THE APPLICATION OF EMPOWERMENT THEORY TO STREET CHILDREN OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD: The Case of Casa Alianza (Covenant House) in Honduras

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the urban street child phenomenon in the developing world. It establishes that in most developing countries Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have assumed the role of the state and have taken action to combat the street child "problem. They have fashioned public policy and instituted programs to address this social phenomenon. The study argues that existing development approaches and policy intervention strategies applied by NGOs are wholly inadequate to address the complex causes of children leaving home to take up residence in the urban streets. It posits that the empowerment model of alternative development, as articulated by planning and development theorists, is far more likely to: (1) prevent the migration of children to the streets; (2) improve the well-being of children currently living on the streets.; and (3) redress to some extent imbalances in social, economic and political power that lead children to the streets. Subsequently, a case study is undertaken of one NGO for street children, Casa Alianza, Honduras. The model of empowerment is applied to Casa Alianza, Honduras to evaluate the efficacy of the organization and to offer recommendations on adjusting their policies and programs to empower to a greater degree their target population.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Children and adolescents who use the streets of Third World cities as their principal living space have been a focus of attention for aid agencies and governments for over two decades. The issue of street children first appeared as a major concern in the wake of the International Year of the Child in 1979.\(^1\) Since that time, strongly emotive images of children seeking a livelihood on the urban streets of developing countries have appeared in the media, largely because of the violence done to some of them by the supposed guardians of the peace - the police. It was inevitable, therefore, that shortly thereafter a growing body of literature would evolve around street children and youth, focusing particularly on ethnographic accounts of the newly “discovered” subjects and the documentation of numerous projects and programs designed to address the “problem”.

The state in most cases has either been unwilling or financially unable to provide these children with basic urban services. Further, the state often appears uninterested in forming public policy that re-integrates the children into civil society. Where policy is in place regarding the provision of housing and other urban services for children as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is often

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\(^1\) In 1982, the Inter NGO Program on Street Children and Street Youth was formed. In 1986, UNICEF’s Executive Board approved priority measures on behalf of “children in especially difficult circumstances.” Special emphasis was placed on street children and for “developing strategies . . . which would defend their rights, avoid their exploitation, and respond to their personal, family, and community needs” (Blanc, 1994a, 36-37).
ignored by agents of the state. As Meyer notes, states have begun to look for “private-sector alternatives to provide public services” and “international donors increasingly use NGOs to provide international public goods.”

She continues, “while the public sector has downsized and pursued macro-economic stability, other government functions have been passed back to the market or in some cases NGOs.” In the past few years, therefore, it has become evident that “the power of the international private sector has increased dramatically” and, as Hudock explains, many believe that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have a “comparative advantage in delivering development services” given, for example, their sources of funding, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness.

The matter of street children has transcended national borders and cuts across the boundaries of academic disciplines and professional specializations. As many states have abdicated responsibility for the urban problem of street children, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have assumed the role of the state and have taken action to combat the street child “problem.” Though private organizations, NGOs must rely on planning models to fashion public policy to address and “solve” this social phenomenon. Some of the initiatives that have resulted from the policies and intervention strategies of NGOs in recent decades on behalf of street children include campaigns appealing for international solidarity; experiments with new educational strategies compatible with conditions on the street; establishment of special organizations to assist these youngsters; media reports lamenting their deplorable living conditions; seminars and national and

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international conferences; and research studies on their demographic profile, ways of dealing with life on the streets, or their family history and socio-economic background.

1.2 **Problem Statement**

Despite the implementation of various policies and initiatives by NGOs to assist street children over the last twenty or so years, the problem of children and adolescents who use the streets of Third World urban centres as their principal living space has not been curbed, much less eradicated. In many urban centres the numbers are rapidly increasing. So too have the draconian measures meted out to street children remained; children are still incarcerated, beaten mutilated and murdered on a daily basis worldwide.

Existing development approaches and policy intervention strategies applied by NGOs appear wholly inadequate to address the complex causes of children leaving home to reside in the urban streets. As I hope to demonstrate, research indicates that children turn to the streets for familial, municipal, national and international reasons. The social welfare and community development models, which serve as the foundation of most policies and programs instituted to assist street children, fail to address many of these causes, and therefore fail to significantly decrease the numbers of urban street children.

1.3 **Research Questions**

The principal questions posed in this thesis are:

- What factors cause children to leave home for the streets or what factors cause parents to abandon their children to a life on the streets?

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• What existing development models have been relied upon by governmental and non-governmental organizations to address the phenomenon of street children?
• Why have existing development models that have been applied by NGOs to the problem of street children failed to prevent more and more children dwelling in urban streets?
• Is there an alternative development model that meets the practical and strategic needs of children currently living on the street and prevents more children from living on the streets?5

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this thesis is threefold. First, I will argue that existing models of development applied by NGOs fail to prevent children dwelling on the streets because they do not take into account the complex causality of the phenomenon. Second, I shall posit that the alternative development model of empowerment as articulated by John Friedmann and refined by the feminist planners Caroline Moser, Elizabeth Rocha and Jo Rowlands, is far more likely to: (1) prevent the migration of children to the streets; (2) improve the well-being of children currently living on the streets; and (3) to amend to some extent imbalances in social, economic and political power.6 Third, through a case study of one NGO which aims to assist street children, Casa Alianza, Honduras, I hope to establish that the empowerment

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5 Practical needs are the immediate perceived needs of the children (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, medical care etc.). Strategic needs are those that challenge social, economic, and political structures and other mechanisms that systematically marginalize street children and their fight for survival. These terms are drawn from the work of Maxine Molyneux: Mobilization without Emancipation (1985). Her work will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

development model can be used to evaluate existing programs and to indicate ways in which such programs could be improved.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Given the breadth of my subject matter, I have employed a multi-faceted research methodology. The first part of this thesis involved a series of literature reviews. First, an initial literature review was conducted to establish the identity and number of street children in the developing world. Because the focus of my case study in the second half of the thesis was the street children of Honduras, I paid particular attention to the extensive survey conducted in Tegucigalpa by Proyecto Alternativas. This survey was carried out by the project's medical staff who met with 1,244 street children between the years 1990 and 1992. Each child was interviewed on four occasions to determine the demographics and lifestyle of the population.

Having compiled qualitative and quantitative data on street children in general and those in the urban centres of Honduras in specific, I undertook a second literature review to establish the perceived causes of the street child “problem” in those countries in which the “problem” is acute. A third stage of literature review of the development models applied by governmental, non-governmental and community-based organizations to address the street child “problem” was also required. A final review of literature was done on the potential of the alternative development model of empowerment to meet the needs of target populations and to change social, economic and political structures for the benefit of the marginalized.
In the second part of this thesis, I conducted a case study of one NGO that attempts to meet the practical and strategic needs of street children – Casa Alianza, Honduras. I initially selected Casa Alianza, Honduras as my case study for personal reasons. Several years ago I became a member of Casa Alianza’s Rapid Response Team. I was sent detailed information on crimes against Central-American street children perpetrated by agents of the state, and was asked to write to public officials and newspapers demanding that these agents be apprehended and prosecuted. My horror at the frequent murder and mutilation of street children intensified and I began to take a greater interest in the phenomenon of street children in general and the policies and programs of Casa Alianza in particular.

I also elected to use this organization as my case study because of the distinctive approach taken by Casa Alianza, Honduras to address the problem of street children. In my review of the many NGOs dedicated to assisting street children, I discovered that Casa Alianza’s objectives, policies and programs were far more progressive and comprehensive than those of comparable organizations. While other organizations focus on meeting only the practical needs of street children, Casa Alianza attempts to bring about a measure of structural transformation of the society that street children inhabit. The organization openly opposes the violent treatment of children at the hands of the State – appealing to local, national and international communities -- but also attempts to reform State practices by negotiating with its agents on matters relating to street children. Furthermore, the policies of Casa Alianza take into account the numerous and
complex causes of children living in the streets, and therefore their programs go beyond the ameliorative to the transformative.

To gain a better understanding of the objectives, policies and intervention strategies of Casa Alianza and to determine their effectiveness, I undertook fieldwork in Central America. I visited the head office of Casa Alianza in San Jose, Costa Rica for one week in March 2000. During this time, I conducted a series of formal and informal interviews with various staff members, including the Director, Bruce Harris. Casa Alianza provided me liberal access to their library, which contained, among other literature, internal documents and reports, outlining their methodology and elaborating the various policies and intervention strategies of the organization.

In order to experience the day-to-day operation of Casa Alianza, I spent the following week in Managua, Nicaragua. I was originally scheduled to view Casa Alianza’s program in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, as this was the site of my case study. However, due to political unrest in the capital and a notable increase in the assaults and murders of foreigners, Casa Alianza’s Director, Bruce Harris, determined that it was in my best interests not to travel to Honduras at that time. Nevertheless, I was advised that the operation of the program was nearly identical in both urban centres.

Upon arriving in Managua, I initially visited the local head office of Casa Alianza and conducted interviews with the directors of family re-integration, psychology, spiritual education, sexual health, and drug rehabilitation, and with the directors of the crisis centre and transition home. I then accompanied street
educators on their daily treks to the marketplace, parks and parking lots to interact with street children. I also visited the crisis centre and transition home. I observed and interacted with street children on the street, in the crisis centre and in the transition home with the assistance of a local translator.

Had I funding to expand my field research and had I a working knowledge of Spanish, I would have also employed participatory research techniques in this study as such techniques have been thought to empower street children. As Blanc explains, in an ideal study of poor urban children, it is important to “give space to the children’s own subjectivities and voices, or, in other words, to make children subjects rather than objects of the research.” Such research can function to raise the consciousness of children, thereby empowering them to perceive of themselves as cognitive beings capable of evaluating, and perhaps changing, their reality. It might also improve the self-esteem of street children, thereby empowering them psychologically, as researchers take seriously their stories and their perspective of the causes of, and solutions to, child homelessness. However, due to brevity of my field research because of funding constraints and because of my inability to speak Spanish, the staff of Casa Alianza and I felt that it would not be in the best interests of the children to engage in participatory research techniques.8

7 Blanc, 1994a, 39.
8 For discussions on child-centered research and action research with street children, see Connolly and Ennew, 1996, 136-143; and Kefyalew, 1996, 203-211. Kefyalew explains that “the idea of research subjects playing an active part in research is still in its infancy and this is particularly true
1.6 DESCRIPTION OF THESIS STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

I shall begin my study by describing and enumerating the street child population in urban centres of developing countries. This description includes the production of a flexible working definition of the street child. In the first half of Chapter 3, I shall identify and discuss the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary causes of the street children phenomenon, as reported in studies on street children worldwide. In the second half, I shall set forth the three social planning models applied by NGOs to the phenomenon, examining in detail the policy interventions and programs that are generated from these models. In the subsequent chapter, the empowerment model will be offered as a viable alternative to the three planning models considered in Chapter 3. In specific, it will be shown to address the multiple causes of "child streetism." Chapters 5 and 6 will be dedicated to my case study of Casa Alianza, Honduras. Chapter 5 provides background to the case study area, while Chapter 6 examines the operations of Casa Alianza, Honduras, specifically their policies and intervention strategies. In Chapter 7 Casa Alianza, Honduras will be evaluated based on the empowerment model of development, and recommendations will ensue.

when it comes to involving children in research" (203). Further, he identifies the constraints of this research that includes finance and time, both of which were relevant constraints in my study.

9 "Child streetism" is a term apparently coined by Bar-On, who uses it in both his articles on the subject of children who work on the street (1997: 64, 1998:202). I am using it in this context to refer to children who spend most of the time residing on the street. See my working definition of street children in Chapter 2.
CHAPTER TWO

STREET CHILDREN:
A THIRD WORLD URBAN PHENOMENON

2.1 WHO ARE THE STREET CHILDREN?: THE POLITICS OF DEFINITION

One of the primary difficulties in discussing street children is the lack of consensus in defining the population. Henry Mayhew first used the term "street children" in 1851 when writing in London Labour and the London Poor, where he noted that "each year sees an increase of the numbers of street children."\(^1\) Over a century later, the street child label was reactivated in UNESCO's literature concerning "war-vagrant" children following World War II. The term, however, gained wide acceptance and general use only after the United Nations' Year of the Child in 1979.\(^2\) Before this time, children found on the street of Third World cities were typically referred to as homeless, abandoned, or runaways.

Over the last twenty years there have been many attempts to define more clearly the designation “street child”. Most definitions of street children concentrate on two characteristics: presence on the street and the level of contact with the family. The most oft cited is the now dated UNICEF definition which differentiates children "on the street" and children "of the street," terms adopted from the groundbreaking work of the late Peter Tacon.\(^3\) UNICEF defines children on the street as boys and girls of various ages who work as vendors in the urban markets or who engage regularly in other informal economic activities (carrying bags,

\(^1\) Mayhew, 1851, 479.
\(^2\) Williams, 1993.
\(^3\) Connolly & Ennew, 1996; Franchet, 1996.
guarding cars, begging, hauling garbage) in geographic areas formally designated for public use. *Children on the streets* retain regular or occasional contact with their families and live, however loosely, with some degree of supervision by an older sibling, parent or other adult. In contrast, *children of the street*, according to UNICEF, are typically teenage boys who have been either orphaned, abandoned or have run away from their families, and who consider the street as their place of shelter, source of livelihood and place of companionship. This group of street children is too young to enter the formal labour market and too estranged from their families to participate in familial economic activities. Some do involve themselves in informal economic activities as described above, yet the majority of their time is spent "hanging out" and participating in various forms of petty criminal activity. In much of the literature, this group is often referred to as the "real" street children.

UNICEF's typology gained wide acceptance in the 1980s and continues to be used by various individuals, organizations and governments throughout the developing world. ⁴ However, over the last decade social scientists have attempted to construct more revealing typologies which take into account other dimensions of street life, such as street territories, social organization, economic activities and integration with street culture. ⁵ Still others have sought to define street children in terms of human rights, their relationship with civil society, the various stages of

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⁵ Aptekar, 1988b; Aptekar & Abebe, 1997; Dallape, 1996; Lucchini, 1996a.
street life, the degree of deviant behaviour, and the level of psycho-social
development.\(^6\)

Despite definitional diversity in the literature, it has been common practice to refer to street children as a more or less unified group. This has led some researchers and practitioners to conclude that attempts to define street children create static, false generalizations about the Third World street child population that obscure the realities of the situation.\(^7\) Despite growing evidence, for example, that street children are as varied as any other population of children, many institutions and public media produce a "street child" profile to appeal to the imagination of a public who wishes to see the street child as an emblem of humanity in its untamed state.\(^8\) Unfortunately, such organizations fail to recognize the truth of Lucchini's claim, that "being a street child corresponds neither to a clearly delimited social category nor to a perfectly homogenous psychological unity."\(^9\)

Since the late 1980s, certain researchers began to expose the ideological underpinnings and conceptual imprecision of definitions of street children. The pioneering work and novel methods of research carried out by the likes of Aptekar, Swart and Glauser shed doubt on the adequacy of existing definitions and challenged the hegemony of the pervading images of street children.\(^10\) For instance, in his work Street Children: Deconstructing a Construct, Glauser argues that street children do not always fit clearly into UNICEF's "on" the street and "of" the street dichotomy. He notes that:


\(^7\) Connolly & Ennew, 1996; Gigengack, 1994; Glauser, 1998; Lucchini, 1996a; Reddy, 1992; Rosemberg, 2000; Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b.

\(^8\) Boyden, 1998.
some of the boys who shine shoes at the central bus station of Asuncion prefer working at night as long distance buses, leaving around midnight, means that an important number of passengers are waiting there in the early evening. Many of these may be potential customers. Also there is considerably less competition and therefore better business for the shoe shiners at night as there are fewer of them, since many parents do not allow their children out to work late at night. For others there are no late bus connections from home. Some of these children work all night whilst others get a few hours sleep wherever they can; some return home in the morning to get some sleep; other only go home every two or three days, spending the nights together with the children who do not go home on any regular basis at all.¹¹

In a similar vein, Reddy argues that "the terminology used by UNICEF [and others] is confusing," echoing the sentiment that in practice, most of the children did not fit neatly into either of these categories.¹² Like Glauser, Reddy finds the "on" the street and "of" the street definition too static, and fails to capture the complexity of the lives of the children themselves.

As noted by Connolly and Ennew, these and other 'competent' theorists and practitioners prefer to conceptualize street children as a group of children who maintain some special relationship to the street.¹³ Although these researchers recognize the existence of street children who do fit into the "on" or "of" the street categories as defined by UNICEF, they argue that they are the minority. As such, for them the "on" or "of" the street categories form two ends of a continuum. The majority of street children lie somewhere in the middle of this spectrum,

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⁹ Lucchini, 1996b, 169.
¹³ Connolly & Ennew, 1996.
demonstrating the dynamic movement that actually reflects the lives of the street child whose contact with his or her family is often in a state of flux.

My research on street children has led me to resolve with Glauser, Reddy, Connolly and Ennew that a broad yet precise working definition of “street children” is required if we are to identify the causes of children living and working on the street and if we are to determine possible planning solutions. Definitional breadth is required to capture the diversity and complexity of the population and precision if we are to devise specific programs to empower members within that population. My working definition, therefore, is as follows: a street child is a girl or boy who is under the age of eighteen and who has left or been forced out of his/her home environment part time or permanently and who spends most or all 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 each other for the provision of physical and emotional needs.

2.2 THE NUMBER OF STREET CHILDREN: THE EXTENT OF THE PHENOMENON

The lack of consensus on the definition of the street child is, unfortunately, matched by the inconsistent and faulty enumeration of the street child population. During the 1980s, many disparate and inflated estimates circulated about the number of children and adolescents surviving on the streets of Third World metropolises. As argued by Rosemberg these estimates were usually developed using deductive reasoning that assumed a linear relationship between poverty and child homelessness.\textsuperscript{14} This has led many researchers and organizations to

\textsuperscript{14} Rosemberg, 2000.
conclude that the world is overrun by millions of street children who represent the poverty of the underdeveloped world.

One of the first published sources that estimated the Third World's population of street children was by Peter Tacon, then the UNICEF advisor on issues related to abandoned and orphaned children. In his work, *My Child Minus One* (1981), Tacon stated:

Perhaps no children have been more intensely exploited and abused in today's world than those who are forced to survive on city streets - the descendants of economic miracles and human tragedies. Any reasonable estimate would put their numbers at about 100 million - and its possible that half of these live in Latin America.¹⁵

Tacon's estimate of 100 million fell to 70 million in the “underdeveloped world” in Black's 1986 study on the history of UNICEF.¹⁶ She argued that 40 million of the 70 million were street children of Latin America. In that same year, the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs estimated that there were between 30 to 170 million street children worldwide.¹⁷ Two years later, in *Cry for Help: UNICEF's Response to Street Children in the Third World,* Landers cites an estimate from the Anti-Slavery Society in 1985, in which the figure drops to 30 million.¹⁸ She maintains the claim that half the street children in the Third World live in Latin America. In more recent publications by UNESCO, the 100 million figure is still used.¹⁹

¹⁶ Black, 1986.
¹⁷ Scanlon et al., 1998.
The legitimacy that UNICEF enjoys in the eyes of the public and its access to the international media were, and continue to be, sufficient to guarantee unquestioned faith in the figures they put forward. The numbers noted above are widely circulated and are quoted by many researchers and writers, yet, as Ennew concludes, “they have no validity or basis in fact.” For example, the headline of a *New York Times* article in September 7, 1983 read: “UNICEF is doing what it can to help the 40 million abandoned Latin American children.” Academic theses and journals articles often cite these estimates as well, without due regard for common sense. Other highly regarded international institutions, such as Amnesty International and Childhope, Inc., reported the same astronomical figures without citing sources as they typically do in their reports to ensure their credibility.

In recent years, several attempts have been made in a series of countries and cities to more accurately identify the number of street children. Since the late 1980s, several studies have conducted counts of children and adolescents found living on the streets during the day or evening hours. Two procedures have been adopted in these studies. In the first, street children are identified via interviews conducted by researchers in the field over long periods of time. In many instances, these child censuses are performed by NGOs who often provide other services such as education, medical care, emotional and psychological counseling and the like. In contrast, the second enumeration method involves the identification and observation of street children without direct contact. Essentially, the surveyed urban

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20 Ennew, 1994a.
21 quoted in Lusk, 1989, 75.
space is divided into zones and assigned teams of enumerators to travel through them, at the same time of day or night, following predetermined routes. The surveyors count the street children and adolescents whom they identify during their circuit. The effect is a simultaneous snapshot of children who are using the streets as a place to generate income, sleep and socialize on a specific day of the year, at a specific time. The basic theory behind this procedure is that space on the streets is not occupied in a random fashion and that street children and adolescents tend to gather or circulate in areas that afford opportunities for income, shelter and amusement.

Both these methods make it possible to estimate the number of street children and adolescents in local areas for purposes of public policy planning. These procedures chiefly differ, not in terms of the degree of contact with the street child, but mainly in terms of the amount of time dedicated to observation and enumeration. That is, although these two approaches both involve cross-sectional surveys, the procedures differ in the length of time during which use of the street is observed. However, the length of time spent in the streets to observe their use determines, in part, the figure at which one arrives at because the use of the street for survival is not an attribute of the person, but rather a condition in which some people find themselves at some points in their lives. Not all children use the space on the streets for survival every day of the year or every hour of the day.

The results from numerous studies suggest that in those countries and cities which have enumerated street children, there are hundreds or thousands of street children whose primary living space in the street, as opposed to the tens and
hundreds of thousands suggested by earlier estimates. One useful example is Brazil. UNESCO and other agencies have variously estimated that there are between 1 and 50 million street children in Brazil. However, since the late 1980's, 17 research studies in Brazilian cities have conducted counts of children and adolescents found living on the streets during the day or night time hours. Both census methods discussed above were used. Their research suggests that there are roughly 35,000 street children in Brazil rather than the tens of millions that are readily publicized and cited.

2.3 CHARACTERIZING URBAN STREET CHILDREN

Comprehending who street children are in terms of their age, gender, place of origin and social and economic characteristics is the first and most important step in designing policies which would positively impact them. Knowledge of their historical backgrounds and the socio-economic characteristics of their families is crucial in that this information helps us to understand why these children use the street as their primary living space. However, any such characterization needs to take into account the cultural differences and context-specific factors which determine the nature and behaviour of street children. Nevertheless, I agree with Le Roux’s conclusion, based on his research in South Africa, that “it needs to be emphasized that street children represent a worldwide phenomenon despite cultural differences”. Examination of the literature indicates that the backgrounds and the characteristics of street children are remarkably similar. In my account of

26 Klees et al., 2000.
27 Le Roux, 1996b, 430.
the characteristics of street children below, I attempt to take into account both the similarities and the variation among street children.

2.3.1 PUBLIC SPACE & PLACE OF ORIGIN

One of the principal and most obvious characteristics of street children and adolescents is that they live alone on the streets, without proper or reliable shelter and without adult supervision and, as such, they do not enjoy parental protection, guidance, love and care.\(^{28}\) Despite the common perception that street children have been abandoned, the research to date suggests that this is not usually the case.\(^{29}\) Research conducted throughout the Third World suggests that most street children are more likely to have gradually detached themselves from their homes, either because of abusive family situations, parent or matrimonial problems, poverty, and/or their need to work.\(^{30}\) Regardless of the circumstances that trigger the loosening or rupture of bonds between children and their families, in most cases a break occurs after a process in which the child becomes increasingly accustomed to street life.\(^{31}\) In most cases these children are working children who leave home in a measured manner, at first staying away for a night or two and then gradually spending more time away from home.\(^{32}\)

The "excitement" of street life is something that some children are drawn or "pulled" to over a period of time. They are often working children who have temporarily stopped going home at night, perhaps because they missed their bus, or friends persuaded them to stay and experience the thrill of being on their own.

