child at Standard Four has developed the necessary language skills to switch entirely to an English-medium education.

The child progresses to secondary tier, where the English syllabus builds on the foundation laid down at primary tier. The secondary school student is expected to develop a high level of proficiency in English to enable him to communicate fluently in English and to follow any further education or future employment (Nyamasyo, 1992). English in both secondary and primary tiers is taught through carefully graded courses divided into a number of sections. These include composition, oral skills, literature, grammar and vocabulary, comprehension and other features of the language. After the secondary level, the students have a variety of options. While a few proceed to the university, the majority join middle-level colleges such as medical training colleges, primary and diploma colleges. They may get more exposure to the English language because even at these levels, English is still the medium of instruction. Street children, since they have not been to school, miss out on acquiring linguistic competence and they find it hard to operate in the multilingual Kenyan society.

Need for Educational Empowerment

While poverty has been noted as the root cause of the population and environmental crisis in the developing world, dealing with poverty also presents the easiest point at which to break the cycle (Clark, 1996). To address poverty globally, education has to be made accessible to all. Children should be able to complete at least primary education, and, through education, get formal or informal jobs that will enable them to meet their basic needs. All nations should make this happen. Education has the power to make a difference in a person's life and in the world. Street children have aspirations. They want to make a home; do well; celebrate life's joyful times, and to strive for their children's future (Black, 1991).

Education is perceived and valued as an indispensable vehicle for development and quality living. Noting the important role that education holds in global development, the United Nations, in its Universal declaration of human rights, states that everyone has a right to education and that education was no longer a privilege. Echoing the fundamental role of education in Kenya, President Kibaki (2003) notes that ignorance is the biggest obstacle to the fight against poverty. He adds that a Kenyan without education is not empowered to take advantage of life's opportunities.

Most street children have had limited if any schooling. Black (1991) reports that most of the street children she interviewed in Manila had received no formal education and most of them came from the slums where they learnt the ways of the working world at their

mother's knee and started earning at an early age. Most of these children were malnourished and their parents were too poor to afford proper housing, food and clothing for themselves and the children. Formal education was then seen as luxury that the slum dwellers could not afford it.

Education is held in very high regard in Kenya because everybody knows that without it, there is no passport to a better place in life. In this connection, Kenya spells out her national goals of education through which her aspirations are met (Government of Kenya 2006). One of the goals listed in the manual is to promote social, economic, technological and industrial needs for national development. This means that education in Kenya should:

- Prepare children for the changes in attitude and relationships, which are necessary for the smooth process of a rapidly developing modern economy.
- Produce citizens with skills, knowledge, expertise and personal qualities that are required to support a growing economy.
- Provide learners with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes for industrial development.

These objectives relate very well to the objectives of primary education in Kenya. But how do the street children achieve the aforementioned? They have not received any formal education. Where do they come in so that they too can be prepared to participate in nation building? Something needs to be done to address their educational needs, hence the

proposal of an Education for Life Center that would facilitate street children's enrolment in formal education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study is mainly qualitative which entails describing phenomena as they naturally occur in the field. The rationale for the choice of using qualitative research is mainly because the researcher needed to understand the subjects and to comprehend their experiences and aspirations. It is only after such an observation and understanding of the subjects that interventions that will address their situation can be put in place. The researcher wished to have the street children as participants in the quest to understand their educational challenges and their aspirations, and what they think about enrolling in formal educational institutions. The qualitative methods were therefore ideal in enabling the researcher to interact with the street children, the research subjects in this study, in their natural setting: the urban streets of Nairobi.

Qualitative approaches were useful in arriving at adequate description of the field and concise understanding of the interactions that ensued between the researcher and the street children. As Mugo (2004) argues, the values of qualitative research such as openness, subject-orientation, introspection, research-phenomenon interaction, induction, historicity and argumentative generalizations of results comprise the main arguments for the preference of the approach in many studies that adopt qualitative design. From the interviews and tape recordings, explanations were given regarding language situation, literacy and numeracy levels, aspirations of the street children, which in turn inform the

designing of an English language curriculum for the street children in Kenya and proposal for establishment of education for life center.

Population and the Setting of the Study

As mentioned in the research scope section, the population of the study is Kenya's street children and the accessible population the street children in Nairobi City (see Figure 4.1). Nairobi was founded in 1899 as a simple rail depot on the railway that linked Mombasa, the seaport at the coast of the Indian Ocean and Uganda. It later rose to become the capital city of British East Africa Protectorate and the capital of the new Republic of Kenya in 1963, on attainment of independence. Gradually, Nairobi has risen to be the most populous city in East Africa with an estimate of 5 million people by the year 2015.

Since its foundation, Nairobi has grown to become the fourth largest city in Africa, despite being one of the youngest in the region. It has risen to become one of the most prominent cities in Africa financially and politically. It is home to many international companies and organizations including the United Nations Environmental Program and the United Nations Africa Office. It has gradually and rapidly established itself as a hub for business and culture.

The city has eight administrative divisions. Being the capital city, it is cosmopolitan in nature and thus, it is representative of the complex language situation of the country. Indeed, almost every ethnic group in Kenya is represented in Nairobi and many different races exist side-by-side, contributing to the multiplicity of the language situation. Most inhabitants of Nairobi are multilingual, with the ability to use the first language,

Kiswahili and English. There is also Sheng, a hybrid language used especially by young people that consists of words borrowed from English, Kiswahili and the local languages.

There are wide varieties of standards of living in Nairobi. Most wealthy Kenyans live in Nairobi but the majority of Nairobians are poor. Over half of the population is estimated to live in slums, which cover just 5% of the city area. The growth of these slums is as a result of urbanization, poor planning and the unavailability of loans for low income earners. Kibera and Mathare slums are the largest, Kibera being one of the largest in Africa.

Basic amenities such as water and toilets are unavailable in most of the slums. Water must be purchased by those who can afford it, often at the expense of food for the children. Most slum dwellers are unemployed and live in abject poverty. Conditions in the slums are generally pathetic, with incidences of illicit brew and other criminal activities being reported now and then. A number of times, the shelters in the slums are demolished or are burnt down and slum dwellers are rendered homeless thus making worse an already bad situation. As a result, there are many street children in Nairobi due to the poor living conditions and poverty experienced in the slums. The fact that Nairobi has the most number of street children in Kenya is a rationale enough to have it as the most appropriate setting for a study that deals with street children in Kenya.

Figure 4.1: Map of Kenya



Source: <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blckenya.htm>

Sampling Procedures

Data were collected from a sample of 120 street children: 90 boys and 30 girls. As noted earlier (cf. chapter 2), street boys are more than street girls hence the rationale to have more boys than girls in the sample. The researcher used judgmental sampling and networking procedures to reach the required sample. The underlying principle of judgmental sampling entails identifying in advance the target variables. This then presupposes the type of respondents to be studied. Street children of age range of ten to eighteen years were to comprise the sample hence the need to use judgmental sampling to have only those street children with the required characteristics forming the sample.

The concept of social network (Milroy, 1980; Milroy and Margrain, 1980) looks at an individual in a society as having specified networks of relationship with other individuals whom he or she depends on and who in turn depend on him or her. Such a network enables one to reach a member of the sample through “a-friend-of-a-friend” approach. The researcher needed to get socialized to the field and to the street children. To achieve this, he had to enter the field through a contact person, an administrator at the Kenya Street Children Rehabilitation Trust, who in turn introduced the researcher to a few street children who then became the researcher’s contact persons in the field. Through the contact persons, the researcher was able to reach many street children. Thus by identifying a contact street child it was possible to reach the required sample, after judging whether a potential member fitted within the required category.

Data Collection Methods

Every street child in the sample was interviewed for thirty minutes on their educational background, aspirations, and educational challenges they foresaw in relation to realization of their career aspirations.

The study used several methods of data collection. First was the interview, which was structured to obtain data related to levels of their literacy and numeracy skills. The rationale to use interview method rests on the premise that many of the street children had not been to school and would not have been able to read and fill in a questionnaire. The researcher was able to obtain information on the street children's bio-data, educational background, and factors that pushed them to the streets. In addition, information on their level of proficiency, how far they went in their school, ability to read and write, calculate simple arithmetic among others was obtained through interview.

The researcher explained to the street children that he would tape-record them. It was felt important to inform them about this since it would be unethical to tape-record them without their permission. The researcher showed the respondents the tape recorder and gave them a chance to talk into it and be tape-recorded. Then he played it back so that they would become familiar with the tape-recording process and thus, reduce the effect of the Observer's Paradox.³ Contrary to the researcher's expectations, the street children had no problem with being tape-recorded and their stories were tape-recorded in a very natural and elaborate way, even though they had not used a tape-recorder before.

³ The aim of the research was to find out the reality on the ground regarding literacy and numeracy levels of the street children and their career aspirations. But we did not want the children to be made self-conscious because of their interviews being recorded.

The researcher made sure that he had at least two tape-recorders in order to guard against malfunctioning. He made sure he had adequate audiotapes, dry cells and some writing materials. To ensure that the stories that the children told were a reflection of the reality, thus ensuring reliability, the researcher needed to verify the information by checking with the children's friends and by building a relationship of trust long before the interviews were conducted. This was especially helpful because truths, fantasies and twisted realities are less common when a relationship of trust with every individual child has been established (Nieuwenhuizen, 2006).

