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What is This?

The concrete particulars of the everyday realities of street children

Jan Grundling and Irma Grundling

ABSTRACT

The problem of street children in Namibia corresponds with that seen in other Third World countries where the economic and socio-economic climate favours unemployment and poverty, resulting in cultural degeneration and desperate antisocial behavioural patterns. An example of this phenomenon is the growing numbers of street children who are not an integral part of a family, supportive neighbourhood or healthy surroundings. A recovery plan based on the concrete particulars of the everyday realities of these children is urgently required to reverse the situation. It demands a clear understanding of the problem within the specific context of Namibia. This article describes the general characteristics, behavioural patterns and causes of the phenomenon in order to enable the government to prevent, manage and provide an efficient service to households in Namibia so as to defuse and respond to those factors contributing to children living on the streets.

Introduction

The Republic of Namibia (formerly known as South West Africa) lies in southwestern Africa, with South Africa to the south and southeast, Botswana to the east and Angola to the north. Despite its vulnerability to drought, Namibia's potential for economic prosperity is high owing to its abundant

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mineral reserves and rich fisheries, as well as its well-developed infrastructure (*The Europa World Year Book*, 2000). However, according to Twedten and Nangulah (1999), despite the existence of a relatively high gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, all evidence on Namibia points to the fact that the GDP per capita conceals severe differentials along the lines of geographical location, occupation, age and gender. Namibia can, therefore, be described as a country with deep and widespread poverty, but also as a country with a great deal of wealth concentrated in relatively few hands. According to these authors, the richest 10 percent of Namibian society receive 65 percent of the country's income, whereas the remaining 90 percent share among themselves only 35 percent. It is thus not surprising that Namibia is ranked below 100th in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the world.

Poverty and income inequality have resulted in the phenomenon of street children in Namibia. The phenomenon of street children is one of high complexity and variability. Street children are found on the street at any hour of the day – not only in urban areas of Namibia, but also in the most rural towns – and are exposed to violence, criminality, drug abuse and delinquency. Their numbers are rising daily.

In order to introduce a recovery plan that will lead to an improvement in the lives of street children in Namibia, a clear understanding of the problem within the Namibian context has to be obtained. Furthermore, recommendations regarding such a plan should take into account the realities of the problem at the grassroots level. Nearly half (48.2 percent) of the population of Namibia is under the age of 18 – claiming the fundamental right of children to be part of a family and have access to homes, safe and supportive neighbourhoods and healthy surroundings (World Bank, 2001).

Literature review

All over the world, children often turn to the streets in an attempt to resolve problems that arise from the social structures and situations in which they find themselves. One of the principal reasons for turning to the streets is poverty. In the case of Namibia, according to *The National Household and Expenditure Survey* (CSO, 1996) 53 percent or 129,758 of all Namibian households are classified as poor, having a standardized consumption level (SCL) of N$7200 (US$1000) or less per annum. Of these, 10 percent can be classified as very poor. According to Twedten and Nangulah (1999) one can expect a strong geographical concentration of low income and poverty in the north (Oshikoto, Caprivi and Oshana), with the central (Omaheke,

Kunene, Erongo, Khomas and Otjozondjupa) and southern (Hardap and Karas) regions being generally better off in terms of average income and poverty.

The existence of poverty within specific regions of a country is what Bar-On (1997) (as quoted by Young, 2004: 472) called 'a micro-level crisis of poverty' that debilitates family environments causing children to go onto the streets. Children that turn to the streets share one common factor – namely, 'working the streets' to make a living. This happens because households are unable to provide adequate living arrangements for their children. There is, however, a world of difference between the 'runaways' or homeless youth found in developed countries, and the 'street children' found in Third World countries.

In contrast to 'runaways', who mostly turn to the streets in search of adventure, excitement or independence, the 'street children' of the Third World turn to the streets as a result of neglect or abandonment (Richter, 1991). The phenomenon of 'street children' in the Third World compares favourably with Schurink's (1993) definition of a street child:

> A street child is a boy or a girl who is under the age of 18 and who left his/her home environment, part time or permanently (because of problems at home and/or school, or try to alleviate those problems) and who spends most of his/her time unsupervised on the street as part of a subculture of children who live an unprotected communal life and who depend on themselves and on each other, and not on an adult for the provision of physical and emotional needs such as food, clothing, nurturance, direction and socialization.
>
> (Schurink, 1993: 5)

These children use the streets in different ways and researchers on the phenomenon of street children (Grundling et al., 2002; Richter, 1991; Schurink, 1993) differentiate between:

- children **on** the street, and
- children **of** the street.

