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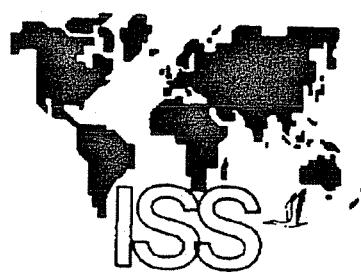
STREET CHILDREN AND PUBLIC POLICY: A Case of Tororo District Urban Border Centres, Uganda.

A Research paper presented by
Nekessa Constance Ouma
(Uganda)

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for obtaining the Degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS IN PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Members of the Examining Committee
Prof. Ben White
Dr. Joop De Wit

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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The Hague, December 1997

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies; the views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my dear mother, Clemintina Hamala Obbonyo Ouma (Mrs.), and my dear brother, Wandera Pious W'Ouma, who laid a firm foundation for what I am today; academically and socially. They have contributed to my spirit of determination to struggle to achieve what I wish to, as a woman.

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This list is by no means conclusive nor inclusive. To all of you who have contributed to my success, I am grateful. God bless you (NASAYE/ WERE ABAHONYE).

Connie Nekessa Ouma
ISS, The Hague
The Netherlands
November, 1997

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Abbreviations

AIDS ....Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

ANPPCAN..................................African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against
Abuse and Neglect

CA... Constituent Assembly

D.A..District Administration

DAT...District Advocacy Team

DMO...District Medical Office

DPACs...District Plans of Action for Children

FOCA..Friends of Children Association

ROU...Republic of Uganda

HIV..Human Immuno deficiency Virus

ILO..International Labour Organisation

IRCS ....International Red Cross Society

KEFAN...Kenya Food and Nutrition Action Network

LC ....Local councils

LDUs..Local Defence Units

NCC..National Council for Children

NGO..Non-governmental Organisation

SPACs...Sub-county Plans of Action for Children

UPE..Universal Primary Education

UN ....United Nations

UNCRC...United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF..United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

UNPAC...Uganda National Plan of Action for Children

UPE..Universal Primary Education

URCS..Uganda Red Cross Society

MAP OF UGANDA INDICATING THE AREA OF STUDY: TORORO DISTRICT

MOYO

KITGUM

KOTIDO

ARUA

GULU

NEBBI

LIRA

MOROTO

APAC

MASINDI

SOROTI

HOIMA

KUMI

KAPCHORWA

PALLISA

MBALE

KIBAALE

KIBOGA

LUWERO

KAMULI

BUNDIBUGYO

TORORO

KABAROLE

MUBENDE

JINJA

IGANGA

KASESE

MUKONO

KAMPALA

MPIGI

LAKE
COWARD

HASAKA

BUSHENYI

KALANGALA

MBARARA

RUKUNGIRI

RAKAI

KABALE

KISORO

LAKE   VICTORIA

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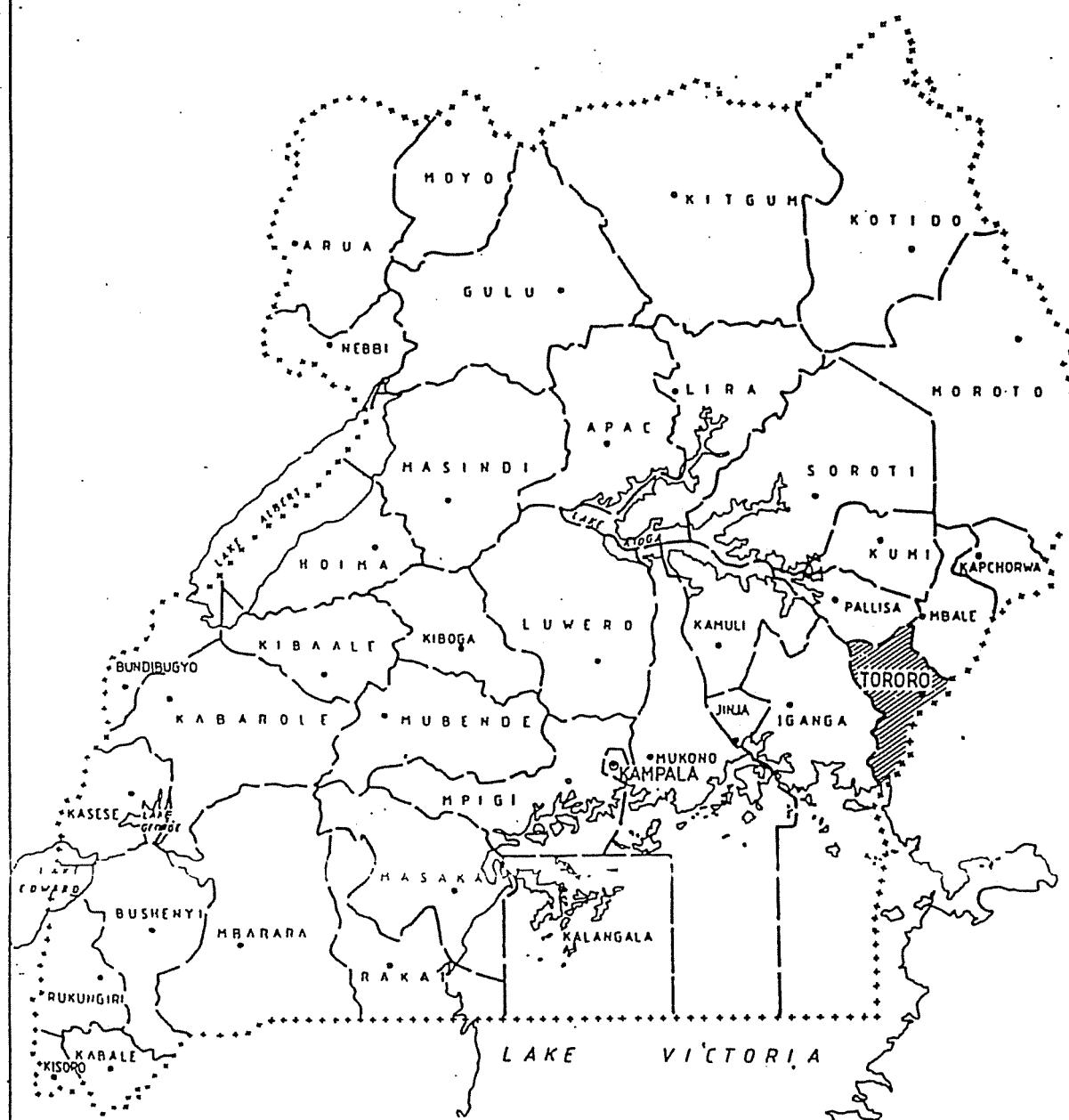
LEGEND
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- — — DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- • DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS
- ▓ TORORO DISTRICT

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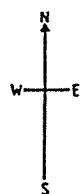
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Children living as well as working in the streets is a common sight in almost all the cities of the world. They have been the subject of so many studies. They have been a topic of discussion at national, regional and international levels. Several programmes world-wide have been designed and developed with a view of reaching these children. Despite these actions and concern, are we (*those involved in the actions as well as inactions*) able to say we know these children very well? Where they come from (their background)? How many they are? Who are they? Where they are? What they do? Reactions and answers to this questions, which have been answered in one way or the other, reveal that the term does not mean the same and one thing to the users, whether at a policy, programme, or/and project levels, even in everyday use at local levels. This implies significant differences among conclusions and the eventual responses to these children all levels. Therefore any appropriate point of departure for a discussion on street children in any forum should begin with a viable definition of these children, although the task to come up with a definition has not been easy.

The phenomenon of street children is increasingly catching the attention of the world today. Almost all counties East-West or North-South are concerned by this phenomenon of street children, despite the differences in degrees. It is an issue/problem that transverses the East-West and North-South distinctions. This is mainly due to the current debates about the Child Rights which have internationally become 'law' as the Bills of Rights of Children and the current Children Statute in Uganda and partly due to the 'potential menace' these children present. There is increasing attention and advocacy on the rights of children stressing that children should not be seen as passive but actors on the scene by themselves. The study then seeks to bring street children like any other category of children into lime light of development in Uganda.

1.1 Background to the problem

Since the United Nations Declaration of the International Year of the Child in 1979 and the subsequent decades of child rights advocacy, global awareness of the rights and needs of the world's children has been growing.

Uganda is a party to the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Rights of a Child and therefore bound by this convention to ensure that community protects the young including street children. The

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World Summit for Children in September 1990, in which Uganda became a signatory of the Declaration for Survival, Protection and Development of the child, helped to place children as first priority on Human Development Agenda. The Summit also emphasised the issue of the most vulnerable children, such as *street children* requiring immediate attention and support to ensure equitable development in humanity's quest for equality and justice. A Plan of Action for implementing this declaration is being carried out under the umbrella of the Uganda National Plan of Action for Children (UNPAC) which is also the social welfare policy for children in Uganda.

According to earlier surveys (FOCA, 1992), there were only approximately 4000 street children in Uganda; (1000 of them in Kampala). However Tororo district urban areas which are border towns are turning out to be among the leading urban areas facing the problem of street children given the high influx rate of street children. The Tororo district major urban centres of Busia, Malaba, and Tororo Municipality area are increasingly hard hit with the new but rapidly growing problem of street children. The number of street children in Busia and Malaba was estimated at 1050 and 510 respectively in 1993 (UNICEF, 1993) and the number is estimated to have increased to over 2000 in Busia, 1000 in Malaba and 300 in Tororo town (Mpabulungi, Tororo District, A situation Analysis, 1994).

Africa in general and Uganda in particular, has not taken drastic measures to totally eliminate these children off the street, like some of the Latin American countries such as Brazil, Guetamala and Mexico where special killer squads have been created as a solution. For instance in the Colombian city of Bogota, 2830 children were murdered and in Brazil 1500 were killed in 1992[1]. Moreover, indications are emerging that Ugandan society may be losing patience as was implied by one Ugandan Minister of State when he recommended that these children should be rounded off to prison in order to clear and get rid of them from streets of Kampala (the capital city of Uganda), which is contrary to her commitment.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Although *Street children* constitute a discovery of the eighties, they already existed previously though not labelled *as street children* (Sabattini, 1996; 155). As a result of the increased concern of street children in the eighties, a number of books dealing with this issue started to appear. These books were mainly intended to develop methodologies to alleviate the most urgent needs of street children, while the theoretical reflection about the group lacked a clear conceptual framework.

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[1] Steven Gutkins, 1993; Coming of Age, Waiting for Death, News Week, October.

In light of the foregone statement(s), *this study will suggest that the policy regarding street children in Uganda has been developed with a narrow conceptualisation and perception of street children problem and a big number of them has been eliminated or left unmentioned and not catered for by the policy.* Despite the fact that the cities of developing countries in general and those of Uganda in particular contain a number of children facing particularly difficult circumstances, only a small percentage, is currently recognised as street children. According to Uganda's policy regarding children, the concept of street children refers to those *"children who spend their time living and working on the streets of urban areas" (Friends of Children Association 'FOCA' 1992; ROU, 1992).*Therefore, the concentration on one group of street children (i.e. *those who live and work in the streets*), eliminating another (i.e. *those who are not permanently living on the streets but come from their "homes" and spend most of their time all alone on the streets*) results in a narrow focus of the problem of street children and consequently the solutions to this problem. Status of street children and why they have chosen to be on the streets is not recognised. Streets are seen as problems by the public and not solutions, hence attention towards withdrawal, harassment by the police, rape and all sorts of the negative labels of the street children. No action to enhance their survival strategy is being taken, especially in Tororo district urban centres.

It should be noted that the broader category as defined above are street children in every sense of the word; except that they do not sleep on the streets but face all other difficulties such as begging, scavenging for food, harassment, they all swim in poverty, lack access to basic facilities, etc. Although these group of children have a slight difference especially in accommodation in their 'homes' and frequently in touch with their "parents" or "guardians", like their counterparts are not being educated, are frequently abused, and often do not have control of the money earned by their labour.

It is, therefore, quite clear that although the problem of street children exist and can be recognised very clearly, people are unable to explain what precisely makes a certain child, a street child. Despite the existence of a clearly formulated definition, many uncertainties have surrounded and been held about the group as well as the literature on the issue (Tacon, 1986, Aptekar, 1988). Little also has been done to those who fall in the already existing definitions

In the course of my work as a Child Advocacy Project Officer in Tororo district, I gained insight of the conditions which distinguish *Street Children* from other groups of the poor urban children. I considered that they (street children) fall under the following two conditions; first, they spend a lot of time on their own without protection or care of adults. Secondly, the place where they spend their time is on the

streets. The above aspects which I perceive for any child to be defined as a street child are so conspicuous in the street children of Tororo border towns where smuggling of goods across the border is the business and means of survival for both the children 'of' and 'on' the streets (*i.e. the children live and work and those who come and work and retire at the end of the day to their 'homes' respectively*).

In this study, therefore, *all those children who spend a lot of time on the street on their own in Tororo border towns are considered street children*, these include the eliminated group of street children that are not permanently on the streets but still have "family" ties, unlike the conception of street children as only those children living and working in the streets as addressed by the children social welfare policy in Uganda.

The two conditions mentioned in this definition above, which can be regarded as "necessary conditions", can be found in the Inter-NGO definition (*see 2.3.2*). Nevertheless in Uganda, these conditions are insufficiently emphasised which has led to lack of conceptual accuracy of the street children problem and consequently narrow policy formulation in addressing the problem.

Street children as a group are neither heroes or victims. The coining the name street children is due to the fact that, unlike other children, their situation departs from the current social norms of the society. They are marginalised children of the urban underclass who take care of themselves and their peers with minimal adult guidance (Lowry, 1997). Therefore, it is essential to grasp and respect the depth of suffering, loss, or betrayal that many of these children carry with them. However, for the children on the street, the harassment, hostility, including rape to especially the street girl child, unlawful arrest and imprisonment (as said their greatest enemy is the police and local defence councils), and the pervasive deprivation they face call for concerted effort and urgent action, from the communities from which they come and live, and from the government with proper involvement of the children who understand their own situation. Thus, this concern arises from the fact that their situation is considered inadequate in their own interests and this concern responds to this inadequacy in regard to the interests of society at large.

1.3 Justification of the study

Uganda's population stands at 16.6 million out of which more than half (8.3 million are children (0-15 years) are children (Housing and Population Census, 1991). According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, out of Uganda's 8 million children, approximately 2 million are living in difficult

circumstances, 1.5 million are orphaned and 450,000 are disabled (Childlink ANPPCAN, vol. 1, Jan. 1995). When one takes cognisance of the fact that a large proportion of the said children are on the street without a definite future, then this warrants investigation. The issue of street children becomes even more disturbing when one notes that these children are the future of Uganda. It is also surprising that both the Uganda government despite the national welfare policy that is in place addressing other categories of children (but with a narrow perspective of street children) and the existing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have taken a back seat in trying to resolve the problem in Tororo district. This has been observed that "despite this worsening situation of street children in the district urban areas, no action has been taken by either government or NGOs" (Mpabulungi, 1994).

The disadvantaged urban children commonly called street children are part of a wider problem of vulnerable children in our midst whose problems society must realistically address. These children are likely to form a large percentage of the workers of the formal sector, which requires a lot of entrepreneurial skills to earn their living and sustainability. The problem of street children should be seen as an integral part of development and transformation of society. So the proper conceptualisation and definition of the issue of street children is a necessary step in defining the real causes of the emergence of different categories of street children and thus formulating feasible policy solutions. The paper, therefore contends that behaving like the proverbial ostrich which buries its head in the sand will not solve the problem, but a practical solution to the problem is needed than ever before, hence the justification for this research.

The economic, political and social effects of this problem could be far reaching to the country in future if not addressed now. This is evident looking at the rate of influx of street children at this border towns, the problems that accompany it such as deprivation of their rights, rape, child labour, hostility from the community and law and order arm of government and all the negative perception of the street children, which all shape their future.

This paper's position is that the problem of the street children if "well addressed", that is if well defined and conceptualised, could also lead to proper policy strategies to address the problem and promote better life chances for these children. This does not mean that the problem can be totally stopped/ eradicated but it can be controlled. It is therefore the duty of each nation and society at large to give the children the best it can but also involving street children in all that concern their life.

1.4 Objectives and relevance of the study

The objectives of this paper are to study the situation and problem of street children, to generate alternative conceptualisation, to assess the existing policy on street children and come up with alternative recommendations. This study seeks to go beyond the existing narrow definition of street children, that eliminates the majority of the of street children who need to be incorporated. It examines and highlights the situation and scale of street children, explores the concepts of street children, and the problem structuring theoretical perspectives in relation to generating alternative conceptualisation and strategies towards them. There is a need to see street children in a different wider perspective in order to come up with a holistic approach to the problem.

Findings of the study will hopefully be useful for policy makers, street children workers and any children interested parties in their endeavours to work with and for street children. It calls for thorough research and analysis of any (policy) problem before final design of any strategies and policies and their implementation. It calls for all stakeholders to look beyond symptoms to causes for better strategies to a problem. In bid to fulfil these objectives, the questions below will guide the study.

1.5 Research questions

In response to these problem of street children, the following questions need to be addressed:

a) What are the forces (both pull and push factors) at work that result to children relying on the streets for their livelihood in the district and what then constitutes street children in a wider perspective?

b) What kind of interventions are in place at national, district, and local/ community level to address the problem of street children and what have been the problems relating to them?

c) To what extent can children get involved in strategies that contribute to their livelihood?

d) What sort of possible and feasible programmes and strategies could best address this problem of street children?

In answering these questions, the need for better conceptualisation of street children will be addressed, in order to throw more light on the root cause of the problem and how this is to be taken into account in planning.