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\(^{28}\) Blanc, 1991.
\(^{29}\) Ennew, 1994a; Green, 1998; Tierney, 1997.
\(^{30}\) de la Barra, 1998; Ennew, 1994; Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999.
For those who must work all day on the streets and then go home to still more work and/or abuse, the appeal of carefree, reckless abandonment with other children in similar predicaments can be seductive. Many future street children alternate between home and the streets for months, staying longer as they learn to travel the city.

Once leaving home, the children and youth become quickly assimilated into the street environment. They plan different survival strategies on their own and develop themselves materially, culturally and morally. On the streets, the children and youth experience excitement and danger, challenges, and various forms and amounts of support. Freedom from adult control and constraints is an alluring attraction. The dangers they face include apparent obstacles to safety, which range from foul weather to city traffic, and the less obvious threats of abuse from adults, police and even other children. They are constantly challenged to find food and a place to sleep at night. For support, they turn to other street children, loosely formed gangs, sympathetic merchants, shelters and various outreach programs organized on their behalf.

In many locations, a strong majority of these children and adolescents have migrated to the urban centres from rural areas. For example, in a Tanzanian Survey approximately 80 percent of street children had migrated to Dar-Es-Salaam, of which 94 percent were from rural areas.\(^\text{33}\) In contrast, a Honduran study found that over 60 percent of street children in Tegucigalpa were residents of the City, resulting in less than 40 percent who have migrated from elsewhere. Regardless of


\(^{33}\) Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999, Wright et al., 1993b.
whether the street children are residents of or migrants to the urban landscape, the critical issue is their isolation from institutions of socialization. In some cases those children who have migrated have often become uprooted from the traditional forms of cultural socialization and hence are completely divorced from their families' ways of life. Street children who are native to the metropolitan centre are also estranged from normal social institutions and support networks. According to Lusk, the repercussions of their isolation are that they develop outside of the most important "institutions of socialization - the family and the school". Consequently, in general, these street children and youth are not only homeless and roofless, but they are also, in many ways, culturally rootless. This characteristic distinguishes them from other children of the urban poor who also flood the streets but who maintain ties with family and school, and in most cases return home to their families at the end of the day. The fact that these children and adolescents are unique in these respects demands different types of intervention than those designed to assist other urban poor children.

Besides this basic relationship to the street, street children can be distinguished by several other additional attributes. First, most street children are male; girls make up no more than a quarter of this population, typically less, and also begin their life on the streets at an older age. For example, in studies in Mexico, India, Brazil and Honduras, boys accounted for 83 percent, 82 percent, 74 percent and 95 percent respectively of the total street children population. This predominance of boys is particularly striking because in many cultures in

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34 Lusk, 1989.
developing countries, girls are more likely to be abandoned and abused than are boys.³⁷

The most common reason asserted for finding fewer girls living on the streets has been that they are taken off the streets for the purpose of prostitution.³⁸ Others, however, argue that a more plausible reason for the gender differences is cultural constraints on female children who are required to assist with housework and child care.³⁹ Cultural sanctions towards girls are stronger, it is argued, and thus they are subject to more controlled supervisions or monitoring by their families. Still others point to the less considered and more subtle factor of the dynamics that go on between stepfathers and male stepchildren. They argue that matrifocal family structures, particularly of East African and Latin American countries, might account for boys - but not their sisters - turning to the streets.⁴⁰

Surveys in Third World countries suggest that the majority of street children belong to the middle and the late childhood age groups. For example, in a Ghanaian survey, 51 percent of the children were thirteen to fifteen years of age, 24 percent were seven to nine years old, and only 4 percent were four to six years of age.⁴¹ This breakdown, closely replicated elsewhere, reveals the fact that the youngest age at which a child can survive alone on the street is approximately six or seven years of age, while older youth, between fifteen and sixteen years of age,

³⁶ Lusk, 1989; Lusk, Peralta & Vest, 1989; Pandey 1991; Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b.
³⁷ Korbin, 1981.
³⁸ Agnelli, 1986; Pandey, 1991; Rajani & Kudrati, 1996.
leave the street in search of more profitable, socially rewarding, and stable forms of employment.\textsuperscript{42}

2.3.2 FAMILY RELATIONS AND STRUCTURE

Studies done throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America have found that most street children tend to come from large, disorganized family backgrounds. For example in a Tanzanian study, 78 percent of the street children came from large families that had anywhere between six and fifteen children. In a Honduran case, the average family size from which street children originate is approximately 5.3 persons.\textsuperscript{43}

In terms of family structure, a comparison of several studies suggests that few regional generalizations can be made because the data differ so much from country to country. In Brazil, approximately 50 percent of street children come from homes with two parent families, 34 percent from female-headed single parent families, and the remainder had lived with other family members or guardians.\textsuperscript{44} In San Jose, Costa Rica, it was found that only 22 percent came from two parent families, 38 percent came from female-headed single parent families, and the remainder lived in a variety of situations.\textsuperscript{45} In Quito, Ecuador, 62 percent came from two-parent families and 26 percent came from female-headed single parent

\textsuperscript{42}Aptekar, 1996; Barker & Knaul, 1991; Chatterjee, 1992; Fonseka & Malhotra, 1994; Maphalala, 1996; Marquez, 1999; Mutuku & Mutiso, 1994; Natale, 1992; Pandey, 1991; Porio et al., 1994; Rizzini et al., 1992, 1994; Rizzini & Lusk, 1995.

\textsuperscript{43}Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999; Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b; Wittig, 1994; Wittig et al., 1997.

\textsuperscript{44}Rizzini et al., 1992, 1994; Rizzini & Lusk, 1995.

\textsuperscript{45}Valverde & Lusk, 1989.
families.\textsuperscript{46} Finally, 85 percent of the "parking boys" of Nairobi came from female-headed single parent homes.\textsuperscript{47}

As the data from these studies suggest, it is difficult to construct generalizations about family structure and street children. However, several recent studies have noted that weak or disorganized family backgrounds are commonplace among street children. In a study in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, nearly three out of four children stated that they came from homes which had a variety of matrimonial problems including parental separation due either to death or divorce. An equal percentage of the street children mentioned fights between parents, the cruelty of stepparents and abuse as conditions prevalent in their family.\textsuperscript{48} In a Honduran study, Wright \textit{et al.} found that three quarters of the street children exhibited symptoms of family dysfunction and an equal number cited dysfunctional social relationships in the family as their reason for leaving their families and living on the streets.\textsuperscript{49}

Several authors have speculated about the cause of this family dysfunction. In Honduras, Schulz and Schulz assert that the economic decline experienced by many Third World countries in the 1980s led to increased poverty which subsequently led to family disintegration, particularly among the lower economic classes.\textsuperscript{50} They argue that cultural values have traditionally fostered little responsibility on the part of the male or a sense of obligation to his wife or children. The coming of hard economic times have brought about a marked instability in

\textsuperscript{46} UNICEF, 1985.
\textsuperscript{47} Wainaina, 1981.
\textsuperscript{48} Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999.
\textsuperscript{49} Wright \textit{et al.}, 1993a, 1993b.
family life and have considerably aggravated the frequency of male abandonment of families.

Similarly, of Columbia, Lewis Aptekar asserts that the traditional nuclear family, the patrifocal family as he calls it, is still the dominant form of family organization, particularly among the middle and upper economic classes. However, there has been a substantial increase in the number of matrifocal families, from which a majority of street children originate. As described by Moulin and Pereira, the matrifocal family structure is one organized around the woman when either there is no male companion present, when the woman is the main economic provider of the family, or both. Studies of street children in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Tanzania, Kenya, the Philippines and others, have noted that high percentages of street children originate from families whereby the woman maintains the family unit, either economically, as a consistent care provider, or both. Szymanski interprets this phenomenon as a form of “marginalization of the man” which has led to an inversion of roles in the family and a breakdown of the dominant patriarchal tradition found in many developing nations.

This reversal of familial roles has increased the workload borne by the mother and this, in turn, affects her relationship with her children. Rizzini and others assert that a long and stressful workday has a negative effect, not only on the mother’s relationship with her children, but also upon her ability to control

50 Schulz & Schulz, 1994.
them. A further consequence is the transmission of a weak image of the father, who has difficulty in performing the role that society expects of him. In male dominated societies such as those cited above, several authors argue that this image undoubtedly produces a lot of frustration, increases the father's level of stress, and leads to negative relationships within the family which contribute to family instability and disintegration.

2.3.3 EDUCATION

In terms of educational status, a comparison of several studies suggests that school participation varied substantially across cities and countries. However in most cases, a large percentage of street children have had little or no schooling. Most who went to school dropped out and did not even complete the primary stage. For example, in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, 95 percent of the street children had never been to school and did not know how to read and write. Of those who received formal education, none went beyond primary school, and a majority completed only up to grade four. Likewise, in Tegucigalpa, Honduras roughly 90 percent of the street children did not attend formal schooling. Of those who did, almost all had completed no more than 3 or fewer years. In addition, roughly half were considered functionally illiterate. Finally, in studies conducted in Bombay, India roughly 55 to 70 percent of the street children had never attended formal schooling, with only one in ten currently attending.

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54 Bibars, 1998; Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999; Mutuku & Mutiso, 1994; Rizzini et al., 1994.
2.3.4 **HEALTHCARE**

There is no doubt that the unhealthy urban environment in which these children live is a major cause of health problems among them. Generalizations abound, often promulgated by journalists, academics, and many street children programmes, that these children are considerably less healthy than other poor children who maintain close links to their families. It is believed that in comparison to other children living in urban areas, street children are more likely to be: malnourished, subjected to unsanitary and unhygienic surroundings and exposed to climatic variations. It is reported that they lack adequate food, have limited access to medical care, and are vulnerable to physical and sexual exploitation, drugs and violence. As one researcher concluded, “all in all, there is scarcely an aspect of a street existence that does not imperil the physical and emotional well-being of children.”

In terms of nutrition several studies support these claims. A study of street children in ten cities in the Philippines indicated that 82 percent of them were malnourished, and two-thirds of them were stunted. However, recent research, although patchy, indicates a more complex picture. Several authors claim that street children fare no worse, and in some cases fare better than other children from similar economic backgrounds. In a long-term study in Nepal, Baker et al. concluded that the nutritional status of street children is higher than among children.

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56 D'Lima & Gosalia, 1989; Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999; SPARC, 1991; Wright et al., 1993a.
58 Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b.
living in squatter settlements and rural areas. In another study, one thousand street children in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, were compared to an equal number of poor working children in the same city. The researchers found that roughly three-quarters of all street children were assessed to have good to excellent nutritional status. The authors also found that second and third-degree malnutrition was found only among working children living with their parents whereas no such cases had been seen among street children. Similarly, in an in-depth study in South Africa, Richer and van der Walt found that street children were not more undermass than other black urban South African boys of the same age.

Research conducted to date suggests that most street children are found to be predominantly healthy. In a study in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, interviewer assessments of street children concluded that roughly 76 percent were deemed to have good to excellent physical health. However, among street children who were ill, infectious diseases appear to be the most common form of illness, although disease patterns are location specific. Respiratory infections such as tuberculosis, skin diseases, gastro-intestinal problems, eye infections, and sexually transmitted diseases are leading causes of illness for street children.

Regarding mental and psychological health, there is great diversity of opinion in the literature. Donald and Swart-Kruger in their research have noted that, in terms of psychological and emotional health, the lack or loss of an adequate relationship with an adult caregiver poses the greatest problem for most street

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60 Baker et al., 1996.  
61 Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b.  
62 Richter & van der Walt, 1996.  
63 Aptekar, 1994a.
children. Drawing from a theory of attachment and its effects on the development of emotional security and trust, as well as its role in psychological nurturance and the process of identity formation, Donald and Swart-Kruger argue that the separation from an adult caregiver has profound implications for street children. These authors state that what emerges from the literature is a paradox between evidence showing development risks and vulnerability across physical, social, emotional and cognitive/educational areas on the one hand, and on the other, evidence showing resourcefulness, adaptability and coping ability of street children.

2.3.5 Survival Strategies

Often, many of the children have acquaintances on the street even before they separate from their families, either through working relationships, or through older brothers, sisters or neighbourhood friends. These acquaintances often introduce them to small groups with which they coexist on the streets, sharing resources, sleeping together, and protecting each other. Even those who have no prior contacts on the streets soon find companions with which to form their own groups and bolster security.

Within the city, street children generally concentrate in specific sectors, major streets and parks. The domain most often associated with street children is the informal sector of the central business area, where they can work or beg as well as find places to hang out and sleep. Marginalized street children are attracted to the streets and other public spaces of central business areas for two reasons, both

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64 Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b.
65 Connolly, 1997; Ennew, 1994a.
66 Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994. Ironically, it is the lack of such a caring relationship that usually precipitates the choice, or forced acceptance, of street life.
of which relate to their age status. Some come because they are searching for income-generating possibilities on the streets that are denied to them because of their age in the off-street activities of the formal sector - both in commercial and industrial areas. Central business areas also have an attraction for children and youth in general because, located at the heart of the urban system, they offer a number of consumer and entertainment possibilities, all with easy transport access. These attractions are all the more appealing to street children, given the apparent lack of structure and schedule in these areas, as well as the perception that they are free from surveillance.

In the central areas of cities, some street children find the necessary means of survival. They gradually establish relationships in their surroundings, thus transforming their locations from mere physical spaces to social places. Because street children generally eat and sleep in the same spots day after day, people working around the central areas of the city in hotels, restaurants, and markets know them. Owners of small food stand may sympathize with them and allow them to eat for free at the end of the day. Most market vendors, however, bitterly complain about the presence of street children, as they believe the kids drive away those customers afraid of being assaulted or robbed.

Finding food and shelter each day is the most apparent challenge of street life. In their search for food, most street children resort to working during the day. Most often this work consists of easy-entry occupations in the informal economy that allow considerable autonomy and require little or no capital. Typical examples

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67 Dallape & Gilbert, 1993; Ennew, 1994b; Lucchini, 1996a; White, 1990.
68 Connolly & Ennew, 1996.
are street vending and personal services such as portering, running errands, shoe
shinning, and guarding and washing cars. The children also engage in recycling of
garbage. In most cases, the street children combine more than one kind of work
during the same day, and in some cases, the nature of their work changes to suit
seasonal variations. The hours of work show wide fluctuation - some occupations
being possible only in the early mornings or late evenings.

Many street children use begging as a source of work and income. As
recorded in a survey in Honduras, the 42 percent of street children in Tegucigalpa
supported themselves through begging. In Tanzania, approximately 11 percent of
street children used begging as a means to gain income. Generally, the younger
street children, predominantly those under the age of 10, perform most of the
begging, the reason being that younger children illicit greater sympathy from
adults.69

Earnings of street children also show a wide fluctuation. Many researchers
argue that the incomes of street children are usually small, just enough for
subsistence as there are too many children chasing too few jobs, some of which
are in competition with adults.70 However, others have argued that many street
children earn, on average, as much as the adults around them, and at times
more.71 In India, in the Andhra Pradesh towns, 45 percent of the street children
earned 300 to 900 rupees a month while the average monthly earnings of 55
percent of working children living at home amounted to less than 150 rupees. This

69 Lugalla & Mbwambo, 1999; Tierney, 1997; Wright et al., 1993a, 1993b.
71 Aptekar, 1996; Blanc, 1994b; Dewees & Klees, 1995; Dube, Kamvura & Bourdillon, 1996; Porio et
al., 1994
trend was also evident in Delhi and Bombay.\textsuperscript{72} In the Philippines, on the other hand, street children earned less than the working children living at home: an average of 28 pesos a day as opposed to 60 pesos. Children in this context were found to be generally paid much less than adults for the same work.\textsuperscript{73} However, Porio speculates that the averages may be skewed in favour of working children because a few of them have better-paying jobs. The higher earnings of street children, noted in several other studies, is a measure of both their needs and their survival skills. Highly remunerative occupations such as prostitution or drug peddling may be all the more attractive and available for street children who find themselves in situations of severe economic need. The shop lifting of food and other goods for resale may also serve as a more lucrative economic survival strategy.\textsuperscript{74}

\subsection*{2.3.6 Victimization of Street Children}

Almost every study of street children in various cultures concludes that the children's worst fear is not of going hungry or missing the security of their families, but of victimization and of hostility from the public and police.\textsuperscript{75} State-sponsored or sanctioned abuse of street children has become a phenomenon throughout the Third World. From Brazil to India to Kenya and from numerous other countries come reports of street children being beaten, tortured, and even murdered by the police and other self-proclaimed vigilantes. One of the worst documented cases of this type of hostility is found in Brazil, where between 1987 and 1990 alone, there

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{72} Bose, 1992.  
\textsuperscript{73} Porio \textit{et al.}, 1994.  
\textsuperscript{74} Blanc, 1994b.}
were 1,397 violent murders of street children. In the 1990s, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Casa Alianza and others published several reports that documented inhumane crimes committed against street children by law enforcement officers and other arms of the oppressive state apparatus.  

This degree of hostility towards street children raises the question of why there is such violence occurs. Perhaps part of the answer lies with the street children’s relationship to public space. Instead of using the street and other public arenas chiefly as conduits between private pursuits street children spend much of their time in these places and so are publicly visible. As Baizerman states, “street kids are part of the background of city life for some adults, while for others they live in the foreground.” Their very presence challenges social norms, thus generating pressure by certain factions of the adult world that they disappear from view.

A different approach to ascertain why there is so much violence meted out toward street children is to examine those cultures that have street children but have not reacted with such hostility as other cultures have. For example, there appears to be less violence toward street children in East Africa and Uruguay. In Ethiopia, street children expressed that the current government had treated them with kindness. The same authors noted that street children report that Sudanese police have actually gone out of their way to be helpful to them. Jacobsen argues that Uruguay’s “successful” response to street children is rooted in its high degree of concern for social issues, its ability to resist whole-sale implementation of  

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economic neo-liberal policies, the social re-integration approaches of its NGO community, and the level of coordination between the Uruguayan government, Uruguayan NGOs and UNICEF. The treatment of street children by local government, therefore, varies across locales, though abuse is hardly an uncommon occurrence.

2.4 Conclusion

It is clear from this description of street child populations across the developing world that there is no “typical” street child. Many characteristics of street children are site-specific. However, many street children have shared experiences. Most, for example, come from poor homes in which violence manifests in some form. Likewise, most street children are exposed to violence and a drug culture on the street. Further, most turn to the informal economic sector in order to earn enough money to survive on the street. It is important, therefore, to have a general sense of the characteristics of street children world wide, but to recognize the diversity amongst the group.

Any approach to assist street children, then, must identify the traits of the specific target population if it is to be successful. Save the Children describes a project in Nepal whose objective was to rescue girls from the street which failed because it did not recognize the same desire for independence in girls displayed by their male counterparts. Project administrators failed to research carefully the psychology of the female street population and imposed on that population gender stereotypes. Stereotypes, therefore, must be avoided. Just as programs that wish

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77 Baizerman, 1990, 4.
to assist street children cannot rely on a narrow definition of the street child, they must not create an inflexible notion of their target population. Definitional fluidity is of utmost importance in all stages of project planning and development.

79 Ennew, 1994a, 85.
CHAPTER THREE
CAUSES OF AND RESPONSES TO THE STREET CHILD PHENOMENON

I am now a grown up girl and I know how to take care of myself. After what my father did to me, I found out that the street can be better and warmer places than one’s home. The streets are also a better place than those horrible prisons they send us to. I have met new friends at the last institution and they have taught me new and more lucrative tricks. No, I will not tell you what I have learned, this is the secret of our business (12 year old street girl, Egypt).  

Everyday I fight with my father. Every day my father drinks and fights with the family, so I left home. My brother left later. My family asks me to stay but I run back to the streets again. (14 year old street boy, Ethiopia).

My father was killed during the 1994 war. After the war and the death of my father, I started going to the street. I woke up early in the morning and went to the bus station where I used to sell biscuits and pocket tissues. All the day long I was out on the streets. I ate just one bread and one drink. I was giving my mother some money and keeping some myself. Sometimes policemen grabbed our goods and took them. We were obliged to start again from zero. Sometimes passers-by said we should be chased out of town. One day, my friends told me that we could earn money staying outside until late and when we arrived home, our parents did not open the doors for us. We stayed in the streets for five months, sleeping outside on sacks and cartons in an abandoned house in the area (15 year old ex-street boy, Rwanda).

The literature on street children is peppered with such stories. These narratives by street children in Egypt, Ethiopia and Rwanda offer a kaleidoscopic view of the challenges they face both in their homes and on the streets. These and other child chronicles have shattered the dominant view of the street child as simply

1 Bibars, 1998.
a passive victim of cruelty and abandonment. Rather, a more complex picture is
constructed of the street child as being an active agent in seeking alternative care
on the street, making choices between different lifestyle options and otherwise
taking charge of their own lives, even though this may be within severely restricted
frameworks of opportunity.\textsuperscript{4} And finally, these street child stories also begin to
capture and identify some of the factors which contribute to the movement of
children to street life.

Despite thousands of such autobiographies of street children and a firm
awareness of how the child moves from the home to the street, why they end up on
the street is much debated. The how or the process of becoming a street child has
been well documented. Almost all street children begin their life on the streets
gradually and predictably. Regardless of the circumstances that trigger the
loosening or rupture of bonds between children and their families, a break occurs
after a process in which the child becomes increasingly accustomed to street life.\textsuperscript{5}
In most cases these children are working children who leave home in a measured
manner, at first staying away for a night or two and then gradually spending more
time away from home.\textsuperscript{6}

However, though there are millions of poor children that live throughout the
developing world, the overwhelming majority of them are not street children.\textsuperscript{7} This
raises the following question: why do some children leave their homes and move

\textsuperscript{5} de la Barra, 1998, Ennew, 1994a.
\textsuperscript{7} UNICEF estimates that in 1996 there were roughly 720 million poor children living in cities of the
developing world; Blanc, 1994a.
full-time to the streets while their siblings or peers from similar socio-economic and familial backgrounds retain a close relationship with home?

Past researchers tended to identify one or two causes of the street child phenomenon, and developed policies and intervention programmes to address these causes. Unfortunately, given the complexity of the cause of child homelessness, which will be discussed at length in this chapter, these policies often offered "band-aid" solutions and failed to reduce the number of children who turned to the street. Recently researchers have recognized the complex layering of causality of the street child phenomenon. Part of this "new" recognition has emanated from growth in the field of child studies within academia as well as the application of innovative, participatory, child-centred research methods to street children. 8 These studies have only just begun to uncover some of the mechanisms by which forces such as poverty, war, social turbulence and family breakdown affect parents and children, creating conditions which cause children to resort to the street. 9 So too have these studies only now commenced uncovering the complex interplay between personal, familial, municipal, national and global factors which push children onto the street. Veale, for example, has argued that the problem of street children needs to be addressed holistically, "considering all social, economic, political, cultural and educational realities". 10 Simplistic treatment of any "specific matter or contentious issue," she continues, "often leads to unrealistic conceptualization and ineffective management". 11

8 Connolly & Ennew, 1996.
10 Veale, 1999, 8.
The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, I wish to delineate the dominant causes of child homelessness as recorded in recent studies on street children conducted across the developing world.\textsuperscript{12} It will become apparent from this literature review that the causes can be placed along a spectrum, ranging from the individual, family and local community, to the city and state, and finally to the national and international communities. Though I render each cause distinct for the sake of clarity, it should be understood that in any given context these causes are entangled to varying degrees. I then wish to outline the four major intervention models of governmental and non-governmental bodies to the street child problem, demonstrating that these agencies base their policies and strategies on their particular conception of the causes of children living in the streets. Over the course of my discussion, I hope to demonstrate that each of the four models fail to see the complexity of the causes and have therefore had very limited success in stemming the tide of child homelessness.