According to Schurink (1993), children *on* the street in the Third World constitute the largest group (approximately 75 percent). These children have homes and usually find themselves on the street in order to contribute towards the financial support of their families. According to Makombe (1992), as many as 85 percent of the street children in Zimbabwe, for example, have homes. Children *of* the street (approximately 25 percent), by

contrast, usually have little or no contact with their families, and are on the street to survive (Richter, 1991; Schurink, 1993).

As far back as 1987, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) indicated that the following are key factors in contributing to the phenomenon of street children:

- *Factors at the macro (community) level* – for example, politics, economy, housing, health and welfare services, unemployment and rapid urbanization. Young (2004) identified economic poverty as an outcome of socio-economic restructuring, along with HIV/AIDS and internal conflicts as the key indicators of child poverty in sub-Saharan African.
- *Factors at the meso (family) level* – the breakdown or disintegration of the family structure, single-parent families, remarriage, desertion, poverty, child abuse, child neglect, family violence, lack of bonding and lack of parental discipline, and a general lack of adequate care and attention.
- *Factors at the micro (individual) level* – escape from an intolerable situation (hunger, abuse, shame, etc.), failure at school, lack of money or feeling unwanted and a burden to the family.

For many families in Third World countries, a complex interaction between and a combination of these factors have made reliance on the economic contribution of their children an essential part of survival (United Nations, 1990). Thus, some children are exploited to become family breadwinners.

Although street children are not a uniform group, research findings on African street children indicate that their ages range from 2 to 18 years and, although the majority are boys, both sexes are represented. According to Richter (1991), the social situations of African street children are often similar and they are most commonly described as destitute, harassed, rejected and underprivileged. However, they do turn to the streets for different reasons:

- to support their families, because of inadequate family income;
- because they are neglected by poverty-stricken parents;
- because they are orphans or have been deserted by both parents;
- because they decide to leave their homes due to factors such as overcrowding, alcohol abuse by parents, parental abuse or peer pressure (Richter, 1991).

Currently, various programmes are designed to address the phenomenon of street children in African countries. Most of these are initiated and

run by voluntary and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and, according to Schurink (1993), they mostly have, among others, one or more of the following objectives:

- to provide assistance, both material and other, including legal advice, counselling, rehabilitation, education and shelter for destitute children;
- to establish a contact centre which provides daily meals, informal education, health care, counselling, sanitation and recreation facilities;
- to provide children with the opportunity to be re-integrated into formal schooling or tertiary education in order to increase their employment prospects;
- to improve the quality of life of street children and their families;
- to re-unite and rehabilitate children and their families; and
- to look for foster parents or community-based foster homes.

In spite of all the efforts and programmes aimed at addressing the phenomenon of street children, the needs of these children are simply not being met and their numbers are ever increasing. Schurink (1993) concludes that the problems encountered with these programmes do not stem from a lack of initiative, but rather from a lack of sufficient resources, such as funding and trained staff, as well as a lack of proper planning and government policies. Drake (1989) is of the opinion that many of these programmes fail because they do not meet the needs of the children involved. In fact, they contribute to a sense of failure in addressing the problem of street children, because they expect model behaviour and self-disclosure from the children in return for the services rendered. It is of the utmost importance to realize that no programme will succeed unless it is based on a scientific assessment of the situation in which the children find themselves, as well as the real needs of the children.

Nzimande (1996) defines the family as a support system. In these terms, the family is the ideal support system for any child's needs to be met. Ideally, the family (or parents) provides for the physical needs of the child. It provides information that the child is loved and cared for, information that the child is valued and esteemed and that the child belongs to a network of mutual obligation. When a child is deprived of this support system, he or she may be tempted to find fulfilment outside the family unit.

As a result of a growing concern with regard to the children of the world, the United Nations published the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. This declaration was designed to serve as a guideline and recommendation to countries on how to protect children from negative effects. It was, however, not sufficient to mobilize countries towards implementing radical

measures. Therefore, in 1989, the Declaration was complemented by the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Governments that accepted the Convention are obliged to amend their legislation to accommodate the provisions of the Convention and to commit themselves to implementation of the Convention in their country. Some relevant parts of the articles included in the Convention of the Rights of the Child are summarized here.