1.6 Research methodology / organisation of paper

The research looks at the issue of street children Uganda and Tororo district border urban centres as a case study area, although examples/situations from other urban centres will be sought. The study is seeking to define the concept of street children beyond what is understood in Uganda today, in order to

include an eliminated group of children and in so doing to bring out various factors that force these children on the streets. Having given the dimension of the issue, an analysis of the response of the central government, the local government (district administration), NGOs, Community and street children themselves to this problem will be dealt with, analysing what kind of interventions are in place and what are the results and problems related to them. A further examination is be made on how best the issue regarding street children can be handled drawing cases of successful experiences or/ and policies from other countries. Based on these cases and analysis of the loopholes in the current children welfare policy in Uganda and the international conventions regarding children, I will propose possible ways to address the problem of street children in a way to give them a future. This also includes lessons learnt, policy implications and a conclusion.

The study is divided into five chapters, including this one, which is an introductory chapter stating the problem, justification and objectives of the study and the methodology. Chapter two reviews practical and theoretical perspectives of public policy and street children. Chapter three presents insights in the life of street children in Tororo District. Chapter four analyses the responses to street children. Chapter five contains policy options, recommendations and conclusions.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Since it was not possible to conduct a field survey for this particular study due to financial and time limitations, I have used survey reports carried out by organisations in the field of street children in Uganda and a personal field experience of my work. This may affect the depth of my presentation on issues as best information would be that of primary data especially where I am physically involved. The empirical data used may bear a degree of unreliability due to the fact that very little research has been carried out on street children in Uganda, and different organisations represent this issue differently as can be seen in the subsequent chapters. However, despite the above problems, I got some information and data from child related relevant organisations from Uganda.

1.8 Sources of Data

The research based on secondary sources of data, primarily books, research studies that have been carried out in the area of street children in Uganda and globally, International conventions on children to which Uganda is a party, data from child organisations, (specifically UNICEF), news papers, government documents and field reports from some organisations working with children in Uganda. I have also used my experiences derived from my work as a Child Advocacy Officer linked to children's

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advocacy work and contacts with child organisations, government departments directly related to and involved with children affairs and with children themselves.

Chapter 2: Street Children: The Theoretical and Practical Aspects

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will look into public policy theories and concepts of street children, viewing the conceptualisation of street children in an international perspective but also giving a realistic view of children in the developing world. The chapter is divided in two distinct parts. The first part reviews literature on policy analysis focusing on problem structuring as critical part of policy analysis for this study relating to the problem of street children definition and conceptualisation in Uganda. In this section the main concepts such as public policy, policy analysis, policy problem, and problem structuring will be defined. These theoretical concepts will be elaborated in view of their application in the conceptualisation of the street children problem/ issue as currently addressed by public policy. The second part reviewing the literature on street children, which include the definition of main concepts including children, street children. Literature on the socio-economic context of street children, age boundaries, understanding street children, images of street children, and number game/ magnitude of street children as conceived generally will be included. It will also give a brief overview of the process of urbanisation being central to the street children phenomenon in the poor countries.

2.1 Theoretical perspective on Policy Problem Structuring in Policy Analysis

Street children problem and its policy in Uganda will be analysed in relation to the public policy theories and their relevance in coming up with a viable appropriate policy conceptualisation and recommendation in view of the problem at hand.

2.1.1 Public Policy

Public policies are a series of related choices which include decisions to act or not to act by government bodies or officials and any interested actors in a particular decision. The process is not as smooth as may be imagined. It involves a to- and - fro movement of the process. Therefore making judgements about public policies will depend considerably on understanding the meaning and the process of public policy analysis. This is especially the case of Uganda and developing countries in general solutions to problems like the street children problem/issue rely which on the government particular perspective of the situation.

What has been referred to as public policy is hardly an end in itself. Likewise, a pre-occupation with its formulation does not ensure that it is fully right (adequate) and best in addressing the issue at hand; and it does not mean that it will automatically be carried out. This is therefore important enough to deserve

comment. Public policy is basically a guideline for action, but one which does not serve the purpose unless action occurs. Without action, it is merely a statement of intent or purpose of those who initiated it. Thus, those who act (or fail to act) become real determinants of a policy. To do a good job, policy makers must see to it that the real problem is well identified and well analysed, policy objectives properly indicated, and making sure that they are capable of being carried out. Thus, the policy towards street children in Uganda in general and Tororo district in particular will be observed in this respect, using the theories below to show the gap created by policy definition and structure of the problem.

2.1.2 Policy Analysis

Policy analysis is defined by Dunn (1994; 61), as ....*any type of analysis that generates and presents information in such a way as to improve the basis for policy-makers to exercise their judgement...... In policy analysis, the word analysis is used in its most general sense; it implies the use of intuition and judgement and encompasses not only the examination of policy by decomposition into its components but also the design and synthesis of new alternatives. Activities involved may range from research to illuminator to provide insight into anticipated issue or problem to evaluation of a complete programme. Some policies are informal, involving nothing more than hard and careful thinking whereas others require extensive data gathering and elaborate calculation employing sophisticated mathematical process.*

The broad conception of policy analysis as presented above accentuates the practical character of policy analysis as a response to recurrent problems and crises facing governments. Policy analysis in this chapter will be looked at as an applied discipline. Policy analysis thus goes beyond traditional disciplinary concerns with the explanation of the empirical irregularities by seeking not only to combine and transform the substance and methods of several disciplines, but to produce policy-relevant information that may be utilised to resolve problems in a specific political settings. It also goes beyond the above, but will also produce information about values and courses of action. It thus includes assessment of the policy and alternative recommendations depending on the policy problem (Dunn, 1994).

All policies involve stakeholders. These are those individuals, institutions, social groups which have a "stake" in how a policy develops, is formulated or implemented, because they stand to gain or loose by that policy (Kimuri, 1996: 62). The stakeholders are not equally powerful or have equal access to decision making or organised and have resources. In other words, the ability and willingness of each stakeholder to tilt the policy in its own favour would be different. Policy design has to take note of the stakeholders and the methods they would use during formulation and the boundaries of the problem, implementation to steer a policy in a particular direction (ibid.).

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2.1.3 Policy problem

Policy problem(s)[2] are interpreted differently by different policy stakeholders even where there are facts (statistical facts). The same policy relevant information can result in conflicting definition and explanation of the problem. For example, the street children problem in the world all over, where it exists and in Uganda in particular, has had conflicting definition and explanation as discussed in differences in its definition and magnitude in the foregone paragraphs and in the forthcoming chapter(s). Dunn (1994: 137), contends that the conflict occurs.........

> "not so much because the facts of the matters are inconsistent (and often they are), but because policy analysts, policymakers, and other stakeholders hold competing assumptions about human nature, government, and opportunities for social change. Policy problems are partly in the eyes of the beholder."

This is evident in problematisation of the street children issue by different actors depending on their own interest. Different views have been raised depending on the conceptualisation of the party (authors, NGOs, governments, and even individuals) involved.

In order to analyse the different conceptions of all those involved in street children problem and more so the policy makers, and understand the issue of street children as a national problem that requires urgent attention, I will use the public policy theory of analysis by William Dunn, a clear view of how problems should be structured. This framework, though general, will try to relate to the conceptualisation of street children in Uganda.

Dunn (1994, 54) argues that ;

> There are three classes of policy problems: well-structured, moderately structured, and ill-structured problems. The structure of each of these three classes is determined by its relative complexity, that is, the degree to which the problem is actually an independent system of problems.

Policy problems are unrealised needs, values, or opportunities for improvement that may be pursued through public action. However, the nature, scope and severity of the problem is produced by applying the policy-analytical procedure of problem structuring. Problem structuring, a continuous part of policy inquiry by policy analysts to search for competing problem formulations of different stakeholders is the most important activity. This is because problem structuring is a central guidance system or steering mechanism that affects the success of the subsequent phases of policy analysis (ibid., 138).

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[2] Policy problem is a set of mental or conceptual constructs abstracted from a problem situation by stakeholders (Dunn, 1994: 185).

Problem structuring in policy analysis can supply policy- relevant knowledge that challenges the assumptions underlying the definition problems reaching the policy making process. It can also assist in discovering the hidden assumptions, diagnosing causes, mapping possible objectives and above all synthesising conflicting views and designing new policy options. It is therefore, important to analyse the concept of street children for a better policy and its results.

2.1.3.1 Problem Structuring in Policy Analysis

Dunn (1994), argues that the requirements for solving ill-structured problems are not the same as those for solving well structured problems. Whereas well-structured problems permit analysts to use conventional methods, ill-structured problems demand that the analyst first take an active part in defining the nature of the problem itself. In actively defining the nature of the problem, analysts must not only impose part of themselves on the problem situation but must also exercise creative judgement and insight. This means that policy analysis is properly devoted to problem structuring[3] as well as problem solving. Problem structuring is the process of generating and testing new alternative conceptualisations of a problem situation. In fact, problem solving is only one part of the work of policy analysis:

> The problem-solving image holds that the work of policy begins with well articulated and self-evident problems. Problem structuring, therefore, takes priority over problem solving in policy analysis. Policy analysis contains processses for finding and construing problems; it involves problem setting (structuring) in order to interpret inchoate signs of stress in the system (Dunn, 1994).

It is in this regard, I argue that unless the concept of street children is well defined and the policy geared towards well defined problem, the solutions will remain inadequate. It will only address part of the problem.

Problem structuring is a process of generating and testing alternative conceptualisations of a problem situation. This perspective will be of great help if applied to the different conceptualisation of the street children and its consequent priorities as argued out in the previous and in the first part of this chapter. As observed in the foregone paragraph, problem structuring takes priority over problem solving in policy analysis. Problem structuring may be viewed as a process with four interdependent phases: problem search, problem definition, problem specification, and problem sensing. What takes precedence in policy structuring is the recognition or *felt-existence* of a problem situation. As long as the analyst recognises a problem situation then he engages in a problem search; in which the focus is

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[3] Problem structuring is the use of higher-order methods (metamethods) to discover the critical elements of a problem, their causal arrangements, and their implications.

not only on one problem but many problem representations of multiple interested parties (stakeholders). This view and theory can be of relevance when looking at the different representations of the issue of street children in the world and Uganda in particular. Practising analysts normally face a large, tangled network of competing problem situations which are dynamic, socially constructed, and distributed throughout the policy-making process (ibid., 148). The analysts are faced by a metaproblem - a problem of problems that is ill -structured because the domain of the problem representations by different and by diverse stakeholders seems unmanageably huge and uncompromising. Every stakeholder represents his/her own interest.

It is then after moving from this stage that the analyst defines the problem in its general and basic terms. Dunn (1994), argues that the choice of a conceptual framework should be often similar to the choice of a worldview, ideology, or popular myth and indicates a commitment to a particular view of reality. However, I would like to add on and argue that whereas it is important conceptualise a problem in the worldview, it its also important to take into account the current situation (environment) under which the policy is being structured and formulated. Whereas a problem may be global like one of street children, its immediate cause and reaction to it may be different in different countries, and should count.

Having looked at the need for generating and testing alternative conceptualisation in problem structuring as highlighted by Dunn, it is therefore important that the problem of street children should not be viewed and defined negatively as only children who are homeless, abandoned, delinquent, criminals, useless, and living on the streets. The problem of street children in Uganda should be viewed and redefined in a wider perspective as children struggling for their survival, rather than useless, criminals and homeless. Most of these children have homes and family ties and many more positive aspects of life (see 2.4.3 and 2.4.5). Therefore, in my view, these group of children who form the majority should be incorporated. Problem structuring of street children issue should be done in such a perspective to enhance wider designed strategies at implementation. The solution to these children is not to isolate them but bring them into perspective and equip them for survival.

It does not mean that well defined policies will always succeed. However, well defined problems are one step ahead in successful implementation of the policy relating to such problems. Therefore, it is important to integrate policy formulation with implementation. Well defined problems will lead to well spelled strategies of achieving the policy. The strategies will be seeking to answer questions as: What is

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the service output of the programme? For whom is it designed (clarity on the beneficiaries)? When is it to be provided? According to Paul (1982: 111), what, for whom, and when, are the key dimensions of operating goals of any policy or programme. It is important to note for any successful policy, the strategies should be targeting the rightful (primary) beneficiaries. The Uganda child welfare policy with particular emphasis on street children is unclear on its primary beneficiaries as a big number has been left out.

The kind of clientele (street children), the policy is addressing is generally unsophisticated mobile mass who need to be organised and influenced in effective ways for better results. Therefore, implementation of activities and provision of services calls for a setting that permits some measure of autonomy, risk taking, and personnel who are sensitive clientele needs and are motivated enough to work together in well knit teams, and if necessary, with a network of organisations (bid. 9). This is what should be called for in implementing of the policy towards street children.

The policy analysis theory with particular emphasis on problem structuring could generate new and viable conceptualisation and consequently strategies towards a solution, looking at the general concepts of street children and urbanisation process as below and the actual situation as in chapter 3.

2.2 Urbanisation process

The street children phenomenon in developing countries has been linked by several authors to the urbanisation process (Agnelli, 1986; as quoted by Sabattini, 1996). The concept of "urbanisation" is normally understood as a process by which the urban portion of the world's population experiences growth[4]. It should be noted that for most of the five to six thousand years that cities have existed, only a small minority of the population of any society has actually resided within them (Basham 1978, 57). Only since late capitalism has this process accelerated considerably. Agnelli (1978: 20 in Sabattini, 1996), testifies the speed this process has acquired during the last decades and the forecasts of the near future; in 1980, 40% of the world's population lived in cities, by the year 2000 this figure will be 50%, and in 2025 it is estimated to be over 65%. The term "urbanisation" is also used to refer to the diffusion of urban knowledge, behaviour and economic structure to rural areas and to the effects of urban contact upon the personal adjustment of individuals.

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[4] In Basham's words the term "urbanisation" refers to a proportionate increase in the urban population as compared to rural population of the society or to the actual migration to the city (1978;82)

The current urbanisation process in the developing world can hardly be understood without recourse to the socio-economic trends over the decades. Urbanisation in the developing world started in the colonial period in the first half of the present century with the establishment of economic and administrative centres forming the first urban nuclei. This triggered the influx of people to the urban nuclei for commerce, development and education (Nuwagaba, 1993). With time the nuclei developed into full grown district urban centres. The influx, however, over-run the urban facilities due to increased rural poverty and deprivation on the other hand, and neglect of urban public utilities on the other. This pressure on land and housing utilities is a phenomenon which still holds valid in many urban areas in the developing countries and in Uganda in Particular.

Experiences of some of the African countries illustrate the extent of this rapid urban growth and the attendant crisis. In Swaziland for example, less than 1% of their population was urbanised in 1950; to day it has grown to 33% but it could raise to 65% by the year 2025. Similarly, in Mauritania, urban population grew from 3% in 1950 to 70% in 2025, with the population in most major cities having quadrupled between 1950 and the mid-1980s. In some cities, including Dar Es salaam, Nairobi, Lagos, and Khartoum, populations have multiplied more than sixfold in the last thirty years (see Nuwagaba, 1997). Uganda like its counter parts has experienced and is experiencing the same trend of urban pressure. Street children as an urban phenomenon can not be isolated from the urbanisation process in Uganda. The process of urbanisation has had both positive and negative aspects of development. It has developed pressure zones with slum areas accommodating the poor urban population and which are one major source of street children. The street children are always found coming from the poor urban population or/and they stay in the slums as the residential places in all urban areas, as will be seen in chapter 3.

2.3 Main concepts

In this paper several concepts will be used, which though not new, need clarity as regards their usage in this context. Differences in concepts have been a contentious point in the child studies in different countries, and between developed and developing world; therefore having clear definition creates clarity on their application in this paper. These definitions will be put forward basing and looking at the literature that is in place about the street children. The following concepts will be defined:

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2.3.1 Children

The definition of the term "child" is more complex than may appear at first sight, both in Uganda and more generally. The definition of the term child was a contentious matter in the Constituent Assembly[5] (CA) debate as to what could be acceptable as a child in Ugandan context or Law. It created a gender rift between the CA representatives. The male CA representatives argued that a child should be one below 14 years, whereas the female CA participants were in full support of the Convention on the Rights of Children definition, (that of below 18 years). The term still carries strong arguments and debate as per its application in Law courts, up to date. This was observed when Lady Justice L. Kikonyogo, (Supreme Court Judge), at a Consultative Workshop on Rape and Defilement on September, 9, 1997, advised the Uganda Law Reform Commission to consider reducing defilement age from 18 years to 16 years. Even after the constitutional definition, those who apply the law in Uganda, are not contented with the definition in place. This implies a significant disagreement/differences in the conclusions reached on this term, even for countries like Uganda who are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC).

The lack of consensus concerning the exact age limits of children can be linked to a number of factors. First of all, to the *unspecified use of the term "child" in everyday language*. In this case, the term child refers to any individual who has not reached adulthood. It may also refer to someone's son or daughter, no matter the age. Secondly, lack of consensus may also be attributed to *varying cultural notions about the term "child"*. Therefore clear limits separating both status of seniority and adulthood, and the different phases involved in each (infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth) can not be established (Sabattini 1996: 19). And Thirdly, it is also attributed to *no coincidence among the biological processes and developmental age of a child*. Individuals who delayed in biological processes may also be delayed in intellectual development. Due to differences in timing, the different ages may not coincide with each other; some out grow their age in size and others have premature sexual maturation.

Blanc (1992), observes that the definition of what constitutes "childhood" and thus children as a category, raises some important issues and that ideas on these issues have been rapidly changing. In the North, the clear construct of childhood came in with the rise of middle class after the first phases of industrialisation, bringing the concept in extensive discussion. However, in the South (developing countries), this shift has partially occurred and the construct is not consciously part of the prevailing

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[5] Constituent Assembly (CA), is the body of constituent representatives which discussed and wrote the constitution of Uganda, 1995

attitudes, there is no clarity of the concept children, it differs from country to country, from culture to culture, from situation to situation, and person to person. Therefore childhood (*according to western construction*) in developing world is very short-lived for both impoverished urban and rural children who have to find ways or work to sustain themselves and/ or their families. The situation is different for rich(er) children.

