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Street children and human dignity:

The case of SODZO International and the Methodist Church in Maua, Kenya

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Abstract

Street children are described as worthless, thieves, homeless children who have no life. Most are born and die in suffering. The issue of street children is a challenge experienced globally, whether in developed or developing countries. Statistically, there is an increase of street children all over the world. It is also shown that children in and of the street are facing a lot of challenges and sufferings. The society has despised them, and they do not value them as a human being. Within such an understanding, this study was done to explore how the church has taken that challenge to restore the dignity of these children.

The research explored and shows certain behaviors and certain factors which contribute to the increase of street children in Maua town. The factors are well known, but no one has come out to take any serious measure to reduce the sufferings and increase of children in the streets. The questions were directed to the church leaders and Sodzo organization leaders in relation to these children, as theologically speaking the church is an institution that ought to shape society, and to which people turn for both spiritual and physical rescue.

Based on the research findings, the local Methodist Church and partners institution Sodzo International are trying to add value and dignity to the street children. This is done by reducing their sufferings, and other challenges they face on the streets. Through the study, I discovered that the church has also tried to reduce the socio-cultural negativity connected to the marginalization, rejection and merciless killings of the street children. This is done by instilling mercy and love, through a message that every child deserves care and love, just like any other child in the society.

However, the study found out that the church and Sodzo affiliated organizations in their endeavors to take care of street children, are faced with financial challenges and growing numbers of street children. The study found that the key factor contributing to the growing number of street kids and families are related to socio-economic challenges. The large majority of the kids are from the low- and middle-income families. The study, therefore, suggests that the church should work close with the government in order to design special programmes to address the societal socio-economic challenges.

Elizabeth Mukaria, 20th May 2019

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Explanation of terms

Arithi ba ntuura—village stewards.

Changaa—local millet brew.

Chokora—street children, street urchins.

Imago Dei—Image of God.

Kimeru—A local Bantu language spoken by the Ameru people of Kenya.

Kwina chokora iraurairwe utuku—there is a street child who was killed a night.

Mandazi—a local snack.

Miraa (khat)—a herb like traditional sacred plant of Ameru, considered a stimulant.

Muntu — person, human being.

Mwana nwa mwiriia — a child belongs to the clan/community.

Mwiriia — clan, gate.

Mzungu—Englishperson, European.

Ng'ombe — Cow

Njuri Ncheke — Ameru sacred council of elders.

Nkia — poor.

Safisha mji — clean the town.

Samosa — a local snack.

Thiiri — Peace.

Ubuntu — an African concept which denotes a bond of unity among people.

Ukia—poverty.

Umetumwa kwangu kunichunguza? — have you been sent to investigate me?

Umuntu—equal ubuntu, meaning a person is a person through other persons.

Watoto wa Ahadi—children of promises, promised children.

Wendo—love.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

3Rs+P—Rescue, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Prevention.

CMC—Catholic Mission Center.

FGM—Female Genital Mutilation.

HIV/AIDS—Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

LWF—Lutheran World Federation.

MCK—Methodist Church in Kenya.

MMH—Maua Methodist Hospital

OHCHR—Convention on the Rights of the Child.

PRSP— Poverty Reduction Strategy

UN—United Nations.

WCC—World Council of Churches.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

1.1 Background

The aim of this study is to explore how the Methodist Church is creating value and dignity among street children in the town of Maua in Kenya. This exploration takes place within an understanding of diakonia as Christian social practice. Diakonia is understood as Christian responsible service and accountable action. Diakonia as such is associated with the marginalized and the suffering people (diakonia in context). This furthermore relates directly to a Christian anthropological perspective that sees God's image in human beings. Diakonia, therefore, can be viewed as an action of love for fellow human beings created in the image of God.