3.1 **THE CAUSES OF THE STREET CHILD PHENOMENON**

3.1.1 **PERSONAL PATHOLOGY**

It has long been asserted by many authorities in the cities and countries in which street children reside that these street children occupy the streets because of personal pathology; that is they have been presented as misfits and criminals. It is held by many levels of government in developing countries that the psychological inadequacy of children turns them to a life of delinquency. Lewis Aptekar, however, has conducted extensive research on the emotional and neurological functioning of

\textsuperscript{12} It is important to recognize, as Dallape argues, that some of the variables for children departing their homes and arriving in the streets are not currently known (1996). This area of study is still
street children and has found that their mental health was adequate.\textsuperscript{13} Aptekar notes that “the test data showed the sample to be relatively healthy, intelligent, and emotionally intact.”\textsuperscript{14} Recent research in Kenya suggests that, in fact, children who turn to the streets might actually have greater mental health and resilience than poor children who elect to remain at home: “[In] Kenya, it appears that the level of many street children’s functioning is adequate and that many of them do better than their equally poor counterparts who stay at home.”\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, researchers in Bogota found that street children demonstrated great creativity, strong social bonding through friendship, and autonomy.\textsuperscript{16}

Certainly, it cannot be denied that living on the street children may develop what is generally perceived as emotionally and physically unhealthy behaviours. Wittig \textit{et al.} report that roughly half of the street children in Honduras, for example, are addicted to glue, and this is quite a conservative estimate. Street life also encourages criminal activities such as theft and prostitution. Wright \textit{et al.}’s research of street children in Honduras indicated that 53\% engaged in petty theft, while 22\% admit working in the sex trade. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to date that suggests that children who turn to the streets do so because of personal pathologies. Rather research indicates that it is the other way around: street life pushes relatively healthy children towards illegal activities, influencing them to participate in dangerous behaviours.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{13} Aptekar, 1989b.
\textsuperscript{14} Aptekar, 1989a, 427.
\textsuperscript{15} Aptekar, 1994a, 212.
\textsuperscript{16} Tyler \textit{et al.}, 1992.
\textsuperscript{17} As noted in the previous chapter, however, far fewer children are engaged in criminal behaviour than is generally perceived.
\end{footnotesize}
3.1.2 Familial Pathology and Familial (Micro) Poverty

Most researchers do not locate the cause of the street children phenomenon so much in the psychology of the individual child, but in the pathology and / or poverty of the family of origin. A wide range of studies conducted in a wide range of countries in the developing world revealed that dysfunctional family relationships and familial financial distress was the determining factor in the child leaving home.

Cockburn remarks that most street-children originate from families in which they are abused and neglected by their parents. In his study of children in South Africa, 80% of all street children have a history of physical, sexual or emotional abuse\textsuperscript{18}. In Bombay, Patel interviewed 1,000 street children and discovered that the large majority of children identified family violence as the major reason that they now reside on the streets.\textsuperscript{19} In a subsequent study in India of child porters who work and live without family support, Subrahmaniam and Sondhi found that family discord was reported by the children as the cause of their homelessness.\textsuperscript{20} According to Keen’s study in Johannesburg, South Africa, broken homes characterized by alcoholism, violence, and desertion by family members (most notably the father or step-father), was noted as the cause of 90% of the street children leaving home.\textsuperscript{21} In the cities of Brazil, 63% of the homeless children reported high incidences of corporal punishment in the home, which influenced their choice to leave.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Cockburn, 1991b.
\textsuperscript{19} Patel, 1990.
\textsuperscript{20} Subrahmanyam & Sondhi, 1990.
\textsuperscript{21} Keen, 1990.
\textsuperscript{22} Rizzini et al., 1992. In their study of street children in Tanzania, Lugall and Mbambo also found that street children come from desperate, chaotic and poor families, and noted that abuse, domestic violence and family disintegration were the most commonly cited factors by the children
There is a good deal of research that indicates that these familial "pathologies" are themselves most frequently caused by family poverty. Le Roux's research on street children in South Africa suggests a link between family poverty and family violence. Le Roux found in many cases that poverty and unemployment tend to increase the incidence of parental abuse of alcohol and drugs and to increase the likelihood that they will physically and/or sexually abuse their children. In Indonesia and the Philippines, Silva found that poverty weakens the capacity of parents to cope with daily contingencies which, in turn, causes them to place greater value they place on their children's obedience and maintenance of the home. Some children find this difficult to endure, and seek greater freedom elsewhere.

Even when no such abuse manifests in the home, however, familial poverty can still rupture the bonds of the nuclear family. Given that the employment income from the adults in the home is insufficient to meet the cost of basic expenses (food, shelter, clothing), children in the family must then undertake employment, most often in the informal economy, to supplement the household income. Once the children taste the "freedom" that the street offers, many elect to leave the family altogether.

3.1.3 Rapid Urbanization

Although the literature suggests that the phenomenon of urban street children can be explained in part by familial poverty and pathology, one cause of

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such family strain is the lack of municipal resources to the urban space in which they reside. As argued by Bernstein and Gray: “the street child phenomena is a byproduct of a community that has been exposed to industrialization and rapid urbanization without the support of a firm social service infrastructure.”²⁶ It is believed by Swart and others that parental depression, anger, anxiety and frustration at urban poverty, social alienation, unemployment, and the absence of even the most basic services cause harsh or neglectful treatment of children.²⁷

Urban areas have grown, since WW II, at an alarming rate, resulting in the population explosion. With the exodus of a large percentage of the population from the rural areas to urban centres comes a great demand on urban infrastructure and services which cannot be met. Poverty, which used to be mainly a rural phenomenon, is now concentrated in urban areas. Capital investment in urban infrastructure has not only failed to keep pace with urbanization, but it has also decreased. This decentralization process has placed more responsibilities on the shoulders of local governments, but the national government does not provide them with the funds needed to permit them to meet such responsibilities.

Rapid urban growth, therefore, creates a huge imbalance between the resources available and the needs of the population. As a result, many of the families living in the developing world reside in the slums on the periphery of the urban core where most families live in shacks without running water, sewage lines

²⁴ Silva, 1996.
²⁶ Bernstein & Gray, 1991, 52.
²⁷ Swart, 1988a, 34
and electricity. The crime rate is high and law enforcement is, for the most part, absent.\textsuperscript{28}

Dallape’s research in Africa leads him to identify “urban demographic ‘explosion’” as the dominant cause of child homelessness. Like Swart, he believes that this overarching cause has led generally to familial disintegration, and in specific to the “breakdown of family life,” “a high incidence of female-headed households and female unemployment,” “alcohol and drug abuse,” and “the need for children to help generate family income.”\textsuperscript{29} So too does Veale’s research in Angola and Ethiopia reveal that urban poverty, social marginality and unemployment – byproducts of rapid urbanization – exacerbate violence and family stresses within the home.\textsuperscript{30} “Benumbed by the minimal conditions of their lives,” Cockburn writes, children become the “neglected, abused and rejected offspring of parents and communities.”\textsuperscript{31} Likewise, Bibars’s research in Cairo led him to conclude that the “root causes” of street children are “rapid urbanization, deteriorating economic conditions, declining governmental and non-governmental social programmes, and weakening family ties.”\textsuperscript{32}

It is rather ironic that children, faced with living in a polluted slum with the threat of epidemics and without the most basic of services, are actually healthier when they decide to leave home for the street. While initially they are forced to work on the streets to help the family survive in the absence of urban shelter and services, it becomes evident to them that they can, in many instances, enjoy

\textsuperscript{28} Dallape, 1996; Diversi \textit{et al.}, 1999.
\textsuperscript{29} Dallape, 1996.
\textsuperscript{30} Veale, 1999.
\textsuperscript{31} Cockburn, 1991b, 13.
greater physical, emotional and economic health and well-being on the street. That is, the economic circumstances of the family, caused by rapid urbanization, renders street life a popular alternative. Rosa et al found in a study of Brazilian street children that 82% of the street children reported that they left home for economic reasons – both to supplement family income and to improve their own economic circumstances.³³

Local governments are financially unable and, in some cases, reluctant for ideological reasons to support families with child-rearing and economic development. In many developing countries, for example, no adequate school system in place to permit children to enter a world of upward mobility due to limited space in urban schools. McLoyd and Wilson also found that urban schools also dissuade children from attending classes in many cases by adopting irrelevant curricula from the North and by attempting to compel students to purchase school uniforms and to pay other non-tuition fees which families cannot afford.³⁴ Without adequate urban services that support communities and families, the burden of day-to-day existence is solely placed upon the family which, in many instances, crumble under the pressure.

3.1.4 National Politics and Poverty

While many researchers recognize the inadequacy of infrastructure and services at the local level, which contributes to the street child phenomenon, many others point to national causes as the more significant factor in children living on

³³ Rosa et al., 1992.
the streets. When pointing to the nation as the cause of children residing in the streets, three factors are frequently cited: civil unrest; political structuring; and national economics.

In a comparative study of street children in mid-19th-century Ireland and those currently living in Sudan, Veale concludes that the origin of street children in both countries was and is civil unrest. Civil unrest dating from the Mau Mau struggle for independence has been connected to the origins of Kenyan street children. Violent popular uprisings in Columbia in the 1980s have also been linked to the high incidence of street children, as have civil wars in Guatemala and Nicaragua. In Guatemala, a genocidal civil war led to the murder of disappearance of thousands of citizens, and at least 160,000 women were left widowed and their children fatherless. Civil war in Nicaragua also created many single-parent, female-headed homes.

In countries like South Africa, civil war hasn't forced as many children on the street as has Apartheid. According to Ross, for example, the street child phenomenon in South Africa is merely the outcome of the national political system of racial segregation that has been in place since the 1940s. Ross illustrates her statement as follows:

the vast majority of an estimated 9,000 street children in South Africa are black. There are virtually no white street children in South Africa, but there are 10,000 white children in 160 state-registered and subsidized children’s homes. In contrast, there are no state-administered children’s homes for African children in the urban areas. The 12 existing private homes

37 Aptekar, 1996.
38 Aptekar, 1989a; Harris, 1997.
accommodate just under 1,000 African children. Although the existing 11 places of safety for African children can accommodate 1,400 children, only 700 children were harbored there during 1991.\textsuperscript{40} Ross concludes, therefore, that those children who reside in the street in South Africa are the victims of Apartheid.

By far one of the most insidious causes of street children on the national scale is the poverty of the State. The degree of national poverty in Third World countries can be measured in numerous ways, yet one of the most poignant is the level of debt to First World financial institutions. The 1980s, which many refer to as "the lost decade", were years marked by sharp declines in economic and social welfare and the "debt crisis" in numerous countries in the South. Aggressive lending practices from the North piled excessive and unmanageable debt on the backs of many Third World nations; many developing countries were unable to service the debt.\textsuperscript{41} The debt rescheduling programs that ensued required debtor countries to massively redistribute their financial resources, increase exports, initiate privatization of state companies and reduce government spending.

The debt crisis in general and the draconian debt rescheduling programs in particular have devastating effects on the poor and working classes in Third World nations. From the outset of the debt crisis in 1982 until the end of 1990, debtor countries in the South remitted to their creditors in the North an average US$6.5 billion in interest payments alone.\textsuperscript{42} The redistribution of hard cash toward debt

\textsuperscript{40} Ross, 1991, 70.
\textsuperscript{41} Bello, 1995.
\textsuperscript{42} George, 1995. If payments on the principle are included, the debtor countries have paid creditors at a rate of almost US$12.5 billion per month - as much as the entire Third World spends each month on health and education.
payments has led to significant decreases in funding for health, education and other social programs, and a subsequent explosion of poverty in many countries.

In numerous developing countries the impacts of increased national poverty have been severe, particularly on the children. In most African countries and in many of the developing countries in Asia and Latin America, urban children are more likely now than in 1980 to be born prematurely to mothers who received late or no prenatal care, to suffer low birth weight, to be born into poverty and to die in their first year of life. They are more likely to have an unemployed or underemployed parent, see a parent die or go to prison, live in a single-parent household, endure substandard housing, suffer from child abuse, and drop out of primary school.\textsuperscript{43} And they are more likely to find themselves on the streets struggling to survive.

\subsection*{3.1.5 Global Economics}

Many researchers look beyond national poverty as a cause of the street child phenomenon to highlight international forces as the primary cause. As I have intimated, these forces include international economic restructuring, the transition into the global economy, the polarization of income and wealth, and the disappearance of social safety nets associated with neoliberal economic policies.\textsuperscript{44} These authors argue that individual, familial, municipal and even national causes that are frequently cited in the street child literature are simply variables, dependent on the monetarist economic development model called neoliberalism, that governs the world economy and the national economies of many Third World countries.

\textsuperscript{43} Blanc, 1994a.
\textsuperscript{44} Aptekar, 1994a; Aptekar & Ciano-Federoff, 1999; Dallape, 1996; Mickelson, 2000.
Paul Krugman describes the new world economy as a system, a complex network of feedback relationships. This new world economy developed in response to the constant desire for accumulation in capitalism induced by technological innovations and the drive for comparative advantages. In the new world economy, the most dynamic source of wealth generation is the creation of new knowledge that is then applied broadly to human activity by means of new technology and organizational methods for information processing. Not only is this informational economy global in scope, its structure and logic define a new international division of labour within this emerging world economic order.

Restructuring the global economy was accomplished through two principal international financial institutions: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). During the 1970s, however, lending practices of these financial institutions led to a steep rise in debt levels of many developing countries. The inflation caused by the 1973 oil crisis, the recession that followed, and additional borrowing to pay interest on existing loans and dividends on foreign investments created a cycle of ever-increasing debt. These processes underpinning the growth of Third-World debt were accompanied by an ideological shift in developed countries from Keynesian economic policies to neoliberalist economic policies. Such a shift in economic doctrines led to unhindered free-market policies that included deregulation, privatization, import liberalization, restricted involvement of

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45 Krugman, 1996.
46 Castells, 1993.
47 Adams, 1997. The IMF was originally conceived as a stabilization fund whose main purpose was to promote, through the use of its resources, exchange rate stability and adjustments to short-term dis-equilibrium of the domestic economy. The World Bank's niche was originally conceived to be reconstruction finance, especially the physical infrastructure. However, development finance eventually became its specialty.
the government in the economy, removal of price controls, and substantial cuts in
government spending on social services.\(^{48}\)

Since the 1980s, the macroeconomic stabilization policies of the IMF and the
World Bank have included structural adjustment programs. The impacts of
structural adjustment programs, including environmental destruction, destabilization
of national currencies and the crippling of economies of many developing countries,
have been well documented.\(^{49}\) As Carnoy notes, a number of empirical studies,
including several by the World Bank, have shown that the IMF and World Bank
adjustment policies are associated with increased poverty, inequality of income and
wealth, and slow or negative economic growth.\(^{50}\) The neoliberal macroeconomic
stabilization policies have therefore contributed to the economic marginalization
and increased impoverishment of large sectors of the population in the Third
World.\(^{51}\) As Stillwaggon argues, the effects of structural adjustment are felt
principally through wages and labour markets, and extreme cuts in state social
spending. The burden of these adjustments, therefore, falls on already,
malnourished, ill-housed and unhealthy people, who are unable to adequately care
for their children.\(^{52}\)

As will be evident by now, my division of the roots of child homelessness into
various “causes” is somewhat artificial. These causes are plural and
interconnected, each drawing on and contributing to all the others. In fact, this
review of the causes identified by researchers for children living in the street

\(^{50}\) Carnoy, 1999.
suggests that there may be a causal chain, beginning with global restructuring and concluding with children sleeping on the side of a road or at the doorpost of a local shop. That is to say, there are primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary levels of causality when considering the phenomenon of street children: the primary being globalisation; the secondary being national instability and political divisiveness; the tertiary being rapid urbanization and municipal poverty; and the quaternary being familial poverty and pathology.

3.2 POLICIES AND PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS: A TYPOLOGY

Despite the complexity of the causes and this apparent causal chain, most policies and program interventions that address the problem of street children are generally based on only one or two levels of causality. The social planning models, therefore, applied by governmental and non-governmental agencies to street children have had varying degrees of success. Many have correctly criticized these models, and some of the resulting projects, as inadequate to the task, for only a small percentage of street children are assisted, the numbers of urban street youth continue to increase, and few NGOs appear to address the multiple causal levels.

Review of the literature on program interventions for street children reveals that, with the singular exception of Lusks' informative work, there has been little systematic classification or categorization of these policy initiatives. In his influential article, Street Children Programs in Latin America, Lusk identifies four policy approaches that have been applied to street children: (1) the correctional approach, (2) the rehabilitative approach, (3) outreach approach, and (4) the

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preventive approach. More recently, (5) the reintegration approach has been added to the list of accepted models of intervention.

I have found it beneficial to rework Lusk’s typology to identify three major approaches to the phenomenon of street: correctional; social welfare; community development. Each policy approach aimed at addressing a social planning problem is fundamentally informed by the assumptions and ideologies which define that problem. In other words, the method of defining the planning problem influences the preferred policy approach and intervention strategy that is applied by policy-makers and planners. That is to say, if an organization determines that the planning problem is based on the personal pathology of the street children, their intervention strategies will differ greatly from those who conceive of the planning problem in terms of macro-deficiencies such as national debt. As I briefly set forth in each of the three policy approaches, I will determine the ways in which adherents of each model determine the causes, and fashion the problem, of street children.

3.2.1 THE CORRECTIONAL POLICY APPROACH

In Third World countries the 'correctional' or 'containment' approach is the oldest and still the most popular social development policy aimed at the street child problem. In most cases this approach is devised and administered by the state government or on occasion, the Catholic Church or other religious organizations. It

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54 In the latter part of the 1990s, other researchers and authors have followed his lead and have added to and articulated similar typologies. Some of the more recognized literature includes Cockburn, 1995; Gigengack, 1994; Scanlon et al., 1998; le Roux & Smith, 1998.

55 While the policy interventions are described somewhat chronologically, from correctional through to community development, it is recognized that these approaches did not “evolve” from each other, though they may have mutually influenced each other. While these policy approaches are, at times, employed alone, at other times organizations have drawn upon several policy approaches.

56 Longres, 1981.
is the preferred policy option of the judiciary, the police, and in many instances, the
general public as well.

This approach is grounded in the belief, upheld by many nation-states in the
Third World, that these children are public nuisances and delinquents; that is, that
the cause of the problem is child pathology. Under the legal systems of many
countries in the South, carry-overs from the colonial period, vagrancy is a
punishable offense, and is often applied to street children.57 Today, long after the
demise of direct colonialism, these measure are still enforced. According to Scharf,
Powell and Thomas, the typical response of juvenile court system is to regard street
children as "deviant" and criminalize their very existence on the street.58 On the
whole, official measures adopted in an attempt to deal with the problem reveal a
negative, punitive attitude, with street children being subjected to arrest and
detention in harsh circumstances, and at times killed at the hands of law
enforcement agencies and other oppressive arms of the state.59 As cited in le Roux
and Smith, state policy and the response of authorities are to lock them away either
in institutions (soft prisons) or prisons, which is a "reflection of the attitude that
street children are societal evils."60

Ironically, contrary to pervasive assumptions, most research shows that few
street children are actively involved in crime, although since part of their behavior,
such as vending, falls within the province of the law, they are often attended to by
the police. Although the fact that some street children engage in illegal activities is

57 Richter, 1989b.
58 Scharf, Powell & Thomas, 1986.
59 Dewees & Klees, 1995; Felsman, 1981, 1984; Lusk, 1989, 1992; Lusk, Peralta & Vest, 1992; Patel,
not in contention, Richter maintains that there is little evidence to support the idea that delinquency (as a motivational and behavioural syndrome) is characteristic of more than a small minority of street children.\textsuperscript{61} Thus while Windhoek advises that in Bombay two out of five children reported that they had been arrested, 80 percent of those were never incarcerated.\textsuperscript{62} Similarly, in Botswana, 75 percent of those detained were found to be criminally “clean”, and in Zambia, Tacon was unable to trace a single street child who was ever brought to court.\textsuperscript{63} Instead, it would appear that most detentions of street children are more driven by so-called “city clean-up” campaigns in the belief that their presence has an adverse effect on tourism, or by their informal trading that competes with established businesses and deprives government of taxes and permit revenues.\textsuperscript{64}

In Honduras, the state has been as brutal as most. The Honduran police has been implicated in countless crimes against street children, crimes that contravene their own laws and international treatises such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Between the years 1995 and 1997, more than 800 children were illegally detained in adult jails. Despite international pressure, Honduran judges continue to send minors to adult prisons where they are often violated physically, psychologically or sexually.\textsuperscript{65}

Unfortunately, claims Swart, “in apprehending and treating the children as criminals, society may place them on the path to criminality.”\textsuperscript{66} These forms of

\textsuperscript{50} le Roux & Smith, 1998, 906.
\textsuperscript{61} Richter, 1988.
\textsuperscript{62} Tacon, 1991b; Blanc, 1994a.
\textsuperscript{63} Okello-Wengi, 1994; Blanc, 1994a.
\textsuperscript{64} Dorfman, 1984; Porio, Moselina, & Swift, 1994.
\textsuperscript{65} Casa Alianza, 1997.
\textsuperscript{66} Swart, 1988a, 35.
policies and institutions, far from being progressive and rehabilitative, are most often punitive and "practice archaic and Dickensian methods of 'caring' for children." International pressure in the late 1980's, principally through UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other vocal NGOs, compelled many governments to mask their view and treatment of street children with the rhetoric of social welfare. Yet the acceptance of these CRC policies were palliative at best and served simply as a discursive facade, as institutional practice remained unchanged and the so-called "assistance" or child welfare model and the repression model became intertwined.

### 3.2.2 Social Welfare Approach

Culminating with the United Nation's Year of the Child in 1979, several new street child policy and programs were instituted. Led by sharp criticism of the correctional policy vision of the street child phenomenon, social workers, urban-planners, clergy, sociologists and NGOs called for new policy alternatives which focused on the rehabilitation of the street children. These professionals and organizations argue that the street kids are not delinquents, but rather victims of neglect, abuse, poverty and unbearable home conditions. That is, that the street child phenomenon is caused by familial poverty and / or pathology. Given sufficient support, they hold, street children could be "rehabilitated" or "re-socialized" and again become part of civil society.

The social welfare approach starts with the basic assumption that children need love and security and that the family, or a family substitute, is the best social

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institution to receive these. In Smit's research on the perceptions of policy makers in South Africa, the general opinion was that street children have much the same needs as other children, but these were seldom fulfilled. The respondents identified the following needs: love from family or family substitute, without which the child is at risk for distorted identity development and is unable to establish and maintain healthy relationships with others; physical care, such as food, clothing, and medical attention; security, including a safe place to live; education, so new skills can be acquired; and recognition and appreciation, which are essential for a healthy self-image. Policy makers maintain that a precarious existence on the streets is not conducive to fulfilling these needs.