In developing countries in general and in Uganda in particular, the reality and practice of the concept child is determined by various issues. According to practice and reality, age may/does not determine childhood in the African and many other developing country situations. One ceases to be a child irrespective of age, when he/she gains economic and/ or social independence, when one can afford for himself/herself. Marriage and giving birth also determines when one ceases to be a child. Very often children of below 18 years of age, but once married, assume all the responsibilities of his/her home, with no or little experience and with no guidance. At this stage they may become fathers and mothers, and they assume adulthood status within the community. It is important to note that AIDS has bought with it increased numbers of "children" (by biological/age criteria) who have to take on "adult" responsibilities in production and household management.

However, understanding or maturity of street children (psycho-social functioning) resembles that of an adult and therefore in this respect could not be taken as children; though they look much smaller and younger than they really are. As Sabattini (1996), observes that one could not call an individual who can maintain him or herself and survive on the streets alone a *child*.

The appropriateness of the definitions of course depend on the purpose(s) for which the definition is needed. Thus different definitions of the term "child" (by age or other criteria) may be equally appropriate for different specific (analytical and policy) purposes. For the purposes of the present situation we feel it sufficient to adopt a simple and practical definition. Therefore, we will adopt the definition of International Convention on the Rights of a Child and as reflected in the 1996 Children Statute of Uganda, referring to a child as "a person of 18 years and below." The Convention on the Rights of a Child, as adopted by United Nations (UN) in 1989, contends that a child is not a citizen and has no political power. It is at the age of 18 years when citizenship begins, when you can vote for legislation and policies that rule your life (Ennew, 1994: 10). Ennew adds that in other spheres children are defined by age and by what they are *not;* what they are is quite limited.

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2.3.2 Street children

"Street children" is a category of children whose definition is still problematic and in the process of being clarified (Blanc, 1992: 41). The term, in its application has different meanings for different people using it. The concept and definition of street children has been problematic as acknowledged by various authors, though they have not put forward any alternative proposals (Glauser, 1990: 143). However, others attempt new definitions but even the existing ones lack precision and can add confusion in practice.

The definition and use of the term street children varies all over the world, between child organisations and even within communities. For example, UNICEF and INTER-NGO programmes (1984), all define this term differently. There are also authors who refer to the subject by using the popular terms which are commonly used/known in their given local communities without any further explanation (Glauser, 1990). For example, *Chokora* (scavengers) in Nairobi, Kenya; *maungu* (thieves, uncontrollable) in Kenya- Uganda border towns of Malaba and Busia; *Bayaye* (thieves) as commonly and generally referred to them in Uganda; *gamines* (as referred to in Colombia) and many more in the other parts of the world where the street children issue/problem exist. They have also been defined and popularly labelled by various terms, *"runaways"*, *"out of school youth"*, *"homeless kids"*, *"vagrants."* (ILO and UNICEF report, 1994: 22). However, this labels to street children can be hurtful and promote negative connotation. This shows how confused and difficult the issue of street children is even to those who feel entitled and concerned to intervene in the lives of the children facing problems.

The theme "street children" as a social construct affects our perceptions of the street children problem, of the appropriate solutions, appropriate policy and individual responses. Central is the notion, that street children exist in contrast to "normal" childhood. According to Ennew (1994), "normal" childhood is equated to children with a family, with parents, and growing up with parental guidelines and dependent on parents both economically and socially. Boyden (1994 as cited in Aptekar, 1996: 257), puts forward the idea that street children become the.....

> *"objects of moral judgement" because they violate the norms of society by not being under the same roof as their parents, by working instead of going to school, and by assuming the right to enjoy the fruits of their work as they choose (consuming drugs and alcohol).*

They are seen as children out of the "normal" lifestyle of families.

Thus street children all over the world have come to symbolise the moral decay and large scale social problems in their society, including inequality of income and changing family values. Looking at the

impoverished state of street and working children the world all over and Uganda in particular, people feel confronted by the breakdown of their society and the insecurity of their future. This has resulted in different views about these children.

The most cited definition of the concept of *street children* was given by an International Programme of non-governmental organisations which functioned from 1982-1985: The Inter-NGO Programme (1984). According to this definition, a street child is........

> *"any boy or girl who has not reached adulthood for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wastelands etc.) has become his or her habitual abode and/ or sources of livelihood and who is inadequately protected by responsible adults (Sawyer 1988, Fyre 1989).*

However, for practical purpose of this paper and its arguments that have been forwarded, as regards the conditions (see 1.2), with the reflection of the above definition, the term street children will refer to *all those children who spend a lot of time on their own in /on the streets; that is both those who live on the streets and those who work and go back to their "families". It therefore goes beyond the policy definition.* This definition which is derived from observable traits of street children on the ground, is inclusive and broader, and treats street children not as a homogeneous group taking into account other aspects of life of street children, in comparison to the policy definition (see 1.2). It is more policy relevant in that various policy responses can be developed with a view of this diversity of the group. The definition acknowledges the differences within street children. It is important to note that the concept of street children encompasses a number of children in different circumstances, occupations, and predicaments. However, Blanc, acknowledges that it is not the categories that are the most important but the total recognition of the situation and commitment to the response.

However, this re-definition (a more inclusive concept of street children) is necessary, though not in itself enough. There is a need to break down street children into different sub-categories depending on their situation and problems as will be seen in the actual situation in chapter 3. It should be noted that the more inclusive the definition, the less homogeneous will the population of street children included in the definition; and the less homogeneous they are, the more need for differentiated policies addressed to different kinds of street children.

It is this difference in conceptualisation and use of the term street children that determines the strategies that policy makers and any other interested organisations that intervene in problem adopt. Glauser

(1990, 144) argues likewise, that it is less acceptable that international organisations, policy makers, social institutions and individuals who feel entitled and concerned to intervene in lives of children with problems (in this case, street children), do so on the basis of obviously unclear and arbitrary knowledge about the reality of these children's lives. The result of these is in harmful to the children: it is obvious that a child with serious problem(s) may be deprived of vital institutional care, protection and help because s/he is conceptually defined out of the categories which labels children deserving of care/ attention within a given society. Children with serious problems may be forced into inappropriate institutional care or any inappropriate intervention due to being wrongly included in a "problem" category. Being left unidentified or even nameless may mean being invisible to society.

2.4 Practical Framework of Street Children

The issues of street children is a world-wide problem and there has been a generalised conceptual perspective. These views hold for some children and not others but all in all, help to give an overall state and view of street children in the different parts of the world.

2.4.1 Socio-economic context of street children

It is of importance to spell out the socio-economic context which shapes the street children phenomena and in which it occurs. Street children problem is largely associated with poor social classes. It predominantly originates from poor working- class households of both formal and informal sectors in urban centres and from rural setting. Although Sabattini (1996), correctly argues that not all street children are driven to the streets due to poverty in their families and not all poor children are on the streets; it is generally the case that street children do not come from wealthy social classes. It quite true that there are no compelling economic reasons for children from privileged backgrounds to enter the streets to earn a living for themselves at an age of below 18 years. Researches in this field have shown that the majority of children on the streets are mainly working children and earn a living for themselves and/ or to supplement the meagre resources of their families. It has been observed that:

> the search by children for income earning opportunities is typically part of the family survival strategy-
> response to extreme poverty or to major household crises (Rodgers and Standing, 1981: 12, quoted in
> Sachikonye, 1991: 4).

This observation is very true for the presence of the majority of children on the streets in many third world countries and particularly the border town street children, who are mainly working street children. In one way or another, children on the streets are engaged in an income earning opportunities, "legally" or "illegally". Myers (1988, as quoted in Lowry, 1997), from his observation of the Brazilian street children reaffirmed the socio- economic situation of these children, as below;

"The vast majority of street children [in Brazil] were in fact neither homeless nor delinquent, but simply looking for income to help support themselves and their families. The problem (of street children) should be redefined as one primarily of unprotected working children who were frequently exploited and worked under abominable conditions for very low returns."

Like the Brazilian street children, most street children in Tororo district border urban centres are not just homeless and delinquent, many of them are primarily street working children.

The presence of poverty in families both in urban and rural settings plus major household crises such as, violence and hostility of parents towards children; death, divorce and remarriage of parents, are contributive factors which push children to the streets for supplementary or/and alternative survival strategies. A street children study in Cambodia revealed that poverty and structural imbalances in society are deep rooted problems. From the children's view, in the aggregated responses of children interviewed, the reasons for their being on the streets were various but many of them hinge on poverty. These included: poverty/parents being poor, to support the families, parent(s) dead, parent(s) handicapped, and to follow father to make money. Others were abandoned, or had suffered violence and abuse in their families, and cruelty and physical violence were common at home (ILO and UNICEF report, 1994; Ennew, 1996). The most recent social root of this phenomena has also been armed conflict within countries. For example, the Ugandan civil war situation in many regions has contributed greatly to increase of street children. The influx of street children into the urban centres on the Zimbabwean side of the border was explained by flight of a number of children in the war ravaged neighbouring Mozambique, as it was observed below;

Armed conflict has dislocated family life, peasant production and internal security forcing many children to flee on their own or with parents. These children have engaged in vending and domestic work and at times they end up on the streets permanently (Sachikonye, 1991: 28).

We have referred above to poverty and meagre resources as being one of the major socio-economic force driving children to the streets in the third world; Uganda is no exception. Economic stress has undermined the social safety net provided by the family network in our cultural context. A considerable number of street children belong to destitute families who live in very difficult circumstances but who can no longer be accommodated by the extended family network.

2.4.3 Understanding of Street Children

In a five country survey analysing street children and their family relations, it was established that only a small number of children had severed all their family ties (Blanc, 1992: 46). Most children live at home and come to the streets for economic survival and contribute to the household economy by their informal- sector work activities. For example in Philippines and India, three-fourths of the children on

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the streets were actively contributing to household economies. In Brazil, even of those who had tenuous ties with their families, 42% was found still some times contributed to the family budget. It is worth noting that most of the these children live in poor urban neighbourhoods in all cities where the street children phenomena exist. Whereas some street children attend school, education sustainability depends on the parent's appreciation of its values, but also on school fees and time schedules which are critical determinants of children enrolment and continuity.

On the other extreme, there are street children who have no functional family ties at all and attempt to fill this void by forming "fictive family" relationships and even stronger emotional attachments to the "street".

Sabattini (1996) from his literature review, estimated these two categories as composing respectively, 75% of *children "on" the streets*[6] and 25% of *children "of" the streets*[7] in countries where this phenomenon is present. Anyuru (1996), has categorised Ugandan street children as composing 90% of children on the streets and 10% of children of the streets. This difference between the general and the particular situation reveals that there is no homogeneous situation and categorisation of street children. The yardstick of distinguishing these categories of children, is the degree to which these street children maintain contact with their families. Since the children "of" the street face a more acute situation, many authors, interested parties and even policy makers, have regarded them as the "real" street children. To these authors and policy makers, although the category of children "on" the street need support, they are not "street children" (Aptekar, 1988). However, I do not concur with this opinion, given my field experience and the "necessary conditions" which determine a street child as a concept. Furthermore, the isolation and elimination of this category of children from the policy concept of "street children", has not stopped the general perception of this group as street children by the general public, when they are seen all the day long, mixing with the so called "real street children". The street conditions of these children have not changed, they engage in most of the work that is done by those referred to as "real street children", but only have closer family ties. What has changed is the social understanding about the group; they contribute to the family livelihood and have a "family". It should

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[6] Children on the street- in this case refer to those children who come to the street to work and at the end of the day return home, maintaining a regular family contact.
[7] children of the street- refer to those children who have moved away from home and leave longer periods without getting in touch with the family people. Sometimes they never get in touch with their families. They are completely independent from their families and live on their own.

be accepted that whereas there are these differences which may need different approaches to any attempts towards this phenomena, all these children need attention.

It should be noted that street children have quite a tight-knit social organisation, with their own networks of mutual help and support. It has been observed by several authors and children workers that street children have well co-ordinated social ties among themselves that help them carry on with their lives on the streets. They have formed a home away from home, in which they help each other in case of any problem and also in times of joy. This important point has escaped the attention of policy makers but if realistic policies are to be developed which build on children's strengths, rights and participation, much of these neglected aspects would need to be taken into account. In short, there is need to understand street children.

2.4.4 Numbers Game[8] /magnitude

Street children are an elusive population; moving about in the streets or from one urban centre to another, they are difficult to find and difficult to count. Anyuru (1996), acknowledges this problem when he observes that the street children in Uganda is a mobile population, making an actual account difficult. It is more difficult to get the actual number of cross- border street children, for example the case of those in Tororo district border towns of Busia and Malaba. These children are often defensive and resist being interviewed. Children, and in particular children in especially difficult circumstances like street children, who have been emotionally scarred and exposed to exploitative adults, tend to be defensive and conceal the truth about their own families and their personal histories. Most existing family/household studies do not contain information about children.

According to Blanc (1992, 45), the little existing quantitative information on street children is based on limited research and NGO estimates which are rarely reliable, systematic, or methodologically sound. Definitions and terminologies are not standardised. For example definitions about different forms of abuse are relative in different parts of the world. This makes global and even national and local (single urban centre) and cross cultural comparisons difficult to obtain. Van Beers (Research Co-ordinator of SNV- Kenya Street Children Programme), at a meeting of 20 organisations working with street children, noted that street children are often a mobile group and quantitative estimates of their numbers, may give inaccurate results (Were, 1996: 3). He then observes that a lot of confusion has resulted as

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[8] Numbers game refers to the validity and reliability of the estimated numbers of street children whether locally or internally. It also explains how different stakeholders in street children issues come up with different numbers or maintain a constant numbers despite the problems growth over time. Ennew (1994: 32), observes that the basic reason for the lack of accurate figures is that no one can agree on definitions.

regards the magnitude of the street children problem and how to deal with it as a result of a poor definition of the target group and poor research methods.

For example, the figure of 100 million street children world wide has been repeated since the late 1980's and continues to be used as a convenient figure to conjure the magnitude of the problem (Lowry, 1997). This figure has been used as if the problem is stagnant within this period of time, but with the observation of the trend in different countries, such as Uganda and Kenya, street children situation is on the increase and it has become a new phenomena in many other urban centres where it had never occurred before. The reality is that nobody knows the real figure whether at global, national or city levels. Lowry emphasises, what we know is that the vast majority of these children, from 75% to 95%, have families and homes of some kind (Were, 1996; Kudrati and Rajani, 1994; Bose, 1992)[9]. Appetiser (1996: 253), argues that these estimates vary so drastically because of different groups of children. Ennew (1994) argues that the basic reason for the lack of accurate figures is that no one can agree on definitions. The inflated estimates also have to do with the public's fear which is diffuse, but which is fuelled by increasing economic insecurity.

These problems in no way diminish the problems of street working children. The knowledge of who are street children and how many they are; are crucial questions to bring the problem into perspective for any planning or rather intervention. A recognition of their family relationships allows for more effective programming grounded in realities of the slum-to-street continuum (ibid.).

2.4.5 Image of Street Children
Street children everywhere in the world where this phenomena exist have been perceived negatively from, and their situation is contrasted with "normal" childhood. Most studies show that street children are treated badly by communities (Boyden, 1991). Appetiser (1996: 257), observes that they have been sold to what amounts to indebted servitude and have been murdered for no more than committing petty

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[9] The figures quoted are for convenience for the organisation or interested party; for example NGOs or children activities may give higher numbers in order to be given a go ahead to attract sympathy and carry on their project work but it can also be a backfire on the activists as well and government's emphasis on low numbers of homeless or street children can be a shield on their indifference. According to Uganda child welfare document, it is estimated that Uganda had only 2000 street children, on the other hand NGOs reports an estimate of 10,000 to 15,000 by that time up to date.

Another example, is that of Mexico government, which conducted a survey in Mexico City that revealed only 5,000 'real' street children in the city of 27 million people. However, the Mexican activist Andrea Bercena twistedly observed, the state counted 5,000 children who have no one to provide them with clean underwear. They congratulated themselves, and declared all the rest of the street working children the responsibility of their families (Andrea. B. , CEMEDIN, personal communication, 1991; as quoted in Lowry, 1997). Unfortunately she herself lost credibility because of her exaggerated claim of at least 5 million 'street children' in Mexico City.

crimes or simply being naughty. For example, several hundred children have been killed by death squads in Brazil; in 1996, a Kenyan street child was shot dead by police for stealing a signal-lens from a parked car. The question is, why do street children elicit such reactions, in contrast to other categories of children?

They are portrayed as a nuisance in society, they are on many occasions ignored by adults. Street children in every country and probably every urban centre are referred to by local names, which names have negative connotations. Labels to street children can be hurtful and promote negative connotation and they also influence the public response to the street children. Whereas the criminal perception by the public may be true for a small section of street children, some studies have proved that many of them do not possess the resources nor the power to engage in criminal activities (Sachikonye, 1991: 32). Their major problem is vulnerability, powerlessness, and poverty (ibid.). They are seen offering cheap and useful services to the public without any hostility.

Street children's families, future and their own situation has been perceived and portrayed very negatively and also very collectively as if they are a homogeneous group, although they may have only few similarities. Their families are perceived as broken, disintegrated with poverty, single female headed families and as children with broken ties with their families. Generally speaking, reasons for street children being in the streets are various as advanced by different authors and street child workers (see 2.3.1). The children have been forced by various reasons to seek for "alternative home" and survival strategies, the street. Whereas many of the case studies show that street children are mainly out on the streets as a result of poverty, runaways can not be totally ignored. There are also cases where hostile environment at home forces them away.

The children have also been perceived as those whose future is doomed, as children who will be criminals, terrorists and can not be rehabilitated. They are seen as children who do not think and care about their future. The children themselves are seen as starving, violent, without morals, thieves, runaways / uncontrollable, prostitutes for girls, drug addicts, and as children who have lost emotional attachment such as love (Ennew, 1994: 14). However, whereas some of these ideas are true and apply to some street children, studies on street children have also proved that they are not applicable to all children. There are many children on the streets who interact with "their" families and also many of them as discussed in the foregone paragraphs have family ties. All these perceptions are usually with people of different interests and views about these children. However, poverty has been the most

important driving push factor behind the rest of these family perceptions. Therefore, in this paper, poverty, civil strife and broken and unstable families are taking the lead as the main push factors despite other minor factors as peer group influence, indiscipline and need for freedom. These images of children have determined the responses by all actors in this field.