Life for many Kenyan families entails struggle, with the World Bank studies showing that 35.6% of Kenyans live below the international poverty line of 1.90 dollars a day (The World Bank, 2018). This makes the life of a child even harder. Most children grow up lacking the very basics in life, food, clean water, medicine, shelter, safety, a bed of your own. Beyond that, there are no toys, no dolls, no football balls, no sweets and treats, at best, a bed of reeds to sleep on. The school would be wonderful to attend, which could mean a path out of poverty, but there is no money for school fees. Some have no homes, no parents, they just sit on the street and wait maybe for a miracle or a good Samaritan. Life, in this case, becomes a matter of simply survival or staying alive. That is the life of street children in Kenya. Lewis in this respect, meaningfully states:

> Observing the children and how people have reacted to them not only has forced me to think about growing up without the security of parental love but has made me contemplate the potential rewards of life without parental restraint (Aptekar 2009: 2)

In Kenya, there are street children also known locally as *chokora* (a Swahili word) or the "street urchins". The term *chokora* is derogatory, defaming and traumatizing. *Chokora* means those who eat from "scratching the ground" like a chicken does or trashes. They are also held as petty thieves and pick pocketers. These terms remove the child elements from the street children, robbing them their human dignity and value. In this case, the children in the streets are exploited and subjected to inhuman activities. Some are used as beggars,

while others are raped, incorporated in crimes, drug selling and other abuses (Onyango et al. 1991: 3). These children lack any support and protective parameters in the form of shelter, food, health facilities and education. They are exposed to violence, molestation, arrests and all forms of brutalization. As Richter argues:

> Street children are subjected to physical assaults, sexual abuse, harassment from the public, intimidation by gang members and criminals and arrest by the police…. frequently repeats what was occurred in the home though the victims themselves, street children … are regarded as irresponsible and lawless and a serious financial burden to the society (1988: 214).

Street children live in dehumanizing conditions and state. There is a stigma attached to the meaning of *'chokora'*. This generates explains how society conceptualizes and view street children. This has been an obstacle for self-acceptance or being unconditionally accepted by society.

This study is done in Maua, a small town in Kenya. The aim is to explore how the Methodist Church is working with street children, hence adding value and dignity. The church is trying to help and change the perspective of how society views the street children as worthless, cursed, prone to violence and all negative acts in their lives. The idea to undertake the study was inspired by my current studies in diakonia, essentially understood as Christian social practice. I reflected on how I have been brought up with parental love, care, security and provision of most I needed. And based on this reflection I wondered how these children are mercilessly facing the worst of human injustices and violence. This furthermore led me to start thinking about the role and place of the church as the voice of voiceless, which is a prophetic aspect of the church.

1.2 Motivation

A number of factors motivated me to choose this topic for my thesis. I grew up in Maua town where I witnessed a lot of things happening to the street children. When there was a wedding or any big event, the street children could hang precariously on to the rear bumper of the convoy going to the events to gatecrash and at least get something to eat. In the process, some got injured while others were abused by people pushing them of their cars and beating them to leave the specific event.

Few allowed them to stay and at the wedding reception the few that were rendered such opportunity were never allowed to mingle with others as if they suffered from plague and

were less human. They were never served like other human beings, but received remains from other guests, and not in a plate. Some people saw the street children as unworthy human beings, while others just accorded them a pity due to them being neglected and abused. Sadly, the most common public response was scorn and hostility. For they are assumed to be dirty, and uncontrolled.

My understanding of *Ubuntu* has been a further motivational factor to undertake this study. Ubuntu is an African concept which denotes a bond of unity among people. Human beings only become truly human in relationship with others (Dreyer, 2017: 2). Through the spirit of Ubuntu human beings sees worthiness in other human beings, even when they are of less material value. When I see how the street children are treated, I do not question the elements of their humanity, but our own lack of human essence. When I see the street children without food and being thrown out of the community within our abundance, I question our Ubuntu. When I see the government, especially on national days through an operation *safisha mji* (operation clean the town) clearing the street families where some end up being killed by the police, I seriously question the existence of Ubuntu among those in leadership. John argues that these children "have also been abused in other ways. Under the rubric of a government sponsored program called "operation beggar" (Aptekar 2009:2). In such a moment, instead of us seeing suffering human beings, we see beggars, pickpockets, violence urchins and so many other words which make them unapproachable and untouchables. This brought me to the realization that as we rob them their human value, dignity, and worth, we are robbed too.