> For the purpose of the present Convention a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
>
> (Article 1)

> State parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind . . .
>
> (Article 2)

> A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her environment, or in whose own best interest cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state . . .
>
> (Article 20)

> State parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular make primary education compulsory, available, and free to all, encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need, make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means and take measures to encourage regular attendance of schools and the reduction of dropouts.
>
> (Article 28)

> . . . that all children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should be assisted in their recovery and re-integration into society and that this should take place in an environment which fosters health, self-respect and dignity . . .
>
> (Article 39)

The child is dependent on others for material support and protection. The Convention of the Rights of the Child sets universal standards for the protection of the child against neglect, abuse and exploitation, and guarantees their basic human rights including survival, development and participation in activities necessary for their development into mature and responsible adults. The Convention also recognizes the rights of children to express their opinions and feelings and the fact that these feelings and opinions should be taken into account when decisions about their lives are made (McPherson, 1987).

Statement of the problem

Although street children are reportedly widespread in most African countries, reliable statistics are lacking. The latest research done in Namibia by Tacon (1991) estimated the number of street children to be as high as 2300, with 700–800 living in the capital city (Windhoek) alone. This represents a proportion of 1.35 street children per 1000 of the population.

The ability to integrate street children into a programme that will lead to a sustainable improvement in their lives depends largely on the availability of current and reliable data of the everyday realities facing these children.

Research objectives

The following objectives were formulated for the street children research project, namely to determine and describe:

- the general characteristics of street children in Namibia;
- behavioural patterns of street children in Namibia; and
- the causes of the phenomenon of street children in Namibia.

Research methodology

In order to determine and describe the general characteristics, behavioural patterns and the causes of the phenomenon of street children in Namibia, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were utilized in urban and rural areas of Namibia. The Namibian towns listed in Table 1 were designated to be included in the project.

Table 1   Designated towns included in the research project

Region	Town
Caprivi	Katima Mulilo
Erongo	Swakopmund
	Walvis Bay
Hardap	Mariental
	Rehoboth
Karas	Keetmanshoop
Kavango	Rundu
Khomas	Windhoek
Kunene	Khorixas
Omaheke	Gobabis
Oshana	Ondangwa
	Oshakati
Oshikoto	Tsumeb
Otjozondjupa	Grootfontein
	Okahandja
	Otjiwarongo

Sample description

A sample of 243 street children was reached. Of these children, 208 were interviewed. The remaining 35 comprised a group of children ranging between the ages of 2 and 6 years, and whom the research team came across in a temporary tent shelter in Gobabis. As these children were too young to be subjected to an interview, they were merely observed within the shelter, as well as when leaving the shelter to roam the streets of Gobabis.

Data collection

Structured interviews were used as a means of collecting data from street children. A research team comprising two researchers and seven social workers conducted the interviews. Children were interviewed on the street, at shelters or at official places of safety. Although the interviews were structured, discussions were conducted in an informal manner to enable the children to narrate their stories with minimal structural constraints and to ensure the active participation of the children.

Interviews with members of the community and volunteer workers, as well as social workers and other professionals involved with street children,

were conducted to enable the determination and description of the perceptions of adults involved with street children. A group of 102 very diverse individuals was interviewed by the research team. The group included personnel from the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare working within the regions, people attached to service-rendering organizations, principals and teachers from schools that are involved with street children, pastors from different church denominations, politicians, the parents of street children, the police and concerned members of the community.

The two-step research design process (interviews with street children and members of the community) ensured the provision of data from the street children themselves and also from individuals from different spheres intimately involved with these children. It further provided the ideal basis for comparing the knowledge and perceptions of adults attempting to care for the street children with the information provided by the children themselves.

The field research team comprised individuals well equipped to communicate with and relate to the children and their circumstances. The field research team consisted of psychologists and social workers because the researcher believed that rapport building with the street children was an important determinant of successful interviewing. The best information was often obtained when the interviews began with an informal conversation, accompanied by the provision of sweets, and continued after the interview schedule was finished. The use of qualified psychologists and social workers was also instrumental in getting street children to focus on the relevant issues being discussed and obtaining a more realistic account of the experiences of the street children, as the children demonstrated a tendency to exaggerate their situations or personal triumphs. Their involvement was also important to filter facts from the flights of fancy of the street children, on the one hand, and information on perceptions based on the stereotyped generalizations of adults involved with street children over time, on the other hand.