The street children phenomena has different meanings to different actors/people, and therefore policy responses have been put forward in that respect. However, the street children problem should be viewed with very clear understanding of the push and pull factors and a concrete boundary and magnitude. Clearly answering the questions, who are street children?, why are they on the streets?, what are their problems?, without apportioning blame, is the only way to develop appropriate approaches to work with and for street children. These questions will guide policy makers in formulating sound and well defined policy problems and recommendations which will be implemented with a clear vision.

2.4.6 Approaches to street children

Approaches and responses to street children in countries where this phenomenon exists have taken various dimensions. Conventional and alternative approaches, legal and illegal are all ways in which the street children phenomenon has been addressed in different countries world-wide. These responses can be attributed to perception/conceptualisation of the phenomenon in a particular city and/or country. Some of the responses in addressing this issue will be presented from different parts of the world. This may serve as a basis of what could be appropriate in the Ugandan case in the subsequent chapters.

Many countries, with the international call of attention to child survival and development, strengthened the conventional/ mainstream approaches to street children. For example in Brazil, the response to Street children has slowly moved institutional assistance by government which withdrew children from communities by support of forces of law and order (the military and civil police); juvenile courts; and welfare agencies to non-institutional assistance (introducing the street children to society before they become a threat.) (Rizzini et el, 1992: 32). There has been legislation of children's rights and consequently shifting the legal and social position of children in Brazil. This approach called for joint efforts of government and NGOs identifying, analysing street children problems and disseminating details of the situation and successful projects engaged in the struggle, with the street children participation. It also fostered information exchange among many voluntary groups and considered

participation in community life very important to street children's psychological and social development (ibid. 33).

Some countries, such as Brazil and other Latin American countries have worked on gaining national visibility to the problem of street children. This has been done by creating awareness on the problem of the marginalised urban children by organising regional meetings of street children, calling for their participation. For example, the National Street Children Congress in Brasilia in 1986, in which 500 street and working children participated, encouraging them to speak out the issues that affect them. This sort of presentation had effects on the stereotypes that had grown around street children, giving them a new positive public image (ibid.).

The integration of children's rights into national constitutions is one way governments are responding to the (street) children problem. For example, this has been done in Brazil, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa. Constitutions are the basis of public laws and policies. However, effective implementation of these policies/laws is what remains questionable in many countries. The Constitutions have been supported by drafting and adoption of children's acts, such as the Children and Adolescent Act in Brazil, the Children Statute in Uganda, Children Act in India, South African Child care Act, and many others in other countries, defining the laws that govern the children and their rights. In response to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the World Summit for Children (September, 1990), many countries have developed National Plans of Action for Children, some extending them to the lower levels. This has been done in countries like South Africa, Kenya, Brazil and Uganda. What is not clear is their effectiveness in relation to street children issues at their different levels in different countries.

Defining and implementing the children rights have been approached by adopting to the process of decentralisation in some countries. This is true for Uganda, Kenya and Brazil, where districts and municipality respectively gain more autonomy and responsibility. The process is expected to result in policies and programmes which are more need-oriented, rationalisation of management, increased participation of local beneficiaries, more efficient control of resources at the local level, and increase accountability (ibid. 39). For example, Brazil's policies for implementation of children's rights has been divided in three sections;

i) Basic social policies which are for all children, giving them all their basic rights;

ii) Social assistance policies which address only children in need, they are not universal and have positive discrimination. Their responses are based mainly on economic status, made in favour of underprivileged groups of children and families.

iii) Special protection policies which addresses the victimised children, in a situation of personal and social risk.

This categorisation of the children welfare policy has been able to take care for those children who may be left out and those who need special attention. However, despite decentralisation and national concerns about street children, little has been done at the lower levels, for example the case of Tororo district.

On the contrary, despite the positive approach to street children in these countries; there are also brutal and illegal responses administered in addressing the problem. In bid to eliminating street children off the streets, special killer squads have been created as a solution. This is has been very common in the Latin American Countries of Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico (see 1.1; Lowry 1997). According to Human Rights Watch/ Asia (1996: 2), in India, street children are routinely detained, illegally beaten and tortured and sometimes killed by police, in response to the problem. This has been attributed to police perception of street children, its widespread corruption and violence, and non-implementation of legal safeguards. This is also true for Kenya (see 2.3.5), South Africa, and Uganda too (see chapter 3). In Sudan, the government response to street children phenomenon, in a campaign of 'cleaning up' city streets, there has been arbitrary arrests and detentions of these children. The children are rounded up and sent to special, closed camps. This has been the policy since 1992 (Rone, 1995). The Sudan government does not bother to investigate reasons as to why children are on the streets and what alternative approaches could be offered. However despite the continued seizure of children off the streets, the government has of recent taken up an internationally funded pilot project to reunite children in the camps and their families (ibid.).

Other than the mainstream/conventional approach as above, there is alternative response to the problem. Alternative interventions by international and local NGOs have been very vital in addressing the (street) children issues/problems all over the world. NGOs active in the child welfare field are often established to provide alternative services to individuals and groups whose needs are not adequately met by the existing welfare policies and services and which are not foreseen at all by the system (Rizzini, et al, 1992: 50). UNICEF has played a leading role internationally. However many international and local NGOs have been created to assist the street children. The main problem with

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these NGOs is that their definition for the term is not standardised (see Blanc, 1992). These NGOs have done tremendous work in preventive, remedial, and on sight/immediate help to street children. Some of them, have also contributed to children welfare policy development in countries where they operate.

2.5 Concluding remarks

The issue of street children as seen from this chapter is very complex, and its complexity has resulted in divergent and ambivalent views, and responses to the problem the world all over. However, this does not mean that nothing can be done to get to approximate reality of the situation. The realisation of the complexity of the street children problem should be the strong-hold for all those that feel concerned and are involved in seeking a better future for these children. The complexity should be the starting point for deeper analysis and research before any policy is formulated and implemented. The chapter then brings out the theoretical and practical need for better conceptualisation and definition of the problem in order to formulate and implement viable strategies for the right beneficiaries and the kind of personnel and organisation for successful implementation of the policy. Policies should (re)define street children taking into account the differences between them, thus not excluding some of them in order to find appropriate solutions/strategies depending on different causes forcing them to the streets.

The tools laid down in this chapter, such as problem structuring, general international views with diversities about street children, and the approaches from various countries, will be borne in mind in guiding the analysis in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Insights into the Street Life of Street Children: The Case of Street Children in Tororo District Urban Border Centres

3. 0 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the overall situation of street children in Uganda and Tororo district in particular. Briefly, the trends and patterns of urbanisation will be dealt with. It will cover the emergence of the street children and their characteristics, the work they are involved in and the consequent risks of their life on the streets as well as from the activities they are involved in. It will sum up with the public perception /attitude towards these children, which as discussed in the last chapter reflects the terminology and therefore the definition of street children in Uganda and Tororo district urban border centres in particular. The street children definition and policy formulation should be based on the concrete situation with the help of this analysis.

3.1 Trends and patterns of urbanisation in Uganda

In Uganda, like the rest of the developing world, urbanisation has taken the same trend and patterns as in many other African countries. Urbanisation in Uganda started in the early twentieth century, with the establishment of economic and administrative centres all over the country but tremendously increased in the 1980s (Richard Stren ed., 1994 cited in Nuwagaba, 1997). The economic centres created "pressure zones", a phenomenon punctuated by heavy demographic shifts from rural areas to urban centres. This trend has resulted in migration of poor migrants to towns, either with their families which with time can not afford the standards of living. The migrants later over-ran the existing facilities culminating in increased pressure on housing utilities, land resources and other infrastructure. It is these pressure zones (poor slum areas) which are the centres and residential areas of street children. Table 1 depicts the trend of urbanisation of major towns of Uganda since 1980. *(see next page).*

The major feature that can easily be seen from the table is urban primacy. This is clearly indicated by the population of Kampala, the largest urban centre with a population of 774241, followed by Jinja the second largest town with a population of only 65165. Thus Kampala has remained the primate city throughout the period of 1980-91. It is also apparent from the table that the central region of Uganda constitutes the highest level of urbanisation by 16.6% and 24.4% in 1980 and 1991 respectively. At national level, Kampala represents 5.6% of the total urban population in Uganda (Nuwagaba, 1997).

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Table 1: Urbanisation rates of the ten largest urban centres of Uganda (1980-1991)

Rank	Urban area	Current status	Population		Average annual growth rate (%)
			1980	1991	1980-91
1	Kampala	C.C.	458503	774241	4.7
2	Jinja	MC	45060	65165	3.35
3	Mbale	MC	28039	53987	5.96
4	Masaka	MC	21123	49585	4.84
5	Entebbe	MC	21289	42763	6.36
6	Mbarara	MC	23253	41031	5.16
7	Soroti	MC	15048	40970	9.11
8	Gulu	MC	14958	38297	8.55
9	Tororo	MC	16707	26783	4.29
10	Arua	MC	9663	22217	7.57

Note: CC - City Council

   MC- Municipal Council

Source: National Housing and Population Census, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (UG., p.47)

The heavy population in urban areas and Kampala city in particular has been brought about by various factors including among others; the post-colonial policy of concentrating the socio-economic opportunity in specific urban centres to the detriment of other areas. This policy culminated in the movement of the rural population to the urban centres as a natural response toward this colonial legacy and post colonial policy. The result has been unprecedented pressure on residential accommodation and sanitation services in the city and other urban centres. The problem of urbanisation in Uganda has been summed up with particular reference to Kampala in a study which revealed the following:

> *Kampala township was created in 1902. African residence was restricted to an area outside the township on the land that was under mailo tenure.[10] The last boundaries were demarcated in 1968. The development of land outside the 1902 township was left to the owners of the land. This had adverse effects on the urban planning of Kampala. Buildings face different directions. There is great mixture of uses, with little separation of residential from commercial and industrial uses. Most buildings are temporary or semi-permanent and many of the households live in crowded conditions (UNEP, 1989, quoted from Nuwagaba, 1997).*

The above case of Kampala is representative of the rest of Uganda urban centres, with no exception of urban centres in Tororo district. This haphazard growth of urban settlements is shown in the table 2.

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[10] A farm of free hold land tenure where individuals own land titles certifying bonifide ownership of land parcel.

Table 2: The level and trend of urban growth between 1969-1991

Year	No. of urban centres	Population	% of total population
1969	28	276,211	4.6
1980	48	634,592	5.0
1991	92	938,297	5.5
1995	150	1,889,622	11.0

Source: National Plan of Action Habitat II, 1995.

Note: According to the 1991 National Housing and Population Census, the area was defined as an urban area if it had a population of more than 2000 inhabitants. (Ministry of Planning, Entebbe Uganda)

The table above indicates that the level of urbanisation is only 11.0%. It also shows that rapid urban growth has been between 1991 and 1995 at about 12% p.a. This is comparatively low on the global scale. However, most of the settlement in these towns have sprung up without proper urban planning and development control requirements. The urban authorities have consequently ignored these settlements describing them as "illegal" and not conforming to municipal/city council building, health and population holding capacity regulations. Due to their status the urban authorities have ignored them in the provision of the necessary services such as water, refuse collection, electricity and sewage disposal. The authority has failed to do away with these settlements as they represent centres of high density and this has political implications. These particular areas represent the most problematic urban areas in Uganda.

The problem of the municipal authority performance has been worsened by the political crisis that culminated in the fall in the economic growth of the country. For example by 1979, after the overthrow of Amin's government, the income per capita declined to US $ 120 from US $ 450 in 1970 (Background to Budget 1987, as quoted from Nuwagaba, 1997). Despite the above, urban population growth has grown out of proportion with the growing drastic decline in industrial production and in the rest of all the sectors of the economy. So this period was characterised with growth of urban poverty in all urban centres in Uganda. Urban poverty has forced the urban population into finding alternative sources, whereby the young population are pressured to contribute to their own and family livelihoods. The situation of street children in Tororo district border urban centres is mainly linked to poverty in urban and rural areas as well.

3.2 Background to Tororo District

Tororo district is one of the 39 districts of Uganda, located in Eastern part of Uganda; bordering with the Republic of Kenya to the East, Iganga district in the West, Mbale district in the North and stretches from Lake Victoria in the South to Lake Kyoga in the North. Its main urban centre Tororo municipality ranks 9th largest among Ugandan urban centres. (See attached map).

Tororo district is predominately rural with over 88.5% of the population living in rural areas, with a very small population living in the urban centres.

3.2.1 Household structure

According to the census (1991), while 24.9% of the rural households are female headed, 34% are female headed in urban areas. The average family size 4.8-5.0 in rural areas and 3.6 in urban setting. However it should be noted that though child headed households are not clearly segregated in the above percentages, there are also child headed households within the demarcations, (see 3.4.4). This also explains why some children (as heads of household) have to seek their survival from smuggling on the streets of the urban areas.

3.2.2 Population and age structure of Tororo District

Tororo district is generally characterised by a young population. According to the population census (1991), the district had a total population of 555,574, out of which 409,719 are children and youth below 30 years of age (74% of the total population). Of these, 302,417 are children less than 18 years of age and 45% of the total population are children under 15 years of age. Thus more than half of the total population are children, which implies a high dependency ratio, with serious implications for the development of the district.

3.2.3: Socio- economic background of Tororo District

While the Ugandan economy has been growing at an average rate of 6% per annum since 1986, poverty afflicted over 50% of the Ugandan in 1995 (UNDP; Uganda Human Development Report [UHDR], 1996: 54). The poor are predominantly rural, with the east and north regions being the poorest regions, for which Tororo district is part. This partly explains the prevalence and increasing trend of street children in the district urban centres.

According to the 1991 population census, 8.5% were in formal employment; 39.9% were self employed; and 51.6% were unpaid family workers. Agriculture forms the major economic activity in the district, where 83% of the population are engaged in subsistence agriculture (1991 census). The majority of the population engaged in agriculture are women comprising of 54.5 %. This basically

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indicates that women are the potential labour force in agriculture. This indicates that women like in many parts of Uganda are not engaged in paid employment which may be attributed to the low levels of education or/and cultural setting.

Agriculture (subsistence farming) provides 79.9% source of household livelihood, yet commercial farming provides only 0.4%. Other sources of livelihood include employment income 10.1%, petty trade- 4%, formal trading- 1.1%, and cottage industry- 0.3% (Mpabulungi, 1994).

According to the 1995 ILO/UNDP Employment Advisory Mission Report on Employment Generation and Poverty Reduction in Uganda (as cited in UNDP; UHDR, 1996), employment opportunities and wages in the informal and small-scale farm agriculture sectors have been growing less rapidly than the formal sector, suggesting the build- up of a labour reserve under the stress of rapid migration in the main towns. The restructuring of the formal sector agencies in order to enhance their competitiveness, downsizing of the public sector service and the inability of the retrenched personnel to secure remunerative self-employment or jobs in the private sector has contributed to the poor growth process, which on balance, has been jobless growth in urban population with little or no sustainabilty and prospects of a positive impact on human development.

Thus with a fast growing population, massive rural to urban migration, and economic crisis caused by the fall in the market price of export goods such as coffee and cotton disrupting the socio-economic situation of the country and effects of structural adjustment (as above), urban centres then became the destination of thousands of people seeking a haven for their problems. Urban centres in Tororo district are all experiencing this trend, as a result children are drawn nearer to the streets than before.

Religion: The major religious sects are Catholics comprising of 47.1%, Anglican Church (Protestants) 41.3% and Muslims 9.4%. As a border district, there has a number of churches mushrooming and new christian sects such as Baptist, Pentecostal, Hope of Faith etc., have come up. There is no distinct geographical interpretation of the distribution by religion.

3.3 Emergence of street children and its causes

The term *street children* is not new in the catalogue of problems that have hit the urban centres of developing countries in general and Uganda in particular, over the last two decades.

In East Africa , street children were first noticed in Nairobi in 1969; and by 1989 there were an estimate of 3600 in Kenya as whole. In Uganda, particularly Kampala, street children became noticeable in 1972, with the onset of Amin's economic war (Anyuru, 1996: 269), and this trend of street children has grown to an estimated more than 15000 today (Kasirye; 1993).

The 1979 "liberation war" that ousted dictator Amin left scores of children fatherless but the social disruption was contained to some extent by the strength of the extended family system. However, the 1980s saw the invasion of streets of Kampala by scores of children. This marked the endless civil strife which greatly contributed to the increase in number of street children in many towns of Uganda and particularly Tororo urban areas has been characterised by the influx of street children partly due to the same reason of civil wars in Eastern and Northern Uganda.

3.3.1 Explanation of why the street children are on the streets

The new but rapidly growing urban phenomena of street children in Tororo district urban border centres is attributed to several factors that explain its emergence, trend and sustainability up to this day. Several authors (Aptekar, 1996; Anyuru, 1996; Ennew, 1994; Kyeyune, 1996; Lowry, 1997; Sabattini, 1996; etc.), have come up with various reasons explaining what forces these children onto the streets, however, the following are particular to the street children in the district. It is typical that children do not end up on the streets due to single cause but a combination of several factors. According to various studies, the major factors particular to the street children of Tororo urban centres are; economic causes/extreme poverty in homes and more so urban households, civil wars and cattle rustling, unemployment, broken homes/families and deaths of parents/caretakers resulting mainly from AIDS. However, others include; peer group influence to children in contact with those already on the streets, and children's desire for adventure; some children also run away from threatening cultural practices such as male and female circumcision (Anyuru, 1996; Kyeyune, 1996; FOCA -1995; URCS baseline survey reports, 1996).