After every interview, the researcher played back the recording for the street child who would then listen and point out whether there were some areas where he/she would not like, so that they could be deleted. Happily, the researcher was never asked to get rid of any section.

To determine reading proficiency, two texts were given: one in English and the other in Kiswahili, which each respondent was asked to read. For the writing proficiency in both languages, they were asked to write a paragraph of about 120 words on:

- a) **Maisha yangu mtaani** (My life on the street) for the Kiswahili proficiency
- b) **What pushed me to the street** for test of English proficiency.

Data were collected after the researcher had visited and established useful links with the street children, thus gaining their confidence and thereby minimizing the observer's

paradox. For example, the researcher was free with the street children and did the best to answer all their questions. He insisted that there was no wrong or right question and that they should ask for clarification any time they felt something was not clear to them. The researcher told them about his background, and participated fully in some of their tasks. The researcher also did the best to respect the street children seeing them as individuals with feelings of joy and sorrow and daily life accomplishments and difficulties.

The researcher wanted to learn from the street children as much as possible about their culture, language, literacy and numeracy skills issues, and they were the teachers in that case. They knew a lot about their environment since they were the ones on familiar ground.

Data Analyses

The tape-recorded data was transcribed and written down on paper word for word. After that, the researcher went through studying the information from each of the sampled street children noting down the emerging information in relation to the objectives of the research. Information on the literacy and numeracy ability was also analysed. The emerging patterns were later studied and the patterns analyzed and interpreted to form a discussion on the street children's aspirations, language use, literacy and numeracy skills, and their educational challenges among other issues.

Research Challenges

The main challenge encountered involved language use. Hardly any of the sampled street children had the ability to use English despite it being the official language in Kenya. This is because most of the street children had not been to school, and English is acquired in a formal setting in Kenya. In addition, the children could not speak standard Kiswahili and most of them only communicated in Sheng, a hybrid language that borrows a lot from African languages, Kiswahili and English. The researcher could not understand some of the Sheng terms and expressions but this was resolved by getting help from those who understand Sheng. To counter this, the researcher used as much Kiswahili as possible, limiting himself to the use of very basic terms and avoiding complex Swahili words. In addition, making use of research assistant who understood Sheng helped in the translation and understanding of the many Sheng words that the street children used during the interview.

It was also difficult to gain the trust of the street children and to have them sit for thirty minutes answering the questions. Some of them were reluctant to be interviewed and were suspicious of the researcher's motives and what he wanted from them. Some literally avoided the researcher and would run away. The street children who were the researcher's contact persons in the field helped in a great way in ensuring that the children gained trust of the researcher. Some of them expected to be given money for their time, and were disappointed to hear there would not be any payment. Others saw it as a waste of their valuable time which they would rather spend begging on the streets. Some would give very hasty responses, all the time looking at the passers-by, and at

times interrupting the interview by running after one who looked like a possible benefactor.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher needed to first get consent to conduct the fieldwork and had to get permission from the coordinator, Kenya Street Children Rehabilitation Trust, a unit that addresses the welfare of the street children.

Secondly, there was also need for the researcher to get an informed consent from the street children who formed the sample in the study. The researcher informed the sampled street children details about the research project. The children were told about the objective of the research and the expected outcome and how they could benefit from it at the end.

The researcher also explained his expectations of the street children in the research and asked them whether there were issues that were not clear to them. The children were reminded now and again that they were not obliged to take part in the research if they did not want to. The researcher explained to the children that the data collected would only be used for the study and that their real names would be changed while writing up the final project. The researcher also promised to seek the children's permission, if the pictures of the sampled children would ever be used in the final report. The researcher also promised not to include the major places that form the abodes of these children.

The children were also compensated for their time during research. The researcher bought bread and fruits for the children. Some of the children also requested to be given toothbrush, which the researcher gladly gave. The researcher avoided giving money and instead brought the items with him to the streets. The researcher believed that as soon as money exchanged hands, the relation between the researcher and the children would change drastically.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Languages Spoken by Kenya's Street Children

The analysis of data in relation to the identification of languages in which the street children were fluent and those that they had difficulties in revealed that most of them were fluent in their mother tongues. In addition, a few of them had learnt other indigenous Kenyan languages, besides their own, as a result of interacting with their friends on the streets who came from ethnic groups that speak the said ethnic languages. A number of them could speak Kiswahili, but with numerous grammatical mistakes especially those related to concord and tense. The children were, however, comfortable using Sheng, and they said it was the code that they use to interact among themselves because of the heterogeneity of the street children population. Hardly any of the street children was fluent in English language, despite it being Kenya's official language.⁴

The following table lists the languages spoken by the sampled street children and highlights the number of speakers competent in the three linguistic skills of reading, writing and speaking (cf. Table 4.1).

⁴ English is learnt in a formal setting in Kenya, such as schools. The fact that many street children have not been to school makes it hard for them to acquire competence in the language.

Table 4.1: Language Use and Proficiency Levels

LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE SKILLS		
	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Sheng	120	-	-
Kiswahili	80	5	5
English	3	2	2
Gikuyu	34	6	6
Luhya	18	3	3
Dholuo	18	5	5
Kikamba	12	1	1
Kimeru	12	1	1
Kalenjin	8	2	2
Kiambu	7	1	1
Ekegusi	4	0	0
Turkana	2	0	0
Taita	2	0	0
Kuria	2	0	0
Kimaasai	1	0	0

Language Proficiency Levels

As the table 4.1 indicates, most of the sampled street children did not have a mastery of the linguistic skills of reading and writing even in their own languages. This is because they had not been to school where the literacy skills are taught. Even the sixteen who had

been to school up to at least primary grade three seemed to have forgotten how to read and write in their mother tongues. Surprisingly, some of the children said they were not able to speak their mother tongue because they had left their homes long time ago, and they now either speak in other indigenous Kenyan languages or use Sheng in their communication.

Numeracy Skills

Although the sampled street children could count in Swahili up to 100, most of them were not able to do some simple sums of additions, subtraction, multiplication and division. They all said that it was hard for them to even add up the money they got by the end of a day of begging on the streets. This again is attributed to the fact that only a few of the children had been to school so they missed out on acquiring such numeracy skills.

Aspirations of Street Children

The street children that formed the sample in the study had aspirations and knew where they wished to be professionally in the future. They had clear plans for their future, holding on to some ideas about what they want to be when they grow up. The following table presents the aspirations of the street children.

Table 4.2: Career Aspirations of Kenya's Street Children

PROFESSION	BOYS	GIRLS
Medical doctor	19	3
Army	18	1
Pilot	12	1
Engineer	10	2
Police	10	1
Teacher	10	6
Motor mechanic	7	0
Carpenter	7	0
Pastor	4	1
Farmer	3	1
Nurse	0	5
Salonist	0	3
Secretarial	0	3
Cateress	0	3
TOTAL	90	30

Table 4.2 indicates that some of the street children wished to pursue white-collar careers such as piloting, engineering and teaching. For example 18 street children wanted to be medical doctors and 11 of them hoped to become pilots. Others would like to join blue-collar careers such as carpenters, salonists and motor mechanics.

Unfortunately, of the 120 street children interviewed only sixteen had been to school but had dropped out in their first years of elementary learning. Most of them were illiterate and they also could not do simple arithmetic sums. Yet what they craved for most in education was acquisition of literacy skills. Almost all said they hoped to complete school one day; they would like to have a full education and lead a normal life like their peers in regular schools. They believed that education held the key to a bright future for them, and that if they were to achieve their career aspirations, then they needed to go to the highest level of education. They dreamed of becoming rich and powerful, like the people they saw passing by in big cars or the ones enjoying themselves in hotels. They

looked forward to getting a permanent job and gaining money to help themselves and their families. The children dreamed of falling in love and feeling grown up. They all said they would like to raise families but were aware that this would be dependent on whether they would be able to support them. They all said that regular income was necessary if they were to win bread for their families.

The children would love to earn money in a more structural way than is the case on the streets. They would like to earn the money in a more honest way than through the acts of stealing. They would also want to reduce their use of drugs because they all seemed to know the dangers associated with drugs. They felt that they should not follow bad friends. They would also want the police and the entire society to have a more positive attitude towards them and they longed to have the image of street children as thieves and beggars erased from the public's mind. They all felt that they needed to become good people: no stealing, having good friends and no doing drugs.

They were all very enthusiastic about going to school. Nevertheless, they were aware of their personal limitations in achieving their dreams. One of the children captured it well when he said that he would like to be a medical doctor in a hospital because he believed it would be the best profession for him and was what he liked best but was not sure how he would get out of the street life and get back to school. He felt that his current occupation should be to work on the streets and try to make better his life as a result.

Foreseen Educational Challenges

Most of the street children felt that if they were able to read and write, and do some simple calculations, they would do much better in life. They understood their predicament in trying to communicate in a Kenyan society that usually communicates through written form and in English, the tongue that to them is a privilege to the chosen few. Further, some would love to read the Bible, while others would want to watch and understand some television documentaries but their major handicap is language used in the media: they cannot comprehend it.