I was further motivated by an understanding of the church as the body of Christ. Christ who suffered for the sake of human beings and the street children are no exemption. The church preaches about human dignity and worth in Christ Jesus. The value and worth of the street children are equally found in Christ our Lord and God. The church can react practically to set free the oppressed and those who are suffering. I, therefore, uphold that street children have a place in the church and society.

1.3   Research problem and research questions

The question that maybe asked by most street children is "where is God?" "Where is the church?" "Do church people really see us and understand us as the image of God?" To create a positive self-understanding, in general, and especially for the street children who suffer neglect, there is a need to focus on them as images of God. From this vantage point

it is accepted that all human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have inherent value independent of their utility or function (Cheraghi et al. 2014:917). This is one of the areas that the church may stick firmly to in order to relate street children to their proclamation of Christ's love and the gospel. The core of the Christian faith within the Christian anthropology and theology is God's love for human beings. This love is for the redemption of our sins, but it is also extended to the society we live in as our Christian social responsibility (diakonia). Diakonia is therefore Christian faith in action.

From a Christian diaconal perspective, those who are outside the Christian community should also experience the love of Christ. This is because the church is called to encourage all and build their self-worth, through preaching the gospel of love in action. The Christian community cannot renounce the responsibility of their context, that is, their immediate society. The church can serve human beings in the image of God within the realities of their context. Human beings fall and redemption have been the focus of the church. The church facilitates the restoration of fallen human beings, by leading them to repentance, confession, and forgiveness of their sins. From the perspective of Christian anthropology, sin did not only affect human beings but society as a whole. Diakonia calls for the transformation of the social structures because they cause destruction and affect human life.

Most street children within the context of this study are exposed to neglect and stigma. This is something that makes them feel less human. Street children experience that their lives are shattered, and their spiritual and mental life tormented. In Christian anthropological and diaconal perspective, there is a need to reach out to them and uplift their human worth. A diaconal church should be able to help them rebuild their lives, which would include providing them with all that are required to restore their human dignity: education, shelter, food, health and destroying structures which take them to the street.

Therefore, the church can be in the middle between the community and the street children to bring back what has been taken away from them by restoring their dignity, through transformation and reconciling them with the society and by empowering them to stand on their feet. The church can also create awareness within the broader community that we are all (including the street children) created in the image and likeness of God and belong to each other. Hence, there is a need to love one another as God love human beings *(John 13: 34-35).*

Guided by this understanding, the main research question for this study is:

What is the Methodist Church in Kenya doing to affirm value and dignity to the street children, with specific reference to the activities and programs of Sodzo International in Maua?

In addition, the following supporting questions further guide this study:

What influenced Maua Methodist Church to start the street children center?

How has Sodzo International impacted the lives of the street children under their care and support?

1.4 Research design and methodology

Methodologically, this study is steered by a contextual approach. Bevans defines contextual theology as a theology that considers culture, history, contemporary thought forms along scriptures and traditions as valid sources of theological expression (2004: 189). Following Schreiter, the Kenyan context, in this case, is understood to be culture and various manifestations that people and society experience, indigenous religion, social structures, existing theologies and worldviews that are determined by the prevailing circumstances in the community (Schreiter, 2002). Where all are there to affect every man or woman either positively or negatively.

This research, therefore, explores issues related to diakonia and Christian anthropology in the local context through its study of the interaction between selected local church congregations and street children. The point of focus in this research, therefore, is the two entities of church and street children. In order to explore this focus, the study involves qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research method that employs several methods for collecting empirical materials, mainly through interviews, observation, and the analysis of documents and focus group discussions (Bryman, 2012: 380).