Data analysis

The data obtained through the interviews were analysed qualitatively by identifying key words and common themes that emerged from the narratives. The quantitative data were analysed using EPI INFO Version 6.04b data management software, which was developed and distributed by the World Health Organization and the Centre for Disease Control.

Discussion of research results

Profile of street children

The research findings (Table 2) indicate that street children in Namibia are between 6 and 18 years old, with the average age being between 12 and 13 years, and the majority of street children being between the ages of 10 and 15 years. All the street children interviewed were of African origin and, as elsewhere in the world, street children in Namibia are predominantly male – 78.8 percent of the children interviewed were boys. This also corresponds fairly well with figures from other African countries as quoted by Veale and Dona (2003), namely 95 percent in Zimbabwe, 84 percent in Angola, 76 percent in Ethiopia, 70 percent in Zambia and 100 percent in Sudan. In this study, girls were slightly younger than boys – being aged 7 to 14 years with an average age of between 10 and 11 years; the boys were aged 6 to 18 years with an average age of between 13 and 14 years. The most prominent ethnic group among street children in Namibia is the Nama-Damara group (54.6 percent).

Although migration might be common among street children elsewhere, in Namibia it is most likely restricted by the remoteness of towns and the vast areas of deserted, harsh, and barren land between them. More than 80 percent of the Namibian street children operate in groups, which seems to indicate that, once on the street, these children develop support systems or networks, which effectively substitute for the family support system. In general, the children organize themselves into small groups, pool and share resources, and take care of one another and of those who are not able to take care of themselves.

Table 2   Dominant profile of street children in Namibia

| Component	Nature
Race	Of African origin
Ethnicity	Namara-Damara (54.6 percent)
Gender	Boys (78.8 percent)
	Girls (22.2 percent)
Age	Boys: 10–15 years
	Girls: 7–14 years
Support network	Operate in groups
	Sharing of resources
Type	Children *on* the street

Table 3   Permanency of the situation for street children in Namibia

Nature of the situation	Percent of children (n = 208)
Left home permanently	10.6
Left home temporarily	8.2
Still return home at night	81.2

The research findings also support findings with regard to the Third World phenomenon that most street children are actually children *on* the street rather than children *of* the street – 80.2 percent of the children interviewed indicated that they return home at night, and therefore have regular contact with their families. Kombarakaran (2004: 853) labelled this phenomenon 'home-based children on the street'. Table 3 gives an indication of the permanency of the situation of street children in Namibia.

Home situation

It is clear from Figure 1 that employed poverty and chronic poverty can be considered to be major factors contributing towards unhealthy home situations. In homes where employed poverty exists, children primarily experienced a lack of privacy due to sharing facilities, physical and sexual abuse by others and exposure to family violence. In the case of chronic unemployment, the scenario becomes even worse as children experienced a situation in which parents are unemployed and cannot provide for the physical needs
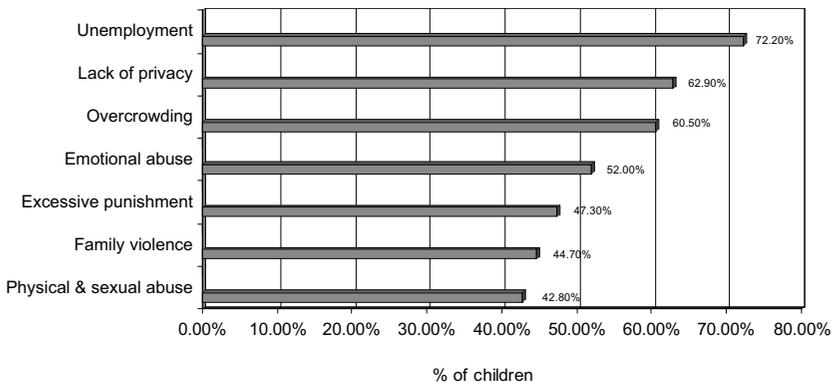
Figure 1   Home circumstances of street children

of the child, the child is emotionally abused, is excessively punished and has to live in an overcrowded house.