They also felt that most regular schools would not admit them for fear that the street children could not fit into the normal school routine on the account of the character change they have undergone while on the streets. In addition, they also felt that the learning they had missed out ever since leaving school (some had never been to school at all) made the schools feel that it would be practically impossible for them to fit in.

This corresponds with the report of the hearing on street children in Kenya (ANPPCAN, 1995). It recognized that many street children would find it difficult to participate in a regular classroom and that regular schools would find it difficult to cope with such children due to personal and limited resources. The report further expresses that besides the bad habits picked up by the children while on the streets, substance abuse and addiction, bad language, indiscipline; stealing and bad behavior would pose challenges to educationists. It was felt that these children may not benefit to the fullest if they were just picked and packed back to regular schools, for they tended to be academically backward

and had a very short attention span. Suggestions were floated as to how this could be addressed. For example, additional efforts can be expended to make lessons interesting in order to catch the concentration and attention of street children. This would motivate them very much. Additional resources can be provided in these schools to cater for street children and teachers should receive more specialized training to be able to respond professionally to the needs of street children.

Even as we think of providing formal education opportunities to the street children, there is need for their inner strengths and abilities to be respected. Then we must strive to build on them so that their self-image as self-independent persons, their initiative, the group as a basis for social support and nurture are taken into account as the starting point for providing support to them (Rane, 1994). Our practice should be based on understanding these children and responding to the nature of the services they require, rather than a pre-conceived and stereotype notion of the care of the children. For example, in this study, we find that street children interviewed aspire to go to school and realize that education is an important key if they are to achieve their career aspirations. What street children in Kenya really crave for most from education is literacy. The desire to learn is there and the need to be literate too. They all understand that some kind of know-how is essential for their future life. They know that literacy and numeracy skills are valuable in enabling them calculate the profits of their imagined future businesses, use of money, how to save and where to save. Bearing this in mind, it will make sense to support the children by providing a school for them for this is what they really want.

The street children need to be equipped with the ability to read and write. After achieving this milestone in their lives, they will be able to access relevant information and technology which will facilitate their being recognized as important and vital citizens in the society. Thus they will be able to function effectively in the society because they will have benefited from an education about the world around them.

Kenyan Street children's stories- a sample

Allan

He is a fourteen-year-old boy, originally from Siaya District in the western region of Kenya. His father worked in the quarry but he was not making enough to be able to support his family of seven. Allan traveled to Nairobi with his aunt, who lived in Mathare, one of Kenya's biggest slums, with the hopes of finding a school where he could study as he stayed with his aunt. He never got the chance to attend school after all. His aunt was also having financial difficulties and did not manage to fulfill her promise of getting a school for Allan. He would go for days without food, and there were a lot of quarrels from the aunt, who had four children of her own and no man. Allan thus found life at the aunt's house very difficult and he felt as if he was the odd one out in the aunt's one room tinned house. At the same time he knew that he could not go back home and even if he did, none would understand his plight. He opted to run away and he moved to the streets upon the influence of a fellow slum boy he befriended while at Mathare. On the streets, Allan started begging money and other time he would collect waste paper and sell to get money for food. He now lives on the streets and reckons that still life is very hard but he has his freedom and can get to do whatever he wants to do. He has three

sisters and three brothers whom he has not seen in a long time. He cannot read the Bible, yet he loves to read of the word of God. He can only watch KARATE movies because they have actions, as he cannot understand the language because most programs are in English.

Allan wants to be a mechanic, to repair cars, because cars have always fascinated him. Before doing so, he would love to study up to high school level since he knows very well that education will help him achieve his goal. He would love to go to a college and do a course related to automobile repairs. Afterwards, he would look for a job and think of how to help his parents and siblings. He would like to get married, have three children, live happily and comfortably as a family, have the children go to good schools so that they can have a bright future. He would love to learn more about Karate so that he can defend himself from bad people such as criminals.

Rebecca

Rebecca was born in 1992 in Dagoretti, in the outskirts of Nairobi. She can speak Swahili and some English. Her parents separated a long time ago and the father later remarried. She has six siblings, with her being fourth born. She used to live with her grandmother. She started school then dropped out in Primary 3 as there was no food at home and she was to take care of the younger siblings to enable the mother to go out to look for food.

Rebecca would love to resume school, study up to University level and be a lawyer so as to defend the helpless and poor ones in the society. She developed interest in legal affairs

when she was called as a witness in her parents' divorce case when she was just eight years old. Her desire is to get in love with a man, get married and together, have four children. She feels that it would be hard to raise more than four children.

James

James is a twelve year-old boy from Elburgon, Rift Valley. Both his parents are alive but they are very poor. He is the last born in a family of five siblings. He went to school up to Primary Grade Three, and then dropped out because the parents were not able to buy some textbooks that were needed for him to proceed to Primary Four. He can only speak in his indigenous language (Kikuyu) and Sheng. He also knows a few words in English such as boy, car and girl. He also can count up to twenty in English and can recite fluently the English alphabet. James says that his father used to drink a lot and when he came home he would beat up all of them and often chase them out of the house for no apparent reason. James summarizes the suffering that he went through by saying: “*tulikuwa tunapigwa kama nyoka*” (**We would be beaten like a snake**). He decided to run away and find solace on the streets.

The main difficulties that James faces while on the streets involve going without food for days on end and sleeping without knowing where the next meal will come from. He says that they are not assured of their next meal since they depend on what they may get from the dumpsite or buy some food with the little money they may have begged on the streets. They cry that they get very little from begging, and they are afraid of stealing and getting shot by the police.

Another challenge that James faces is police harassment. He always lives in fear of being arrested and beaten up by the police, who according to him are “ruthless” and “cold.” Many a time, fierce police dogs are let loose on him and he has to run for his life. He wonders aloud whether anybody had any idea what it means to live in constant fear, not knowing when and from what direction the enemy will pounce. He feels unsafe all the time.

In addition, James finds it hard dealing with the attitude of the public. He feels that the society neither understands nor cares for him. He feels that members of the public do not understand the street children at all, and they tend to think that street children enjoy being on the street. Most are not empathetic to their plight and do not bother to find out why the children left the comfort of their homes. He says that most street children are pushed to streets by circumstances, and they need love not hatred and indifference from the society. Peaceful coexistence among the street children themselves is also a challenge. There are frequent fights among them, and some of them end tragically. James has witnessed many fights that led to murder. He saw a street boy, whom he referred to as Carton, being stabbed and then died.

Has James been back home since he ran away? Yes. He once went back home but saw the conditions had not improved so he took off for the streets once again. His father was still drinking and making life a nightmare for everybody. He preferred the life on the streets. He says he has been on the streets of Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kitale and now

Nairobi, all major urban centers in Kenya. Asked about his aspirations, James says he would like to go to school and study to be a judge, He says “*nikipata nafasi nirudi shule, nitamshukuru mungu. Nitamwambia asante*” (If I ever get a chance to go back to school, I will be grateful to God. I will thank him). He would like to get a job after his degree in law, get married then be able to help his parents and his siblings. He would like to raise a family, and get as many children as God will enable him to: “*Siwezi kukataa watoto*” (I cannot say NO to the gift of children). He would love to raise his family in peace, making sure they have tea and bread every morning.

John

John is a young fourteen year-old teenager. He was born and brought up in Grogan, a dangerous alley in Nairobi’s River Road. He has 4 siblings. Neither he nor they have been to school. He can speak Kikuyu, Kikamba and Sheng. His mother as well as his siblings used to beg on the streets. He has lost touch with his family and has not seen his siblings in five years. He does not know where his brothers and sisters are or even the whereabouts of the mother. His mother was alcoholic and would beat him up for no reason at all. He does not know who his biological father is and this is something that bothers him very much. He has a big scar on the face as result of the mother hitting him with a bottle when she was drunk and he inquired about his biological father.

John confesses to have abused drugs because he wanted to forget his sufferings and bitterness. At times he is unable to sleep because of hunger, so he takes drugs. A lot of insults and all forms of abuse are common on the streets and he is frequently involved in

fighting with other street children. He has also suffered much from police harassment and beatings. He says he has been hurt many times and never went to hospital because none would treat him if he has no money.

John wants to go back to school to study to be lawyer. This will ensure he is able to take care of his family. He will be able to look for his mum and siblings and help them after securing himself a job. He loves scouting and would also want to be a famous soccer player. He prays that he will get children and that they will not go through the hardships he has had to undergo. He will build a beautiful house for the family, look for the mother and his siblings and settle them in that comfortable house. He prays that God will help other children going through similar problems like him. John believes in God and loves to hear about the word of God but he is unable to read the Bible or any other religious books due to illiteracy.

Lucy

Lucy was born and brought up in Mathare slums in Nairobi. She is sixteen years old. She has four siblings. She can speak Dholuo, Swahili and Sheng but has difficulties understanding English as she dropped out of school at Primary Grade three. Her father died when she was eight years old and she remembers vividly the sufferings she and her family went through after that. The father was a casual laborer and would get jobs in any construction project going on around Mathare. Some time the father would be lucky and get a job in a construction that would be on for a long time. Other times he would be

unlucky and would be off job for days. But she says life was better when her dad was alive.