There are two streams within the social welfare approach: (1) child rehabilitation; and (2) child and familial rehabilitation and family reintegration. An example of the first stream of the social welfare approach is the Bosconia Project of Bogota, Colombia which aims to forge a new child through development of skills and moral instruction. This project incorporates a multiyear, four stage residential treatment program with the goal of transforming "hardened" street boys into "well-adjusted," socially fit, vocationally trained, secondary-schooled graduates. Using several residential facilities and work centres, the street boys are gradually phased through a series of prosocial and educational environments which turns the child from that of the culture of the street. As the children pass through the four stages, they assume increased responsibilities. In the final phase, former street children reside in a self-governed boys' city that has an elected mayor and governing

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70 Smit, 1993.
legislature. Graduates of this last phase have acquired job skills and completed a technical high school degree.

Swart questions the usefulness of taking children off the street and putting them into an institutional setting and isolating them from the rest of society, though he admits that rehabilitative institutions are not all the same. They range in philosophy from "the benign to the punitive," and do little or nothing to address the causes of the street child phenomenon. It is also felt, in the context of South Africa, that "children are 'forced to fit' treatment programs instead of the other way around." Further, Cockburn (1991) maintains that rehabilitation and resocialization policy model is geared mainly to Western, middle-class notions of child development, and efforts at "mainstreaming" these children may infantilize them and blunt their survival skills. It has been argued that such an approach is merely a form of neo-colonialism.

Other projects based on the social welfare model offer a more individualized rehabilitative program which aims to reintegrate children back into their immediate or extended family. Most programs of this nature provide education and counseling to parents and guardians on the avoidance of family violence during the reintegration process. One such program in La Florida Municipality in Chile maintains a program that educates and trains adults on the ways in which to deal effectively with their children's behaviour problems without resorting to physical

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73 Swart, 1988c, 52.
74 Swart, 1988c, 53.
77 De la Barra, 1998; Jones, 1997; Scanlon, 1998.
punishment or any other form of violence.\textsuperscript{78} Another program in Mexico estimates that 67 percent of the children they attempt to reintegrate with their families will do so within one year and of those who do return or are placed with a substitute family, 94 percent will have remained with the family after one year.\textsuperscript{79}

The rehabilitation and reintegration model is generally credited with some success. As argued by Boyden however, the reintegration or reunification approach is based upon the uncritical desire to ‘return’ the child to the family which he or she had taken such pains to leave. There is a tendency to idealize the role of the family, which is regarded as secure, offering the opportunity for education and the advancement of skills through work in the home or with the parent.\textsuperscript{80} The reality, however, all too often involves an underemployed parent or guardian or one who works long hours; little time for leisure; inadequate access to schooling; and unpaid work within the home.\textsuperscript{81} It is against this backdrop that a child might perceive street life as a site of relative freedom and companionship and a survivalist’s training ground. Some reintegration programs, therefore, return the child to the reality of the family, only to provoke and re-enforce the idealization of street life.\textsuperscript{82}

Agnelli maintains that the ability of these institutions to rehabilitate children and keep them out of trouble once they leave the program is poor.\textsuperscript{83} This position is echoed by the educational director of the Bosconia Project who acknowledges

\textsuperscript{78} UNICEF, 1994.
\textsuperscript{79} Jones, 1997; Porto et al. 1994. Credited with some success, these programs contradict to some degree that view that the family dynamics of street children are beyond repair and that they could potentially fare better than their siblings who remain at home (Aptekar, 1988a, b, c, d).
\textsuperscript{80} Boyden, 1998.
\textsuperscript{81} Jones, 1997; Gigengack, 1994.
\textsuperscript{82} Aptekar, 1988b.
this reality, when he explains that the central dilemma of his rehabilitative program “is that they produce competent, moral young men and women who must graduate into a society which is unjust, prejudiced, and discriminatory.” Most of the graduates are unable to find jobs because of their former street existence. The few who do find employment often find the work environments oppressive, and many discover that they cannot transfer to the workplace the negotiation and reconciliation strategies taught at Bosconia. As a result many of their former clients have become disillusioned and have returned to their former lifestyles. Finally, this, and other projects like it, has also been criticized for being costly, representing a considerable challenge to fund-raisers, and for their inability, primarily from limited institutional capacity and resources, to reach the vast majority of street kids.

3.2.3 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The rise of the community development policy approach to street children coincided with a marked deterioration in the world economy, occurring from the mid-1970s onwards, particularly in Latin America and Africa, where the problems of recession were compounded by falling export prices, protectionism, and increasing national debt. Within this context, the community development policy approach to street children emerged, seeking to cover gaps in government inaction or to palliate the injustices of the “new” market. The application of this policy approach signaled a movement away from the assumptions of personal pathology and skill deficiencies toward the assumptions of structural deficiencies in society which lead

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83 Agnelli, 1986.
84 Lusk, 1989, 70.
85 Scanlon et al., 1998.
86 Blanc, 1994b.
to childhood poverty and undermine the family system. This planning approach aimed to improve conditions at the municipal or community level, which they hoped would improve community social and economic well-being, and thereby decrease the likelihood of children resorting to life on the streets.

It is significant to note that though proponents of the community development policy approach recognize global economics as the primary cause of the street child phenomenon, they intervene not at the national or international level, but instead focus their attention on local communities. This approach insists that to improve the lives of children living on the streets and to prevent other children from leaving home, it is essential to improve "living conditions in the homes and communities from which they have fled." Many of the projects look toward the implementation of basic urban services, such as home construction and upgrading, the provision of sewage systems, community centres, and nurseries. Still others attempt to provide educational, economic, health, or counseling services to children in the street setting.

As was the case with the social welfare policy approach, there are two streams within the community development approach. The first focuses on preventing children migrating to the street. The second treats street children as a unique "community" and attempts to improve their lives on the street.

The first stream that emerged from this policy approach was preventive in nature. Supporters of the preventive strategy argued that rather than applying scarce resources to individual children of over-stressed families, resources should be applied to strengthening the safety nets that ensure the viability of families. One
of the best examples of this approach is the Urban Basic Services Strategy (UBSS) in India that is jointly supported by the government of India and UNICEF and which focuses on women’s organization and social sector goals for children. It constitutes a multisectoral approach to integrated community development, incorporating health education and promotion with physical upgrading and income generation activities. This program evolved from a selective, targeted approach at the community level to a whole town approach at the municipal level by integrating it into the socio-economic agenda of the local government. The UBSS/India program is also an answer to those who say that many of the community-focused interventions cannot be replicated on a large scale as it has served an estimated 10 million of the urban poor.\textsuperscript{88}

The second stream that emerged from the community development approach was community-based outreach programs. The focus of this intervention is not to separate the child from his environment and social space, as does the correctional and rehabilitative approaches. Rather, it seeks to reinforce the organization, culture and labour of street children, and to provide additional services such as nutritional, medical and educational support programs within the street environment.\textsuperscript{89} One example of this stream of practice for street children in Honduras is \textit{Proyecto Alternativas}. Based in Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras, \textit{Proyecto Alternativas} provides street kids with health education and other social services. The project operates from six principal locales as well as a number of auxiliary sites within close proximity to the primary sites. Project activities

\textsuperscript{87} Green, 1998, 87.  
\textsuperscript{88} Fonseka & Malhotra, 1994.
at each site consist of health education, primary health and dental care, a feeding program, and informal educational and recreational activities.\textsuperscript{90}

Once again in Honduras, we find another more revolutionary approach to supporting the "community" of street children. One organization has opened a child bank which provides loans and assists children to save money. One of the workers reports: "Now we have 185 accounts ranging from fifty cents to two hundred dollars. At first they didn't trust it, but now they understand how it works."\textsuperscript{91} Green believes that such a community development approach will assist children to move gradually from "unplanned (or unwanted) work tantamount to begging, such as wiping car windscreens, to something approaching a trade, bringing higher income, self-respect and education."\textsuperscript{92}

3.3 Conclusion

A review of the three approaches to street children -- correctional, social welfare and community development -- reveals that the correctional approach is both a violent and wholly inappropriate model to address the phenomenon of street children. Even from an amoral perspective, "social cleansing" has little effect on reducing the numbers of children who turn to the street, as is evident in countries who blatantly reject the most basic human right to life. Further, from an ethical perspective, this approach is both heinous and diabolical. Casa Alianza's Report on the Torture of Street Children in Guatemala and Honduras outlines the brutal treatment of children at the hands of government agents or those sanctioned by the

\textsuperscript{89} Scanlon et al., 1993.
\textsuperscript{90} Wright, Wittig & Kaminsky, 1993b; Wright, Kaminsky & Wittig, 1993b; Wittig, Wright & Kaminsky, 1997.
\textsuperscript{91} Jesús Pérez Espinoza as qtd in Green, 1998, 85.
Officials have unlawfully imprisoned, beaten, raped, shot, strangled, mutilated and ripped the eyes from children with great sadism. Clearly, such an approach to the “problem” of street children merely meets the needs of those who take pleasure in violating the minds, bodies and spirits of the powerless. It completely fails to address the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary causes of the street child phenomenon.

The social welfare approach also has its limitations. As Green points out,

> critics argue that most street children projects are failing because they are addressing the wrong issue. The existence of street children is a symptom of a broader malaise in . . . society, and it is this malaise that must be addressed if children are to stop taking to the streets . . . Such an approach eschews the tendency to concentrate solely on street children to the exclusion of other children.\(^9^4\)

This may, however, be an unjust criticism. Those individual children assisted by such projects to live happy, productive lives would not levy such criticism of a particular project. Though it would be ideal to help the community and nation in which poor children live, this is not the goal of some smaller agencies, who may not have the financial base to support this vision. Each street child’s life is indeed valuable, and many of these small agencies are effective because they are small and direct their attention to local groups of street children. Friedmann explains that these projects are often criticized because they “are regarded as contributing little to economic growth and capital accumulation; they do not count as “development writ large.”\(^9^5\)

\(^9^2\) Green, 1998, 85.  
\(^9^3\) Harris, 1997.  
\(^9^4\) Green, 1998, 86.  
\(^9^5\) Friedmann, 1992, 140.
autonomous, and tailor-made" and is often very effective at the micro level.\textsuperscript{96} Mickelson likewise admits that “jewel-box programs for homeless and street children are both absolutely necessary”; however, she also recognizes that they are “woefully insufficient.”\textsuperscript{97} Though the social welfare approach does not really address any of the causes of children living on the streets, it does provide necessary services on a daily basis to them.

Certainly, the community development approach does move beyond the individual street child to concentrate on improving the lives of poor families and struggling communities. Unlike the social welfare approach, it attempts to address the tertiary (rapid urbanization and municipal poverty) and the quaternary (familial poverty and pathology) causes of the phenomenon. However, this approach also fails to treat the primary and secondary causes of children living on the streets: global socio-economics and national instability and political divisiveness. There projects do improve the self-reliance of the community and “facilitate the self-production of life by the household economy”;\textsuperscript{98} however, they do not press for immediate change of the existing power relations in society.

It is my opinion that while the social welfare and community development approaches to the street child phenomenon have their benefits, I agree with Mickelson's proclamation that the programs that derive from these approaches “are absolutely necessary and woefully insufficient.”\textsuperscript{99} It is my belief that a new approach to the “problem” of street children must be forged if all the causes of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{96} Friedmann, 1992, 141.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Mickelson, 2000, 383.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Friedmann, 1987, 372.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Mickelson, 2000, 386.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
children and youth living on the streets are to be addressed. This new approach would not negate other approaches (with the exception of the correctional approach); rather it would absorb within it the strengths of other methods. In the subsequent chapter, I will assert that the empowerment model of development as delineated by John Friedmann and refined by feminist planners Caroline Moser and Jo-Ann Rowlands is the theoretical approach most likely to generate programs which address the multiple layers of causality of children who live on the street. In the process, it will not only benefit the lives of a few street children, but the lives of many of the urban poor.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF EMPOWERMENT:
EMPOWERING THE CHILDREN AND BEYOND

In the previous chapter, I have discussed at some length the three dominant planning models employed by governments and non-governmental organizations to address the street child phenomenon. I have argued that the corrective model is both ethically and practically untenable. I have indicated the strengths of the social welfare model and the community development model, but have also underscored their limitations. I have suggested that these models fail, at the very least, to address the primary and secondary causes of children living on the streets. In this chapter, I will argue that organizations for street children should adopt the ideology and principles of the alternative development model of empowerment and apply them to their policies and programs, if they wish to reduce the flow of children to the street and to improve the lives of those currently living on the street.

4.1 EMPOWERMENT THEORY

Empowerment as a concept is a somewhat nebulous term used somewhat indiscriminately, and some of its policies embrace aspects of the rehabilitation and community economic development approaches. A term which grew out of the social and self-help movements of the 1960s and 1970s, empowerment in this period was concerned with community participation, the

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marginalization of poor, minorities, and the potential of grassroots organizations.\textsuperscript{2}

Empowerment theory matured in the 1980s and 1990s, and has taken on different forms in the discourse communities of social psychology, political science, feminism, planning, and development studies. It has most often been applied to marginalized groups, like women and indigenous peoples, in the Third World.\textsuperscript{3}

Friedmann is perhaps the first to set forth clearly the ideology of empowerment as an alternative theory of development. He argues that empowerment must not only lead to “a clear improvement in the conditions of life and livelihood of ordinary people, but most bring about “the rectification of existing imbalances in social, economic, and political power.”\textsuperscript{4} Empowerment as an ideology addresses inequities at both the local and international levels.

David Seddon remarks of Friedmann’s theory, “For Friedmann, although an alternative development must start locally, it cannot end there.”\textsuperscript{5} Indeed, Friedmann argues that though “an alternative development is initially based in particular localities, its local aim is to transform the whole of society through political action at national and international levels.” Because Friedmann perceives the causes of poverty, marginalization, and dis-empowerment as local, 

\textsuperscript{2} The historical roots of empowerment theory can be found in Marxist thought. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a resurgence of interest in Marxist ideology, and the idea of empowerment that surfaced at this time was related, in some circles, to class struggle and the overthrow of the capitalist ruling class. In development studies, discussions of empowerment were related not only to class struggle but to the South World’s struggle against the North World, as the latter had forced the former into a relationship of dependency. Empowerment theory is often linked in such discussions to Neo-Marxist development theories. For an account of the formation of empowerment theory, see: Alinsky, 1969; Arinstein, 1969; Boyte, 1980; Clark, 1965; Friedmann, 1973; Lewis, 1968; Moynihan, 1970; Perlman, 1976; Warren, 1969; Rocha, 1997, 31-32.


\textsuperscript{4} Friedmann, 1992, 9.
national and global, his theory of alternative development requires that the
disenfranchised assert their power on every level: "Without this quantum leap
from the local to the global, alternative development remains encapsulated within
a highly restrictive system of power, unable to break through to the genuine
development it seeks."\(^6\)

In terms of implementing empowerment as an alternative development
model, Friedmann emphasizes social and political empowerment – as he
believes that only through systemic change can "a politics of inclusive
democracy, appropriate economic growth, gender equality and sustainability of
inter-generational equity" be brought about.\(^7\) He emphasizes social and political
empowerment, rather than individual empowerment, because he feels that
democracy, economic growth, gender equality, and social equity can only occur
with the metamorphosis of the state. For Friedmann, the household is the
central locus for empowerment rather than the individual, and he argues that
alternative development should begin by permitting the "household access to the
bases of power," thereby improving the household's condition of life and
livelihood.\(^8\) If the household is empowered, Friedmann believes, it will
strengthen economically and become more socially and politically active. This,
he concludes, will lead to individual self-empowerment.

Though Friedmann's model of empowerment advocates organizations
which "stand in opposition to the state," so too does he recognize the need for

\(^5\) Seddon, 1994, 529.
\(^7\) Friedmann, 1992, 34.
\(^8\) Friedmann, 1992, 54.
both community-based and non-governmental organizations to "work with the
state." That is, though many CBOs and NGOs are opposed to the ideology of
the state, in order to effect social and political empowerment of members of civil
society, these organizations have to work in conjunction with the state if they are
to produce "an agile and responsive state, capable of implement[ing] its
policies." Friedmann defines this relationship as one of "antagonistic
cooporation" and insists that it is necessary. In his opinion any attempt to
empower communities through alternative development without state support will
be "stillborn." Friedmann's alternative developmental model of empowerment,
therefore, demands both local action, structural reform and state participation.

Elizabeth Rocha, another social planner, does not disagree with
Friedmann's ideology, but clarifies the way in which empowerment works at
various levels. Examining theories of empowerment from a variety of disciplines,
Rocha devised a typology of five types of empowerment: political empowerment,
socio-political empowerment, mediated empowerment, embedded individual
empowerment and atomistic individual empowerment. Within each type of
empowerment, Rocha presents four "constitutive dimensions" – "locus, process,
goals, and power experience":

the locus of empowerment – the intended area of change – moves
from individual to community. The processes of empowerment
refer to the actual methods used to obtain the desired results.
They range from individual therapy to state-challenging political
action. The goals, the intended outcomes, of each empowerment
type are situated along a continuum of intended change in skill or
circumstance – from simply increased individual coping to altering

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institutional arrangements. Finally, the power experiences include all four stages in varying combinations.\textsuperscript{11}

While Friedmann emphasizes empowering the community through collective social action beginning with the household, Rocha argues that empowerment can begin at any level along her continuum. According to Rocha, NGOs and CBOs can empower in a variety of ways along this ladder of empowerment. They can empower the individual by acting as service providers to a particular disenfranchised individual. They can empower the individual embedded in society by creating organizations in which these individuals can participate. By taking part in such organizations (microcosms of society), individuals can achieve competence in, and master, relations with others, and can realize decision-making power. NGOs and CBOs as "professionals" and "experts" can also empower a targeted population by providing their "clients" with necessary knowledge, information and skills. Organizations can also empower the community by facilitating its transformation from "an object that is acted upon by outside forces, to a subject capable of acting upon and transforming its world."\textsuperscript{12} Such a transformation of the people will assist them in their collective struggle to "alter social, political, or economic relations."\textsuperscript{13} Finally, NGOs and CBOs can empower a community by facilitating its efforts to expand access to group resources and to effect legislative transformation.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Rocha, 1997, 34.
\textsuperscript{12} Rocha, 1997, 38.
\textsuperscript{13} Rocha, 1997, 37.
\textsuperscript{14} Rocha, 1997, 39.
Rocha asserts that organizations should facilitate each form of empowerment in the community – that they should devise policies and programs that work along the continuum of empowerment. Her analysis suggests the implicit weakness in applying a single level of empowerment. For example, atomistic individual empowerment on its own does not solve the need for "alterations in systems, social relations, or structural changes," just as mediated empowerment on its own may result in the production of "a relationship of domination and subordination."\textsuperscript{15} Like Friedmann, then, Rocha recognizes that empowerment must move from the local to the international.

Like Rocha, Jo Rowlands also perceives empowerment working on multiple levels, though she identifies three rather than five dimensions: personal, relational and collective. Empowerment must assist individuals in developing a sense of self and confidence which permits them to undo "the effects of internalised oppression."\textsuperscript{16} This will then allow them to develop the ability to negotiate, influence and make decisions within broader relationships. Finally, such empowered individuals can work together to become involved in political structures at a local village or neighbourhood level or at an international level. To focus solely on the personal would hardly effect necessary changes in the inequitable distribution of power and resources within society. But without personal empowerment, she suggests, collective empowerment may well be untenable.

\textsuperscript{15} Rocha, 1997, 35, 37.
\textsuperscript{16} Rowlands, 1997, 15.
While Friedmann, Rocha and Rowlands define empowerment and the multiple levels or dimensions on which empowerment should operate, they do not delineate specific policies and programs that naturally flow from the ideology of empowerment. Nira Yuval-Davis writes of the danger of creating static empowerment policies and practices, explaining that empowerment for one group might represent another group's dis-empowerment.\textsuperscript{17} Likewise, Friedmann paraphrases Devaki Jain's conclusion that "no two situations are ever alike . . . and creative responses must grow out of an intimate understanding of resources, constraints and political will."\textsuperscript{18} All knowledge according to Friedmann is "perspectivist [and] provisional."\textsuperscript{19} Therefore, proponents of empowerment development theory rightly avoid prescribing specific interventions for all target populations and in all contexts. Rather they set forth the objectives of this development approach, discuss the multiple levels on which empowerment must occur, and provide well-contextualized case studies of particular applications of empowerment theory. This permits organizations to retain the ideology of empowerment and adapt its principles as need be to a specific target population.

4.2 \textbf{Benefits of Empowerment as an Ideology and Planning Model}

The empowerment model of alternative development has much to offer. Its greatest strength lies in its recognition of the complex nature and causes of poverty, disempowerment, and social marginalization. Unlike the social welfare and community development models, it comes to terms with the fact that long-

\textsuperscript{17} Yuval-Davies, 1994, 179-197.
\textsuperscript{18} Friedmann, 1992, 141.
term change can only be brought about if agencies treat the problem holistically. Individual, household, neighbourhood, municipality, nation and global relations must all be transformed if, to use Friedmann's term, an "inclusive democracy" is to be established. It further recognizes the complex interaction between multiple agents – poor citizens, grassroot organizations, NGOs, the State, international agencies like the UN, OXFAM and so forth. Therefore, given its holistic nature, the empowerment model of development would address the multiple layers of causality implicated in socio-economic problems in the Third World.

The empowerment model of alternative development is also effective because it absorbs into itself positive aspects of other approaches to social planning problems in the developing world. It does not preclude many strategies devised by advocates of rehabilitation or community economic developers. Many (though not all) of the policies and programs which flow from the social welfare and community development models can be subsumed under the empowerment model. For example, Friedmann praises micro-projects which "respond to a specific local need," and certainly many of the examples of social welfare and community development programs discussed above respond to a specific local need and "directly improve the conditions of life and livelihood of the poor." The empowerment model of development absorbs such micro-projects into its vision, but takes them a step farther in insisting that such projects "scale up"; that is, the empowerment model demands that social welfare or community

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20 Friedmann, 1992, 158.
development micro-projects expand their territorial scope and network with other NGOs, CBOs, and the State.

Because the empowerment model of development is so flexible and does not prescribe specific policies or programs, it can be easily adapted to different environments and to existing programs. The empowerment model of development can be of value in organizing planning development interventions and in evaluating existing interventions. For example, organizations can apply Friedmann's stated objective of empowerment development theory to their project:

the objective of an alternative development is to humanize a system that has shut them out, and to accomplish this through forms of everyday resistance and political struggle that insist on the rights of the excluded population as human beings, as citizens. Its central objective is their inclusion in a restructured system that does not make them redundant.  

NGOs and CBOs can determine the extent to which their programs and policies meet this objective or other objectives outlined by theorists of empowerment. Empowerment theory can also serve as the foundation or framework for those NGOs or CBOs which are not yet formed or firmly established, and can inform its daily practices.