Reasons why children first turn to the street

The main reasons why Namibian street children first turn to the streets are summarized in Table 4, which indicates a complex interaction between factors external to the family and factors that relate to the family or the home circumstances within which the child finds him/herself. The majority of the children (58.9 percent) responded that they would never, in future, consider abandoning street life for a life at home – the reason being given was that they knew that the circumstances at home (as indicated in Table 4) would never change. For most of the children involved in the study (67.5 percent), the future is tomorrow. What matters to them is day-to-day survival – having something to eat, something to wear. Those who have actually abandoned street life (32.5 percent) at some previous stage said that it was mainly hunger that drove them back onto the streets again. Street life has thus become vital for their survival.

Factors external to the family that contribute towards the poor and unsupportive environment to which the child is subjected are mainly socio-economic. For a Namibian family, these factors are perceived to be:

Table 4   Main reasons why street children turned to the streets

Priority	Reason/motivation for children turning to the street
1	Survival
	Physical needs are not met
	Need for clothes
	Need for money
2	Peer pressure
3	Child abuse
	Physical abuse
	Sexual abuse
4	Child neglect
	Emotional needs not met
	No parental care/support
5	Parental substance abuse
6	Sent into streets by parents to help support
7	Family violence

- the current high rate of unemployment in Namibia;
- regional economic sectors of Namibia that are unable to absorb or accommodate a potential economic active regional workforce;
- the current education system, which is expensive as well as un-supportive and is insensitive to the specific needs of children from a deprived background;
- the impact of HIV/AIDS on the disintegration of the core family structure; and
- the high prevalence of uneducated, illiterate parents.

Interactively, these factors result in a weakened and degenerated family situation the most prominent characteristics of which are indicated in Table 5.

Given these deprived home circumstances, it is not surprising that the child looks to fulfil his/her needs external to the family unit. It should be emphasized that, as in the rest of Africa, the majority of street children cannot be classified as homeless children (Table 5). Only 18.6 percent of the children interviewed could be classified as homeless. This corresponds fairly well with figures of 15 percent in Zimbabwe, 2 percent in Zambia and 22 percent in Ethiopia (Veale & Dona, 2003).

Survival behaviour

In response to questions about the means by which they obtain food, more than half of the street children indicated that they beg for either food or

Table 5   Characteristics of a degenerated family

- Poverty – 86.4 percent of the children in the study indicated that there is not enough money at home to take care of the family.
- Parental substance abuse – within the Namibian context, substance abuse mainly refers to alcohol abuse.
- Disintegration of the core family – death, divorce, remarriage and parental absence from the home (either as a result of employment obligations, being in jail, having deserted the family, etc.) result in single parent families (as was the case with regard to 42.2 percent of the children interviewed), step-parent families (5 percent of the children), or the child being orphaned or deserted by both parents and having to stay with family or friends (18.6 percent of the children).
- Child abuse and child neglect – more than half of the children included in the study have been subjected to some form of ill-treatment which includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as neglect (87.2 percent of the children).
- Family violence – problematic interpersonal relations within the family are often resolved with family violence.

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money to buy food. Apart from begging, most of the children obtain money either by selling something or by assisting the public by pushing supermarket trolleys, carrying shopping bags, washing cars or minding parked cars. Although a mere 1.7 percent indicated that they do sometimes resort to shoplifting or theft in order to obtain money to buy food, it could be expected that this is a 'soft' statistic. Access to hygiene facilities seems to pose a real problem for street children in Namibia. Those children who find shelter at official places of safety and voluntary shelters have access to hygiene facilities at these institutions where they are also provided with luxuries, e.g. soap. However, more than 50 percent of the children who return home at night indicated that such facilities are not available at their homes.

The needs of street children in Namibia

The needs and priorities of street children in Namibia are given in Table 6 and follow almost exactly the classification by Pringle (1994). These needs and their priorities once again stress the theory of Maslow (1954) that, if physical needs are not satisfied, psychosocial needs become secondary.

Defining a street child in Namibia

Based on the research findings, a street child in Namibia can best be described as:

- a minor (i.e. a child under the age of 15);
- who depends on him/herself for his/her own survival by working the street; and
- who has either left home because of his/her home circumstances, or

Table 6   Needs of street children in Namibia

Priority	Need	Pringle's classification
1	Basic physical needs such as food, clothing and money.	Physical needs such as food, shelter, clothing and health care.
2	Need for education/schooling.	
3	Emotional needs such as parental care, love and attention.	Psychosocial needs which refer to the need for love and security, the need for
4	The need to be secure and protected.	new experiences, the need for praise and recognition and the need for
5	The need for praise and recognition.	responsibility.