After the father died, Lucy's mother started some business of selling second hand clothes to women at Mathare, but the business did not do well. She was not able to meet the basic needs of her children and she started shouting at them, and beating them up, blaming them for the misery she was in. Lucy could not take it anymore and she left for the streets. According to her, problems at home and the never-ending quarrels from her mother pushed her to the streets.

Lucy has been sensitized about HIV and AIDS and knows some people who have died of it. Lucy has had sex for money many times and she would get about 3 US dollars per day. She knows of street girls aged 13, 14, 15 years who have gotten pregnant. The fathers of their children are the street boys.

Lucy would like to go to school and be able to lead a successful life. She knows that life on the streets can only get worse. She would like to leave the streets and get a better life. Her dream is to become a teacher and if possible also become a professional soccer player.

Sam

This seventeen year-old boy was born in Nakuru, in Kenya's Rift Valley Province. He speaks Kikuyu fluently and some Sheng. He is not able to speak English at all. He is an

orphan. His father died of chest problems a long time ago, and his mother succumbed to a long illness in 2001. He has two brothers, and as per the last time he saw them, they stayed with the grandmother in Nakuru. He did not go to school at all because the mother could not afford to pay fees for him and the siblings. He was always hungry as there was no food at home and the mother was always in a bad mood. The main reason why he joined street life was because he needed to look for food. He felt that things would be better for him on the streets as he could beg and get some money with which to buy some food.

Life on the street has been too hard for Sam and his peers. It is worse when it rains, as there is no shelter for them, and no place for them to sleep in. Police always harass and beat them up mercilessly. Most of the time he sleeps on the verandah of the shops in the city, but the watchmen employed by the owners of the business to guard the premises often beat them up. He is always exposed to diseases and there is none to take him to hospital. A motorist, who sped off without finding out whether Sam was dead or alive, has also hit him. He says not all-street boys are as lucky. He has witnessed several street children run over by a speeding motorist, and they died.

Sam wants to go to school, as he knows that the educational path is the one that can help him achieve his dream of becoming a pilot. He wishes to become either a pilot or an engineer in future. He loves drawing and he can make a great artist. He knows he has to read and get educated. Later, he would want to establish a center for children in extremely difficult circumstances. He is keen on sports such as volleyball and soccer, and

he knows about professional footballers such as Brazilian Ronaldo, whom he says plays football very well.

Sam knows about HIV and AIDS and he knows of people who have died of complications related to it. He would like to marry a rich white lady and together have twelve children. He will provide for their needs such as food, clothing, education and shelter. Asked why he would marry a white lady, he says: “**unajua mzungu tayari ako na pesa**” (you know a white person already has a lot of money). Sam dreams that one day he will drive a car because to him it is the epitome of success.

Charles

Charles is a fourteen year-old boy from Kitale. He speaks Luhya, one of Kenya’s indigenous languages. His mother died when he was six years old but his father is alive and stays in Kisumu, Kenya’s third largest city. Charles has been on the street since the age of nine years. After his mother died, his father remarried and the stepmother was so harsh that Charles took off and went to the streets where he thought he would find peace and quiet.

Charles says life is hard on the street. He remembers one day when he fell sick and thought he would die. He has been arrested by the police and put in a cell. When he got out, he was weak and one day he was taken ill. He did not have the energy to do anything, not even eating. Other street boys would bring him food and some drugs. He

has smoked all sorts of substance. Marijuana, khat, jet-fuel, cocaine and bhang are all available on the streets for as little as Kenya shillings one hundred.

Charles begs for money from the members of the public. Other times he steals from them. He and fourteen others live as one group under one leader whom they all respect. Group members look out for each other and help one another in times of need. However, there are intra- and extra-group fights all the time, some ending very tragically. The street children who die are thrown into the Nairobi River. He wishes to go to school, study hard to become a professor in future. Then he would be in a job that would enable him to take care of his family. He would like to get married and have four children: two boys and two girls.

Brian

Brian only speaks Dholuo and Sheng. He is twelve years old. He has four brothers. The parents separated after the father was diagnosed with HIV and AIDS infection. The mother left him, and took Brian with her. The father followed them and got Brian back from his mother, since in his Luo culture a male child belonged with the father. Brian would go for days without food and he never felt close to the father. He would beat him up and Brian would end up sleeping out of the house for fear of the beatings. He decided to go and beg on the streets.

Brian did not go to school at all, but he hopes that one day he will be able to learn how to read and write and speak good English like the *mzungu* (white man). He would like to

join the army so that he can defend his country and others who need protection. He would also like to play karate so that he can defend himself and others who are weak. When he goes to school, he believe he will be patient and will persevere for the sake of his future.

He would like to get married and get beautiful children, just like any other successful person.

Dorcas

Dorcas is a fourteen year-old girl from Kakemega, Western Kenya. She has seven siblings and no father to win bread for them. She attended school up to primary four, and then dropped out because of lack of fees. The mother asked her to go to the town center to beg because of the financial difficulties they were going through. There was no food at home, most of the time. Dorcas would like to go back to school, continue learning and become a nurse and be able to take care of the sick and suffering patients, and help to reduce their pain. She would like to become financially successful so that she can help her mother and siblings get out of poverty. She says that it is terrible being poor; unable to tell where the next meal would come from.

Hesbon

Hesbon is a fifteen year-old boy from Machakos, the Eastern region of Kenya. He speaks Kikamba and Sheng. The mother died in 2002. She had a chest problem. The father had died two years before. He suspects that his parents died of HIV/AIDS complications. He has three siblings but he has not seen them since 2002, soon after the mother's burial. He

has been on the streets since 2002. After the mother died, Hesbon stayed for some time with his aunt who mistreated him very much and was very abusive. She would accuse him of bringing dirt from outside into the house. Soon after, Hesbon ran away and went to Kayole to look for an uncle he had been told about. He could not trace the uncle, so he joined the children who were on the streets begging for food.

Hesbon would love to go to school and learn Math, English, Science and Social Studies. He wants to be a pilot when he grows up. He loves the idea of flying and going to different countries and commanding the big machine in the sky. He would also like to help the sick and the hungry. He remembers a day he was taken ill and he did not have money with which to buy some food. A fellow street boy bought some breakfast for him and later got for him some medicine. For entertainment and keeping fit, he loves playing soccer.

Jedida

Jedida is a thirteen year-old girl who speaks Swahili, Kikuyu and Sheng. She went to school up to Primary Five, so she can also speak a little English. She dropped out of school because her mother could not raise enough money for fees. She is from a single family. She has four siblings. She escaped from home because she had an illusion that life on the streets was better than home. She sleeps on the floor and search for food anywhere. Her fellow street children give her some food when she is not lucky to get some.

Jedida would like to go back to school and continue with her education. She would like to become a medical doctor because she just loves it. She has always loved to have the opportunity to treat the sick and help them recover. She would also like to get married, and have four children. She loves to play football and also to dance.

Jedida knows about HIV and AIDS. She knows that it is a killer disease caused by a virus. The victim becomes thin. She knows that one must avoid engaging in casual sex because AIDS is transmitted through sexual relations. She also knows that AIDS has no cure.

Patrick

Patrick is aged fifteen years. He has four siblings: three brothers and one sister. He dropped out of school while in Primary Two, because of poverty. The family used to live together in a small house and there were many problems. He remembers that his mother fell sick and then his father left them and that was the beginning of all his problems. Food was scarce and quarrels and beatings were in plenty. It was a very hard life. He could not take it anymore so he decided to leave home and try his luck in Nairobi. He doubts whether his parents can remember him, for to him, it seems he left home a long time ago.

Patrick finds life on the streets unbearable especially because of the frequent police harassment. He does take drugs to help him forget his misery. He remembers one day he was under the influence of drugs and a speeding car hit him as he crossed the road. He almost died.

Patrick would like to go back to school and study hard to become a medical doctor. He has always wanted to become a doctor so that he can treat the sick and he can also treat himself when he is taken ill. He will then have a good job, be able to look for his parents and settle them in a comfortable home.

Patrick is informed about HIV and AIDS. He knows that immorality is one cause of HIV infection. He has had two girlfriends. He would like to get married and have three children. He would hate his children to suffer in any way or lack the basic essentials.

Summary of the Chapter

These accounts of the sampled street children focused on in the study point to the fact that most of them are not in the streets by choice: circumstances have pushed them to the streets. They also indicate that they all have a dream of leading a decent life, getting quality education, pursuing a career of their choice, and raising happy and successful families, just like any other human being in the world. But they also know that for them to do so, education is important. They all desire to get enrolled in schools, as the table on their aspirations and the discussion that follows it shows. These children should be helped to seek after knowledge and we will all be amazed at the great heights that education will take them.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROPOSED EDUCATION FOR LIFE CENTER

Rationale of the Establishment of the Educational Center

The draft national policy on children in Kenya recognizes the right to education as a basic human right. It further observes that all children deserve quality, accessible and affordable education. However, enrollment of children in especially difficult circumstances in primary schools in Kenya is noted to be low. Street children and children of poor families in general form the majority of those who drop out of school (Shorter and Onyancha, 1999). These children are noted to lack both the material and the psychological support to enable them to continue their education. Most of them come from unstable family backgrounds and therefore enjoy very little support from their parents. This facts aside, the draft policy recognizes the fact that for Kenya to achieve universal primary education by 2015 there is need to ensure that all children, including those in difficult circumstances (such as street children), have access to quality education.