4.3 APPLICATION OF EMPOWERMENT THEORY TO STREET CHILDREN

As a policy approach and a planning practice, the empowerment theory of alternative development is neither widely recognized nor documented as such in the literature on street children. Theorists appear to have overlooked the application of the empowerment model to marginalized children who seek out a

livelihood on urban streets of developing countries. This is most unfortunate, as
the empowerment theory of alternative development would address the primary,
second, tertiary and quaternary causes of children living on the street because it
seeks not only to meet the everyday needs of individuals but also to restructure
social relations at the municipal, national and global levels. In addressing
immediate needs and facilitating structural transformation, the empowerment
model would help stem the flow of children migrating to the streets and would
assist those residing on the streets to re-enter civil society.

The empowerment model has been successfully applied to poor women in
the developing world who are attempting to overcome social, political and
economic inequity. In A Word of the Times, But What Does it Mean?
Empowerment in the Discourse and Practice of Development, Rowlands argues
that a “feminist model” of empowerment must “incorporate a gender analysis of
power relations that includes an understanding of how ‘internalized oppression’
places internal barriers to women’s exercise of power, thereby contributing to the
maintenance of inequality between men and women.” It must also address the
way in which violence against women at the hands of men conditions the
experience of women.

Empowerment theory as applied to women has addressed two types of
need: practical needs and strategic needs. Strategic needs are understood as
the need for the structural transformation of society to remove women from their
subordinate social position, while practical needs are immediate daily needs
such as the need for housing, food, clothing, healthcare and so forth. Moser
argues that empowerment policy approaches “seek to reach strategic gender needs indirectly through practical gender needs. . . It uses practical gender needs as the basis on which to build a secure support base, and a means through which strategic needs may be reached.” Rowlands insists that the distinction between practical and strategic needs - “made it possible to think about how to address gender and development issues in a pragmatic way without losing site of the fundamental changes required to tackle gender inequalities.”

The empowerment policy approach could likewise be applied to street children who also need to have their immediate and strategic needs met. Friedmann’s objective must always be kept in mind during the application process, however. That is, organizations must make a “clear improvement in the conditions of life and livelihood” of the street child and must strive to rectify “existing imbalances in social, economic and political power” by facilitating a structural transformation.

Rocha’s ladder of empowerment is perhaps the most useful tool to apply empowerment policies to street children. Individual atomistic empowerment of a street child could take place through local service provision and individual therapy. The focus would be on identifying the life circumstances and the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of an individual street child and devising local services to meet such needs. These services might include

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housing, food and clothing provision, medical care, therapy and skills training. These local services would improve their conditions of life, increase their coping skills, furnish them with self-esteem and a sense of self-control. Empowerment policies at this level would not address the structural needs of street children, but would certainly address their most immediate practical needs.

Empowerment policies should also be applied to the street child in their particular social context. As argued by Rocha, the focus here is on "effectively addressing the situatedness of individuals within structural processes." Empowerment theory at this level would endorse, for example, the local banking system offered to street children described in the previous chapter. By providing the street child with a means to save their income, such agencies help children to better cope in the social environment of the street, giving them a heightened sense of personal efficacy and mastery over their immediate surroundings.

Alternatively, if street children do not wish to remain living on the street for any reason, embedded individual empowerment might involve street children re-entering the household from which they left, and therefore require family re-integration. For street child families, this would in most cases necessitate a reconstitution of household relations. As noted in the previous chapters, it seems that the patriarchal family, where machismo is sustained by abuse and abandonment, is often cited as a cause of children living on the streets. In order for the street child to be empowered within the social structure of the household, the entire household of origin would require provision of practical needs and, in most cases, ongoing therapy to stop abusive patterns. Though this may not be
possible in all instances, it is beneficial where possible because, as Friedmann notes, the household is very much the locus of civil society. Of course, Friedmann insists that within the household, all individual members must have access to “the process by which decisions, particularly those that affect their own future, are made.” A network of households in a community are far more likely to bring about structural transformation than individuals, but these households must first be re-structured themselves according to the principles of human dignity and equity.

If the street child cannot be re-integrated into the re-structured household but does not wish to live on the streets, organizations can create alternative households which are microcosms of society. Living in these households, street children can be empowered to relate to others in such a way as to become competent in a social environment which requires negotiation, self-assertion and participation in the decision-making process. This will provide them with social awareness and experience which are necessary for an agent to act upon and master an external environment.

NGOs and CBOs can also empower the street child by acting as external agents who can, in Friedmann’s terms, animate or “blow the breath of life into the soul of the community and move it to appropriate actions.” Such “animateurs” can spark change from within, according to Friedmann. They can empower street children as a collective unit to alter social, political and economic relations in society. This type of empowerment, however, might be a little more

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difficult with children than it is with adults, as many have not had the opportunity to fully develop social and cognitive skills. In addition, under the law in most developed countries, children have no democratic powers, and therefore as a group, for example, have no electoral status. NGOs and CBOs may have to take a more active role in the process of social and political empowerment, acting almost as a "parent" or at least an advocate. The child will be empowered socially and politically largely through the support and strength gained from the support of more powerful others, whose voices and opinions carry more social and political weight. The organization itself will likely have to actively oppose the State's treatment of the children and at the same time play an intermediary role between the State and the community of street children.

Nevertheless, with the assistance of more powerful organizations and advocates, street children as a community must gradually metamorphosize into a collective body capable of acting upon and transforming their world. NGOs and CBOs must guide them to become powerful social and political agents. Organizations must avoid rendering street children as passive recipients of assistance as this will render them bystanders rather than active agents in the process of development. Further organizations should foster a sense of collective agency amongst street children in order to prepare them to work as an organized body capable of political protest and action. With older children, NGOs or CBOs could facilitate grassroot organization by street children, like the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls (MNMMR) in Brazil. NGOs and CBOs could then work alongside child-led organizations to demand social

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28 Friedmann, 1992, 144.
change. It is essential that children participate to the greatest extent possible in order to avoid creating a relationship of dominance and subordination.

If NGOs or CBOs apply the empowerment policy approach at these various levels, they will not only meet the practical and strategic needs of the street children, they work towards removing the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary causes of the street child phenomenon. This is because the empowerment approach demands the transformation of the populace and of “the rectification of existing imbalances social, economic, and political power.”

The language of empowerment has not yet filtered into the network of organizations and agencies concerned with street children worldwide. Although in my review of literature on street children did not reveal any street-child organization which applied the empowerment model, many of the organizations appear to adhere to the ideology of empowerment and adopt its general principles. These organizations seem to have greater success in meeting the practical and strategic needs of the street children than those who fail to adopt the principles of empowerment.

In the second part of this thesis, I will describe and evaluate one NGO, Casa Alianza, Honduras that works with and on behalf of street children in Tegucigalpa. After providing a contextualizing background of the case study area and describing Casa Alianza’s intervention programs, I will evaluate its programs in light of my earlier discussion of the empowerment theory of alternative development. This evaluation will reveal the ways in which Casa Alianza empowers street children by meeting many of their practical and strategic needs.
However, it will also reveal aspects of the program which require modification and policies that the organization should consider adopting. This discussion will demonstrate the value of the empowerment approach in both the organization and evaluation of development interventions on behalf of street children.

CHAPTER FIVE

HONDURAS: A CONTEXT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Honduras has much in common with its Central American neighbours, sharing a history of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and an economy dominated by plantation agriculture for the North American Market. But Honduras is also very different from its neighbours in a number of significant ways, including the composition of its oligarchy, the nature of its trade-union movement, its unique geography, the absence of a significant guerrilla movement, and its strategic significance in terms of US foreign policy.

Figure 1 – Map of Honduras
Given its substantial coastlines and its central location in the middle of the Central American isthmus, one would have expected significant economic and social development to occur in Honduras. However, as the new millennium has dawned, this potential has not been realized. Since its independence from Spain in 1821, Honduras has suffered the consequences of neighbouring civil wars, internal rebellions and armed conflicts, changes in government practice, political corruption, grinding poverty, a scabrous topography, natural disasters, and foreign occupation. These various dimensions of instability have led to the characterization of Honduras as a country of many extremes.\(^1\) It sits at the bottom of the Central American list of social and economic development indicators such as literacy, health care, nutrition, per capita income, life expectancy and unemployment, just to name a few. In addition, since the 1960s, Honduras has had one of the highest rates of urbanization in Latin American. Efforts by a series of government administrations have attempted to find a stable political system, and have struggled to develop and expand an economy plagued by extreme human and material resource shortages, and have tried to establish an independent regional role relatively free of external intervention and dependence.\(^2\) Yet despite these efforts Honduras continues to maintain its unwanted role as one of the poorest and most underdeveloped nations in Latin America.

### 5.2 GEOGRAPHY

Honduras is roughly the size of England, and has an estimated present-day population of about 6.5 million people. Variously likened to the shape of a triangle

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\(^{1}\) Helms, 1983.

\(^{2}\) Rosenberg, 1986.
or the head of a bull, Honduras encompasses an area of 112,090 square kilometres, making it the second largest country in Central America after Nicaragua. It is bounded on the northwest by Guatemala, on the southwest by El Salvador, and on the east by Nicaragua. The Caribbean Sea defines the extensive northern border. The southern border, the smallest, is a coastline at the Golfo de Fonseca, which opens into the Pacific Ocean.  

Honduran social, economic and political development has been and remains significantly influenced by the country's geography. Honduras's dominant geomorphic feature, its rugged geography, explains much of its history and present-day underdevelopment. The extremely mountainous terrain, composing approximately 81 percent of the country's total area, has caused it to be compared to "a neglected, crumpled piece of paper"; a spatial reality that has probably served as an obstacle to Honduran development. The mountainous terrain is partly to blame for the lack of economic development as it discouraged native settlement and immigration, hindered the building of transportation routes, and impeded the development of a national government. Furthermore, the non-volcanic nature of these mountains has also resulted in little of the fertile lava soils that its neighbours have in abundance. 

There are two smaller geomorphic regions in Honduras - the Caribbean Lowlands in the north and the Pacific Lowlands in the south - which are dramatically different from the mountainous rugged terrain of the interior highlands. They are characterized by narrow, very flat alluvial plains that parallel the coastlines. 

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4 Euraque, 1996.
strips of flat land range from a few kilometres to over sixty kilometres wide and
serve as the country's principal area of agricultural production, both for local
commerce and export.\(^6\)

5.3 **ECONOMY: A HISTORY OF DOMINATION**

As argued by many economists, Honduras has historically lacked both the
economic infrastructure and the social and political integration necessary for its
development.\(^7\) As such, the country remained economically dependent on the
export of a few commodities - precious metals before 1900 and bananas
throughout the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Honduras' primary agricultural economy
came to be dominated by two large U.S. companies that established vast banana
plantations along the north coast. Plantation life, foreign ownership of the agro-
industry, and conservative politics held sway in Honduras from the late 19\(^{th}\) century
until the mid-20\(^{th}\) century.\(^8\)

The Honduran economy grew and diversified in the face of these persistent
obstacles. Through the 1950s and the early 1960s, the national government
ushered in a new series of economic development policies that focused on the
creation and expansion of the nation's infrastructure: transportation, electricity,
communications, financial institutions, and administrative capability.\(^9\) Economic
growth and development followed with sizable increases in the GDP and the GDP
per capita, and decreases in the inflation rate and the level of unemployment and
underemployment.

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\(^6\) Virtually all subsistence agriculture has been relegated to the slopes of the valleys in the Interior
highlands.
\(^7\) Bulmer-Thomas, 1987; Euraque, 1996; Rosenberg, 1986.
However, after a promising economic performance in the 1950s and 1960s, Honduras, like much of Latin America, experienced economic difficulties in the 1970s and severe economic stagnation and decline in the 1980s. From 1970 to 1979 the annual growth rate of the GDP fell from 5.6 percent, from the previous decade, to 3.6 percent. Increases in GDP per capita experienced in the previous decades began to falter, as did the per capita income level and the Quality of Life Index. In addition, the annual inflation rate increased dramatically from 2.6 percent in the 1960-1972 period to 9.1 percent in the years 1972-1976.\(^\text{10}\)

### 5.3.1 The Economic Crisis

In 1982 the Central Bank of Honduras conducted a revealing study on the development of the nation’s economy. It found that between 1960 and 1982, the economy had grown by an average of 4.4 percent a year but that this growth had done almost nothing to improve the abysmal conditions in which the vast majority of Hondurans lived. In 1960, 81 percent of the population had been classified as extremely poor; in 1982, 81 percent were still extremely poor.\(^\text{11}\)

The timing of this study coincided with the emergence of an international economic crisis. Between 1979 and 1982 the growth of the GDP in Honduras fell from 6.8 percent to -1.7 percent. Per capita growth dropped from 2.9 percent to -5.2 percent. By 1983 per capita income had retreated to its 1972 value. Thereafter, the situation gradually stabilized, with the economy growing 2.8 percent in 1984 and a little over 3 percent in the 1985-1986 period. This growth was not

\(^{8}\) Frassinetti, 1985; Lainez & Meza, 1985; Vinelli, 1986; Merrill, 1995; Euraque, 1996.  
\(^{9}\) Merrill, 1995; Morris, 1984.  
\(^{10}\) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997; CDI, 1998.  
\(^{11}\) Schulz & Schulz, 1994.
enough, however, to overcome the rapid population increase, and so per capita GDP continued to decline. By 1986 the country had experienced seven consecutive years of negative per capita growth. Meanwhile, real wages and salaries plunged 7.7 percent in 1983 and continued to fall in the years that followed. Unemployment increased from between 7 and 15 percent in the 1972 period to an estimated 26.5 percent in 1986. In 1986, seventy-five percent of the economically active population was either unemployed or underemployed. The region's political instability because of civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua added to the economic woes of Honduras, especially in the private sector, and encouraged massive capital flight, estimated at one billion US dollars.\(^\text{12}\)

By 1990, the official unemployment rate had risen to 28 percent and foreign debt was almost US$1,000 per capita. Coupled with poor economic growth and what the World Bank euphemistically referred to as a "lull in investment", Honduras witnessed in the first two years of this decade an inflationary process unlike anything it had ever seen in its entire history - nearly 4 percent per month. The per capita GDP had decreased by 14.2 percent over the past decade. Per capita income was estimated to be about US$525 a year. Nearly three quarters of the Honduran population was living beneath the developing world's poverty standard. Total foreign debt had also more than doubled from US$1,588 million in 1981 to US$3,526 million in 1990. From 1990 to 1994, the GDP and the GDP per capita had an annual decrease rate of -1.5 percent and -4.1 percent respectively.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997; Navarro, 1994; Schulz and Schulz, 1994; Vilas, 1995.
Wage-earners also saw their real incomes fall dramatically from 1980 to 1990. As shown in Table 1 in 1980 the households in the bottom 20 and 50 percent in terms of wage income were earning 4.3 and 12.7 percent respectively of total labour income, whereas the households in the top 20 percent were drawing 59.3 percent of the total. By 1990, the proportion of total income earned by households in the bottom 20 and 50 percent had slipped to 1.9 and 7.7 percent accordingly, which represents a regression to the 1970s values.\textsuperscript{14}

The Honduran economy began to recover in late 1995. The National Administration, under the leadership of President Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez and his "Moral Revolution" platform, substantially increased Central Bank of Honduras net international reserves, reduced inflation to 12.8 percent per year and restored a healthy pace of economic growth. From 1995 to 1998 the annual growth rate of the GDP was 4.5. Because the annual growth rate of the population was 2.5 percent, a steady increase in the GDP per capita has resulted.\textsuperscript{15}

Yet despite these economic improvements, the disturbing economic trends that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s have not abated as the millennium has drawn to a close. Although economically more stable than perhaps at any other time in the past two decades, Honduras still faces daunting economic problems. The transportation and communication systems are woefully inadequate for the nation's needs.\textsuperscript{16} Per capita annual income stands at US$650, one of the

\textsuperscript{14} Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997; Latin American Weekly Report, 1998. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Merrill, 1995.
Table 1 - National Income Distribution  
(Percentage of Total Income Received by Each Stratum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poorest 20%</th>
<th>30% below med.</th>
<th>30% Above med.</th>
<th>Wealthiest 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
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<td>12.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
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<td>El Salvador</td>
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<td>10.0</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>26.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic commission For Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997

lowest figures in the Western Hemisphere.\textsuperscript{17} Nearly 50 percent of the population is living on less that US$1 a day and nearly three quarters of the total population are still living in poverty. Combined unemployment and underemployment are estimated to be at 50 to 60 percent, with the annual inflation rate at approximately 20 percent.\textsuperscript{18}

In addition, Honduras continues to remain economically dependent on foreign aid. The national government continues to borrow from the IMF and the

\textsuperscript{17} Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997.
\textsuperscript{18} UNICEF, 1999; Wilkie, 1999.
World Bank, which has led to the increase of the public foreign debt of over US$4.5 billion.\textsuperscript{19} The service of this debt now consumes nearly 30 percent of total government revenues.\textsuperscript{20} The Honduran government has attempted to stimulate the manufacturing sector and expand assembly operations and diversify agricultural production, but these efforts have been only moderately successful. Although sugar cane is now the primary agricultural export, closely followed by bananas, agricultural diversification has been limited, leaving the country at the mercy of market fluctuations. The manufacturing sector has not yet developed beyond simple textile and agricultural processing industries and assembly operations. The small domestic market and competition from more industrially advanced countries in the region have inhibited more complex industrialization.\textsuperscript{21}

Given these grim economic indicators, it is surprising that Honduras has managed to avoid, so far, the political violence that has plagued its neighbours with similar, though not nearly as severe, economic problems. The question for Honduras in the coming years undoubtedly will be how best, with its limited resources, to deal with the growing economic pressures on its citizens while avoiding domestic unrest. Increased crime, particularly in Tegucigalpa, domestic violence and household breakups, and increased homelessness, particular among children, are just some of the contemporary signs of social disintegration that have resulted from Honduras' dismal economic situation.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Wilkie, 1999.
\textsuperscript{20} CDI, 1998.
\textsuperscript{21} CDI, 1998; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997; Wilkie, 1999.
\textsuperscript{22} Schulz & Schulz, 1994.
5.4 U.S. INVolVEMENT

Although Honduras has been influenced by the U.S. since the arrival of the
U.S. fruit companies, it was with the overthrow of the Somoza regime in
neighbouring Nicaragua in July 1979 that Honduras took on a more central role in
U.S. foreign policy. The rise of leftist movements in Guatemala and El Salvador and
the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua threatened U.S. hegemony in the region.
Bordering all three countries, Honduras became geopolitically important for U.S.
foreign policy in Central America.23

Both Presidents Carter and Reagan wanted a civilian government in
Honduras that would support their foreign policy goal of establishing and supporting
"democratic" governments. U.S. foreign policy succeeded in obtaining Honduran
cooperation for its program of counter-revolution and militarization through massive
injections of aid. During the next decade, Honduras received over US$1.6 billion in
direct military and economic aid and became "Washington's closest ally in Central
America.24

Throughout the 1980s, an interdependent relationship grew between the
U.S. and Honduras. For its part, Honduras "allowed" the U.S.-supported Contras, a
counter-insurgency, guerrilla movement 'armed' with the objective of destabilizing
the Nicaraguan Sandinista government, the use of their country as a base for its
operations. As argued by Annie Street, Honduras became "the linchpin of the
Reagan administration's Central America policy, in its effort to quell liberation

23 Acker, 1988; Barry & Norsworthy, 1990, 1991; Merrill, 1995; Norsworthy & Barry, 1994; Schulz &
24 Norsworthy & Barry, 1994, 159.
movements in the region.\textsuperscript{25} The U.S. built an extensive military infrastructure of bases, airfields, and radar sites in Honduras, as well as a large training facility, mainly used for training Salvadorian troops. During the 1980s, massive US military aid in the amount of approximately US$442 million flowed into Honduras. This enabled the military not only to develop the most powerful military force in the region but also to control some key areas of the economy, including telecommunications, the cement industry, insurance and banking.\textsuperscript{26}

In return, Honduras became one of the top ten recipients of U.S. economic assistance in the world. Between 1980 and 1989, approximately US$1.2 billion was funneled into the Honduran economy. While more than half was used to relieve the country's balance-of-payments problems, 30 percent came in the form of development assistance, and the remaining 20 percent was food aid. Most of the U.S. economic aid to Honduras, roughly 85 percent, came in the form of direct grants rather than loans.\textsuperscript{27}

The interdependent relationship between the U.S. and Honduras continued into the 1990s. However, Honduras lost much of its immediate geopolitical importance for the U.S. with the end of the contra war and the consolidation of the peace process in El Salvador and Guatemala. Both military and economic assistance were subsequently curtailed. Nevertheless, the perceived threat by the U.S. of leftist challenges in Nicaragua, Salvador and Guatemala, as well as the

\textsuperscript{25} Street, 1985, 217.
\textsuperscript{26} Acker, 1988; Barry & Norsworthy, 1990, 1991; Merrill, 1995; Schulz & Schulz, 1994; Rosenberg, 1986.
strategic military infrastructure established during the 1980s, has led the U.S. to maintain a strong presence in Honduras.28

5.4.1 U.S. Intervention Leads to Destabilization

The economist Philip Shepherd gives a precise accounting of the negative consequences of US interference in Honduras:

Heightened regional instability, terrorist attacks on Honduras, pillage by the CIA-backed contras, marginalization of Honduran civilian leadership, increased internal repression and human rights abuses, severe economic deterioration and the postponement of urgently needed socioeconomic reforms.29

Shepherd’s conclusion that American intervention in Honduran affairs has generated social, political and economic problems in Honduras has been confirmed by the research of social scientists. As Barry notes, “AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] has not only deepened the country’s economic dependency; it has also further debilitated the country’s governmental and non-governmental sectors.”30 Instead of Honduran nationals running the country, “outside consultants have been placed in most ministries” and “government has become accustomed to turning to AID and the U.S. Embassy for consultation and approval of most economic and political decisions.”31 This has led Norsworthy and Barry to label Honduras an “AID junky increasingly dependent on a foreign-assistance fix.”32 Furthermore, funds from AID have failed to “trickle-down” to the poor majority. Washington aligned itself with the military and the business elite and influenced the government to institute political and economic policies that

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29 Shepherd, 1984.
undermine the interests of workers, peasants and the middle class. As a result, the U.S. has fostered social and economic polarization within Honduras.\textsuperscript{33}

U.S. military intervention, according to Weaver, has also encouraged a repressive government in Honduras: "In the 1990s, the legacy of the massive militarization of the 1980s seems to be encouraging policies of repression that were characteristic of its [Honduras's] three troubled neighbours."\textsuperscript{34} When Honduran peasants and workers attempt to assert their rights, the military, financially strapped because of declines in US military aid, have became increasingly brutal. With the land invasions and strikes in 1991, "the Honduran record in human rights deteriorated as the military responded."\textsuperscript{35}

### 5.5 Politics, Unions and Popular Movements

Although ostensibly a multi-party democracy, the Honduran political scene has been dominated by two main parties since the 1890s. Both are right-of-centre, but the National Party (PNH) is further to the political right than the Liberal Party (PLH). The other two parties with legal status, the Christian Democratic Party (PDCH) and the Innovation and Unity Party (PCH), hold a handful of seats in Congress.\textsuperscript{36} The Honduran Communist Party (PCH) has never had legal status. When elections are held, voting is largely still determined by caudillismo, and the incoming party redistributes government jobs among its own supporters, civilian or military. Political corruption is endemic.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32} Norsworthy & Barry, 1994, 162.
\textsuperscript{33} Norsworthy & Barry, 1994, 162.
\textsuperscript{34} Weaver, 1994, 246.
\textsuperscript{35} Weaver, 1994, 245.
\textsuperscript{36} CDI, 1998.
Popular organizations that should challenge such political corruption have varying degrees of success. For instance, the trade union movement is well established in Honduras and influential. Workers of the vast banana plantations organized themselves in the early part of the twentieth century, and a strike in the plantations in 1954 spread to other parts of the country, closing down 60 percent of the economy. A settlement was reached granting recognition to the more moderate unions, and this made it possible to organize workers throughout the country and in different sectors of the economy. The unions and the popular movements became a significant political force. This important development provided an opportunity for greater US influence. In particular, Honduran unions received significant financial backing from the relatively right wing American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the associated Interamerican Regional Organization of Labour (ORIT). However, this support has ensured that the majority of trade union organizations in Honduras are moderate or right wing and have become closely allied with some factions of the military government.