3.3.2 Economic causes

The most important cause is the socio-economic environment into which a child is born and bred. This, plus the sociological causes are the most important in stimulating the child's personal attributes and aspirations such that if the environment is disrupted, ill formed and inadequate, chances are that the child will go to the streets in order to escape such surroundings. The effect of very low wages and low purchasing power, is abject poverty which is characteristic of slum areas; and that 90% of the population lies below the poverty line and exhibits the indicators of poverty like poor housing, poor

health conditions, malnutrition, and unemployment of parents (Munene and Nambi, 1996; Nuwagaba, 1997; Anyuru, 1996). Poverty at household level reduces the chances of families attaining the basics of life, such as; food, education, shelter; creates a situation whereby the young/children are left independent to either sustain themselves or /and help in meeting the family needs, because the parent(s) can not afford to maintain their children.

However, there is no alternative provision or remedy in cases of genuine failure as a result of financial constraints in Uganda. Since 90% (Anyuru, 1996; Nuwagaba, 1997) of the population are low income earners the extent of social problem/solution leading to street children can be envisaged. Under such circumstances, it is inevitable that some of these deprived children take to the streets as an alternative to cater for themselves. Below is a case of a child caught up in the streets due to economic conditions of her family;

> *"Nafuna (13 years), by 1996, had spent 6 years on Busia town streets. She moved from Mbale to Busia with her parents venturing in petty trade. However, with deteriorating border business, she was pushed to the cross border smuggling of goods from Kenya to Uganda, for the whole day up to very late in the night, all in bid for survival and support of her home. She could not attend school because there was no money to sustain her at school and all the time is spent in smuggling goods/on the streets. This was the only survival strategy for her."* **(URCS[11] baseline survey report on street Children in Busia town; 1996).**

Nafuna is a stereotype of many young girls and boys who have been pushed by the poor economic conditions of their families to take on to the streets to earn a living for themselves and their families. This is the most common situation of the street children along the border towns of Tororo district, who if given the attention due to their innovativeness can carry on with life successfully.

The problem of the influx of people from rural areas to towns has resulted in the proliferation of slums and squatter areas. The unskilled rural migrants who may get a service-type of job with very little pay will only afford to stay in the growing slum community within absolute poverty. The growth of the street children phenomenon has been orchestrated by the growing urban poverty in these slum community.

The majority of street children in Uganda should therefore not be seen as homeless and delinquent but positively struggling for survival. They are on the streets for economic survival for themselves and/or their families. These children are either engaged in a family or individual business or employed by a

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[11] URCS- Uganda Red Cross Society- NGO

trader. The problem is not just being on the street but of exploitation by the traders (who offer them peanuts in return of their services) and poverty within their families. It is thus important to look at the socio-economic backgrounds of these children in order to come up solutions that fit them.

Due to economic structural changes in Uganda that greatly lowered the value of the shilling, despite the wage increase, wages have fallen in real terms because the prices of goods and services have also risen sharply. The poor households in urban centres are no longer able to care for their children. It should be noted that the slum population is young, with at least half of the slum population less than 20 years of age. Thus the young unskilled and semi-skilled population are limited to the lowest urban pay, so they have to resort to alternative means to make ends meet, thus explaining the presence of street children in urban areas.

The problem of low earnings is worsened by the high rate of unemployment in Uganda, which makes it difficult for such parents to cater for the basic necessities; as a result they let the children cater for themselves at an early age. Hence having children working away in cities is seen as a way of coping with the economic difficulties. The children then find the best alternative strategy to be on the streets.

3.3.3 Family breakdown/ Broken homes

Many street children come from broken families/homes. For the purpose of this research paper, "broken homes" will refer to a home context that is irregular (separating and re-uniting)and troubled (under constant quarrels). It will also refer to a home, where either one or both parents are absent because of death, desertion, separation or divorce. In this respect, it will also include circumstances where both parents are still in the home but in a complete breakdown of marital co-existence eventually leading to violence, which is one reason why children are on the streets.

Family breakdown has also accelerated the poverty situations of the concerned homes. The single parents are usually unable to manage their homes. Out of frustration and desperation, the children go to the streets as an alternative to the bad situation in the home and also to support the single handed unable parents.

Therefore to examine the root causes of the street children phenomenon, means to look at the status of the Ugandan family today. It should be stressed that the breakdown of families is a symptom of increasing poor socio-economic conditions. In the survey (FOCA, 1995), 13% out of 90 street children

interviewed, said they were on the streets due to absolute poverty in their homes. However, others were harassed by step-mothers, relatives or own parents, others due to overload of work. It must be understood that these are effects of poverty (including poor education). Below is a table depicting reason given by the street children as to why they were on the streets as per above mentioned survey.

Table 3: Reasons for being on the street

Reasons	Percentage (%)
Harassed by parents	15
Harassed by stepmother	14
Orphaned- nobody at home	14
Poverty at home	13
Harassed by relatives	8
Mother died	6
Friends convinced me	6
Too much work at home	6
Beyond parental control	6
Family break up	5
The only parent I knew died	5
Father died, mother disappeared	1
Father killed and mother chased away	1
Total	**100**

Source: FOCA baseline survey on street children, 1995

Children become very vulnerable when there is family break down; in case of family violence between parents or care takers, the child is in a difficult situation and even indirect family violence affects children; not only will he/she experience the break up of his family but also the deprivation of one parent. They are also further abused by parents taking their frustration on them. Below is a case of a street child with experience of family violence between his parents,

> *Butto (14 years), as a child I was kicked without reason, and I do not like it any more. My father and mother fight nearly every night, which force us in hidings. I love my parents because I miss them but I do not dig into hidings any more. Our father comes back when drunk and kick the door open and fight with us; so we have to run into hiding with our mother. So I ran away from home to come to the city to avoid all that. But I go home once in a while to see them.*
> *(From FOCA[12] baseline survey reports, 1995: 23)*

He (Butto) in an attempt to search for "peace and freedom" that was lost due to family violence, ended up on the Busia town streets like many other children that come to the streets for similar reasons.

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[12] FOCA- Friends of Children Association- is an indigenous NGO working with street children.

The harsh economic conditions have weakened the community's capacity to cope with collective/communal responsibilities. Today it is common to hear that a "child belongs to the street" and not to a family, village or community as in the past; the social networks are broken, where the responsibility for children was collective. Economic hardships as noted earlier were brought about due to the economic structural adjustment programme, wars, natural disaster, weakening the capacity and will of families and communities to look after their children.

3.3.4 AIDS and street children

Uganda has been ranked second only to USA in the number of AIDS cases in the world (McGrath et al, 1993; 430). The effects of AIDS on the entire Ugandan society has been devastating. Thousands of orphans have been left unable to sustain themselves, and as a result some of them have ended up on the streets for survival. Today it is not uncommon to find households headed by children, while a substantial number of AIDS orphans get on the streets, especially those who are familiar with town life. The proliferation of AIDS orphans on the streets is due to the decay of traditional extended family system which can not sustain collective responsibility anymore as depicted in the foregone discussion .

Orphanhood in Tororo district is on the increase. For example, out of the total 302,417 children in the district; 2,902 children were reported both parents dead, while 25,129 children had lost their fathers (bread winners) and 10,939 children had lost their mothers (Population Census 1991). It was also revealed that 29 out of 302, 417 children did not know their mothers, and 279 out of 302,417 children did not know their fathers. It was reported that 2,309 households were headed by children less than 19 years and yet 240 households were headed by children less than 15 years. Therefore many children lack care and parental love leading to increased numbers of uneducated children, early/child marriages[13], child abuse and street children. In the survey reported in table 3, 27% of street children reported the death of one or both parents as the reason for their being on the street.

3.3.5 Civil wars

Uganda has been characterised by a series of civil struggle for a very long time, from the 1979 war up to now there are pockets of civil war especially in the northern and eastern and recently western parts of the country. The main effects on street children in this district are attributed to the civil war in Eastern Uganda from 1985-1992. The effects of the war forced a number of families and orphans to seek refuge in the urban areas and these generally disintegrated. In the flight of families to towns, many

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[13] Early child marriages in this case come up due the need and thinking that the children will have support for themselves and their siblings left behind after the parents death

children became separated from their families as family members dispersed. The prevalence of street children as a result of civil strife has become true for all urban areas in Uganda. Studies carried out in different towns show that there are street children from the war ravaged parts of Uganda, more so in the Eastern Uganda urban centres. As a result the number of children on the streets of Tororo district border urban centres have increased, either as result of either death of parent(s) during the war or/ and out of displacement.

3.3.6 Cattle Rustling

Closely related to civil strife is the effect of cattle rustling[14]/raiding. This problem is more particular to Eastern Uganda urban areas. The new but rapidly growing problem in Tororo District urban areas like its neighbouring districts of Mbale and Iganga, is/has also been attributed to the influx of displaced children from Karamoja and Teso cattle rustling areas (Mpabulungi, 1994).

The large numbers of street children in Mbale, Busia, Malaba and Tororo towns are due to population displacements from the neighbouring districts of Kumi, Soroti, Moroto, Pallisa and many other areas. Out of the total number of the street children in Uganda, about three-quarters are as a result of civil wars, cattle raiding, AIDS and poverty (Anyuru, 1996). Children who run away on their own or with their parents, have to engage in some form of generating income for themselves and/or their families.

It is important to note that whereas poverty is the major factor (and a contributing factor to many of other causes) forcing the children to the streets as an alternative for survival, there are cases where children have ended on the streets out of their rebellious nature, they have rejected the trade-off between childhood protection with family obligations for the freedom from authority with less security (Aptekar, 1988: xix) and are beyond the parents control. However, it is my belief that as long as the vast majority in Uganda earn very low incomes, inadequate to cater for the basic necessities, the children will continue to suffer neglect and impoverishment and life on the streets will be a solution to survival for many children but a problem to society.

The overview of the forces behind the street children phenomenon in Uganda as above make it quite clear that the conception that street children are those who have permanent life in the streets, is inadequate. The overview brings out that many street children are on the streets in search for survival

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[14] Cattle rustling refers to armed cattle theft between cattle keeping/pastrolist ethnic groups. This happens on large scale by the most powerful tribe (Karamojongs) in several districts in Eastern Uganda.

but not necessarily without family ties. It is then important that policy makers see the problem in that perspective to incorporate those are left out of the current policy definition.

3.4 Characteristics of street children in Tororo district border urban centres and their age boundaries

Street children like other social groupings have particular characteristics that are common to them either as a small group in an urban area or general in a country. In Uganda, however, street children all over tend to have general characteristics from town to town.

3.4.1 Age boundaries of street children in Tororo urban border centres

The street children usually range from the age of 5 to 18 years. This is the age which is able to work and therefore able to survive the challenges of the street. However, this does not mean that the street does not accommodate children of less than 5 years. Parents/mothers have abandoned newly born babies and children below 5 years as well, but these are usually taken away either to babies homes or children's homes as fast as they are identified. On the other hand, those who have out grown the age, still appear on the streets but do not fit in the "street child" category because they are no longer children per the definition. They could be referred to as "street adults". The age group of 5-18 is the most active group of street children. It may be shocking to a new comer on the streets of Busia and Malaba border towns to observe the number and age of children, especially children of between 5-10 of age (*See table 4 below)*, on their own, crossing the border loaded with smuggled goods (such as sugar, milk, soap, cooking oil, etc.), on their own. The majority of these children are part of their families in the struggle to earn a living, within their means. In a baseline survey by the Kenyan Government on street children on the adjacent border town of Busia on the Kenyan side, it was found out that 8-9 out of every 10 street children were living with their families *(KEFAN report, 1995)*. However, these children, have developed their survival strategy, and manage it on their own.

3.4.2 Gender

In Tororo border urban centres and in Uganda in general, the most visible street children on the streets are boys, it is estimated to be 75%; and 25% the children found in the streets are girls. This does not mean that the girls are as few as the figure suggests. Their lower visibility on the streets is due to the fact that they are usually engaged in domestic work and working in market places. However, after their scheduled time of these type of work, they return to the streets for supplementary work. Later in the evenings they can be seen selling small merchandise (such as sweats soybeans, bananas, groundnuts, popcorns cigarettes and biscuits), and smuggling across the border, while others engage in prostitution

for survival (in return for money, food and shelter). The girls may also be forced into sex, due to use of drugs. Across cultures, unaccompanied girls (like the street girls), are at high risk for sexual harassment, rape and coercion into sex work, but this is also true for the vulnerable young boys.

The street girls unlike the street boys attract sympathy from a broad section of the people (with either good or bad intentions). The girls easily find accommodation (if not attached to their families), from people with different motives ranging from lust of men to economic exploiters who make them house maids or baby sitters. They are easily given work to do in domestic chores and therefore given second hand clothes, looking better off than the street boys. However, they are not protected from hazards such as rape and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases including the killer HIV/AIDS. Boys on the other hand are more conspicuous in street activities because they are commonly found in all public places such as bus/tax parks, markets, along roads, and even bars. They may be found scavenging for food from garbage and dustbins. They may be found in isolated places engaged in illicit activities and circumstantially bear the brunt of suspicion from the public. This does not rule out that girls are never found in open places.

Below is a table depicting the sex and age of a sample of street children in baseline survey in Busia border town in Tororo district. The sample was of 90 street children, however some did not give full information.

Table 4: Sample Sex and Age frequency of street children

Sex			Age		
Sex	No.	%	Age (years)	No.	%
Male	86	96	5-9	7	8
Female	4	4	10-14	63	70
Total	90	100		70	78

Source: Baseline survey report on street children in Busia Town, 1996.

It is therefore, significant to note that both sexes live and work on the streets, but the number of boys far out number the boys as reflected in the sex and age distribution figures in the table above.

3.4.3 Solidarity and Communication
"Birds of the same feather flock together." Street children in all cities in Uganda, respond to similar adverse problems and conditions with special coping mechanisms/strategies that amount to a kind of

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similar culture within these children. Unless they are in proper line with the rest of the group the few opponents are likely to depart from the group. They (street boys and girls) have a sense of choice, an instinct which promotes them to join a particular group with which they share the interests, have same hobbies, are usually of the same sex and fall in the same age range. Although, from different tribes and background; unity has been naturally knitted in the various groups of children erasing sectarianism and instead breeding unity regarding in whatever they do, on the face of the same problems, dangers and enemies. Their common culture is centred on formation of fostering groups of friends, courage, mistrust of authorities, strong emphasis on the basic human values of friendship and ingenuity.

Street children in Tororo border urban centres, just like their counterparts the world all over; like different countries or nationalities possess different ways of communication amongst themselves while on the streets. The language developed is mainly for defence/safety against the non-members. It is not easy for any person outside the street children group to grasp their language. It may be just a sign, mime or mixed complicated vocabulary that leave one far out from their communication to each other. They use slang that are not found in any dictionary or language. One wonders why they are used. It may be a way of keeping themselves from the outside world that does not seem to welcome them. They are very creative though young. Below are some of the words used by the street children in Uganda; the list is not exhaustive.

> *Charlie: Referring to a fellow street boy*
> *Ki Mean: A kind of greeting*
> *Tompepeta: Do not spy on me*
> *Obujja: Money*
> *Ondaaba bubi: You dislike me*
> *Ba paayi: Policemen*
> *Muzende: Parents*
> *Bamuyodde/Bamunywedde: Has been arrested*
> *omulenga njuba: Watch*
> **(From Kyeyune, S, Street Children; Why they are OUT. 1996: 11).**

Street children's solidarity goes beyond their common vocabulary to actual help in case danger or attack of fellow members. Solutions are communally sought in bid to save the one in danger (such as arrests, attack from outside group, signals for safety etc.). Despite these closeness, street children the strength of friendship relations varies from group to group. For example, children working on the streets and with strong family ties make rather weak friendships compared to the other group, and these friendships are confined to working hours. For the street children, for whom the street is the only alternative home, friendships are crucially important for sustaining their daily existence and making ends meet. The groups that they form, create a sense of community solidarity.

These children are filled with suspicion, fear and insecurity at all time from their "enemies." Though the Ugandan situation has not reached the Brazilian level of vigilante squads, the Ugandan and in particular, Tororo border urban centres' street children live in constant fear of the police and local defence units and even the hostile adults that are against them. This was expressed by the street children (Child-Link, vol. 2, 1996:2), that *"our best friends are from among themselves, while our worst enemies are the police and local defence units, who arrest us and throw us to the remand homes where conditions are near to inhumane."* and the City/ Municipal councils that remove the garbage the major source of food and warmth. As one of the street child exclaimed, "our *major worry is finding ones garbage pit carried away/cleaned by the city council authorities; the food and warmth will be gone!"* *(Munene and Namibia, 1996: 346)*. Lowry (1997: 5) supportedly observes that hostile adults present similar threats to vulnerable children everywhere.

3.4.4 Risks of the street children

The vulnerability and poor conditions of street children expose them to a lot of risks (behaviours) and situations either forcefully or as a matter of choice, for the sake of survival in their 'alternative home,' the street.

3.4.4.1 Drug use

One wonders how these young children face the street life: how they are able to stay all day long moving up and down, how they do all the dirty and tough work (carry heavy luggage, pick pocket, cut bags, break cars as an alternative for survival strategy) without "fear" of the consequences, pick and eat "dirty food" from dustbins, sleep on verandas (for those whom the street is the sole home). To them drug use has become part of the way of life. Many girls and boys sniff glue and other solvents, including petrol, and aviation fuel (Sanyu and Nassali 1995: 33). They also smoke marijuana, chew mairungi and drink crude waragi (alcohol).

The street children advance various reasons for using the drugs; which include avoiding frustrations, providing warmth in the chilly nights, getting sleep, fighting enemies, killing pain, idleness and giving appetite. Drugs help to spend a night in the open - to fight the cold and to get sleep. Thus, lack of shelter, more so to the children for whom the street is the alternative home, contributes to drug consumption. Property like blankets and mattresses can not be kept - "drugs are blankets." However, not all street children take drugs, for example out of out of 90 interviewed by FOCA, 20% said they did not take any drugs, and 80% do. Drug taking habit exposes these children to a risk of engaging in any activity however dangerous it may be. Discussions with street children have revealed that drug and

substance abuse can lead to a number of problems. Some drug abusers loose self- control and the strength to work if over used; some have ended up in car accidents, or have experienced dizziness, chest pain, stomach upsets, coughs and headaches. To survive, youths resort to stealing in order to sustain their drug habits. To them drugs provide instant relief, but of course, no solutions.