The phenomenon of street children is a problem that has a solution requiring concerted political and social action, will and financial resources. For example, empowering the street children will require provision of quality education so that they will be competitive with their peers already in the regular schools. The first thing would be to understand the plight of these children, getting to know their individual, social, emotional and physical needs so that we can help them to be the best they can. Second thing would be to provide what they crave for if it is going to make them achieve their goals in life, for example the

need for quality formal education among the street children as reported in this study (cf. chapter 4). Enrolling such street children in school will be a great avenue of getting them off the streets as they will be in school full time. Unfortunately, in most developing nations, not enough is being done by governments to encourage greater investment in full time education for the street children and other children in especially difficult circumstances.

Achievement of universal primary education in the world's nations can be a great step in helping curb the problem of street children and the poor nations should be helped by donor agencies to realize this significant milestone as stipulated in the Millennium Development Goals. Although the government of Kenya instituted free primary education in 2003, parents are still expected to provide uniform, stationery and other basic needs that the children require. Unfortunately, children in especially difficult circumstances may have no-one to provide for them these basic necessities. Such children are not able to access quality education then, unless some interventions are put in place to address their plight. If nothing is done, the children will have no alternative than to enter the labor market, where they are usually exploited, or they just survive on the streets begging and hoping that one day, they will wake up and everything will be alright.

Street children's empowerment through education will be achieved when street children access quality education. This in turn will be the key to poverty elimination and participation of these children in national development. If nothing is done, street children

will be deprived of their right to childhood and destined to end up as illiterate workers and beggars on the streets with no opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Investment in education should target children in difficult circumstances in order to prevent them from dropping out of school and also to have the ones who have not been enrolled join the school system. With this in mind, it is important for the community groups, government, and non-governmental organizations to work together to address the educational needs of the street children and help to remove them from the streets. From the results reported in this study, already many street children recognize the power and the value of education and would love to pursue formal education. Indeed they prefer schools to streets. Nevertheless, they do not know how they can enter the formal school system since most of them are already overage. In Kenya, if a child does not have a birth certificate and has crossed the normal school age of six years, there is absolutely no provision for allowing him/her to join in a higher class under an accelerated program and he has to sit in the first class along with much younger children and often made fun of for it. That is why establishment of a center that would act as a transition camp to enable a smooth shift of a child from the street to formal education environment is ideal. It will be a center where street children who have never been to school will be prepared to enter the formal school system in classes appropriate to their age. During their time at the center, these children will be put through some accelerated courses which will equip them to catch up with regular-school going children.

How will the Center Work?

The center will coordinate with the arms of the government, for example, Attorney General's office, to get birth certificates for the children, which they will need before they are admitted to the formal schools. In addition, the center will train personnel who will be able to identify and resolve every foreseen problem being encountered in the way of converting street children into full-time students in the regular schools. Further, the center will also offer training support for teachers in the regular schools who will be handling the rehabilitated street children who join their schools.

The proposed Education for Life Center will focus on language, literacy and numeracy needs of Kenya's street children. The children will be introduced to subjects such as Life skills, Social Studies, Science, English, Swahili and Mathematics, and all the other subjects that comprise the primary level curriculum in Kenya. The center will aim at helping street children to grow in mind, body and spirit, hoping to help them be the best that they can, both inside and outside the center. The objective of the center will be to transform the children into fully functioning and capable global citizens, confident and independent, taking control and action within their own lives.

With the help of the Kenyan government, specifically Children's department officers in the Ministry of Home Affairs, the center hopes to reach out to the street children with the aim of facilitating their voluntary desire to relocate to a rehabilitation center in Nairobi city, where needs assessment, detailed counseling and provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and health examination will be provided for them. In case there are former street children who have already been rehabilitated and are now successful in

the society, they will form part of the rehabilitative team. The team will go to the streets, train and bus stations, parks, alleys and other spots where the street children in Nairobi are found to interact with them, and with time, win their trust. The main challenge will be convincing them of a better alternative to their 'profitable' street survival activities.

After receiving counseling, the young street children and the older ones who opt to be resettled with their families and return to school will be taken to their homes. This will be after finding out what is there at home and why the particular street child left home in the first place. This would ensure the cause of separation has been dealt with first before the child is taken back home. The family is the best place for a child's growth and development. There will be a follow-up to ascertain that the children do go back to school and the parents as well as the children will sign a legal bond to this effect. With the help of the area education officers, the children will be placed in neighboring primary schools.

The overage street children who remain will proceed to Education for Life Center where more counseling will be administered. This will be followed by introduction to literacy and numeracy skills as will be stipulated in the curriculum. After receiving instructions in the broad areas and getting certificates, some may join vocational training colleges while others may proceed to regular schools to continue formal education, thus increasing their statuses within the family and in the society. After the vocational training, already established for the Kenyan youth by the government, the learners will find their place in life through employment and self-employment. They may end up becoming experts in leatherwork, mechanic, masonry, carpentry, cooks, tailoring, and photography, among

others. Their financial empowerment will boost their often-low self-esteem as they discover their potential in the task of nation building. They will have been taught how to stand on their two feet and to participate as a member of an increasing and complicated society.

The teachers who will be handling the children in the center will be graduates of primary teachers colleges in Kenya. These are teachers who have undergone a two year teacher training program after their high school diploma. Their curriculum exposes them to a variety of courses such as English, Kiswahili, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Professional Studies and Counseling. However, they will undergo special training in pedagogy and counseling, so that they are prepared adequately to handle and understand street children.

What will the Children achieve while at the Center?

The aim of the Educational center will be to change lives of the street children and provide them with the opportunity to improve their future. Now they will have their basic needs met and will have a chance to get off drugs, access primary education and even engage in income generating activities. The center will incorporate participation and behavioral changes to ensure that the program takes the desires of street life out of the children, instead of merely taking the children out of the street. The aim is to take the children off the street and provide them with a second chance: enhance their learning and learning capacities and social networks; provide them with vocational training, business skills, mentoring and avenues to existing mental and health care centers.

The center will aim at creating a learning environment that would accommodate the deviant behavior exhibited by children addicted to drugs, children who were constantly abused at home and often misused by established gangsters: terrified children who were forever on the run, fleeing the police. The center's aim is to prepare the children realistically for life, helping them to develop a constructive attitude to life and help them to understand their responsibilities as members of the community. The emphasis will be on training for self-development rather than training for certificate only. The focus will be on instilling in the children those values and attitudes necessary for adjustment to desirable living in the society.

If funds will be available, the vocational training can be built next to the center so that the children who wish to proceed to skills training can do so, and the ones who want to join regular schools can go ahead, again with the assistance of area education officers. It is hoped that by the end of the program, the children will have a working knowledge of especially English, Kiswahili and basic Math.

A starting point to start bridging the gap between street children and children in regular schools will be inculcation of literacy and numeracy skills, which will connect the street children with the wider society. These skills include: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Bukonya et al., 2005) in both English and Kiswahili. The acquisition of, for example, listening and speaking skills in the two language will help street children create a favorable impression of themselves and will be able to interact with others effectively

and confidently. In addition, reading may expose street children to new vocabulary, good models of language use, different registers and learning of concepts thus widening the horizons of the street children. Designing a language curriculum that focuses on the acquisition of the four language skills in both English and Kiswahili followed by teaching of other subjects would be a milestone in narrowing the gap between the public and the street children. Concurrently, the children will be going through a program in arithmetic so that they can acquire numeracy skills, as they are vital for survival in the society.

Language is indeed a major means of thinking and communicating and it is fundamental to learning. Through language skills, the children will become articulate, self aware, effective decision makers who are able to live and work with others. Proficiency in both Swahili and English will help a great deal to build the children's self-esteem and confidence and will be an added boost in inculcating a value and desire for self development, so that they can aspire to be something better in life. Additionally, their learning English will enable them interact with people from different backgrounds. This will particularly enrich their personal growth and to facilitate international understanding. All in all, it is hoped that they will end up behaving responsibly, honestly, openly and creatively.

The street children need to be listened to and their perceptions understood and their own world-view taken into account. This should be the basis of designing programs that will be responsive to the needs of the street children: interventions that in the long run will be meaningful and workable because they will be based on the reality on the ground.

Long-term Related Interventions

Even as we propose the establishment of a center that will help meet the educational needs of Kenya's street children and other children in especially difficult circumstances, we must also focus on alleviating poverty in the main area where the children originate from: the slums. As noted earlier, the increase in the number of street children is related to increasing levels of poverty in the country. There is need for political will, a change of attitude among the public and the initiation and implementation of sound economic policies that will bring about positive changes in the financial standings of the citizenry. This will be a great strategy for addressing the root causes of street children as most of the street children interviewed for this research originally came from the two main slums in Kenya, Mathare and Kibera. Over half of the urban population lives in the slums. If slum dwellers were empowered economically, they would be able to provide basic needs for their children and sustaining their children in school by buying for them the basics needed to keep them there will not be as difficult as it is at the moment.