Nevertheless, a series of popular grass root organizations continue to make themselves known in the political arena of Honduras to demand equity and structural transformation despite persecution. There is a rich heritage in Honduras of everyday political resistance led by workers, peasants and the middle class. Norsworthy and Barry report that “in recent years Honduras has . . . experienced the emergence of community groups that have mounted militant demonstrations

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demanding better government services and lower prices for basic goods.\textsuperscript{40} Though there are many popular organizations led by women, students, peasants, human-rights activists, indigenous peoples, each has its own distinct ideological leanings.\textsuperscript{41} Ideological splintering has plagued popular organizations, often preventing them from consolidating their voices into a single, powerful voice of political resistance.

Despite ideological diversity in popular organizations, in 1989 several major labour and peasant organizations united to form the \textit{Platforma de Lucha para la Democratizacion de Honduras} in order to “present far reaching economic, social and political reform proposals to the national government.”\textsuperscript{42} The Platform of Struggle for the Democratization of Honduras “denounced Honduras’s economic system as ‘neocolonial capitalism’ and proposed a series of transformations that would restructure the economy to function for the needs of the majority.”\textsuperscript{43} If these organizations continue to present a unified front despite some differences in world view, they are far more likely to bring about the needed social and economic transformation of Honduras.

\textsuperscript{40} Norsworthy and Barry, 1994, 92.
\textsuperscript{42} Merrill, 1993, 187.
5.6 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The dramatic and sometimes volatile and unstable economy has been
coupled with equally dramatic changes to the demographic features of Honduras in
the second half of this century. Since 1950, the population of the country has
multiplied rapidly, though at a pace that has been slowing (see Table 2). With an

Table 2 - Total Population, Density, Urban Population, Rural Population,
and Percent of Total, 1950-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Total Population (1000s of People)</th>
<th>Density (inhabs. per sq.km)</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population (Percent)</th>
<th>Rural Population (1000s of People)</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1401</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>2627</td>
<td>3662</td>
<td>5138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>1236</td>
<td>1731</td>
<td>2285</td>
<td>3015</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2570</td>
<td>3588</td>
<td>4525</td>
<td>5252</td>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>2969</td>
<td>3964</td>
<td>5246</td>
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<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>2053</td>
<td>2771</td>
<td>3871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>1105</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>2418</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>4136</td>
<td>6288</td>
<td>9167</td>
<td>12880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic Commission For Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997

43 Norsworthy and Barry, 1994, 93.
annual population growth rate in excess of 3.1 percent since 1950 (reaching 3.6% between 1980 and 1986 to become one of the fastest growing countries in Latin America), the population of Honduras has more than quadrupled in the last 45 years, increasing from approximately 1.4 million in 1950 to nearly 6.5 million in 2000. According to UN projections the population will increase by roughly another million people by the year 2000, to over 9 million by 2015, and double its population by 2020.44

Like much of Central America, Honduras still has a young population, although the proportion of young people to the overall population has declined slightly since 1950 (see Table 3). In 1997, approximately 53 percent of the total population was under the age of 19. Honduras also has a relatively small proportion of elderly people, despite dramatic increases in life expectancy during the last half of this century. Given the current population growth rate of almost 3.0 percent for the 1990-1997 period, the percentage of children will remain high for at least some decades.

The population of Honduras is 90 percent mestizo (mixed race), reflecting a history of colonialism and domination. The remaining 10 percent are made up of a number of indigenous groups, the largest being the Lenca, and the Garifuna, who have African/Caribbean origins. The population is also predominantly Catholic, although there is a growing membership of various Protestant churches.

44 UNDP, 1999.
### Table 3 - Population by Age Group

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Total Population</strong></td>
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<td><strong>(Percent)</strong></td>
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<td>517</td>
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<td>309</td>
<td>310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>1363</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2443</td>
<td>2917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>1448</td>
<td>1645</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2364</td>
<td>2791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1210</td>
<td>1581</td>
<td>2042</td>
<td>2694</td>
<td>3566</td>
<td>4174</td>
<td>7962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>1508</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>2187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>1138</td>
<td>1314</td>
<td>1481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>3765</td>
<td>4943</td>
<td>6437</td>
<td>8647</td>
<td>11659</td>
<td>13751</td>
<td>16209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. 60 or more Years</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>276</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>1229</td>
<td>1482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic Commission For Latin American and the Caribbean, 1997
It is very significant that a strong local agrarian capitalist class failed to emerge in Honduras and a middle class did not begin to develop until the 1950s. In other parts of Central America, the introduction of export crops, and in particular coffee, in the second half of the nineteenth century, which linked economies to the world market, created powerful local elites. In Honduras, the coffee industry is controlled by Hondurans, and is grown by between 30,000 and 40,000 small-scale independent producers. The major investments in export agriculture were by foreign companies. In the absence of a local capitalist elite, Honduran society was controlled by foreign capitalists.  

The economic strength of the fruit companies, combined with the patronage system of caudillism and the undulating terrain, have led to a poorly developed state structure, with the military as the only national institution of major significance. This has been reflected in the frequent changes in the regime over the past century, with moves from civilian to military rule and back again, in a series of coups and counter-coups. Such political instability has led to the popular saying that Honduras is a “land of the midnight coup.”

5.7 COMMUNITIES, SETTLEMENTS AND URBANIZATION

There is a sharp differentiation between rural and urban cultures and segments of society in Honduras, as in the rest of Central America, due partly to the urban concentration of wealth and political power, and partly to differing rates of economic and social change. In some ways Honduras resembles the Renaissance city-states of northern Italy. The fortress-palace of the President in Tegucigalpa is

46 Schulz & Schulz, 1994; Rosenberg, 1986.
reminiscent in style and function of Italian antecedents, while the mass of the rural population remains mired in poverty. Only since the post-war era, however, has internal migration and growth in the population begun significantly to expand the towns and cities.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Honduras was still a predominantly rural country in terms of where its population lived and in terms of economic activity. Urban growth during the 1930s through to the 1950s was very slow, and the percentage of urban population to total population was far below that of its Central American neighbours. Between 1930 and 1950 more than 80 percent of the population was still rural, with only 13 to 18 percent of the population in towns of 2,000 people or more (see Table 4).

Table 4 – Growth of Urban Population in Honduras, 1930-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. Of Urban Aggregates (1000s of People)</th>
<th>Total Urban Population (1000s of People)</th>
<th>Population in Urban Settlements Above 10,000 (1000s of People)</th>
<th>Level of Urbanization (Percent)</th>
<th>Annual Growth-rate of Urban Settlements Above 10,000 (Percent per year)</th>
<th>Annual Growth-rate of Urban Population (Percent per year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>7.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2093</td>
<td>1421</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>2649</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>3299</td>
<td>2375</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CELADE, various years

47 Merrill, 1995.
The important cities of the period depended, with few exceptions, on their links to the export agricultural sector. Some of these, such as Puerto Cortes, Tela, La Ceiba, El Progreso, and San Pedro Sula, prospered through the commercial and transportation activities associated with agricultural exports, principally bananas, that developed at the beginning of the century. The other major city, Tegucigalpa, served as an administrative centre for the nation. In the 1930s and 40s, there were only three cities of over 10,000 people with a total population of 50,940 in 1930 and 78,908 in 1940 (46% of urban population and 6% of total population). In 1950, there were still only five cities of over 10,000 people: Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, Puerto Cortes, and Tela, with a total population of 135,011 (55% of urban population and 9% of total population).\textsuperscript{49}

In the early 1960s, the urban population began to swell in Honduras. Urbanization increased at an annual rate of 5.1 percent between 1965 and 1980, due both to natural growth and rural-to-urban migration. The most dramatic annual urban growth of 5.7 percent occurred between the years 1973 and 1984. One of the sources of this growth was the expansion of export agriculture. During the 1960s, large landowners began to expand their operations into the growing of cotton and sugar and some non-traditional crops such as pineapple and melon and to expanded beef production. Through the expansion of the export agricultural sector peasant farmers were pushed on to more marginal lands which resulted in

\textsuperscript{48} Lapper & Painter, 1985.
\textsuperscript{49} Gibson, 1970.
lower yields. This subsequently increased migration to the urban centres in search of work to supplement farm income.\(^{50}\)

Despite the economic downturn during the 1980s, the rate of urbanization continued at an annual rate of 5.4 percent during the decade; the highest urban growth rate in Central America.\(^{51}\) From 1990 to 1997, the average annual urban growth rate declined to 4.4 percent, still one of the highest in the region.\(^{52}\) Determinants of this urban population growth are the result of not only high total fertility rates in urban areas, the highest in Latin America, and increases in the life expectancy at birth, but also better maternal and child health care.\(^{53}\) In addition, export manufacturing grew during the late 1980s and 90s, aided by the membership of Honduras in the Central American Common Market and the development of Export Free Zones in Northern coastal cities. The two big banana companies operate much of the factory-based manufacturing, producing plastics, cans, soap, cement, boxes, rubber, margarine, and vegetable oil. By 1994, 45,000 people worked in the export-processing sector; 20,000 jobs were created between 1990 and 1992, mostly in clothing assembly for duty-free re-export to the US.\(^{54}\) By 1997, 45.0 percent of the Honduran population lived in urban areas, a percentage that is currently estimated at nearly 50 percent.

What has emerged in Honduras is a unique urban system, in terms of population distribution and function. Unlike its neighbouring countries, and much of

\(^{50}\) Acker, 1988; Barry & Norsworthy, 1990, 1991; Merrill, 1995; Schulz & Schulz, 1994; Rosenberg, 1986.
\(^{51}\) Costa Rica 3.7%; El Salvador 2.1%; Guatemala 3.4%; Nicaragua 4.5%; Panama 2.9%
\(^{52}\) UNICEF, 1999.
\(^{53}\) CELADE, 1997; Guzman, 1997.
\(^{54}\) CDI, 1998.
the rest of Latin America, Honduras does not have a single primate city.\textsuperscript{55}

Approximately 48 percent of the urban population is distributed between two major cities: San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. Whereas other Central American capitals hold more than 50 percent of their respective countries' urban populations, Tegucigalpa's percentage of total urban population is considerably lower, at 30 percent. San Pedro Sula, Honduras' second largest city, accounts for 18 percent of the country's urban population.\textsuperscript{56}

Although these two cities account for the majority of the urban population in Honduras, the similarities end there. Tegucigalpa's metropolitan area dominates the commerce and banking of the southern half of the country, and is the national centre of the country's social, political, and cultural activities. Members of the Honduran ruling elite tend to make their homes in the capital: mostly they are 'old families' who travel worldwide and educate their children abroad. Tegucigalpa, which has been the seat of the archbishop primate of Honduras since 1916, is also the location of the leading radio and television stations. It is also the centre of secondary and higher education, and is the central home for the army and air force.\textsuperscript{57}

In contrast, San Pedro Sula is a serious rival in industrial and commercial economic activities. Honduras' major concentration of industry is located mainly in San Pedro Sula itself, and in several industrial zones just outside the city. The

\textsuperscript{55} Gilbert, 1994.
\textsuperscript{56} Merrill, 1995; Vilas, 1995; CDI, 1998; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997; Wilkie, 1999; UNICEF, 1999; UNDP, 1999.
\textsuperscript{57} Merrill, 1995; Berry & Norsworthy, 1990, 1991.
city's multiple functions are further demonstrated by the number of radio stations, schools, banks, cinemas and consulates.  

5.8 URBAN POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

Estimates made from the 1970s of the percentage of national income and urban income accruing to various groups indicate that a small proportion of Hondurans receive a major proportion of national and urban incomes, and that, at every descending rung of the income distribution ladder, access to national and urban incomes decrease dramatically (see Table 5). For example, in 1970 the richest 20 percent of the population received 67.7 percent of the national income and 54.8 percent of the urban income. In stark contrast, the poorest 20 percent received only 3.0 percent of the national income and 4.0 percent of the urban income.

This sharp polarization between the great share of income going to the wealthiest groups and the minimal share to the poorest decreased only marginally by 1980 and again in 1990 and 1995. The progress in distribution resulted in the decline of the top group's share and a slight increase in the share of the bottom 50 percent. The fact, however, that urban income distribution changed even less than that of the nation in general, suggests that the transformations of the national income mostly reflect the social and economic changes that were taking place in the rural areas rather than in the cities.

Table 5 - Urban Income Distribution  
(Percentage of Total Income Received by Each Stratum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poorest</td>
<td>30% below med.</td>
<td>30% above med.</td>
<td>Wealthiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poorest</td>
<td>30% below med.</td>
<td>30% above med.</td>
<td>Wealthiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>54.5</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poorest</td>
<td>30% below med.</td>
<td>30% above med.</td>
<td>Wealthiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic commission For Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997

Yet despite these nominal improvements an ever-increasing majority of the urban population are without adequate employment. At the beginning of the 1970s, urban unemployment was estimated at 10 to 12 percent. By 1980, the total underutilization (unemployment and underemployment) of labour in the cities represented more than 42 percent of the economically active population (EAP) in Honduras.
This percentage of unemployment and underemployment rose even further, reaching seasonal highs of 55 percent in 1997.\textsuperscript{59}

The population living below the poverty line in the urban centres of Honduras has also increased both in relative and absolute terms. In 1980, the total population living in poverty was approximately 2.5 million. By 1990, their numbers increased to 3.9 million, with 2.3 million living in rural areas and the remainder in urban areas. Although this impoverishment affects a larger proportion of the population in rural areas, the plight of the urban poor remains cause for serious concern. Poverty in Honduras and the rest of Central America has tended to become urban, with 60 percent of the increase in poverty over the decade taking place in the cities. The ranks of the urban poor grew by almost 70 percent over the decade, compared with a 13 percent rise in poverty in the countryside. Migrations and the displacement of populations fleeing war zones, repression, and worsening living and working conditions in vast swaths of the countryside are principally behind this trend.

Seeking refuge in the cities, growing numbers of people have put increasing pressures on social and urban services and the labour market and have intensified the problems of shantytown growth. In Tegucigalpa alone over 70 percent of the population is considered poor and is living in extremely dismal conditions. Some of the poor families reside in the slums of the city centre, however the majority live in one of several hundred informal communities, located on invaded land on the periphery of the city. Based on a housing sector assessment report published by the Urban Institute, it was estimated that Honduras should build 46,000 new

\textsuperscript{59} Vilas, 1995.
housing units per year and upgrade another 11,000 units annually over the next
decade in order for the country to catch up on its housing backlog plus provide for
population growth. For the city of Tegucigalpa alone current estimates suggest
there is an housing shortage of 150,000 units.\footnote{Peterson, 1989.}

5.9 **Street Children in Honduras**

One of the urban trends in Honduras that has emerged from this backdrop of
disparity and poverty is the rise in the number of street children. The existence of
children living their lives on the streets of Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula is a tragic
expression of the failure of Honduran society on its path toward development.
Over the past two decades, the presence of street children in the Capital District
alone has grown so rapidly that the various levels of government have had to rely,
at times reluctantly, on assistance from national and international non-government
organizations to ameliorate the "problem". Estimates of the street child population
in Tegucigalpa range from 1,500 to 2,200. After Hurricane Mitch in December 1998,
these estimates increased anywhere by 10 to 20 percent.

Until very recently, demographic data on street children in Honduras, and
more particularly Tegucigalpa, were difficult to obtain. However, since the early
1990s, *Projecto Alternativas*, a health, education and social services program
supported by UNICEF and several other NGOs, has been collecting data on the
street children of Tegucigalpa through a baseline survey. The presentation and
analysis of these data appeared in a series of published articles.\footnote{Wright et al., 1993a; Wright et al., 1993b; Wittig, 1994; Wittig et al., 1997.}
The information contained in the baseline survey includes the usual demographics (age, sex, birthplace, marital status of parents, and others) and a number of more specialized questions that tap the unique concerns of this population: their usual sleeping places, whether they have a caretaker in the street, their relationships with their families, and whether they are orphans. Other questions were asked about religious preference, school attendance, source of income, sharing of income, records of arrest or imprisonment, harassment by police or market vigilantes, gang membership, and drug usage. The street educators also made assessments of mental and physical health, nutrition, and survival skills. Obvious signs of psychosis, chronic depression, antisocial behaviour, adjustment disorders, cognitive impairment and mental or family dysfunction were also noted. There were additional questions concerning their access to health care, frequency of shelter usage, number of regular daily meals, sexual activity, prostitution, and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

As shown in Table 6, the children range in age from 6 to 18 years with the average around 11 years. The children are overwhelmingly male (95%). A significant majority are from the Tegucigalpa area, although roughly 40 percent of the children are migrants from other areas of the country and throughout Central America. Despite the common perception that street children have been abandoned, research here and elsewhere suggests that this is not the case. Less than five percent of the street children in Tegucigalpa were identified as abandoned.
Table 6 – Family and Social Conditions of Street Children in Tegucigalpa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Distribution %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 yrs or less</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9 yrs</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 yrs</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-19 yrs</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex Distribution %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Birth %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tegucigalpa Area</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents' Marital Status %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Together</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Household Status %</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living with Both Parents</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with Mother Only</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in the Streets</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client's Relationship With Family %</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Time &quot;in&quot; or &quot;of&quot; the Streets %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 month</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 month to 1 year</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 year</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does Client Attend School?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% No</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Yes</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can Client Read and Write?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% No</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Yes</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Street children in Tegucigalpa, like those from other Latin American countries, tend to come from large, disorganized family backgrounds. The average family size from which the street children originate is approximately 5.3 persons. Very few of the parents of these children are currently married; most had separated or had never been married. Exceptionally high rates of separation and cohabitation suggest a pattern of "serial monogamy" and frequent male abandonment. Before the children leave home, familial relationships are often cited as being generally poor or nonexistent. Family estrangement is dramatically high and more than three-quarters of the "children of the street" exhibit symptoms of family dysfunction.

As revealed in the research data, the majority of the street children, 57 percent, live and sleep consistently in the streets of Tegucigalpa, with the remainder doing so periodically. Very few of these children are recent arrivals in the streets. More than 80 percent of the children have been "of" the streets for more than a year. Within the city, these street children generally concentrate in specific sectors, major streets or parks, drawn by the relative safety they perceive in numbers. The street children who participated in this survey congregated in several of the cities markets. In these locations or focal points, the children have found the necessary means of survival. They have gradually woven relationships within their surroundings, thus transforming their locations from mere physical spaces to social places. Because street children generally eat and sleep in the same spots day after day, they are known by people working around the focal points in cheap hotels, restaurants and markets. Owners of small food stands often sympathize

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with them and allow them to eat for free at the end of the day. Other market vendors, however, bitterly complain about the presence of street children, as they believe the children drive away those customers afraid of being assaulted or robbed.

Only a mere 10 percent of the street children currently attend some form of school. A strong majority has received formal schooling prior to living on the streets. However, most of them have completed three years or less. A slight majority of the street children can read and write on some level, while nearly half are illiterate.

As noted in the research of Wright et al, the street children support themselves mainly through begging (53%). The younger street kids, predominantly those under the age of 10, generally perform most of the begging or singing on buses for money. These children do most of the begging as they tend to get some sympathy from adults, primarily because of their age. However, once these youngsters begin to mix with older children, who generally steal to survive, they often lose their satisfaction with pocket change and begin stealing themselves. In addition, once the street kids turn twelve or thirteen, begging becomes a less feasible means of survival, as adults stop giving a few coins and view them as old enough to work. However, some street children as they have aged claim that they resist stealing either because they fear being caught or because they believe it to be immoral.

Other street children find monetary jobs, such as watching over a parked car or unloading or transporting boxes and packages. Of those surveyed, 15 percent
said they survived and earned a living through carrying things for people and completing other odd jobs. Some simply steal food, money, or merchandise that they can trade or sell. Unlike many of their counterparts throughout the rest of Latin America, in almost all cases, the street kids claim to keep for themselves whatever money they earn.

Still other street children resort to theft (12%). Those children who do steal generally engage in petty theft, robbing passers-by of their sunglasses or wallets, or breaking into cars. They sometimes use the articles that they steal, but more frequently sell them to vendors at one of the city’s markets that feature stolen merchandise. In spite of the small scope of their thefts, the risks for street children involved with stealing are extremely high. While the police tend to ignore the begging and panhandling, a diminishing public tolerance for stealing has commanded their attention in recent years. Police use draconian measures with the street children who steal or who are suspected of stealing, often placing them in juvenile jails, where they may spend indefinite periods, suffering harassment and performing mundane chores. As recorded in the survey, nearly half of the street children had been arrested by the police (see Table 7). Of those arrested, four in ten had been in jail and approximately 15 percent of these had been in jail numerous times. Roughly 29 percent of the street kids also belong to a street gang.
Table 7 - Mental Health, Physical Health, and Nutritional Status of Street Children in Tegucigalpa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of Mental Health %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of Physical Health %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of Nutritional Status %</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatively, the police or the victim of their thieving may brutalize the suspected street children. Instances have occurred where street children have been beaten mercilessly, even when they were only suspected of stealing. Thus, street children must walk a fine line to retain their freedom, and the price is both emotional and physical damage since relief from stress is as rare as that from infection and illness.