3.4.4.2 Health

The unfriendly environment that these children are exposed to, pose a threat to their health. To those for whom the street is "home", without any decent accommodation or no accommodation at all, their exposure to the cold and mosquitoes, leaves them vulnerable to malaria without care and treatment. Their food from the garbage and dustbins exposes them to all sorts of infection. However, in some cases the children for whom the street is their "home" are better off than those who have close attachment to their families. Those with close family ties have their money controlled by the family needs. They may not be able to spend their money as they so wish, even on a basic health problem. This situation is worsened by lack of medical treatment, either due to neglect in hospital or child's failure to seek medical treatment because of various reasons, and particularly stigmatisation.

Studies (FOCA, 1995; Sabattini, 1996; URCS, 1996) carried out on street children, have pointed out the prevailing malnutrition among the children due to irregular and unbalanced eating habits and even due to the kind of foods eaten. To those that only spend the nights in their homes, they may not be any better as they may not get enough food or no food at all. Therefore malnutrition is very common in these street children especially the young ones and those new in the field. This explains the deficiencies in the children's physical development in terms of height and weight which should be expected at their ages under "normal" circumstances.

Rape and harassment of street children, more problematic with the street girl child though it may also happen to young boys, at the hands of older street youth, army men, policemen and adults is quite common. As a result, street girl- children, often suffer from sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, contracted from the abusers. The boys do suffer as well. This is aggravated by lack of medical treatment as seen in the case below;

> *Amulen (14 years), when interviewed, testified that after seeking for treatment from a health centre, without success, where the nurses scorned her, because she was dirty, she had a wound between her legs and she does not menstruate any more. Her friend developed continuous bleeding (Kasirye, 1993).*[15]

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[15] Kasirye Rogers, in article "Survival on the Streets", in The Vulnerable Child. Newsletter, Vol. 3 No.3, 1993

Rape, harassment, and commercial sex have aggravated the problem of HIV/AIDS among street children; an issue which is little understood by these children. They hardly know how to deal with it. Observations show that a considerable number of this children practice sex at an early age without protection. Whether forced sex, rape or out of choice, these children may get infected with the killer HIV/AIDS. According to FOCA survey (Child-Link, vol. 2 1996: 7), 9% of the 90 children interviewed confessed that they were suffering from AIDS and the majority were suffering from different types of skin diseases and injuries. This kind of revelation show that the street children lives are in danger especially within these AIDS era without cure. It also means that these children are engaged in unprotected sex. Both street girls and boys are liable to being effected because they are all in a tempting situation.

3.5 Street children's work

The main defining feature of street children is that the street(s) is where they spend most of their time and it is a place that determines their livelihood. It is therefore useful to analyse the economic activities performed by street children or any type of engagement that sustains their survival on the streets and its benefits to them and the society in which they live because *work is a very substantial part of the activities of all the street children* (Sabattini 1996: 16), for those who for solely themselves and for their substantial support of their families. In one way or another, street children are engaged in an activity that generates income, whether legal or illegal, the point at stake is survival in and/or out of the streets.

The types of work done by street children generally have common characteristics. They do not require considerable investment; do not demand skills; the work is labour intensive; the work also requires long hours and they are usually within the localities. Therefore, it is easy to change from one type of work to another. The street children's work range from begging, car washing, load lifting (mainly performed by the boys), shoe shining, selling (hawking) of items like sweets, biscuits, cigarettes, ground nuts, pop corn etc., domestic chores[16] like baby sitting, domestic service (mostly done by girl street children) to extremes of prostitution and stealing especially when in most difficult situation to survive. The children who have gone into prostitution (commercial sex) for survival prefer it to domestic work/services. One girl example, in an investigation of child abuse, when asked whether she would better be off in domestic services, said she *preferred relative independence of her present life (prostitute), and despite the hardships and uncertainties, was sure she made more money than she would as a house maid and had no employer to restrict her freedom (Sanyu and Nassali, 1995:33).*

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[16] Domestic chores like baby sitting and domestic services are only an alternative source of income which is only done for a short time schedule but thereafter they retreat to the street for other businesses and later to their homes.

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In addition to the above list of types of work, cross-border smuggling of goods, is the major and leading type of all the types of work to all groups of street children (*those with family attachment and those without*) at the district border urban centres.

It is very clear why this children have to work. Due to the pressures that result in some children emerging as street and working children, there is need for recognition of working children's rights in many countries where it is the only solution to their survival.

3.6 Public attitudes towards street children

At official level, the presence of children begging and scavenging from rubbish bins is an embarrassment to the public and city authorities as is their assumed engagement in illicit activities. They are widely considered to be undeserving of any treatment other than incarceration in institutions built for adult people who have committed criminal offences. The street children are, therefore seen as outlaws and are considered responsible for all the misfortunes that befall the city. Their fate is equated to a city dog; after all, they feed on the dustbins! It is therefore not surprising, when government authorities remark that these children are useless and should be removed from cities/municipalities to prisons in order to get rid of them from the streets because "they do not contribute to social development and as a result, their welfare is not budgeted for by the city councils," (Anyuru, 1996: 272).

Street children are treated with suspicion where ever they are, at all times. This kind of perception and failure to understand their situation has resulted in inappropriate responses from the city/municipal law and order authorities. The children are rounded up and brutally handled by the law enforcing agents (police and Local Defence Units, which as noted above they consider their major enemies). It is therefore not unlikely that children treated in this way will show fear and hostility towards the authorities once they are released.

To the public/community, the prevalence of the perceived "homeless" among people with a more settled way of life creates mixed reactions. Street children are perceived negatively by society and tend to evoke unpleasant feelings. Like the perception of city officials, there is a strong feeling of suspicion against them and they are seen as a liability to a more settled community. Rather than seeking positive solutions to the problem, members of the community express discontent about the street children in their midst. Sanyu and Nassali observe the public hostility towards the street children during a survey;

"When we were talking to children in public areas of Bwaiise[17], the hostility of the adults around them as a group was undisguised. Some adults scorned the use of the word 'children' in relation to those 'bayaye' or 'misegge'[18] saying they are dangerous enough without having ideas about "their rights" put in their heads by people who do not have to live or work near them. Our discussion with the Local Council members in both Tororo and Jinja districts revealed similar attitudes towards the many children who "hang about" the streets in these towns." **(From Suffer the Children: A Preliminary Investigation into Child Abuse in Uganda, 1995: 30)**

On the other hand these children are used as cheap labour by the very community and society which see them as dangerous creatures. Due to their situation of need and vulnerability, their bargaining power is low. So despite the negative attitudes towards them, society associates with them, but on exploitative terms.

This is a very difficult situation as the public has failed to distinguish between *vulnerable, resilient, and adventurous* children. Like city authority, they all see street children as bad and associated with bad things. Street children are outlaws, who should be dealt with by the strong arm of the law because they are suspected to be thieves or spies. Aptekar (1988), observes that *"what has happened to these children depends on public perception."* Therefore, from the above reaction to street children, the response to it will be determined by the public attitude and perception.

3.7. Categorisation of street children

From the overview of the actual situation of street children in Tororo district as above, it is quite evident that reference to the term should not be limited to only those who are living on the streets. This phenomenon/term must encompass also those who spend a lot of time on their own working on the streets but at the end of their work retreat to their "homes". They are not necessarily abandoned and without homes and family ties (totally living and working in the streets) as per the policy definition, public perception as above and as conceptualised in chapter 2. Anyuru (1996) has positively observed that 90% of children on the streets in Uganda, have family ties and are active economic contributors to their family/household livelihood, and only 10% of them have their entire live on the streets, (live on the street).

This wider conceptualisation brings in the eliminated/left out majority group of children who face basically the same problems on the streets like the first one. However, street children, once broadly defined, then could be analytically divided into various sub-categories reflecting various conditions , problems and needs.

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[17] 'Bwaiise' is one of the Slum areas of Kampala, with lots of street children.
[18] 'Bayaye' or 'misegge' meaning delinquents or wolves/wild.

3.8 Concluding remarks

Street children in Tororo district border urban centres, face problems such as; rape (especially the girl street child), they also scavenge for food and many are drug addicts, they have no or lack proper accommodation, and their health is at risk. These problems have been compounded by hostility and harassment from the public, unlawful arrests and imprisonment as a result of misconception of these children and their problems. It is surprising that hostility for these children extends from all those who would understand and pave way for their future, such as the police and LDUs, the general public, and above all the city authorities who make the policies addressing their problems.

As it has been noted in the previous chapter and in section 3.6 above, it is the negative, unclear, and narrow perception/ conceptualisation of these children that has determined the public's and policy response towards them. However, given the actual situation of the causes, the estimated ratio of children who come to the streets to smuggle goods and any other work and at the end of the day retire to their "homes", and those for whom the street has become the "home" and consequently their need to be on the streets as an alternative survival strategy; it is important to analyse and restructure the street children problem in child welfare policy, consequently redefining the concept in a wider perspective and redesigning new policy option and strategies of addressing this problem given their slight different situation, as discussed here and in the previous chapter.

Chapter 4: Approaches towards Street Children in Tororo District

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse various responses to the street children problem considering the different attitudes and perceptions towards them as discussed at the end of the previous chapter. The analysis will take into account the various actors in the arena; including the central government, the NGOs, Tororo district administration, the community and the children themselves. Both the formal and informal responses will be discussed. In so doing the problems related to and the gaps within these responses or interventions will be brought forward. The question of to what extent the children have been and can be involved in coming up with these interventions that contribute to their livelihood; will be addressed.

4.2 Central Government Response to Street Children in Tororo District.

With the international call for centrality of children in national development, the Ugandan government has responded with a commitment to improvement of social services, particularly those which have direct impact on children, at the World Summit for Children in 1990. Many strategies have been developed in a bid to alleviate and positively change the situation of children in Uganda.

4.2.1 Development of Uganda National Plan of Action for Children, (UNPAC)

UNPAC is a policy document in the area of child survival, development and protection, in brief a Child Welfare Policy for Uganda, adopted in September 1992. UNPAC was developed after the World Summit for Children by Government together with NGOs and international Agencies. The major function of this document is to give a situation analysis of the survival, development and protection of children in Uganda, to identify the policies to address this situation and to set targets to achieve them. The document, a sign of government efforts to attest its commitment to child welfare problems is a basis for all activities directed to survival, development and protection of children in Uganda. *However, the question is what strategies and policies did it identify in addressing the issue of street children? What have been its problems and achievements? How effective has it been since its inception?*

The UNPAC document, estimated the number of street children in Uganda as only 2,000 (ROU, 1992). Although there may some exaggerations in the "number game" reflected in the various numbers given by various organisations at various times for the same urban areas and Uganda as a whole, it can not be reduced to only 2,000 from the estimates of 10,000-15,000 (and above) given by many other

sources (see FOCA, 1993; Kasirye 1993, UNICEF, 1993, Anyuru, 1996). The magnitude portrayed in the policy document is determined by the narrow definition of the term "street children" in the same policy (refer to Chapter 1). This indicates that the issue of street children is not regarded as a serious problem, and this could be an explanation for the diversion of attention to other categories of children and their needs, in Uganda in general and Tororo District in particular. For example, there is emphasis on health programmes and education for the rest of the children without particular care for the health and education of the impoverished urban street children. UNPAC (ROU, 1992: 60) has only stated as one of its major goals, as *protection, from abuse, neglect, exploitation and hazard, for all children, and in particular those who are not cared for, or supported, by parents or relatives. Its supporting goal is protection of street children* (ibid., 61). However, without clear knowledge of the scope and severity of the problem, how can the general goal as protection of the "street children" be addressed? This goal does not tell us in which way the protection will take. These children do not only require protection. Much more is required as will be discussed in chapter 5. Little has been done towards the street children problem since the inception of UNPAC

Government, also conscious of the problem facing children, set up the Child Law Review Committee which made recommendations about the future government legislation in relation to children's legal rights, child care, the situation of children in a home and the treatment of child offenders. The recommendation of this committee have been translated into law- 'The children statute, 1996.' *But, how has this legislation been helpful to the street children in Uganda and Tororo district urban centres in particular?* The statute which is in force today does not define street children but they are only included in the category of *"children in difficult circumstances."* This notion ignores the structural causes of the children's problems (Ennew, 1996: 206). This will be discussed below in the district response despite the existing legislation, bringing out the gaps either at implementation or in within the policies themselves.

To foresee the implementation and co-ordination of all the strategies in view of achieving the goals in the above two documents, the government created a children's secretariat, *National Council for children (NCC),* under the National Council for Children Statute-1996. The Council is to co-ordinate all the actors and their activities/efforts that are directed towards child welfare in the whole country. However, other than co-ordinating the activities, NCC does not fund any child welfare activities, its funds are supposed to come from the directly concerned ministries of Education, Health, Gender and Community development, Water and Natural Resources but most of the funds come from donors. This

greatly limits the effectiveness of NCC. Co-ordination of other organisations activities without co-funding leaves it powerless in respect to the activities that it should oversee. Since the Council was established it has tried to play the role of co-ordinating the activities of agencies involved in child welfare but without direct focus on street children, particularly Tororo urban centres case. The government has not been able to fund the council to the level of implementing its policy objectives, although they remain noble intentions on paper. So even the few street children that have been identified in Tororo, Malaba, and Busia centres have not had any direct attention from government.

It should however be noted that the above response has been a general response to all children in Uganda of whom street children are part. The response is also national and Tororo district has by virtue of being part of Uganda been affected by it. However other than the general national policy documents above, the issue of street children at the district level has not gained any attention as per the District Situational Analysis report 1994/95 which states that despite the rapidly growing magnitude of street children in the district no government specific action to remedy the situation has been taken. The issue of street children has remained as a statement of intent in the policy document (UNPAC), though some other child welfare aspects, such as education, health etc. have been prioritised with the launching of the District and Sub-county Plans of Action for Children (DPACs and SPACs[19])respectively in the district in July, 1996, which have not effectively taken off. As already noted, little has been done in respect to street children in practice.

4.2.2 Universal Primary Education (UPE)

UPE is a current policy on basic (primary) education, which was announced on the eve of 1996 general elections and implemented at the beginning of 1997, stating *free primary education to every four children per family* offered by the state. Whereas this policy is generous, distributive and redistributive to children, the assumption that every child has a "family" that will enrol him/her for school is unrealistic and more so to some street children. There are several street children attached to "families" but in such a case, priority will come to the those with parents and to some extent those guarded, hence some street children automatically fall out. Failure to define a "family" in this policy is another limitation in addressing the education need of some children such as those on the streets, who may be orphans, abandoned and generally part of the extended family system who may not be given priority in such situations. Presumably, not only street children but all working children will not be reached by UPE

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[19] DPACs - District Plans of Action for Children- Created in response to decentralisation for districts to plan for the needs of their children depending on the needs. SPACs - Sub-county Plans of Action for Children- created to plan for children at this level. This is a breakdown of UNPAC to the lower levels.

implementation, unless special efforts are made to design and provide forms of education adapted to their needs.

It is therefore not surprising that implementation of this policy in Tororo district has not been smooth. Tororo district has been one of the districts that have been accused of misusing the UPE funds, diverting them to other uses. This indicates that the district has not prioritised children in development planning which is another limiting factor. UPE policy does not take into account the basic needs of a school child; such as books, school uniform, food at school and many other school needs, which if not met will affect the child's attendance. Therefore, the Tororo district street children, for whom survival depends on the street and who are not given chance to get the basic needs are forced out of the policy. A few street children who attend school find the design of the school programmes not compatible with their daily programmes, which eventually force them out of school system.

4.3 Tororo District Administration's (D.A) policy Response

A district in our context, as an institution constitutes a local authority whose existence stems from the dire need on the part of government to bring services nearer to the people. The authority originally owed its existence under the Local Administration act of 1967, which was replaced in 1993 by the Resistance Councils and Committees statute No. 15 of 1993. The new Statute did not change the scope and operations of the authority but strengthened further its functional responsibilities in line with the needs and aspirations of the present government.

The district exists to provide economic, social, political and cultural benefits to the people in its area of jurisdiction. The present statute provides for continuous process of decentralisation whereby the policy among other things, seeks to devolve functions, powers and responsibility for administration, planning and finance from the central government departments to the districts and lower still to the sub-counties. The district council, which is the top political organ in the district formulates the major policies in the sector priorities as presented to it by the various sectoral heads to be followed by the district administration. Currently the district has the following departments; Probation and Social welfare; Health; Education; Water and Environment Sanitation (which according to NCC are directly related to child welfare); Agriculture; and Works, Transport and Communication. However little has been done in alleviating or improving the street children life within these departments.

4.3.1 Existing probation and social welfare policy intervention/response

Tororo Probation and Social Welfare department, according to their reports (1995/96) have done little about the situation of street children under their jurisdiction as per the child statute. Much of the attention is directed to other categories of children and particularly the juvenile delinquents (who are not necessarily street children); on few occasions the probation officer attended court sessions on behalf of some delinquent children The department thus acknowledges that no direct government action has been taken to remedy the situation (Mpabulungi, 1994). However, they are aware that the street children problem exists.

Limitations to attending to this problem has been attributed to resource constraints, both economic and human. According to the Probation officer, they received 1 million Uganda shillings (equivalent to $1,000) for the budget year 1995/96 which is given in instalments in the late months of the year. This small allocation makes it difficult for smooth running of the department. The department can not engage in all activities that fall under its jurisdiction, for example it has been impossible to reach the street children. The department also lacks human resource. With the civil service reforms (retrenchment of civil servants), the department has been left with only two probation officers, who are to cover the whole district. Given the tasks of work that probation department is to cover, it has not been easy to reach the needy children like the street children who need a lot of patience to work with them. Much attention has been given to other categories of children in need. Busia sub-district (which is more than half of the district) and whose urban centre has the highest number of street children, has only two days per week allocated to the probation officer, and there are no grassroots/community workers to support and supplement the probation officer.