As noted earlier, despite the free primary education initiative in Kenya, the parents have to buy uniform, provide lunch, stationery among other things, which is still very expensive for the parents in the slum areas to afford. Most of the time they are struggling to put food on the table. Such things as the school needs are seen as a luxury. The result of the abject poverty in the slums results in a growing apathy among parents whose maternal links with their children grows thinner, as a result of overwhelming financial strain (Dallape, 1997). Slum dwellers can be financed so that they can start engaging

themselves in some income generating activities that would lead to employment opportunities. Such trades as car mechanics, tailoring, show making, watch repair among others can be made available to them. The slum dwellers will be able to acquire technical skills and with time become self-reliant. As Shorter and Onyanha (1999) observe, if the family income of poor people can be increased, then there is better hope that parents can afford the education and upbringing of their children.

Shift in Societal Attitude

As Dallape (1987) points out, working with street children takes more than just a big heart and the best intentions. He notes that a truly successful rehabilitative relationship will only exist where there is friendship. Thus friendship with street children is paramount if there is to be any significant progress towards curbing the street children phenomenon. Fortunately, friendship with street children is not hard to come by and the children are very ready to open up when they notice a caring heart. It is only when members of the society will be ready to look beyond themselves and notice the street children in their surroundings- reach out to them- that they will be able to establish this much needed friendship, and thus be able to understand the plight of these street children. This requires time, firm commitment and a strong will. It will call for members of the society to go out on the streets to listen to their stories; observe what they do; talk, play, and sing with them; get involved in their activities. Be together, get to know them, their environment, the reasons behind their being on the streets, and their survival mechanisms. With time, a special bond will develop. The street children will start opening up, seeing that someone cares for them, and treats them as they crave to be

treated: equal members of the society. If the citizens started paying attention, this will lead to a shift in attitude and mobilization of all in addressing the children's agenda.

Interaction with street children leads to people's shift in attitude towards the children and this gives them the desire to be involved in making the lives of the street children better. Makope (2006) captures this change in attitude by highlighting the story of a few people in Harare.

Lydia Mavere lives in Harare. She works for an NGO that helps to rehabilitate street children in Harare. Before she got involved with the street children issues, she thought that street children did not have a vision for their lives. She hated their bad habits such as drinking alcohol, sniffing glue and use of vulgar words. She initially thought that street children just ran away from their homes to the streets to abuse their lives and others. She thought that their lives would remain pathetic forever.

After socializing with the street children, she discovered that street children were not any different from her or any other persons around her. She got the chance to eat, sing, dance and share the word of God with them, Due to this interaction, she realized that street kids need understanding, love and care from the members of the society. She advises that people should not look down on them when they see them, but should instead lift up their hearts and find solution to help them out. Street children need people who stand firm and prepare the way for their lives. She says all should help to mold the children's lives

because they too are God's beautiful creation and they will be the leaders of tomorrow if so empowered.

Portia, as reported in Makope (2006), on the other hand, held the view that street children were thieves and therefore evil. But after getting to know street children, hearing their stories and listening to them, she realized that these children had a great need of love. She says that love will lead street children to hate what is evil and cling to what is good. Love sums up every good thing that everyone must have to the fullest. She encourages everyone to understand the street children, remember and, above all, love them.

Roselyn helps street children now, but a while back, she could not have seen herself doing that (Makope, 2006). She had a very contemptuous attitude towards street children and blamed them for the many evils committed in the city. It was only after reaching out to them that Roselyn started appreciating that street children were very pleasant children, only that poverty, abuse and other factors had pushed them to their present plight. With time, she started taking care of them, loving them and finding out what could be done to assist them. She realized that street children had a vision, only that stress, depression and peer pressure blocked their vision. She says that one of the reasons why street children end up engaging in such activities as sex, drugs, gangsters and gambling is because they feel unloved. She comments that people need to understand street children, socialize with them and encourage them by any means to have hope in life. They should be supported in their educational needs for these street children can become doctors and teachers of tomorrow.

Tendai thought that street children were stubborn, mischievous and cursed. He thought they were selfish thieves, murderers, and rapists (Makope 2006). By getting closer to them, he realized that some were orphans, while others were born on the streets. There was a group that was neglected by their parents as soon as they were born. Through interacting with them, Tendai realized that street children had a bright future if they were helped to seek after their vision. He says that street children need encouragement so that they do not lose hope or do not wish they did not exist. He appeals to all people to support street children, instead of laughing at them or mistreating them.

Indeed street children have great potential and most of them want to change their lives.

In most cases what they require is someone to believe in them and to help them so that they can reach their goals. They may need help with guidance, education opportunities, and inspiration. They need to feel that somebody cares about them because, just like anybody else, they need love and affection. Ordinary citizens must think about what they can do to change the lives of the street children.

We must be ready to reduce the gap between the poor and the rich like that talked about by an Indian writer, Muk Raj Anand (1936) in his book, *Coolie*. In this book, the main character is a fourteen year-old orphan boy, Munoo. He is ill-treated by his uncle and his aunt beats him more than she beats the cattle. At that tender age, his uncle finds him old enough to earn a living and he is asked to get ready to go to town in search of a job. He is forced to drop out of school at fifth grade. Munoo did not want to go but he knew he had no choice. He loved school and would have loved to pursue education to the highest levels. His uncle makes him walk for many miles barefoot without giving Munoo time to

rest, and even slapping him for getting tired. The money that Munoo would earn was to be given to his uncle. His employers treat him like a monkey, and one day he is kicked with shiny black boots. His employer gets a stick and ferociously strikes Munoo blow after blow. Munoo slips out of the employer's house and runs down the hill and reaches the railway station and sleeps on the floor, thus joining the class of street children in the urban center.

The Munooos of today are many and they are begging to have their voices heard. They would like to pursue their dreams, their vision. They know there are many stumbling blocks on the way, but they know it is not impossible. There is, therefore, need to consider how the society can help street children who cannot be integrated directly into the regular schools due to age or other constraints, but are willing to be helped in the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills and all other advantages that come with the skills. This then prompts the establishment of an Education for Life Center for these street children.

Informal Education in Kenya: An Example

Undugu society in Kenya does operate an informal basic education program to help to address basic literacy and numeracy needs of the street children (Dallape, 1987). The program runs over a period of three years, after which learners are exposed to a variety of vocational skills during the fourth year. They for example get introduced to carpentry, tailoring and sheet metal cutting and modeling. Upon completion, learners are encouraged to join informal sector where they select a vocation to engage in.

Dallape (1996) observes Undugu Education Program gives street children the opportunity to raise their social responsibility, by participating in various extra-curricular activities such as Youth Week, Day of the African Child, Universal Children's Day, among others. In addition, the children who join the program gain the opportunity to participate in team sports, and other activities which instill a sense of belonging and achievement.

In having the street children join the program, Undugu society has created an environment that accommodates the deviant behavior of the street children exhibited by their addiction to petrol sniffing and bhang smoking. It is a program that helps children who are still traumatized and terrified of the police and other street gangs who often make their life on the streets a horrifying nightmare.

Typical school begins at 8am and ends at 1pm. The street children are still engaged in their daily activities of their life on the streets such as working and looking for food. The school therefore does not aim at removing the children off the streets but rather, to make them acquire basic language and numeracy skills to facilitate their survival while still living on the streets. Undugu Society aims at making whatever little difference that they can afford to so that the street children can better their lives.

The aim of Undugu's program seems to be training the street children for self development rather than for a certificate only. The program is designed, developed and implemented to prepare street children to acquire skills to enable them to enter the vocational training centers. One aspect that our proposed educational center will do that

is different from Undugu's informal education is to encourage full time enrolment of street children in a regular school. The street children need to be integrated with their age mates in the regular schools for mutual benefit. This will be useful in establishing cohesion and good understanding between the two groups. With time they will be able to work together in nation building.

The proposed center will only be a transition between the streets and the regular school, and a preparation point where a lot of counseling will be done so that the child will be emotionally and psychologically ready to take the bold step of joining their counterparts in the regular schools. The center will help the child to develop a constructive attitude to life and help him to form a good character and understand his responsibilities as a member of the community. The aim should be to instill in the children those values and attitudes necessary for adjustment to desirable living in the society. Their being fulltime students in regular schools will to a great extent help curb child labor for most of the street children in Kenya are exploited and misused by adults and by established gangsters.

CHAPTER SIX

PROPOSED ENGLISH LANGUAGE SYLLABUS FOR STREET CHILDREN

Introduction

English is the official language of communication in Kenya as well as the medium of instruction in schools. Those who master it reap many academic, social and professional benefits (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002). It is a language acquired through formal instruction thus the children who do not attend school hardly acquire competence in the language. For example, in the study's data analysis, virtually all the street children interviewed had little if any proficiency in English because the majority had received no formal education (see chapter 4).

Children who go through the eight years of primary education are expected to have acquired a sufficient command of English, in spoken and written forms, to enable them to communicate fluently and read for pleasure and information. By the end of the 8 years, learners are ready to enter secondary schools or the world of work. This is an advantage that street children do not have.