The study was done in Kenya, in a town called Maua at Watoto wa Ahadi Children's Centre. This center is run by Sodzo International, in collaboration with the Methodist Church in Kenya. The primary process of data collection was through the conducting of interviews. The interviews were directed to the church leaders and the leaders of the centre. The choice to study this church was taken on the basis of its location in a place that I know well and

thus accessible to me. However, I applied both an emic and etic perspective during the research (cf. Bryman, 2012), that is, being an insider by context, but an outsider in conducting the research. In addition to one-to-one interviews, I collected written documents and videos from the organization. I also conducted focus group interviews. From some parents whose children are benefiting from the project. The aim of the focus group discussion is everybody has his or her own way of understanding the benefit of the project. Therefore, within the focus group discussion, the interaction among the entire focus group member enables them to give the information that may not be accessible through the one-to-one interview (Bryman, 2012). All the data was audio-taped for analysis.

1.5 Definition of key words

In this section, I am going to define the key words that are being used in the project, for the purpose of the study

Street children

Street children can be defined in terms of many dimensions as I have defined them in different areas in this study. Here, however, I confine myself to an understanding of street children as young people who "regularly sleep outdoor away from home, homeless street children who can be found sleeping outdoors in such places as alleys, street pavements, store fronts and roundabouts comprise" (Kilbride et al., 2000: 2). Accordingly, they are viewed by society as less fortunate and human beings with no future. They are children who are believed to have no permanent accommodation as they spend their nights either in unfinished and dilapidated buildings, under parked cars and on pavements. While it is believed that bathing or taking shower is very important in human life, these children only depend on diving in the rivers, without soap or any clothes to change. Their lives are a struggle for survival. In fact, they are not only roofless and homeless, but they are culturally rootless.

Human dignity

Many scholars in the field of diakonia have discussed the concept of human dignity in relation to being created in the image of God where everybody is believed to be equal before God, whether poor or rich. One such scholar, Ulla Schmidt, for instances writes:

> The biblical writing and early Christians traditionally profess the uniqueness of human beings
> compared to other creatures and therefore located in the tradition of reading human dignity as

marking of human beings in the image of God where they have to keep the objects of God's loving action (2010:12).

However, when discussing such Biblical understanding of human dignity in relation to street children it brings an understanding of restoring human's life that has already been shuttered by situations and deprived of the worthiness of being a person in the society. Especially when looking at the case of street children, they are children whose poverty and exclusion have made them to be rendered useless and worthless in society.

Church (Methodist)

The notion of "church" can be understood as the congregation of believers. The Methodist Church, more specifically, is a denomination of Protestant Christianity that derives its inspiration from the life and teachings of John Wesley in 18th Century England. In the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) we have different levels of leadership and organizational structures. These are:

- Conference

    This is the supreme structure of the church where the presiding bishop is the head. It organizes the running's of all Methodist churches in Kenya.

- Synod

    This is the structure that is second in command under the Conference, headed by a bishop.

- Circuit

    This structure functions under the Conference and Synod and is controlled by superintendent ministers who have circuit ministers and circuit stewards serving under their leadership.

- Local congregations / the local church

    This is the lowest level of the church, the society that makes up the conference, synod and circuit. It is run by a church cabinet appointed by the superintendent minister or circuit minister

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1.6   Chapter outline

This study consists of seven chapters. The following is a brief outline of the various chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

In this chapter, I have indicated what my thesis is all about, including the research question, explained the phenomenon, the method used to study the phenomenon and the context of the study.

Chapter 2: The Kenyan context and the case of street children

In this chapter, I define the context of the study and also give the geographical background of the study area.

Chapter 3: Street children and the challenge of human dignity

This chapter offers a definition of the street children and theories that are related to the study. It also discusses the myths related to the street children. Theories of human dignity, empowerment, marginalization, inclusion/exclusion and children's rights are discussed, as sourced from the literature.

Chapter 4: Researching Methodist involvement with street children in Maua

This chapter discusses the research design and methods of the study. This includes an explanation of the challenges and limitations encountered during the study.

Chapter 5: Presentation of the research findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the interviews that I conducted at the Sodzo International center, church and hospital.