4.3.2 Development of District Plans of Action for Children (DPACs) and Sub-county Plans of Action for Children (SPACs)

In June, 1996, after 4 years of the launching of UNPAC, the district and sub-county plans of action for children respectively, were launched in the district. DPAC document is to be developed by all the departments directly related to children welfare, NGOs and the international agencies that are child oriented in the district; the same applies to SPACs but at the sub-county level. However, in the discussion of the DPAC document little was said about the situation and alleviation of street children problem in the district. Whereas it was acknowledged that the street children issue existed in the district, the focus was towards other categories of children in difficult circumstances. However, despite the relevance and need of these plans, children themselves are conspicuously absent in most of these

processes; although they are occasionally consulted by some members of these forums, they have no direct participation.

According to my observation, as a district child advocacy officer, another very serious limitation to effective response to children's welfare in general and street children in particular in Tororo district, has been and still is disunity/ non- cooperativeness of the district departments in addressing common problems that affect them. Despite the creation of decentralised system at the district level to move services closer to the people and avoid duplication services, the departments are not willing to pool their resources and management towards a common problem. The already mentioned directly related departments to children are not in close collaboration to attend to the street children problem. Each concentrates on issues of its interests even in cases where two birds could be killed with one stone. It is not easy to bring these departments together in discussing common problems on child welfare that affect them. The individualisation of departments perpetuated by centralisation system is still rooted in the departments and needs gradual elimination.

4.3.3 Local Councils/ Committees

The government in response to general plight of children, initiated local councils/authorities to support the children. This was initiated with the creation of the Bill of Children Rights which was made law as The Children Statute, 1996. Article 11, subsection 1 (ROU, 1996) states, it is the general duty of every local government council from village to district level;-

a) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its areas; and

b) to designate one of its members to be the chairperson responsible for the welfare of children, who is referred to as Secretary for Children's affairs.

However, before this statute, the post of secretary was specifically given to the vice-chairperson of every committee at all levels. Despite this provision, by December 1995, the District Local council vice-chairman who automatically, was the secretary for children's affairs at the district level, remained only on paper. There was/ is nobody in this position to implement and initiate this policy and activities at the district level and to the lower levels in the district. To date the responsibilities of the secretary for children affairs remain on paper until the new councillors are elected with emphasis on the post and its responsibilities. The district council has not delegated this responsibility to any Councillor for implementation. It is therefore, clear that district policy responses to the problems of child welfare in general and street children in particular are not taken serious. It also clearly indicates that the issue of

street children has not been a priority. The neglect of the statute provision in the district has also contributed to no community mobilisation towards child problems and more so to street children; this is because there has been communication break down between the district and the lower local authorities.

4.3.4 Law and Order Enforcement officers (Police and LDUs[20]) Response

Between the towns (Busia and Malaba) of Uganda and Kenya, where children operate in "illegal" trade (smuggling), chases between law enforcers and street children are witnessed. In the process, they loose their few goods on which they survive and at times have to pay some bribe in order to be freed when arrested. The children are sometimes captured, tied with hands behind their backs and whisked off to the police station, where they are charged with various offences including being idle. With rigour, they are packed in over crowded cells. In Tororo district where there are no facilities for youth/ child detention, they are mixed up with hard-core criminals who teach them, worse offences. It is quite evident that rehabilitation programmes for younger offenders in the district are insufficient and also inappropriate.

A child's first arrest could also be a first hand experience in violence. The apprehended children are also subjected to torture by adult prisoners. Physical beating is sometimes sanctioned by police as it is used as a method of extracting information from children, especially in alleged robberies or other illegal activities such as smuggling of goods which is the major business. While it is widely known that widespread brutality occurs, what can not be gauged is the extent of physical and emotional harm which is inflicted on the children.

The most common offences committed by street children in Tororo urban border centres include smuggling, fighting, gambling, theft, being suspected of robbery and trespassing (Tororo district Probation office reports 1993/94). A few are arrested for drug-abuse, pick pocketing and vandalism and sometimes carrying out activities in restricted areas. Many times street children in Busia and Malaba are arrested on suspicion of any of the above crimes and without defence of themselves, they are dragged to police cells. However, whereas some of the activities above cannot be condoned, arresting a child merely on suspicion of an offence having been committed *is an extremely harsh measure against those who are vulnerable and do not know their legal rights.* It is a violation of the street children's rights (constitutional right) in the Constitution of Uganda for anybody to be arrested and jailed without giving any explanation. Article 15 (Constitution of Uganda, 1967 quoted in Nakiyingi 1990), and the

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[20] LDUs refer to local/community law and order enforcers created by the current regime (NRM) in order to keep peace at local levels to supplement police and the army

Constitution of Uganda 1995 (ROU, 1995), stipulates that a person charged with a criminal offence must be given a fair trial, time to prepare his defence, a legal representative of her choice but most importantly that a person is presumed innocent until is proved guilty. Given the situation in the cells, it is better to come up with realistic and appropriate strategies rather than covering up and transferring the problem to the cells. Yiga and Byarugaba (of Naguru Remand Home in Kampala, 19. 07. 1997), observed out of their experience with the above response,

> "it is a good suggestion that children from the street should not be remanded for being idle and disorderly because that is no longer a crime. More so, this does not solve the problem in the street, that is even becoming more complex, because the problem is beyond crimes and offences as the city authority (law enforcers) perceive it."

Street children who have managed to get merchandise across the Kenya - Uganda border for hawking and vending in the car/bus parks and to market vendors have been the targets of city authorities and law enforcers. Their merchandise is often confiscated and they sometimes spend time behind bars for "operating illegal business." It is the money out of these business that they survive on. Therefore confiscation of their goods can be seen as dumping them on the bins and thus tantamount to sending the children to prison or pushing them into real destitution or into criminal activities to survive. It is not worthy for street children to be treated in this way. There are many alternative ways given their situation to address their plight.

4.4 NGO response to Street children in the district

In recent years various local and international organisations have sprung up in response to the plight of children. These have generally not focused directly on street children, but on children *in difficult circumstances*. The focus has been on orphans, disabled, refugee children and very young abandoned children in institutions. There have been very few organisations with programmes that are specifically directed to street children in Uganda; such programmes generally offer remedial or/ and charity services, such as food and clothing (Anyuru, 1996: 274).

In Tororo district, according to a 1994/1995 situation analysis (Mpabulungi, 1994), there was no single NGO that was directly focusing on the street children's plight despite the increasing numbers in the district. A few organisations have a general focus on children in difficult circumstances and of late only one organisation, URCS is focusing on street children in Busia town.

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4.4.1 Redd Barna, Uganda (Save the Children, Norway)- RBU

RBU, is a voluntary, humanitarian NGO with a wide membership. It funds are from it mother organisation/office in Norway. Its major aim is to promote survival and child development for vulnerable children, and to strengthen the family's and community's responsibility to cope up with the social and economic changes and its consequent problems. The NGO is involved in child advocacy work in the following fields:

a) Mobilisation and sensitisation of the grassroot communities and the District authorities on the rights of vulnerable children especially orphans, disabled and to some extent street children. It has also engineered the formation of Child Rights clubs in schools in bid to involve children in issues that affect their lives.

b) RBU, through the district administration and in collaboration with NCC, embarked on developing DPACs and SPACs. The purpose is to see how best to assist children in general and vulnerable children in particular in meeting their basic needs. However, whereas there are few street children who are school children as well, there will be no or little effect as a result of this advocacy unless street children and communities in which they come from are the target groups. The rights advocated for, may be meaningless unless the children can attain them. The NGO is also trying to develop a data base on children in the fields of education, health, etc., and different total census of children of different categories, to assist policy makers in designing appropriate programmes for children. However, the database on street children has not been developed, this implies that plans for the children may not be forthcoming and they may affect the adequacy of the intended plans of action for children.

The impact of these strategies in relation to street children has not yet been felt in the district considering the general poverty of the population. The multi-sectoral strategy advocated for by the NGO would be more effective if various NGOs in the district had combined efforts to reduce poverty levels. Despite the advocacy for integration and combined efforts of all NGOs that are child oriented, my experience as a co-ordinator and facilitator of both NGO and government departments in area of child welfare in Tororo district, has shown that like the district government departments, NGOs are not ready to come together, each NGO is concentrating on its own activities and there a lot of competition between these NGOs working in same areas, for example children development but not necessarily with street children.

4.4.2 Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS)

This is an NGO which is funded by the International Red Cross Society (IRCS) and also gets funds from membership fees. However, it largely donor funded. URCS is the only NGO in the district that has come up with a direct focus on street children. The organisation after a survey of street children in Busia town, came up with a project proposal in October 1996, "Street Kids Project Busia Branch." The project proposal intervention will *concentrate on mobilising the community, street youth/children and the local leaders and creating awareness about the street children problem and holding discussions about the possible solutions (URCS proposal, 1996/99).* The project accommodates street children/youths from the 6-20 years of age. However it is not clear whether this project will take off, since it is still at proposal stage.

The URCS efforts alone cannot see through the street children issue, there is need for combined efforts. State ministries down to government district departments need to develop an integrated and proactive approach to street children in the country and the district respectively. Leaving the care of street children to NGOs like URCS, without adequate means of monitoring and assessing their interventions, is a risky policy decision, albeit better than simply closing down all NGOs and leaving street children without resources of any kind.

4.5 Public/community Response to street children

In African society as already mentioned in the previous chapter, street children are perceived negatively by the public and this determines the way it (public) will respond to them. Due to this negative attitudes, little has been done by communities to address the rapidly growing problem in the district urban areas.

The public's reaction has been of fear and anger. Thus, there is always verbal aggression, and of venting aggression on the child through physical violence. Like the law and order authorities, the public is also suspicious of street children as bad elements of society. They on many occasions act on suspicion of street children as spies or thieves, then beat them up either as individuals or through mob - justice.

Certain sectors of the community take advantage of the vulnerable situation of the children and exploit them by over-working them and paying them very low wages or dismissing them without pay at all. This is an indication that communities are not sympathetic to the street children situation.

4.6 Street Children Response to their own situation

Children in Uganda for once have been given a platform to raise their views to the policy makers. In June 1994, Uganda children held a *Mock Constituent Assembly debate*[21], and some of the resolutions were adopted in the new constitution. The children came from all the districts of Uganda, Tororo inclusive except Kalangala district that did not send representatives. However, the representation of the children was unfair, in that the educated children (children in schools though there are few street children in schools) were the ones involved, leaving out children in difficult circumstances like the street children who can represent their situations better. This does not mean that the debate was not useful. It gave impetus to children to live worthwhile. One of the children (*Olga Kamikkaze, Mock CA Vice-Chairman*[22]), observed,

> "*if adults give children more of these opportunities to speak out, they give them a reason to live; a reason to feel secure and to be hopeful.*" She added, "*the debate made me feel worthwhile, accepted and built in me a quiet confidence*". In conclusion and appreciation to the debate, she made her humble and last call, "*To the public, it is a great injustice not to allow children to articulate their views when they should. And to the children: I encourage you to rise up and make your needs known.*"

The above call seemed to have been heeded to by the street children who were not represented at that occasion but acknowledged the ideas generated in the debate. The street children of Kampala City have taken a lead in rising up and making their needs known to a silent government on their fate by marching to State House on 21. 07 1997, demanding to see President Yoweri Museveni, to present their grievances. They carried placards reading "*We are tired of living on the streets , we go hungry, we have no parents and care and we are persecuted by police*"*(New vision, Tuesday, July 22, 1997).The children were led by one sympathiser, who claimed to have been working with them, one Christine Marian Nassuna.* However, the State House security guards responded by beating and chasing them away. This has been the most brave move of street children in Uganda, indicating that street children know their experience best and can come up with solutions if given chance to speak out. The move gives grounds for optimism that children in other parts of Uganda will rise up to make known their needs in a similar way.

The children's match to the State House has provoked a response from the president towards this situation. Utterances like "*Museveni come to our rescue, we are dying of hunger*" and "*We [the people] voted Museveni into power but he can't have pity on us, we are tired of sleeping out in the open*"*(Monitor, 22. 07. 1997),* from the street children have had effect on *the stage managed response* that was issued from

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[21] Mock Constituent Assembly debate was to try to see what resolutions in relation to their rights and problems the children would come up with if they were to debate the current constitution which was to be tabled just there after.

[22] Child-Link- ANNPPCAN Uganda Chapter. Vol.1 No 2 June - August 1995. pp 11.

the president. In New Vision article (25. 07. 1997), President Yoweri Museveni directed his staff to look into the problem of street children with relevant departments and give him a report about what the government is doing about it. This direction that was open ended may cover all the urban areas and Tororo urban areas may get the chance of attention.

The street children in Tororo District urban areas of Malaba, Tororo and Busia have only responded to their destiny by involving in the smuggling activities to serve their urgent need and many other activities as discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore their adopted alternatives to conventional families should be accepted rather than outright rejection. It is also important to recognise the autonomy street children have forged for themselves as markedly important for their lives. However, they have not yet risen up like those of Kampala. There is a hope that they will speak out as in the above case of Kampala.

As in the above cases, it is a clear sign that children can have positive contributions if given the chance to participate and contribute to issues that affect them.

4.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter has indicated that whereas there are policy responses to street children both at national and district levels, a lot more needs to be done. The discussion has identified the gaps in both the policy design and its implementation at the district level that need concerted efforts to attend to the street children issue in the district. What sort of possible and feasible programmes could best address this problem of street children in Tororo district? To what extent these children can enjoy their life without fear in society and urban centres in which they work and some live? These and other questions will be explored in the following chapter giving policy options that could be taken, having found out that gaps still exists in the present strategies and responses and mainly from the policy problem definition, and at implementation of the existing policy.

Chapter 5: Policy Options: Recommendations and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

Chapter three has presented the situation analysis of the street children in Tororo district urban centres; and chapter four analysed a number of responses to the street children problem in the district. A critical analysis of the impact of these policy responses showed that gaps still exist and the non-effectiveness of these responses call for concerted efforts and commitment on the part of the district and all the stakeholders in addressing the street children issue. This chapter will look at the possible policy options/responses that can be adopted by the district, NGOs and community in an attempt to mitigate the problems of street children. We will also draw some lessons learnt from the investigation. Some successful approaches and strategies to street children will be recommended but taking note of the differences in culture that may affect their relevance. This chapter will then look at the implications of these options, recommendations and the learnt lessons for policy decisions.

In summary, the main recommendations in this chapter are both concrete and general. These include; use of a more inclusive definition of street children; defining who takes the responsibility to act; improving socio- economic conditions of street children, a) on the streets, supporting efforts to enhance their livelihood, earning capacities and providing other facilities matching their needs; b) addressing their background (areas of origin and families), to reduce the influx of children on the streets. The socio- economic issue include; non-formal basic education and training in livelihood enhancing programmes for street children; improving poverty conditions of urban and rural poor; establishing drop-in centre(s) / night shelter(s); and provision of health care and advice for the street children. In order to achieve the concrete priorities, it is recommended that there should be integration and co-operation between activities of the state/local authorities, NGOs and other actors; advocacy and publicity of street children issues be intensified and street children participation be enhanced.

The issue of street children presents unprecedented challenges to policy makers, social welfare workers and all others working at the national and district levels with direct relation to child welfare and even at community and individual levels.

A number of innovative responses to child development and survival have already been developed despite some inadequacies in the policy document and improper implementation at the district level as already noted, a preliminary examination of these responses indicate that they need refinement and

strengthening for better results. Given the magnitude of the street children issue and the rate at which it is increasing, its heavy personal, social and economic costs to the children and to the economy, existing efforts to respond to the street children must be further developed and supported. Averting some of the worst potential consequences for children already on the streets and preventing children who have not yet turned to life on the streets, will require immediate action by the district authorities, municipal authorities, law enforcers, NGOs and community efforts with attention/ involvement of the street children for a more viable strategy/response. Only through considered, concerted and co-ordinated action will it be possible for the district community to control and work successfully with the street children issue.

5.1 Lessons Learnt.

A number of lessons arise from this research and with the experience of working with and for children in Tororo district. It is not only the children who are highly visible on the streets especially in the late night hours, that are in need of material and social support but also the children who come to work and leave the streets after work (that is, have some home to go to and have family ties). There is a gradual process by which these children become children "*of*" the street and any intervention should pay attention to this process. We need to contact children not only after they have committed themselves to street life but also while they are moving towards such a decision. Indeed, as Maggie Black (1991: 17 quoted in Dube et al, 1996: 261), points out, the categories of the "street" may not be the most suitable point of intervention. We need to go back to the communities from which the children come.

Therefore any programme meant to assist urban children in difficult circumstances (street children) should not begin and end on the streets but in the communities where these children are born and grow up. A programme which begins and ends in the streets is by nature dealing with symptoms of a problem. It is rather remedial than preventive, because it deals with the problem of individual cases of children. The programme should pay attention to factors that predispose children towards the streets. In this way, it can deal not only with the symptoms but also become preventive in nature by attending to the roots. Below I will present some experiences of an organisation that I think have a relevant approach to this issue and could be adopted. The choice of the organisation depends on the similarities in situation and cultures of the areas they are addressing with that of the case country and study area.

5.1.1 Experience from Undugu Society in Kenya

The Undugu Society[23] approach to street children has lessons that can be learnt and coped for better results for Uganda and Tororo District street children problem.

From the Undugu Society experience of drawing children from the streets to the rehabilitation centre; it was realised that it was addressing only the symptoms of a more deeply rooted problem but not the problem itself; many more children replaced those taken to the rehabilitation centre. Undugu then resorted to interact with the communities from which they come by developing offices in these slums encouraging the entire community to address their development needs together. From this point on, Undugu's growth and diversification concerned the needs and aspirations of these marginalised communities and challenges that arise from this struggle. (See UNESCO document, 1995)

Undugu Society today focuses on urban poverty issues. Its emphasis on working with communities derives from the understanding that the root cause of street children is the poverty that is so glaring evidently in every slum and rural areas from where the children are drawn.