In addition to stealing and begging, many street children survive through prostitution. While only 22 percent of the children surveyed by Proyecto Alternativas admitted engaging in prostitution, the actual percentage may indeed be higher. The degrading nature of prostitution and the dangers involved with stealing frequently provoke street children to consume drugs in order to have the courage to engage in both means of survival. Of the street children in the survey, more than
half sniff glue, four in ten consume alcohol at least occasionally, six in ten smoke cigarettes, and one in five smoke marijuana. Glue, in particular, is a popular intoxicant among street children, both in Honduras and throughout Latin America, because it is very cheap, diminishes pain, reduces fear, increases bravado, and suppresses hunger.\textsuperscript{64}

Despite the fact that glue sniffing is often the source of their problems with the police, most Honduran street children who are addicted use it quite openly. Medically, the addiction is psychological rather than physical, but the temptation is powerful, especially as a means to cement their relationships with friends in the street. The intoxication provides them a release from their concerns for the next meal and a chance for even the older boys to lapse into childish behaviour. It also, however, impedes their skills and resourcefulness so that safety, property, and plans for tomorrow give way to a familiar state of mind, focused in the euphoria of the moment.\textsuperscript{65}

Inhalant abuse proves even more self-destructive because of the serious physiological damage it causes. Inhalants can wreak havoc on nearly all body parts: the brain and the central nervous system; the heart and lungs; the liver, kidneys, ovaries, and digestive organs. Bone marrow loss, blood disorders, muscular atrophy, hearing loss and blindness may also result from extensive misuse of these toxins.\textsuperscript{66}

Street children also suffer a host of more common health problems while on the streets. Head lice, upper respiratory infections, skin infections, and dysentery

\textsuperscript{64} Aptekar, 1988b; Green, 1998; Hecht, 1998; Janowsky, 1991.
\textsuperscript{65} Janowsky, 1991.
and sexually transmitted diseases are commonly treated ailments. As described in the Proyecto Alternativas survey, about one in six children (16%) were thought to have fair to poor mental health, more than a third (36%) of the children were assessed as being in fair to poor physical health, and over 40 percent were considered to have significant nutritional problems. The range and extent of health and social problems indicated in these data are scarcely surprising. Concerning health, 5 percent of these children had never been seen by a doctor, and another 51 percent had not been seen by a doctor or other health professional in more than a year (see Table 8).

| Table 8 - Criminality, Substance Abuse, and Sexual Activity of Street Children in Tegucigalpa |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Clients Who Support Themselves                     | By Petty Theft or Begging, % | 53.4% |
| Has Client Ever Been Arrested?                     | No                          | 52.3% |
|                                                  | Yes                         | 47.7% |
| Clients Who Abuse Substance:                      | % Who Sniff Glue            | 56.6% |
|                                                  | % Who Drink Alcohol         | 42.5% |
|                                                  | % Who Smoke Tobacco         | 57.4% |
|                                                  | % Who Smoke Marijuana       | 19.4% |
| Clients Who Are Sexually Active:                  | No                          | 56.5% |
|                                                  | Yes                         | 43.5% |
| Sexually Active Clients:                          | % Treated for Sexually      | 85.1% |
|                                                  | Transmitted Diseases        |      |
|                                                  | % Who Have Engaged In        | 21.9% |
|                                                  | Prostitution                |      |

65 Aptekar, 198b8; Green, 1998; Hecht, 1998.
Concerning nutrition, only 8 percent of the street children were found to be eating three meals a day on the average; about 33 percent ate only two meals a day; 59 percent ate only one. Further compounding the health and emotional difficulties of the street children is that roughly 44 percent of them are sexually active. Almost all of the children of the street have been treated for sexually transmitted diseases at least once.

5.10 Conclusion

The Honduran people face many obstacles in their search for economic and social stability. The topography of Honduras is rough, its economy unstable, its social support structure weak, its political administration precarious and its distribution of wealth grossly inequitable. Natural disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998, only compound the problem. These factors and others contribute to the impoverishment of the Honduran people, many of which are children. Increasing numbers of children live on the streets of Honduras’s major urban centres. Once there, these children are subjected to physical assault, sexual abuse, harassment from the public, intimidation by gang members and criminals, and arrests by the police. This treatment frequently mirrors that which has occurred in the home. Though often victims themselves, street children are often regarded as irresponsible, lawless individuals who pose a serious social and financial threat to society. Any attempt to empower street children will require an attack on the existing Honduran State and a demand for its transformation. As argued by Agnelli the presence of street children is an indictment of the way society construes its
priorities.\textsuperscript{67} Therefore, any NGO that wishes to empower the street children must both indict the social structure \textit{and} work to transform it.

\textsuperscript{67} Agnelli, 1986.
CHAPTER SIX

CASA ALIANZA, HONDURAS: THE APPLICATION OF EMPOWERMENT THEORY TO THE STREET CHILD

6.1 ORIGINS

*Casa Alianza* is a non-governmental organization dedicated to assisting street children in Central America. Though the regional office is located in San José, Costa Rica, its programs operate in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras. To fully understand the origins and objectives of *Casa Alianza*, we must briefly consider those of Covenant House, a non-profit organization launched in New York in 1969, for *Casa Alianza* is a subsidiary of Covenant House.

Covenant House is a non-profit Catholic organization which was born one night in 1969 when Father Bruce Ritter, a Franciscan priest, offered his Manhattan apartment as shelter to six adolescent runaways who were in danger of freezing in a snow storm. After its incorporation in 1972, Covenant House grew from a few group homes in the East Village tenements of New York City to the largest privately-funded organization to provide shelter and services to homeless children in North and South America. Covenant House now operates in fifteen cities in seven countries: Canada, the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama.

Although Covenant House directed its energy to sheltering homeless youth at its inception, it expanded over time to offer a diverse range of services to street children. Covenant House describes these services as follows: “food, clothing, education, vocational preparation, drug abuse treatment and prevention programs,
legal services, recreation, pastoral care, mother/child programs, transitional living
programs, a national crisis telephone hotline, assistance in finding long-term living
accommodations and aftercare.”\footnote{“Covenant House” www.casa-alianza.org/EN/about.} In 1999, Covenant House and its subsidiary 
\textit{Casa Alianza} provided shelter and services to more than 48,000 homeless children
and to respond to the crisis calls of 87,000 desperate youth. Of the 48,000 children
served in person, 13,000 entered Covenant House’s Crisis Shelters, 14,000 were
assisted in Community Services Centres and 21,000 were helped by outreach
workers in the street environment.

To assist so many homeless children, Covenant House has significant
operating costs. The annual budget of Covenant House is US$82 million annually.
Of this amount, US,$600,000 is allotted to \textit{Casa Alianza} Honduras’s annually. The
funding for Covenant House is provided largely by private sources. In fact, 85% of
the 82 million dollars each year is raised through private contributions from
hundreds of thousands of donors.

\section*{6.2 Intentions}

Covenant House and its subsidiary \textit{Casa Alianza} as a whole approaches
the phenomenon of urban street youth with some \textit{a priori} assumptions. The
intentions and objectives of the program are, and always have been, embedded in
both a social and spiritual agenda. Relying on the biblical imperative to feed the
hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless, \textit{Casa Alianza} mission
statement is a commitment “to serve suffering children of the street, and to protect
and safeguard all children . . . with absolute respect and unconditional love.\textsuperscript{2} This mission statement also relies on a social imperative which recognizes that children are human beings and active agents who have their own ideas and experiences and their own inherent human rights. These childhood rights are most recently articulated in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.\textsuperscript{3} As noted by one author, "more than previous treaties, the Convention recognizes the child's capacity to act independently, bestowing not just protective, but also enabling rights, such as the right to freedom of expression and association."\textsuperscript{4}

From Casa Alianza's mission statement an organizational mandate emerges. Their mandate is driven by five principles:

- To provide immediate shelter and services to children and youth who are homeless or at great risk of some kind. Grounded in an open intake policy, services are provided to all youth who seek Casa Alianza's assistance, and particularly to those for whom no other service is available;
- To assist children and youth towards a more positive future in a more permanent environment. This is accomplished by either facilitating a reunion of street children with their families when possible or through the provision of an alternative family setting;
- To collaborate with community groups and organizations and actively participate in local efforts to improve the condition of families and children;

\textsuperscript{2} Covenant House's choice of name is itself taken from the Bible. The organization refers to the Old Testament "Covenant" or agreement between God and humanity. As The Oxford Companion to the Bible explains: "covenant signifies a relationship based on commitment, which includes both promises and obligations, and which has the quality of reliability and durability (p.138)
\textsuperscript{3} Byrne, 1998.
• To vigorously advocate with, and on behalf of, street youth to raise awareness in
the community about their plight and to encourage government agencies, local
communities and families to assume collective responsibility for the protection of
children;

• To assist street children who desire a change in their life-course.

To achieve this mandate, Casa Alianza has designed and put into practice
an eclectic and innovative project. Unlike many other government agencies and
NGO's, Casa Alianza has instituted a program in which the child actively
participates in the creation of an action-plan which permits them to achieve their
own goals. The organization “wants the child to take the decisions from his or her
personal conviction and not from an external imposition, so the child feels
ownership of the covenant process” (3). Casa Alianza rejects traditional approaches
in which the child enters at one point in the program and, despite individual needs
and desires, is expected to move through a series of stages at a pre-decided pace,
their progress judged solely by staff, before leaving at a predetermined date.
Rather, Casa Alianza’s methodology is driven by a personalized approach that
recognizes that each street child is unique and, therefore, the programs provided
are tailored to the individual needs of the child. I will now describe the specific
components of Casa Alianza’s project.

6.3 Working With Street Children in Honduras

Casa Alianza, Honduras began its operations in Tegucigalpa in September
1987. Beginning with a non-residential program for children living on the streets of
the capital city, Casa Alianza, Honduras expanded its operations to include all the
projects and programs it now administers (Table 9). While the number of street kids varies from month to month, as noted in the previous chapter, there is anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 children living on the streets of Tegucigalpa. With a staff of approximately 100, Casa Alianza, Honduras serves about 200 children in its residential programs, and another 1,000 in its other programs and projects.

In Honduras, Casa Alianza runs one crisis centre, one transition home, five group homes, a drug rehabilitation program “La Finca” located in a farm outside the urban core, and a family reintegration program. The crisis centre serves both male and female street youth; the single transition home is for males, while three of the group homes are for males, two for females. In addition, in 1994 Casa Alianza, Honduras decided that it was imperative that a Legal Aid Office be provided for street children who otherwise had no legal recourse when victimized. The Legal Aid Office provides pro bono attorneys to children accused of a crime and to families whose children have been murdered. Further, the Legal Aid Office assists street children access legal documentation, necessary for social integration. Without a birth certificate, for example, many of the street children are prevented from registering and attending school and from applying for jobs in the formal marketplace. The Legal Aid Office assists the children in procuring such documentation, indirectly encouraging the social and economic development of street youth.

For an analysis of the projects at Casa Alianza, Honduras, it is useful to make a distinction between those programs that address the practical needs of the street child and those that address the strategic needs of the street child. The
programs of Casa Alianza, Honduras that are practical in nature are a response to immediate perceived needs of the street child and are most often concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as inadequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, counseling, love and attention, and the like. The programs that target strategic needs are those which challenge social, economic, and political structures and other mechanisms that systematically marginalize street children and their fight for survival.

6.3.1 **Practical Need: Food, Clothing, Shelter, Medical Care**

One of the mainstays of the Casa Alianza, Honduras project for street children is its four phase residential program. The first phase of this residential program is to make initial contact with the street children in the public spaces in the City, that is the street, the park, bus terminals, garbage dump, and markets. This is accomplished through a street educator team, which consists of seven staff members whose sole responsibility is to identify street children and establish a relationship with them. Casa Alianza, Honduras's outreach team provides street children with emergency medical care, counseling, non-formal education, and friendship.

In their initial interactions with the street children, educators attempt to introduce the concept of structure to the children through the playing of games, such as soccer, basketball and hand ball. This is premised on Casa Alianza, Honduras's belief that civil society is governed by structures. In order to reintegrate the child back into the family or community, structure must be re-instilled in the child. In an interview, Rigoberto King Sing, Director of the street team in Managua...
Nicaragua remarked that "during a game the child is encouraged to follow the rules, as the game will not function and cease to be a game if the child does not act accordingly."\textsuperscript{5}

Success in the first contacts with street children is not always easy to achieve. As argued by Sing, "those children who live on the streets, whether or not in trouble with the law, have internalized a very deep distrust of everything and everyone, especially those that are not part of their world."\textsuperscript{6} For that reason, Sing insists that street educators comprehend the processes that created the reality of street children and become familiar with the distinct culture that is built up in the streets.\textsuperscript{7}

Over and above these street services, the initial contact phase of the program involves an attempt to document an individual profile for each street child, whether he or she chooses to participate in the rest of the residential program or not. The information gathered, such as the child’s name, age, day-to-day activities, methods of survival, and time on the street, allows Casa Alianza, Honduras to monitor changes in the composition of the street child population. Further, if a street child is illegally incarcerated, the profile provides the Legal Aid office of Casa Alianza, Honduras the necessary information to act as legal council on their behalf.

The key to street educator's work with the children is a motivation to change their lifestyle. Thus, the street educators do not seek to forcibly 'enroll' children and remove them from the streets. Instead, their intention is to build relationships, in the hope that at some point during the friendship, the child will become aware of other

\textsuperscript{5} Author interview, (March 2000).
\textsuperscript{6} Author interview, (March 2000).
possible lifestyles and will embark on a new life-course. When a street child chooses to join Casa Alianza, Honduras and leave the street, the next step involves the shelter programs.

The Crisis Center is the second phase of the residential program and the first of three shelter projects. The Crisis Centre is a house built to provide intensive care and assistance to approximately 50 boys and 25 girls. Mima Diaz, Director of the Crisis Centre informed me that “roughly 90 percent of the children are brought in by someone from the street educator team, with the remaining ten percent are brought in by other NGO’s.” Of those that take shelter at the Centre, roughly half stay no more than two or three nights. Of those that remain, they stay anywhere from four to seven months.

At the Crisis Centre, the children are provided with room and board, clothing, diagnostic and first aid treatment, counseling by a certified child psychologist and non-formal educational activities which prepare them for reintegration into the public school system. Each child is also assigned an internal educator, whose principal responsibility is the general well being of the child. The methodology at the Centre is to treat each child as an individual. To this end, the children actively participate in the formulation of a Plan de Vida - a development or action plan - that involves the setting of attainable goals for their short- and medium term future. Counseling is deemed critical in this process. A key element in this goal-setting exercise is to assist children to come to terms with their lives, become aware of issues of sexuality, develop skills of self-control, and learn how to live within a

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7 Author interview, (March 2000).
8 Author interview, (March 2000).
family setting once more. The critical feature is to instill a sense of self-worth and confidence.

The children are placed into one of three groups - “beginners,” “intermediate,” and “advanced.” Their placement is based on the amount of time spent at the centre and individual progress. Objectives for each group are defined by the specific needs of its members, although this does not preclude addressing individual needs. Individual therapy is available in this regard. Every morning during breakfast, each group is assigned a list of activities and the themes of that particular day. As stated by Mirna Diaz, “the thematic work is reinforced throughout the day’s activities, addressing specifically the principles of structure.”

The daily activities, such as individual and group therapy sessions, spiritual counseling, recreation, household work, and educational classes, are always working to support, as stated by Mirna Diaz, “the overriding goal of an emotionally stable child.”

At the Crisis Centre, progress of each child, as outlined in their individual development plan, is reviewed at regular intervals. After several months at the Crisis Centre, if both the child and Casa Alianza, Honduras staff perceive that sufficient progress has been made, the child moves on to the next phase. At this stage, the child has one of two avenues that he or she can pursue: a Transition Home; or if considered necessary, a rural-based Drug Rehabilitation program called “La Finca”. The drug rehabilitation centre, located in a rural setting outside the Capital, assists street children who are severely addicted to drugs, principally

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9 Author interview, (March 2000).
10 Author interview, (March 2000).
solvent based shoe glue, immersing them in intensive occupational, individual and group therapies. Following an average stay of approximately three months the children are advanced to the Transition Home.

The Transition Home of Casa Alianza, Honduras provides shelter and a quasi-familial environment for approximately 50 children for an average 4 month period. In addition to the previous services offered at the Crisis Centre, young children are enrolled in public schools and older teenagers begin on-the-job training at businesses that collaborate with Casa Alianza, Honduras. Children in the transition home broaden their individual “Plan de Vida” to include longer-range goals. The goals of staff, among other things, is to inspire a desire in the children for an independent and productive life in the future.

The final phase of Casa Alianza, Honduras residential program, an arduous journey from despair to self-sufficiency, involves a residency in one of five Group Homes located in the Tegucigalpa metropolitan area. An average of thirteen children reside in each home, where they are nurtured by a carefully chosen team of counselors, who try to replicate a positive family environment. It is in such a setting that the former street children learn to bond with a surrogate family while pursuing further educational or professional opportunities. The children remain at the Group Home until their eighteenth birthday or until they have completed their education or job training.

The Family Reintegration program is an additional project of Casa Alianza, Honduras and was initiated in 1991. This program involves both the street child and the parents. Attempts are made to re-integrate the child with his or her family or
with a member of the extended family if a pattern of abuse is not the cause of the child living on the streets or if the child requests it. The Family Reintegration process consists of four steps. The first step is to assess the family situation and to ascertain their perception of the child's leaving home. The second step is to compare the family's account to that of the child. This permits counselors to move to the third step, which is to diagnose the problems within the family that caused the child to leave. In an interview, Maria De Los Angeles Betancur, Director of Family Reintegration in Managua Nicaragua, remarked that "the councilor then identifies and applies family specific activities in an attempt to address the problem(s) that materialized from the analysis."\(^{11}\)

When the child and family are both willing participants in the program, the next step involves the child visiting their family's home once a week. The frequency of visits is slowly increased over time, to the point where the child spends more time with the family than with Casa Alianza. As stated by Maria De Los Angeles Betancur the "goal is to reduce methodically and carefully the child's dependence on Casa Alianza and move towards an "Independent Life" - the fourth and final step."\(^{12}\) In the final step, Independent Life, the child is living and spending most of their time at home with their families.

Five family educators, who are responsible for roughly twenty five to thirty children each, make three home visits per month to children living in Tegucigalpa and one visit every two months to children outside the capital. If a child is in crisis, the family educator may visit as often as three times per week. Every Saturday,

\(^{11}\) Author interview, (March 2000).
\(^{12}\) Author interview, (March 2000).
parents are provided training in the areas of personal and family development, conflict resolution, health and nutrition, family planning, non-physical disciplining of children, support of their children's participation in school, and community development. The purpose of this parent training, according to Maria Diaz, "is reorient the family to take responsibility for the activities of their children - school, work, recreation, health, etc." In 1999, Casa Alianza, Honduras helped 160 street children rejoin their families.

More recently, in February 1994 Casa Alianza, Honduras opened the Legal Aid Office for Street Children in Tegucigalpa. The Legal Aid Office assists street children with civil law matters, such as acquisition of birth certificates and identity cards needed to register in school or benefit from other social services. A further mandate of this office is to provide legal advice and assistance to street children who are victims of authority abuse and illegal detention.

Casa Alianza, Honduras's response to the practical needs of the street children of Honduras is what we might deem in the developed world "social welfare." In this facet of its program, Casa Alianza, Honduras functions as "a department of social services" insofar as it provides some of the social infrastructure not provided by the municipal or state government of Honduras. As Meyer explains, this role assumed by Casa Alianza is not atypical for an NGO in Latin America. Speaking of the economic reforms in Latin America, Meyer writes:

The reforms have dramatically changed the relationship of the public and private sectors in Latin America. The private sector and market forces have been unleashed to pursue economic growth while the public sector has downsized and pursued macroeconomic stability. Other government functions have been passed back to the market or in some cases to NGO. Governments in Latin America worked hard
to achieve macroeconomic stability, but they have yet to report convincing progress for the poor.\textsuperscript{13}

With the government's failure to meet the socio-economic needs of the majority of its population, NGOs such as Casa Alianza have entered the social welfare landscape in order to meet the day to day needs of the struggling populace in Honduras.

In this role, Casa Alianza, Honduras appears to be appreciated by the municipal and state governments who are unable or unwilling to provide such services themselves. Though it would be possible to argue that Casa Alianza encourages the children to remain on the streets, as their daily needs are supplied by the organization, such criticism has not been openly articulated by the Honduran government. It may be that the Honduran government finds the measures of Casa Alianza as, in Friedmann's words, "a form of poverty alleviation and, in some ultimate sense, an inexpensive means of social control."\textsuperscript{14} Casa Alianza's project may be seen, that is, to prevent social uprisings among the unregulated homeless youth who number in the thousands.

Latin American governments, however, have not been as responsive to Casa Alianza, Honduras's push for "positive" social and economic changes on a macro level. Meyer notes that many of the NGOs that appear in Central America and the Caribbean in the 1980s were associated with politically conservative parties: "Central America saw a strong new breed of NGOs allied with the right

\textsuperscript{13} Meyer, 1999, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{14} Friedmann, 1992, 140.
wing of the civil wars that infested the region."\textsuperscript{15} As Norsworthy and Barry remark, many of these NGOs had "little real interest . . . in addressing structural economic problems in the society."\textsuperscript{16} Casa Alianza, Honduras is one such NGO which is known for its social and political interventions, despite threats, sanctions, and legal manipulations on the part of the state.

6.3.2 STRATEGIC NEEDS: SOCIAL MOBILIZATION, EMPOWERMENT, ADVOCACY

Casa Alianza, Honduras attempts to effect a positive structural transformation of Honduran society by intervening in local, national and global economics and politics. Their strategies are various and diverse. On the local level, Casa Alianza, Honduras has dedicated its energy to transforming the legal system. Their actions in this regard should be differentiated from the advocacy role they play as defense council for particular children in specific cases. Casa Alianza's purpose is not only to assist particular children find their way through the labyrinth of the Honduran justice system, but also to re-structure the system itself. The organization attempts to bring about such restructuring through: the prosecution of police officers known to systematically assault and murder street youth; the indictment of judges who fail to impose appropriate sentences for violators of street children; the exposure of the practices of illegal detention of street children; the education of law enforcement officers who are inadequately trained to work with the same; and through working with agencies around the world to prosecute those who exploit the children of Honduras. In general, therefore, Casa

\textsuperscript{15} Meyer, 1999, 33.
\textsuperscript{16} Barry & Norsworthy, 1991, 121. Friedmann notes that in general "compared with their Asian counterparts, Latin American NGOs tend to be more political" (1992:147).
Alianza attempts to revamp the entire justice system: from the behaviour of private security guards and national police officers to the sentencing practices of judges.

In terms of prosecution of those who exploit urban street youth in Honduras, Casa Alianza, Honduras, for example, recently cooperated with national and international authorities to bring about the arrest and conviction of three Americans who prostituted children in Honduras.\(^\text{17}\) The men were sentenced to nine, six and four year terms for their crimes and were also fined between $5,000 and $7,000. Without the fervent complaints and documentation of Casa Alianza, whose Legal Aid Office taped on hidden cameras evidence of children being sexually abused, little interest would be shown by the municipal government, who has a vested economic interest in encouraging sex tourism. Such intervention in the economics and politics of the sex trade in urban centres is part of Casa Alianza's overall vision to undermine the economics of sex tourism in Honduras.\(^\text{18}\)

Casa Alianza has also cooperated with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), part of the Organization of American States, in order to compel States to admit to, and be penalized for, violating the American Convention on Human Rights. Casa Alianza is the accuser in such cases and takes on the State itself. In fact, the first case in history brought before the IACHR on behalf of murdered children was that initiated by Casa Alianza on behalf of young

\(^\text{17}\) In this particular case (one of many) Casa Alianza worked with the Honduran Criminal Investigative Unit in San Pedro Sula. In other cases, such as the prosecution of sex tourist, Daniel Gary Rounds in 1996, the organization worked with the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the US Department of State.

Guatemalan murder victims. In terms of Honduras, Casa Alianza and the Centre for Justice and International Law co-petitioned the IACHR in 1995 to indict the Honduran State for failing to comply with the American Convention on Human Rights, a treaty that Honduras had endorsed. Despite signing this treaty, the Honduran State had continued to illegally imprison hundreds of minors with adults. If the State did not comply with the recommendations of the IACHR, the case could have been forwarded to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica. In this case, however, Casa Alianza was successful in compelling the State to cease imprisoning children with adults, though they continue to struggle with “renegade judges” who resist the law. However, Casa Alianza has found an ally in some cases in the National Police of Honduras itself, who last year openly condemned a police judge for the illegal detention of minors. The National Police put forward a report in which the judge’s decision was seen to contravene both the law and the Honduran Constitution.