The emphasis of the English language syllabus proposed for the street children is on communicative competence. The goal is to make the street children proficient in the language so as to help them fit in the society so they will be able to interact with the wider society and enjoy the privileges that English brings to its speakers in Kenya. For example, they will be able to understand what they read and watch if written or broadcast

in English. They will confidently apply for jobs that expect them to use English in performing their duties. In addition, the street children will be able to catch up with their age mates in regular schools so that when they get enrolled in the classes corresponding with their age, they will not be disadvantaged and will follow the curriculum with ease.

Proposed English Language Syllabus

The syllabus is structured into three levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced. The elementary level is for beginners: the children will be introduced to the English at this level and particularly to the four language skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading. After three months of intensive course in the language, the learners will sit for an exam and then move on to the intermediate level where they will be exposed to more complex structures of the language. The advanced level will focus on the highest level of the English language as expected at the end of primary schooling. The following sections elaborate on the objectives and the content that will comprise each of the three levels. Much of this information is adapted from the existing syllabus for English in Kenyan primary schools (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002).

Part One: Elementary

Objectives

By the end of this session, the learner should have acquired:

- Listening skills to be able to listen, understand and respond to information and instructions appropriately
- Speaking skills to be able to use correct pronunciation, stress and intonation to express needs, feelings, convey information and relate experiences

- Reading skills to be able to read and understand instructions, to read for information and for pleasure, and to develop vocabulary and sentence structure
- Writing skills to be able to express own feelings and ideas meaningfully and legibly in correct English structures

Part Two: Intermediate

By the end of this session, the learner should be able to communicate fluently, independently and accurately in everyday life. Specifically, the learner should have acquired:

- Listening skills to be able to listen, understand and respond appropriately to information and instructions
- Speaking skills to be able to use correct pronunciation, stress and intonation so that their speech is understood, to express needs and feelings, convey information and relate experiences
- Reading skills to be able to read and understand instructions, to access information and to read widely for pleasure
- Writing skills to be able to express own ideas meaningfully and legibly in English, to convey information and to communicate effectively

Part Three: Advanced

By the end of the session, the learner should be able to:

- Apply listening skills in various contexts
- Speak accurately, fluently, confidently and appropriately in different domains

- Apply reading skills in various types of reading
- Communicate precisely, relevantly and accurately in written forms
- Think creatively and critically

Content

Part One

- Sounds of English: Consonants and vowels
- Greetings and request; polite language
- Simple language patterns; statements and questions: What is this? This is... These are... That is.... Those are...How...? Who...? What...? Whose?; use of conjunctions in sentences; use of auxiliaries; relative clauses;
- Vocabulary development: alphabet and counting; parts of the body; clothes we wear; people, animals and tools in the environment; expressions of time; shopping; travel and transport; food we eat; wild animals in the environment; weather, climate and disasters; the farm; health and hygiene; child labor; home and family; leisure time; accidents and road safety; communication: post office; sports; technology
- Nouns: forming singular and plurals; adjectives and adverbs; use of more than, less than; position and direction: where is...?; pronouns; simple prepositions; interjections
- Verbs; tense and time: present, past and future time; aspect: expression of perfective and progressive aspects.

- Writing: sentences using the vocabulary learnt; simple poems; activities in the program; every day activities;
- Reading: short paragraphs on the item in vocabulary development; related poems; comprehension passages
- Listening to and speaking on the items in vocabulary development

Part Two

- Vocabulary: measurements, child's rights and responsibilities; occupations and professions; celebrations; people in the community; administration; workshop and craft; office; home and family; sports; social activities; travel, transport and technology; water bodies; drugs; virtues; geographical features and climatic conditions; current affairs; politics (national, regional and international); business; farming; tourism; sales and marketing; social values; careers; life skills; credit and cooperative societies and welfare groups; insurance; legal matters; modern communication methods; astronomy and the solar system; civic education
- Writing: punctuation: comma, full stop, apostrophe; answers to comprehension passages; composition; letters; reports; curriculum vitae; minutes; recipes
- Reading: texts related to items in vocabulary development;
- Language patterns: Proper nouns, simple sentence patterns (SVO, SVA, SVC); sentences to express one's preferred occupation; use of many and much; comparatives and superlatives; conditional sentences; gerunds; revisit parts of speech; correlative conjunctions; tense and aspect revisited; irregular plurals and

irregular verbs; passive and active voice; direct and indirect speech; relative clauses

- Listening and speaking: instructions

Part Three

- Pronunciation; stress and intonation
- Listening comprehension and note taking
- Debates and public speaking; interviews
- Etiquette; choice of register; negotiation skills; paying attention; turn-taking
- Non-verbal communication
- Parts of speech; phrases and simple sentences; clauses; direct and indirect speech; passive and active voice
- Reading comprehension; use of dictionary; good reading habits; intensive and extensive reading; scanning and skimming
- Sentence skills and paragraphing; punctuation; personal writing; letter writing; creative writing; spelling; public writing; report writing; institutional writing; connectors

Learning Experiences

Learning should be as much as possible learner-centered and activity based. The following can form part of learner's learning experiences for each language skill.

Listening and speaking

- Listening and responding to talks, oral comprehensions, greetings, requests, questions, songs, commands, speeches, stories, dictation, listening comprehension
- Oral practice of language patterns
- Oral practice of vocabulary items
- Talking about activities/experiences relating to the themes
- Reciting poems; making speeches
- Dramatization, role play, story telling, simple dialogues
- Practicing oral composition
- Answering oral comprehension questions
- Telling news/experiences

Reading

- Reading words/sentences/short paragraphs
- Reading texts, poems, picture dictionary, library books and readers

Matching words with pictures

- Compiling pictorial dictionary

Writing

- Writing words/sentences from the board
- Answering written comprehension questions
- Writing guided compositions
- Completing crossword/word puzzles

- Practicing handwriting

Grammar

- Gap filling exercise
- Composition writing
- Joining sentences
- Jumbled sentences
- Cloze test
- Rewriting sentences
- Completion exercises
- Drills

Teachers who will be using the syllabus will be taken through some induction course to familiarize themselves with the same.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The research reported in this study sought to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of street children in Kenya, determine the children's aspirations and start to design a curriculum for them which they can be exposed to while being housed in an educational center in Kenya. To achieve this, the study aimed at identifying the languages in which the street children are competent in terms of reading, speaking and writing skills. It also aimed at assessing the numeracy skills by subjecting the sampled street children to some mathematical questions covering addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Further, the study investigated the main career aspirations of the sampled children in order to justify whether the street children desire to receive formal education.

The findings of the study indicate that street children in Kenya use Sheng to interact with one another while on the streets. They do not have mastery of English, the official language in Kenya. This is a disadvantage to them for they are unable to communicate in many of the domains that require the use of the English language. Although the majority of the street children could speak Kiswahili, it was noted that almost all of them could neither read nor write texts in the language. Kiswahili is the national language thus very pivotal in communicating national affairs of the nation. The same case applied to the use of the ethnic languages. The street children could speak the language fluently but very few of them could write or read texts in their mother tongues.

In the acquisition of numeracy skills, the street children were able to count from one to one hundred in Kiswahili. Some of them could count in English too, and also in their mother tongues. Unfortunately, they were not able to do simple arithmetic involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This is because they had not been to school where such skills are usually acquired.

In terms of aspirations, the street children had great dreams of where they wished to be in the near future. Some wanted to become pilots, doctors, teachers, lawyers and others wished to be car mechanics, salonists and pastors. They also knew that for them to achieve their vision, they would need to receive quality education so that they could compete favorably with their age mates in the regular schools.

The findings imply that there is need to address the educational needs of the street children so that they can access formal education. The establishment of an education for life center that would act as a transition between the streets and formal schools for the street children has been proposed. In such a center, the street children will receive accelerated input in all the major subjects in the Kenyan elementary education curriculum so that after they will have received substantial exposure, they will be ready to enroll in the regular schools at the level where their age mates will be, so that the street children do not have to start learning at the kindergarten level with 3 year-olds.

The study has outlined a syllabus that can be followed in the teaching of the English language at the center. It focuses on all the four skills of reading, speaking, listening and writing. It has also been noted that there is need to come up with syllabi for other subjects in the elementary curriculum so that they can be used in teaching the street children at the center.

Recommendations

The findings in this study point to the fact that street children recognize the power and value of education and have a fervent desire to go to school, and they look forward to being rich and successful one day. What the children are not sure of is how to reach where they aspire to be. This is where the society, governmental and non-governmental organizations need to come in so that they can help to meet the needs and aspirations of street children and other children in difficult circumstances. With this in mind, the following recommendations can therefore be made.

First, societal institutions should be made aware of their responsibility towards children in especially difficult circumstances, and together with the government, find solutions to the causes underlying the circumstances, which produce neglected and abused children such as the ones found on the streets. These institutions should be sensitized about the street children and their needs, and prioritize the needs which can be provided for by the wider society. In particular, the church, individuals, professionals, organizations, and other institutions should all be dedicated, committed and involved in the uniquely challenging job of alleviating the suffering of misplaced youth and abandoned children.