Therefore from the above understanding, any meaningful attack on this problem must attempt to effect the socio-economic situation of the entire communities, rather than seek to the benefit only a few members visible on the streets. *A street child, for Undugu Society, is one that is out of school though of school age (UNESCO document 1995, 60)*. Undugu, therefore maintains that there are many more hidden and even vulnerable street children in the slums around the cities than meet the eyes or sleep on the streets.

Another important aspect of Undugu's programmes in response to street children's problem is the establishment of non-formal schools/centres. This programme uses a shorter curriculum relevant to the needs of street children daily lives, in comparison with the normal formal government curriculum. The curriculum and school schedule runs according to the children's convenient time taking into account their need to work part of the day and their general problems. The Kenyan government has approved these schools/centres and their curriculum. The main aim is to improve basic literacy and equip street children with practical survival strategies, and counselling services. For example in some centres, children earn their living by collecting scrap papers and related wastes in low income settlements.

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[23] Undugu (brotherhood) Society, is an NGO working for and with street children in Nairobi Kenya.

The Undugu Society intervention which contain both preventive and protective elements because of its scope of activities; can be a good example or case of reference for Tororo urban approach to street children. However, though much can be learned from this approach of this programme, its coverage is generally quite limited.

5.2 Possible Policy Response by government/ D.A, NGOs and community.

As already noted, responses to the street children issue in Tororo district need an integrated effort. Coverage can only increase significantly and be embraced when municipal (district) governments, NGOs and the communities themselves- especially the children, families strike an alliance and jointly seek ways to address the problems. Agnelli, (1986: 68), emphasises that one must seek rather to spread the issue among various actors in the community so that the work of government and private initiatives can be mutually reinforcing. This was clearly documented as result of the survey of Urban children in distress in Brazil, Kenya and Philippines. It could change the situation since it is missing in Tororo district approach to the street children issue.

5.2.1 Redefine the concept of street children:

As a contentious point of departure in this research paper, it was argued that "street children" should be understood to include not only those children who have made the street their permanent homes but all those children who spend who spend a lot of their time on their own in/on the streets. In order to have a holistic approach to the street children issue, policy definition should integrate the left out group of children. The policy makers should come up with a "universal" definition (as above) of street children which can be applied in Ugandan situation. Many children in Tororo district border urban centres have the majority of the children falling under the "missing" lot of children in the current policy definition, more so they face almost the same hardships of the streets as dealt on in chapter three. Having recognised the "missing" lot of children, it would then be easier to respond to the needs of these children in relation to the source of their being on the streets or in relation to different categories, since these children do not have all their problems in common (see 2.4.6, pp 28; the response and implementation of children's rights in Brazil divided in sections depending on the category and need of the children).

All those actors/ stakeholders in the arena of street children should recognise that it is very important to intervene in the lives of children with problems with clear knowledge about the reality of these

children's lives. Failure to recognise this omission has left out many children in need of help in one way or the other. Policy should guide all interested parties in dealing with street children problems.

5.2.2 Who should take the responsibility?

Although, NGOs have played and could play a more active role in addressing this issue, there is need for concerted efforts to the problem of street children. For example, it is the police and the LDUs and other law enforcement personnel who deal frequently with these children, and who are considered their enemies on the streets (see 3.6). The children are arrested of minor offences ("being idle and disorderly") and dumped in prisons or remand homes, where they are exposed to criminal and juvenile capital offenders respectively. The policy makers define the problem and come up with policies and policy implementors who see to it that the goals of the policies are being achieved should share the responsibility.

There is need for integrated strategies to address the problems and issues faced by the street children which have been highlighted in this research paper. The strategies should involve the responsibility of all those who play a role in the lives of the children. The responsibility should be taken by all the following: the district police, the LDUs, the municipal and town council law enforcers and welfare department, the district probation office, the directly linked departments as in chapter 4, the NGOs, the secretaries for children in the Local Councils (LCs) as well as the communities as a whole. The individual and society obligation to the child is rapidly breaking away. There is need to rebuild this. The individual should start working together as community and plan for the children in need, together with other actors.

5.2.3 Improve the Socio- economic Condition of street children.

Certainly, the research has revealed that street children have a poor socio-economic background that drives then to the streets for alternative survival. These forces go beyond the control of the Social Welfare programmes at district level. This section of the study offers on some concrete priorities the could be done following the problems and needs of street children in Tororo district urban border centres as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4.

5.2.3.1 Non-formal basic education and training in livelihood enhancing Programmes.

It has been noted that street children in Tororo district urban border centres spent a lot of their time in mainly smuggling of goods and many other sorts of work for their survival. This means that little or no

time is allocated to formal education. It takes a great deal of creativity to run an educational programme for street children in a street corner, but it is necessary.

It is therefore important for district and urban authorities in collaboration with or in support of any involved NGOs to come up with a programme that can give non-formal education and training to these children. This could form part of the currently formed Busia Street Kids Project of Busia. This programme(s) need to take into account the relevance of the curriculum, the availability of time, and the fact the these children depend on work for their livelihood. These children can spend half a day in informal class covering some basic numerals, basic literacy skills, and basic hygiene, as in the case of Undugu Society, Kenya. Many of these children have worked or are working in selling and buying goods and services and already know a lot of practical mathematics. This will be building on the considerable experience that these children already have. This is because most street children find formal education boring and time consuming and at times irrelevant to their urgent need.

In addition, informal training in livelihood enhancing programmes, should be a priority in any attempt to respond to the problem of street children in Tororo district urban border centres. It is quite evident that these children are informal business oriented. Any concerned and involved NGOs with the support of the state and/or local authorities, should strengthen and develop the already existing opportunities and skills and promote other appropriate new ones in the business/ interpreneurship of street children. For example, informal training in basic book keeping could be of help. Encouragement in investing their money and proper budgeting, planning and trade management for their resources are some of the basic skills that can be developed on the already existing skills of informal business.

Many concrete possibilities for income-enhancement are worth exploiting. For example, Tororo district towns are known for their high use of bicycles for local transport, referred to as *"border- border"*. NGO(s) involved in averting the situation of street children could initiate and train these children in the repair of the bicycles as an income generating activity. The NGO(s) could also acquire bicycles and sell them to street children at a subsidised price and/ or in instalments, such that they are able to pay. They could then be involved in hired transportation of either good or people. This is one of the activities that earn many people a living in eastern Uganda urban areas.

A brick and clay charcoal stove making projects could is another example of promoting enhanced survival capacities of street children. Projects targeting street children could come up with activities

like the above that may not need more than appropriate and available technology. The sales of the products can be invested in other activities of their choice and also solve their daily needs. Vocational training in sewing and painting of houses for both street girls and boys is another viable alternative strategy for generating income. Many of these suggestions are alternative sources of income from "illegal" cross-border smuggling of good and prostitution for girls. All the above strategies will enhance the earning capacity of street children

5.2.3.2 Improving conditions of urban and rural poor

Whereas the foregone recommendations are actions directed towards the street (for individual street children), it is very important to treat the problem from the cause/root. Preventive approaches could also be directed to the communities where these children originate. Unfavourable living conditions in rural and poor conditions of the slum populations have greatly contributed to the increase of this phenomena. Thus, a balanced economic development between the rural and urban, slum and medium class urban areas should be part of the framework for improved child welfare. The government and all the actors should therefore make a deliberate effort to channel resources to the rural and slum areas as a way of addressing the causes rather than symptoms. *Policies concerning the micro- economic framework do not directly target the affected groups of the vulnerable children, but have great impact on the social conditions of theses children (FOCA- Baseline survey; Aug. 1995).* Therefore, if these strategies can be implemented and the key players play their part, then it would go a long way to addressing the problems and issues of the street children, as is the case of Undugu Society. Improving living conditions of rural and urban poor (address causes and street children existence), could be a preventive measure to reduce the influx of street children.

5.2.3.3 Drop-in centres/ A night shelter

Drop- in centre(s) or/ and night shelters can provide important support to street children, especially those without family attachments. They can drop-in during lunch hours for a meal, rest and/or for recreation. It could also act as a night shelter as well as where children could go and receive an evening meal and/ or breakfast before going back to the streets. Such a shelter would help meet some children's immediate needs and also serve as an initiation and attraction to other programmes like the non-formal education and skills training programme above. It could also act as a centre for counselling, either by trained children themselves (peer counselling) or by trained counsellors mainly on drug use and violence arising from drug use common among street children. Other activities could be decided upon,

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which are in the interest of the children, which can be done in these centre. This could be implemented/ run by NGO(s) as part of their initial project activities with support of the urban/local authorities.

5.2.3.4 Provision of health care and advice

The condition of the health of street children in general is decried as in chapter 3. The District Medical Office (DMO) could work in close relation with concerned/involved NGO(s) and district social workers in providing medical care and advice to the street children. It has been noted that HIV/AIDS which is little known to them, is becoming a threat to the lives of these children. It is, important that these team of people to create HIV/AIDS awareness to these children and encourage them to use protective measures if they are to engage in sex. The DMO could as well offer free condoms to those interested in using them. This could have a positive effect on the rate of sexually transmitted disease infection and understanding of HIV by these children.

DMO could schedule a plan of visiting street children areas in urban centres to offer free or subsidised medical services, especially for treatment of malaria, skin rushes and sexually transmitted diseases which are most common. This could be done in close collaboration with the nearest health centre/ hospital staff. However, it could be done routinely to save the worsening health situation. The health team could also offer basic first aid training to these children. This is because the type of work and the environment where they work is very risky, any simple health problems could happen to them, which they could attend to it by themselves with some simple training.

However, a feasibility study on the viability and appropriateness of any the above strategies, and subsequent small-scale experimentation should be done before implementation. This could be done by soliciting ideas from the street children themselves, their background, and looking at the environment. This is because any genuine efforts to come to grips with the problems of street children should see the world in the eyes of the children themselves.

5.2.4 Collaboration of government/ D.A, and NGOs

Government departments dealing with child welfare are many and there is a danger of complacency and poor co-ordination among the heads of department and there is also misallocation of resources for which the children, in this case street children suffer.

As already noted, the issue of street children welfare calls for a multi-sectoral approach and involvement and combined efforts of all the major policy stakeholders for better results. For any success of the child welfare policy and any amendments that may come up, the main implementing institutions and service providers; the government, the NGOs, and the district authorities require collaboration and co-ordination between them, in an environment where there is fierce competition for scarce resources. Resources from these different institutions towards the same course of action could be used in effective co-operation with one another, by identifying the problem and the activities/ strategies to approach, then the amount of money involved to be funded in partnership. This will avoid the duplication of work and reduce the competition between them, and this type of approach will address the street children problem in a holistic way. Co-operation is the most meaningful strategy to find practical solutions to the plight of children in especially difficult circumstances and more so street children issues in Tororo district urban centres.

The state and the district authorities have the capacity to mobilise resources and direct them to child welfare, and can work through its various agencies. For example, Community Development department should be reviewed and in so doing seek close relationship with the Youth and Culture and Sports department to mobilise and protect street children. The Probation and Social Welfare department should also be reviewed to make its impact effective and substantial. Since the major problem of Probation department is lack of funding because its mother- ministry mostly relies on foreign aid, government funding should be increased; this is because this department unlike the others is where the street children comes and thus holds the monopoly of co-ordinating and monitoring assistance of this needy children. However, all this should be done with good collaboration with other departments, NGOs and communities.

5.2.5 Intensify Street child advocacy and publicity work

Collaboration and co-ordination of district authorities and NGOs should be directed at carrying out advocacy work and creating awareness on the plight of street children, with total support of the district authorities. Publicity on street children issues should be a major activity at all levels; national, district and community levels. As already mentioned, what is completely lacking and very important are programmes designed to address and change public attitudes. Given the low literacy levels and diversity of languages, publicity of children's rights and responsibilities, free flow of ideas both oral advocacy and publications about street children may lead to a decline of violation of their rights and clear understanding of this phenomena without apportioning blame.

Phiri (1996: 281), emphasises the importance of advocacy for street children. He says, advocacy can

change minds and mentalities, which can in turn alter priorities, establish new policies, and design better programmes. Without moving the way people see and feel about street children and about working with them, very little is expected to improve. We cannot speak of programme planning and alternatives if we cannot alter the misunderstandings that have created street children's current difficult situation.

This was exemplified in the Brazilian approaches and strategies towards the street children (see 2.4.6).

This is not easy, and will take considerable co-ordination and collaboration among a variety of people and agencies, and a re-orientation to where a significant part of the problem lies. This could involve forming a District Advocacy Team (DAT), which would include a member(s) from each of the directly related and helpful district departments or offices as listed in the last chapter, Law enforcers (Police and Local defence Unit), District Secretary for children affairs and a member of all child-oriented NGOs at the district level. A similar team could be formed a lower sub-county level with members slightly similar to that of the above level. Municipal and town councils should come up with similar advocacy teams. This will carry out advocacy work in relevant offices and people, and create awareness throughout the general public including the district authorities and the grassroot to highlight street children as people in society and try to change the negative attitudes. This will reduce the duplication of work, and assert the importance of street children by various involved department giving light on the this issue. It will also mean moving away from blaming individuals or groups, and offering solutions to some large-scale societal problems, including the deep societal inequalities found in Tororo district and Uganda in general.

Public opinions and public pressures has forced down several violations to be streamlined, therefore publication of researches on street children reports on their plight and possible solutions may lead to general trend of progressive criticism. This has been very effective in AIDS publicity attracting responsive concern from people within and without Uganda. The negative attitudes and resultant negative response as dwelt on in this paper is what need constitute the increased publicity programme. One street child from South Africa observed that the public need to know that street children are people like others; to put it in his own words;

"People do not want to see us. It is as if we are a bad dream. They just want us to go away. They do not love us, we are not as good as animals. They forget that street children are people too."[24] (Kruger, 1996: 202).

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[24] This is a statement translated from Zulu.

In a research report on Nairobi street children by Appetiser (1996: 252), one of the street children also observed that *"they think we are dangerous criminals, they do not understand our problems."* All these perceptions can be eroded with widespread advocacy. Thus increased publicity will affect the child welfare policy implementation. Publicity is of great importance because it will be a great deal to implement a programme without clear understanding of what children's rights involve. Enforcement of this policy can only be effective and meaningful if persons concerned and street children (people) against whom the rights are to be enforced are aware and willing to uphold them.

There is need on the part of the District Administration and any interested party to allocate sufficient funds to the dissemination of information regarding rights, push and pull factors and the general situation of street children. This has not been done at all and the realisation that is necessary may make a difference.

5.3 Participation/ involvement of children in Planning and implementation of interventions

As already noted in the foregone chapter (see 4.6), children's participation in issues which concern them in Uganda is minimal, though there have been efforts at the national level to listen to the children as in the *Mock Constituent Assembly*. This is a positive sign that the idea of children's participation is taking root in Uganda. However, the issue of participation of children has not gone beyond the national level. Efforts by the children to bring out their voices are frustrated, as in the case of street children's march to the State House when the presidential guards dispersed and beat up the children.

Children should be treated as social actors and should be given a stage to participate in matters that concern their own situation from the national to the lower levels. It is therefore, worthwhile mentioning that Tororo District administration needs to consider this missing instrument in coming up with any policy interventions that are directed to children, and in this particular case the street children. Whereas Uganda has put children in the centre of policy, by developing UNPAC and encouraging its decentralisation to the lower levels, it is not enough, it should go beyond that. Edwards (1996; 818), observes that *"this is very challenging: in addition to putting children's needs at the centre of policy, it requires space to be made for children's own views and voices to be heard and represented."* This should not stop at policy making but even at project and village levels. All policies, programmes and projects which are directed towards street children, should take in their views. These children understand their own situation more than any body else. This does not mean that their views should be taken on board

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automatically or in totality, but most relevant and feasible ones should be considered. It does not mean that adults cannot make any meaningful decisions for the children but there is need to listen to them, and to recognise the creativity and resourcefulness of children.

Treating street children as unproductive and incapable in issues that are part of them is more likely to result in negative or unintended policy and programme outcomes. NGO networking in the district, should be able to support and mobilise children and street children in particular to take part in debates and decision-making at local and district level.

5.4 Implication for Policy Decisions

The district policy makers should undertake systematic investigation of street children in order to come up with realistic estimates of the number of street children in the district. As we have observed earlier, there is no clarity over the number of street children in Tororo district urban centres despite the observation that the problem is on the rise. Policy makers have to estimate the magnitude of the problem. They should deal with a problem they are very conversant with. This is an expensive and ambitious undertaking, but it is worthwhile given the magnitude of the problem, the rate at which it is increasing, and the probable effect on society currently and in future. It was also observed that there has been little attention to this group of disadvantaged urban children. It is worthwhile coming up with useful sub-categories (by gender, by causes, source of livelihood, having or not having a family, etc.) for policy purposes. Further work needs to be done at each affected urban centre. This will be possible if there is increased collaboration with NGOs. Relevant and required data/information would be collected and well managed to assist in making feasible policy decisions.

Policy makers need to develop effective and viable targeting strategies reaching the street children and how to best deal with this threatening problem/ issue in the district. Policy makers should realise that the children on the streets are just a symptom of a major problem within the district. Whereas it realistic to attend to the symptoms in the short run, it is most important seek for and address the deeper causes. Though, this should be a long term process, this should be recognised and taken seriously by policy makers at all levels.

5.5 Conclusion.

It takes courage, determination, creativity, and an empathy for your fellow-beings to survive on the streets. However, the problem of street children in Tororo district is very complex and broad based as shown in the research findings. The situation requires to go beyond the visible problem, the prevalence

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of children on the street is a symptom of greater structural problem. As the old African saying goes " if you want to get to the root of a murder, you have to look for the blacksmith who made the machete." Therefore action on the problem/issue street children should go beyond the symptoms, which are the children on the streets and their consequent problems, to the actual defined causes. The interventions should be also directed to communities and families from which the children come. There should be a proper analysis of the situation of street children and therefore their "real" /actual problem definition.

It is also important to note that there are no definite or easy solutions for this situation. Therefore, all possible positive/ appropriate approaches to address the plight of these children, both preventive and pragmatic, should be applied based on proper analysis and planning of the children's needs.

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