Such a move on the part of the Honduran police may have resulted, in part, from Casa Alianza, Honduras’ recent training program for twenty-five officers of the National Police. The National Police Commissioner met with the Director of Casa Alianza, Honduras and the former agreed to the latter offering seminars to a total of 500 officers representing a variety of police troops. These seminars provide knowledge and experience to the officers who are given detailed instruction on the Childhood Code, modes of arrest, police violations of the Penal Code and are also informed how to best approach and, if necessary, arrest street children. At the end

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19 In this case (No.11,383), five street children had their eyes gouged out, and their ears and tongues cut off, and then were finally shot in the head by members of the Guatemalan National Police
of the seminar, police and street children participate in a lunch. *Casa Alianza,* Honduras hopes that these seminars will make "the relationship between street children and police constructive, and not violent."

In order to ensure structural change in the broader judicial system, *Casa Alianza,* along with the Centre for Justice and International Law, and members from the IACHR decided in October of last year to send a special rapporteur on children to Honduras to determine whether the State of Honduras has implemented IACHR’s recommendations on the illegal detention of juveniles in adult jails. Further, *Casa Alianza* has persuaded the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights to examine the many murders of children in Honduras, fifty of which were committed between the 1\textsuperscript{st} of January and the 30\textsuperscript{th} of September in 1999. Bruce Harris, *Casa Alianza*’s director, has also petitioned the United Nations to establish an International Tribunal to investigate the systematic murders of street children, which *Casa Alianza* insists are "crimes against humanity" according to the criteria of the International Law Commission.

*Casa Alianza,* Honduras, however, does not only attempt to re-structure the relationship between those in law enforcement (police, judges, legislators) and street children. In order to restructure society, they must improve street children’s relations with other social actors as well. The perception of street children in Honduras is often one of "violent gang members." Local businesses, convinced that street children are gang members, have employed and supported vigilante

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\footnote{ (*Casa Alianza* January 22, 1999)}

\footnote{20 (*Casa Alianza,* November 1, 1999)}
groups to attack, torture and kill street youth. According to Christensen, The Human Rights Committee in Honduras (CODEH):

has the evidence showing that on various occasions 16 powerful businessmen have met and discussed plans for “cleaning up the streets,” which involved plans for hiring professional assassins to do the grisly work, as well as employing members of rival gangs to kill each other. Former members of the Honduran military are said to have lent themselves to the cause for a fee.\(^\text{21}\)

*Casa Alianza*, Honduras wishes to “re-imagine” or “re-vision” the street child to prevent such angst between community members and homeless youth. It does this in several ways: by reintegrating street children into society through education and employment, discussed earlier; by holding a public march annually in which street children collectively parade peacefully through the urban centres to present themselves as legitimate members of society; and by encouraging street children to join scout troops and other such organizations which participate in the local community.

In terms of participation in scout troops, Troop 31 (all participants in Casa *Alianza*, Honduras’s program) won first place in an international scouting competition held in Chile in 1999. The participants felt that this opportunity offered them self-esteem and in the words of Jose Abel (aged 13) “was a demonstration of solidarity and a lesson in leadership.”\(^\text{22}\) Such success, however, does not only cause the street child to re-perceive the self, but also encourages the general public to conceive of street children as potentially active members of the community dedicated to positive social change. In a similar vein, the annual march of the street children through Tegucigalpa renders visible these marginalized members of

\(^{21}\) Christensen, 1999, 2.
society as legitimate citizens of the municipality, with their own distinct needs, concerns and desires. Such a march is not unlike gay parades or other vigils held in North America with the ultimate goal of effecting social and economic change.

*Casa Alianza* does not only aim to bring about societal transformation through legal and social means. They also seek to influence society through economic interventions. One recent instance reveals their success on this level. In 1997, *Casa Alianza*, Honduras met with members of the European Union (EU) and denounced Honduras's continued incarceration of children in adult jails. In fact, *Casa Alianza*, Honduras and Amnesty International requested the EU "to suspend all financial assistance to Honduras until it stopped incarcerating children in adult prisons."\(^{23}\)

The EU provides significant funding to Honduras and threatened to withhold further financing if the Honduran State did not rectify this problem. Honduras subsequently approved the signing of an agreement with the EU in March 1999 to "implement programs to ensure the rights of street children and, whenever possible, facilitate their reintegration into society."\(^{24}\) On signing this agreement, the EU provided more than US 2.5 million dollars to Honduras (channeled through the National Family Institute) to create a Children's Unit within the Ministry of Government and Justice; to better prepare and equip public offices to address the risks and needs of street children; to enact policy of integral care for street children charged with violating the law; and to train officers of the law and educators to deal more effectively with street children.

\(^{22}\) Gutman, 1999.  
\(^{23}\) Moreno, 1997.  
\(^{24}\) Moreno, 1997.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ASSESSING CASA ALIANZA, HONDURAS: THE EMPOWERMENT MODEL AS A PRESCRIPTIVE AND EVALUATIVE TOOL

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, I set forth in some detail the ideology, programs and policies of Casa Alianza, Honduras. Such a careful accounting is necessary if I am to establish successfully which of the objectives, programs and policies of Casa Alianza, Honduras successfully empower the target population. Likewise, it is also essential if we are to offer suggestions on which aspects of the objectives and operation of the organization might be modified to produce greater results.

In this chapter, I initially locate Casa Alianza, Honduras within the spectrum of planning approaches outlined in Chapters 4 and 5. Although I suggest that Casa Alianza, Honduras relies to some extent on the social welfare and community development planning models, the program seems embedded in the empowerment approach to development. I hope to demonstrate that the overall vision and the day-to-day operation of Casa Alianza, Honduras accords, for the most part, with the empowerment theory as described by Friedmann, Rocha and Rowlands. However, I shall also suggest that there are areas in which Casa Alianza, Honduras does not apply the principles and practices of the empowerment model. In response to this finding, I shall offer recommendations that might assist the organization better address the practical and strategic needs of the street children of Honduras.
7.2 **Casa Alianza: Eclecticism as Empowerment**

*Casa Alianza*, Honduras cannot easily be located within the spectrum of planning and policy approaches discussed in earlier chapters, and it would be unwise to merely position it within a single planning model. In my review of its literature, interviews with its directors and practitioners and my observation of its implementation in Latin America, I found that *Casa Alianza*, Honduras adopted an eclectic approach to street children. Obviously, *Casa Alianza* can in no way be aligned with the correctional approach; in fact, a large part of its agenda is to have such an approach to street children abolished. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, *Casa Alianza*, Honduras has brought to bear upon the state legal and economic pressure to render more humane its correctional practices.

However, *Casa Alianza*, Honduras, does borrow some of the features of the Social Welfare and Community Development Models. The organization's reliance on the Social Welfare model is apparent in their four-tiered residential program. The residential program clearly hopes to provide love and security within a substitute-family setting. Children leave their “homes” on the street and enter a social institution (either the crisis centre, transition house, or group home) where they receive physical care, medical attention, education and psycho-spiritual therapy. There is no doubt that this program is based in a social-welfare model. So too does *Casa Alianza* attempt to reintegrate street children with their family of origin (when that family can offer a safe and secure environment for the child) and provides household members with psychological, social and economic support. Indeed, supporters of *Casa Alianza* often describe their work in terms of
rehabilitation; W.E. Gutman, for example, describes the organization as one “that rehabilitates thousands of street children in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico.”

*Casa Alianza,* Honduras also employs strategies typically associated with the Community Development Approach. It offers community-based outreach programs which provide services to the children in the street, thereby permitting them to continue in their informal employment if they so choose. By extension, these services allow some street children, who remain in contact with their families, to earn money that can be added to the household income. Therefore, *Casa Alianza,* Honduras indirectly facilitates community economic development. Furthermore, by offering families of street children, in addition to the street children themselves, social, psychological and economic support, the agency improves the “health” and functioning of the household, thereby contributing to the social development of the community.

*Casa Alianza,* Honduras, however, can be very much aligned with the empowerment model as well, for its vision and practices revolve around individual, collective and socio-political empowerment. *Casa Alianza* Honduras’s provision of basic services, education, vocational training and legal aid, its constant legal challenge of inhumane State practices, and its re-training of local police, for example, serves the purpose of empowering children personally and in their roles in the community, and compels systemic transformation.

In Friedmann’s terms, *Casa Alianza,* Honduras offers social power to street children by providing them with “information, knowledge, and skills, participation in

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social organizations and financial resources.” It also fosters political power by offering children who sleep on the streets of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro with the “power of voice and of collective action”. Finally, the agency provides the children with psychological power because the programs are designed to give “an individual sense of potency.”

So too, in terms of Rowland’s typology of empowerment, Casa Alianza Honduras’s project attempts to invest street children with personal empowerment, encouraging self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of agency, a sense of “self” in a wider context, personal dignity as well as collective empowerment, providing the children with a group identity and dignity, a collective sense of agency and organization. This is accomplished, in part, through extensive training of the children individually and collectively about their fundamental rights, educating civil society about the rights of children, especially street children, and defending children whose rights have been violated. It is also accomplished through individual and group therapy sessions and drug rehabilitation, through which the child can derive self-awareness, self-confidence and a sense of agency.

In Rocha’s terminology, Casa Alianza goes beyond atomistic and embedded individual empowerment. Casa Alianza Honduras’s legal staff offer mediated empowerment, for their staff exists as experts through which children of the street (their “clients”) can be empowered. The child, that is, experiences power through the “support and strength gained from direction from others”

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marginalized community of street children to participate in the altering of “public policy and social attitudes,” thereby giving the children a sense of themselves as subjects “capable of acting upon and transforming” their world. The children should, as a result, modify their thinking about their “relationship to structures of power.”

From the perspective of the empowerment model of alternative development, Casa Alianza, Honduras is commendable. The organization, unlike many others, has applied multiple levels of empowerment, while retaining the benefits of both the social welfare and community development models. In the process, it has not only managed to house 190 children annually, but also to provide 1200 children per annum with non-residential services, approximately one-half of the urban street youth in Tegucigalpa. By adopting an eclectic approach to the problem of homeless youth – blending the objectives of empowerment with some of the programs and policies of the social welfare and community development approaches – Casa Alianza, Honduras offers children physical safety, security and housing and provides families of street children with economic, social and psychological support.

Furthermore, in its determination to “seek justice “and apply the law to “the most deprived, persecuted and vulnerable elements of society,” the agency stands in opposition to the state ideologically speaking, to effect some systemic change. Alvaro Conde, a recent director of Casa Alianza, Honduras, stated that the agency has also, of late, managed to work with the state to some degree to address the needs of street children: “We are now perceived as partners in a common effort.

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5 Rocha, 1997, 38.
As a result, arbitrary arrests have diminished and illegal incarceration of minors with adults appears to have ceased.\textsuperscript{7} Therefore, its relation to the state resembles that described as ideal by Friedmann: it is one of "antagonistic cooperation."\textsuperscript{8}

7.3 **OPENING THE DOOR TO GREATER EMPOWERMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are some aspects of Casa Alianza's program that could be modified to empower to a greater degree the target population with which they work.\textsuperscript{9} I would propose four ways in which the program might be modified:

1. that it become more pro-active or focus more attention on prevention;\textsuperscript{10}
2. that it permit more involvement of local community members in its organizational structure, so as to become more of a community-based organization;
3. that it increase its networking with development partners to broaden its effectiveness as a vehicle for structural transformation;
4. that it retain systematic records of and statistical information on the operation of its program in order to better monitor and evaluate the "success" and "failures" of various aspects of its program.

First, given the great difficulty in persuading children to leave their life on the streets once they have become accustomed to the environment, it would be worthwhile to expend more effort on preventing them from leaving their homes to the streets. As has been discussed at length, the causes of street

\textsuperscript{6} Harris as cited in Gutman, 1998, 11.
\textsuperscript{7} Gutman, 1998, 12.
\textsuperscript{8} Friedmann, 1992, 169.
\textsuperscript{9} It is important to note that many of my opinions on the possible improvements to Casa Alianza's program were touched upon by Bruce Harris, director of Casa Alianza, in my interview with him on March 23, 2000.
children in Honduras are complex and varied. Nevertheless, some causes are repeatedly identified – urban poverty, family disintegration, modernization and so forth. Certainly, some causes of children living on the streets of urban centres cannot be prevented by an agency such as Casa Alianza. It cannot halt, for example, the processes of modernization and urbanization. Nevertheless, I would suggest that it might be able to improve familial relationships in such a way as to prevent children from leaving home in the first place. That is to say, it would be possible for Casa Alianza to put greater energy into preventing certain familial dynamics that encourage children to leave their households.

Green remarks that the “pace of economic and social change and the destruction of old community structures in the drift to shanty towns,” families often collapse under the pressure.\textsuperscript{11} Casa Alianza might consider instituting policies and directing a percentage of its funds to prevent, for example, household disintegration in selected communities at risk. This could be done by creating programs which encourage the restoration of ties between family members and community members. It might also be encouraged by instituting and funding, for example, a community daycare which would ensure a safe, productive environment for children, while their mothers (often the head of the home) work. As Green has suggested, it is essential that projects “go to the heart of the matter – the reasons why children are on the street in the first place” rather than work “exclusively with helping street children.”\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Prevention can include a wide range of activities, from providing micro-loans to families of street children to lobbying US politicians to modify foreign policy.
\textsuperscript{11} Green, 1998, 28.
\textsuperscript{12} Green, 1998, 84
Second, although Casa Alianza, Honduras politically empowers because its social and legal activities alter the relation between a particular marginalized community and the state, it does not appear to encourage collective action of the marginalized community. The organization tends to advocate on behalf of the marginalized group and to have others in the international community advocate for them, rather than have the street children engage in collective, grassroots political action. As a group, the street children do not “collectively demand” socio-economic “assistance from the state.”

Hudock points out “the extent to which local communities can identify and address their own needs” because of the existence of ‘social capital’, that is the degree of trust, reciprocity, and engagement between individuals in a particular society.” Further Pearce insists, as does Friedmann, that to truly empower the poor, to construct “an authentic civil society . . . it must be about empowering . . . and enabling them to fight for their own rights as citizens.” It is essential that Casa Alianza encourage grassroots development among street children, their families where possible, and the community. Otherwise, as Hudock concludes they will foster “dependency” and will fail to “mobilize skills and resources locally.”

Casa Alianza does seek each street child’s participation in “the elaboration of its life plan” and “in decisions affecting the program.” However, I think that the program as a whole may well reflect the ideological leanings and cultural perspectives of external agents or animateurs entering the community rather than

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14 Hudock, 1999, 16.
15 Pearce as quoted in Hudock, 1999, 16.
16 Hudock, 1999, 17.
the reverse. I can find no evidence that Casa Alianza "sparks endogenous change from within" the community, to use Friedmann's terms.\textsuperscript{18} Rowlands recalls the words of a woman named Teresa, a member of Programa Educativo de la Mujer, who speaks of the importance of effecting change from within the community: "We knew what was happening to us and that we had to find our own solutions. People from outside couldn't do that for us . . . perhaps they would only know what we had told them about things, but the people who knew about our problems were us."\textsuperscript{19}

Street children, like women of the developing world, are certainly capable of identifying their needs and forming grass-root organizations to meet these needs, as is evidenced by the formation of the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls in Brazil (MNMMR). Street children, their families and the local community needs to feel ownership over local programs for street children and need to have as little dependence as possible on outside agencies.

Third, it would be wise for Casa Alianza to direct more energy to networking with development partners, particularly development partners from within the community. As Hudock has recently argued, "northern and southern NGOs often provide assistance to community groups through collaborative efforts, so improving these relationships is essential to raising the quality of development services delivered at the field level."\textsuperscript{20}

Casa Alianza recognizes the importance of such networking in their Strategic Plan: FY 1998-2000. One of their goals is "to collaborate with community agencies

\textsuperscript{17} Casa Alianza/Covenant House, 1998, 38.
\textsuperscript{18} Friedmann, 1992, 144.
\textsuperscript{19} Rowlands, 1998, 21.
\textsuperscript{20} Hudock, 1999, 15
and associations and actively participate in community efforts to improve the condition of families and children.\textsuperscript{21} Recently, \textit{Casa Alianza} has been conceptualizing the idea of Community Service Centres, centres through which \textit{Casa Alianza} ideally would network with other community-based and other non-governmental organizations. Community Service Centres, however, will not be built for at least several years, as the plan is in its early stages. \textit{Casa Alianza} organizers have also begun to meet periodically with other non-governmental agents to discuss their common issues and objectives and to determine ways in which they might work collectively for the greater good of the community.

No doubt, it is no simple task to coordinate private voluntary organizations (PVOs), community based organizations (CBOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As Friedmann correctly points out, as each organization has “multiple . . . donor agencies with different ideological and technical orientations,” tensions and conflicts of interest can\textsuperscript{22} However, in my opinion, if \textit{Casa Alianza} is to participate in large scale structural transformation of the community and the state at large, then it must operate within a federation of organizations including the state itself. Friedmann explains that such coalitions can help to reconcile “the particularity of \textit{lo local} [the local] with the general problem of regional and national development.”\textsuperscript{23} There is no doubt that without cooperating with the state and other agencies to address the phenomenon of street children, it is ultimately impossible to effect change at the meso and macro levels of society.

\textsuperscript{21} Casa Alianza/Covenant House, 1998, 42.
\textsuperscript{22} Friedmann, 1992.
\textsuperscript{23} Friedmann, 1992, 158.
This participation of grassroot organizations, non-governmental agencies and the state has already begun to take place in Latin America, as Annis explains:

These organizations are increasingly intertwined not only with each other but with the state. As a result, a policy built upon the idea of large-scale, small-scale development – something which might have appeared naïve or whimsical just a few years ago – is emerging as a serious choice for Latin America in the 1990s.²⁴

*Casa Alianza* would be wise to participate actively with the state and other agencies while retaining the autonomy of their program. For example, *Casa Alianza*, Honduras, might cooperate with *Asociacion Koinonia* which operates thirty-four Daytime Community Care Homes in Tegucigalpa. Staff at the homes care for the children at no cost while their mother’s work. Clearly such a day-care program permits women to find employment, thereby preventing young children from working on the streets to support their families. The objectives of both *Casa Alianza* and *Asociacion Koinonia* clearly overlap and mutual cooperation would result in the increased likelihood of preventing some children from migrating to the street. *Casa Alianza*, Honduras, might also consider partnering with micro-lending organizations such as Project HOPE which provide new economic opportunities for impoverished families. Project HOPE provides business loans to impoverished families in order that they might start small business and generate income to provide for themselves and their children. In 1999, Project HOPE helped over 8,000 Honduran women. Once again, by fortifying the household economy, Project HOPE reduces the need for children to work on the streets and lessons the potential for family disintegration, thereby preventing children leaving home.

Fourth, *Casa Alianza*, Honduras must retain systematic records of and statistical information on the operation of its program in order to better monitor and evaluate the “success” and “failures” of various aspects of its program.

In my analysis of the practices of *Casa Alianza* I was concerned about the limited “empirical data” with which to work. Green appears correct when he says that “there is very little hard statistical evidence on where most street children go after leaving projects and institutions. Very few projects monitor the impact of their work on the children they help, let alone look at what happens to them after they have left the streets.”\(^{25}\) Connolly and Ennew, however, have argued that in the past five years, “programme planners for street children are gradually realizing the importance of properly researched baseline and monitoring data.”\(^{26}\)

It is imperative that *Casa Alianza*, Honduras participate in this new trend, and begin to monitor and evaluate in a more systematic fashion the short-term and long-term “successes” of their organization. It needs to determine which policies and programs produce emotionally, spiritually and physically healthy members of a civil society, members who can act collectively to fight for structural transformation. For example, *Casa Alianza* needs to keep statistical information on: the percentage of children who return to the streets after participating in their various programs; on the percentage of children that find employment after completing the job-skill training program; on the percentage of children able to re-integrate into civil society as measured by adequate housing, regular employment, social relationships, and

\(^{25}\) Green, 1998, 84.
\(^{26}\) Connolly and Ennew, 1996, 139.
community involvement and so forth. Without such records, it is impossible for the programs and policies of Casa Alianza, Honduras to evolve to meet the needs of the street children and to transform society.

This need for monitoring data is recognized in their Strategic Plan FY: 1998-2000 which calls for "at least two external evaluations of each program during the years in which this strategic plan is in effect" and the gathering and analysis of "program data annually." This statistical evidence will permit Casa Alianza to analyze objectively the relative success of various aspects of their program, to develop and direct funds to those areas with the greatest success and to excise elements which have little positive impact on street children and the community at large. This will prevent the organization from "working in the dark," as Green puts it.

7.4 Conclusion

It is difficult to determine given the nature of "existing realities" the degree of success that Casa Alianza, Honduras has enjoyed. Certainly, as I have suggested, the organization has been able to reduce the poverty of street children; to reintegrate homeless youth with their family; to offer alternative family settings for orphans or abandoned children; to compel prosecution of those who exploit street children; to bring to justice members of the state who fail to uphold the law and Constitution or clearly violate it; to refashion the identity of homeless children in the community; and to compel social change through economic interventions.

28 Green, 1998, 84.
The changes Casa Alianza, Honduras has brought about in its thirteen years of operation are remarkable, especially when we consider the resistance often faced by the director and staff of Casa Alianza. As noted by Green,

when the Covenant House project in Honduras went to the InterAmerican Court of Human Rights in 1996 to condemn the practice of holding children in adult jails, the government responded with a press campaign threatening to remove its legal status and, referring to the Covenant House’s North American director, Bruce Harris, muttered darkly about foreign interference in Honduran affairs (185).

Bruce Harris also lost much time when forced to stand trial in Guatemala, when he was accused by the government of slandering state officials, a case that carried on for more than four years. Nevertheless, attacks on Casa Alianza have not derailed their efforts and suggests, perhaps, that their activities have compelled the Honduran State to confront its failure to address the desperate situation of their young, homeless citizens.

Unfortunately, because they work within the existing structure, Casa Alianza, Honduras cannot bring about a speedy, wholesale transformation of society. Hence, in 1999, well over 50 street children were murdered in Honduras, despite Casa Alianza, Honduras’ ongoing activities.29 Certainly, I found that this organization addressed the proximate causes of “child streetism” in a much more expedient, thorough, systematic and humane manner than similar agencies in Central America. However, like other agencies, Casa Alianza, Honduras has difficulty addressing the primary and secondary causes of the phenomenon: global restructuring and national political instability and economic insecurity. Given the

29 Coleman, 1999.
enormity of these causes, Casa Alianza, Honduras often finds itself engaging in no more than ameliorative action. However, by “interfering” in Honduras’s judicial, political and economic systems at the municipal, national and international levels, Casa Alianza, Honduras has begun to chip away at unequal restrictive power structure. The agency openly demands, therefore, that the structure of power in society be re-balanced.

Overall, Casa Alianza, Honduras shows remarkable potential in its work with street children. Its eclectic approach to street children is promising, its well-documented work with the state reflects its concern with macro-processes, its national and international reputation ensures adequate funding, and its willingness to adapt to meet community needs is admirable. In my interviews with directors, staff and street children, it was evident to me that the organization had been meeting the practical needs and many of the strategic needs of the homeless youths in a compassionate, empowering fashion. If Casa Alianza, Honduras can incorporate additional principles of the empowerment model of alternative development, it may be able to participate more fully in the structural transformation of Honduras.
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