What many NGOs are doing may be just but a drop in the ocean, but to that individual child who is helped and transformed from a street child to a hopeful child with a brighter future through their program, it means the whole world. We must strive to work toward a better world for children in difficult circumstances, such as the street children on the streets of most developing nations. We should not go by numbers, but by doing what we are able to do within our capabilities.

Second, the plight of children in extremely difficult circumstances should be brought to the attention of every individual member of the society for all the citizens ought to play their collective part. As Mbogori (1992) points out, the levels of unemployment, poverty, ill-health, illiteracy and other difficulties will remain overwhelming if they are left to any single agency to deal with alone. Indeed the societal problems can be resolved if all of us faced up to them with a clear sense of determination. This seems to echo the words of Dallape (1987) that the eventual solution to the never ending dilemma in the streets lies in the prevention and in the conscience of every society and asks us to work together upon this long term agenda as well within our local hands-on projects with youngsters themselves. Thus, there is need for all to come together in this common goal of addressing the plight of street children. This will ensure that the problems facing children on the streets remain silent no more and that many other children will be prevented from taking the path that leads to the streets.

Third, there must be societal and global attention to alleviating poverty and especially women's poverty. Focus must be on helping alleviate poverty, which is one of the

principal factors that create the street children phenomenon in the first place. In particular, the economic status of women in the society needs to be addressed for if they are empowered economically, they will be able to take care of their families and this will help reduce the number of children who run to the streets. As Dallape (1987) observes, experience has shown that to uplift the community at large, it is vital that attempts are made to improve the socio-economic standing of women. For example, women can be offered appropriate financial assistance so that they can underwrite income generating ventures. As their economic standing improves, women will be able to assist their families more.

Fourth, the government should develop policy to address the serious phenomenon that street children have become. Political leaders should be obliged by the society to play their important role as policy makers to eliminate the causes producing unemployment, poor housing, and misery and as a result, many abandoned children who end up on the streets of major urban centers.

Children should be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. They should be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. As Mandal (1990) notes, a nation's children are a supremely important asset and their nurture and solicitude are a society's responsibility. Their self esteem needs to be worked on by frequently being reminded that they are important, worthwhile, beautiful or handsome and that they are loved. Members of the society must be ready to give the hope of a better tomorrow for the street children. The

children should enjoy the benefit of social security and their growth in all spheres should take place in a healthy manner. Efforts should be directed to strengthening family ties, where possible, so that full potentialities of growth of the children are realized within normal family, neighborhood and community environment.

Foreseen Challenges to the establishment of the Education for Life Center

- Support from the government: will the Kenyan government (Ministries of Education and Local Government) support this initiative?
- Funds to establish and sustain the center: building, resources, personnel, general organization.
- Training staff to work with the street children
- Winning support of religious groups who can support the initiative
- Getting other NGOs already working with street children join hands in making the center a success
- Resettling the street children in their homes
- Getting street children placed in regular school and follow-up

Inspiration:

One man who inspires me is Father Arnold Grol, a Dutch catholic priest in Nairobi, who despite skepticism from those who felt that there was nothing that individual civilians could do about street children went ahead and helped many children by providing shelter, food, and clothing for them. His efforts led to the establishment of Undugu Society, one of the most successful NGOs in Kenya that deal with the street children. It has a

reception centers for boys in Nairobi that offer shelter food, clothing, security, basic education, health care, parental and brotherly love and a sense of belonging. They are also introduced to sports, music and meal preparation. The chief objective of the society is to rehabilitate the street children. Their focus is mainly to provide first aid services in the form of counseling, health care, basic education and awareness. Undugu describes what it does as only “ a drop in the ocean.” But to that individual street child who is transformed from a street child to an ordinary, it means a whole world.

Stories of Street Children from Elsewhere

Black (1991) records stories of street children who live and work in the urban cities of Manila, in the Philippines. For example she reports a thirteen year-old girl, Jocelyn, who, at such a tender age, is a prostitute in Manila. On average she earns eight USD a night. She wishes to resume school and take up dressmaking course.

Another thirteen year-old street child, Richard, ran away from home because of the father's beating. The father had a bad temper. Richard became a homosexual as a result of influence from his street friends. He is afraid of ever returning home due to the violent nature of his father. He wants to become a soldier because according to him, soldiers are respected and help ordinary people.

Allan is eighteen year-old Filipino who wishes to become a soldier. He believes that society is full of chaos and hatred and feels that his fellow citizens are violent and treacherous. He, like Richard, wants to become a soldier. He wishes to own a gun and

wear a soldier's uniform one day. He believes he can learn to shoot like other professionals and arrest all the members of gangs and put them in jail. If not, he aspires to go into business one day and run a drugstore or a movie house. His desire is to be able to help his mother whom he feels has worked very hard all her life, and has become tired.

Royo is another street boy in Manila whose father was murdered when Roy was nine years old. He was stabbed to death by Royo's cousin. After the death of the father, they lost everything they owned. Royo then took up scavenging with boys in the neighborhood and finally left home for the streets. He hopes to become a civil engineer one day.

Makope (2006), on the other hand, tells of children on the streets of Harare who have since been rehabilitated. They reflect on the hard life that they faced while on the streets and talk about the future they would like to have. For example, there is a story of Dube, who ran away from home because he used to be beaten up for disobedience. What he remembers as the biggest obstacle while on the streets was how to get food. In exchange of food, he had to have sex with older boys. Later he discovered some bins where he could get some food. With time, he established a place where he could be guarding cars in the city so that he could earn some money. While on the street, he met with officers from a non-governmental organization, Streets Ahead Organization in Harare that helps street kids. With time, he was able to reunite with his family and with counseling and help from the NGO, he got back to school. He now has a bright future.

Viola, on the other hand, is a young street girl who used to sell her body when she was eleven years old. She used to sleep with different boys and men, and of course she had

multiple unprotected sex. Then she got pregnant at the age of fifteen years and she could not understand what was happening to her. She had none to talk with regarding her confusion and the many changes taking place in her body. She has now been rehabilitated and she wishes all street children could get educated so that their future is much better than their present situation.

Some of the children that Makope interviewed had a clear direction that their lives should take. For example, Farai a sixteen year-old boy who had been on the streets of Harare since 2000, wants to be an artist, and then hopefully get a job. His father worked in Harare city but Farai and the rest of the family lived in the countryside. He did not get to see much of his father. His mother suffered from HIV/AIDS and died when Farai was thirteen years old. The father abandoned them. The brother and his wife took Farai in, but they mistreated him, and would not give him food. He then knew he had to fend for himself and moved to the city. He lived on the streets, fighting for his life. He wishes to have a good life and would love to go back to school. He hopes to be able to rent his own house or build one of his own. He also prays that one day he will be able to buy a car, and then be able to meet with his relatives when he will have become successful.

Luke's another street boy in Harare whose faith in God is intriguing. He says that his faith in God keeps him going. He believes that God made him for a purpose and it has to be fulfilled. He admits that God has really protected him while on the streets, ensured that he is in good health, and he knows that God loves him very much. He is an orphan, fatherless and motherless, but says that although he is an orphan, he knows that he has a

special place in God's divine plan. He seems to know quite a bit about the Bible and says that God is the father to the fatherless, a provider, a healer and a helper of the helpless, giving hope to the hopeless. He continues to say that he will abide in God's grace till he conquers for he is more than a conqueror through God's grace. Luke would like to be an artist and looks forward to the time when he will be able to be off the streets and lead a decent life.

Further Research

As mentioned before, there are almost 140 non-governmental organizations in Kenya that deal with issues related with street children. Studies should be carried out to assess these programs especially their effectiveness in meeting their objectives, thus determining their success in the provision of quality services for the street children in Kenya, and elsewhere.

The present study has attempted to design a curriculum that can be followed in the development of linguistic skills in the English language. There is still a lot to be done to design syllabi for Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Kiswahili and other subjects that students in the regular schools are using. This calls for the development of such syllabi so that they can be used in the Education for Life Center as the street children get helped and prepared to be able to join their peers in the regular schools.

Conclusions

The street families and street children are indeed a marginalized lot whose needs must be addressed. Although the main task ahead should be to combat and alleviate poverty and economically empower vulnerable families currently living below the poverty line, it is imperative to consider the plight of the children already on the streets and who feel they are too old to join six year-olds in preschool in order to acquire language, literacy and numeracy skills. Being unable to break the vicious cycle among street children will condemn them to a struggle in a never-ending situation.

The educational intervention in which the street children will acquire literacy and numeracy skills may be a cry in the wilderness, but we must be willing to be mindful of those less fortunate than ourselves in the society and help in the realization of a better world for one or two street children who may benefit from the programs such as the proposed education for life center. If the street children are helped to be in school and therefore, acquire quality education, their right to childhood will be enforced by keeping them away from child labor, streets, and from all kinds of exploitation. Indeed school is an institution that takes care of all a child's development. It is the thesis of this proposal that through acquisition of language, literacy and numeracy skills, street children in Kenya will be empowered and the impact of their empowerment on their participation in the overall project of nation building will be inevitable.

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