- who has been driven to the streets by his/her parents either permanently or on a daily basis in order to earn money to support the family, and
- who is therefore without parental care, adult supervision or guidance.

Thus, street children in Namibia are initiated onto the street at a relatively young age, and are encouraged to be independent while supporting the family economically through street work.

Recommendations

A general view expressed in all regions of Namibia was that the different agencies involved in addressing the problem of street children do not co-operate sufficiently. As a first step, the Government of Namibia should, therefore, initiate the process of formulating appropriate social legislation, national and regional policies and guidelines to address the problem of street children. The aim should be to serve as a framework for the formulation of secondary pro-active strategies, and should therefore facilitate:

- secondary strategies at the grassroots level with the aim of preventing children from turning to the street;
- the establishment of communication networks between all relevant players; and
- the identification of 'at risk' families and the provision of appropriate assistance to those who have turned to the street with the ultimate aim of re-establishing a stable family.

Efforts should be made to broaden vertical and horizontal employment opportunities for members of the community. Without addressing the underlying structural issues that create and sustain poverty and income inequality in Namibia, children will continue to struggle on the streets or be forced to find formal work to support their families. It is estimated, in Namibia, that 18 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 years currently form part of the labour force (World Bank, 2001). Trade links between geographically isolated centres should be established to promote the flow of goods and services and increase the absorption of surplus capacities in a specific area.

In order to pro-actively respond to the phenomenon of street children, local authorities should develop a social management system able to identify those 'children at risk' who live in families but are obliged to work on the streets to supplement the family income. By so doing, local authorities will be able to focus on the development of coping abilities in families within the

community, rather than focusing on curing the social problems leading to lifestyle changes conducive to a healthy family life. The system should, however, also enable local authorities to manage the phenomenon of street children on and of the street. In this regard, a biometric system installed at various public institutions, including magistrate courts, to track street children may be of huge value. Such a system could, according to Scholtz (2004), use a fingerprint scanner to identify children and then, through its comprehensive database, assist authorities in arranging for the children to be sent to places of safety, rather than to prison.

Educating street children about positive ways of coping with their daily stresses and their own resourcefulness at managing themselves are preconditions to providing them support and enabling them to be reintegrated into family life. Coping skills education may also have a positive effect in reducing substance abuse and other maladaptive behaviour caused by stressors. Building up the self-esteem of street children should also form part of the core of the education programme.

The psychosocial integration of street children into the community also needs to be addressed. According to Leslie et al. (2003), it is important to provide information to street children and their families about available community resources and the procedures to follow to seek help and assistance, for example, legal assistance, spiritual counselling and financial assistance. Furthermore, the provision of counselling and other care services, which provide emotional nurturance for street children, may be beneficial to both the child and the family. However, care programmes are also required whereby the immediate needs of families are communicated to the relevant authorities in order to facilitate timely interventions and needed resources for these families. Through these care programmes the basic needs of families (food, clothing) and children on the street (feeding schemes, shelters, clothing) should be attended to; and medical and health care facilities should be accessible to families in need as well as to children who have already turned to the street. Veale and Dona (2003) also proposed the implementation of a guardianship arrangement that can oversee the integration of street children into a family structure, care centre or other type of institution. This requires an emphasis on community education and awareness programmes that will enable communities to prevent children from turning to the streets, rather than managing the symptoms.

In terms of the specific role of the community, 96 percent of the community agreed that they should:

•   get involved in projects taking care of the needy within the community, with a focus on the relief of basic needs like food, clothing and shelter;

- act as a referral system to identify potential problems and bring them to the attention of the authorities responsible;
- communicate information to the relevant agencies in order to contribute towards a better understanding of the needs of the community and prevent the problem of street children;
- educate their children and work towards cultural uplifting of the community as a whole. Community values and norms should be identified, communicated, and worked towards;
- initiate self-help projects; and
- act as foster parents or identify or establish community-based foster homes.

Conclusion

It is believed that the answer to the street children phenomenon in Namibia lies in the economic empowerment of communities and the solving of family difficulties through reduction of the high levels of unemployment, and addressing the physical and psychosocial needs of communities and street children. It was indicated that the primary role perceived for the community is one of prevention. To fulfil this role, communities need to be empowered through community education and awareness programmes to understand the causes of the street children phenomenon within Namibia. In conclusion, it is, therefore, emphasized that further research should be directly oriented towards solving unemployment problems in Namibian communities.

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