Chapter 6: Discussion and interpretation of the research findings

In this chapter, I focus on the discussion and interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, in this chapter I present the contributions of the study to the street children and theory. Later, I give a summary of the discussion.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, summary and recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusion of the thesis and closes with recommendations for diaconal practices in the context of working with street children in the case study area.

Chapter 2

The Kenyan context and the case of street children

2.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the context of the study. The chapter is dived into four parts. The first part describes the geographical and political background of the study context. The second part deals with the social-religious and cultural aspects of the context of the study. The third part looks at the cultural effect on women and children, and the final part discusses the case of street children in Kenya.

2.2 Geographical background

This study was carried out in Kenya. Kenya is a country in the Eastern part of Africa, neighboring countries like Tanzania in the South, Uganda in the West, Ethiopia and Southern Sudan to the North, and Somalia to the North-East. Kenya covers the area of about 581,309km^2 (224.445qm) and has a population of around 47 million as per 2017. The county has three main ethnic groups, which are Bantu, Cushite and Nilotic. The ethnic groups have 42 tribes, which form the 47 administrative counties, each under a governor (Kenya Information Guide). See more in the map below, figure 2.1.

To further demarcate the study area, I describe the Meru county, which is in the Eastern part of Kenya. The town is the sub-county headquarters and the largest in the upper Eastern part of Meru. It has a population of about 50,000 people. Regardless that Maua is a small town, it is the most diverse town in Kenya. The population is made up of the indigenous Ameru people, other Kenyans, Somali refugees, and some European expats and missionaries who work at the local Methodist hospital (MMH) and Catholic Missionary Center (CMC) (Meru County-Kenya).

The Maua town is an agricultural town, mostly for peasant farmers. The main cash crops are *Miraa* (khat), tea, coffee, and food crops like maize, beans, yams etc. Due to the ever-fluctuating market prices of cash crops like tea and coffee, and with no industries within the region, most farmers are affected leaving the majority poor. Cash crops like Miraa are known to attract many children, who drop out of schools and leave their homes in order to work in Miraa plantations as laborers (Kieni & Kinoti, 2015). The quick cash also makes

some men to live a reckless life. This does not only endanger their lives through diseases like HIV and Aids, leaving their children as orphans, but it contributes to a great number of single mothers or fatherless children. The level of prostitution is also high in Maua, a small town but being the second highest in Eastern Kenya due to easy cash in circulation (Gatonye, 2014). This leaves many children vulnerable, lacking care and support system, and ending up in the streets.

Figure 2.1: Map of Kenya, indicating Meru and Maua (Ezilon maps)

2.3   Social-religious and cultural aspects

This section entails an overview of the religious situation and the role of religion in Kenyan society, Kenyan (Meru) cultural aspects. This study reflects on such background in order to explore how the Methodist Church in Maua is creating value and dignity with the street children in the area.

2.3.1   Christianity and its role in Kenyan society

Kenya is widely regarded and believed to be a Christian country, even though constitutionally it is considered a secular nation. Eighty percent of the Kenyan population are Christians, with the majority being Catholics and Protestants. Zablon Nthamburi, a Kenyan theologian and historian show that from the formation of Kenya as a nation, the Christian church has been at the center of every development in economic growth, social welfare, political and cultural aspects. "The church has contributed in the development of our country in education, medicine and in social as well as economic fields, it has been at the forefront in areas of human development" (Nthamburi, 1982:1)

According to Nthamburi the churches have through their missionary activities been pioneers in establishing schools and hospitals. This is still a great role played by most churches in Kenya. Through education and hospitals, they have played a great role in cultural enhancement against practices like female genital mutilations (Nthamburi, 1982:3).

Adam Chepkwony, in turn, has in his work explained the Kenyan church's central role in championing democracy, equality, and human rights. "Churches have played a significant role in promoting democracy in Africa by agitating and pressurizing the governments to observe democratic values and through conscientization of the public" (Chepkwony, 2003: 243).

The church has organizations whose aim is to support the vulnerable children and fight for the stigmatized especially the HIV-AIDS survivors. They also educate against some cultural practices such as wife inheritance, polygamy, female circumcision, ears, and nose piercing with unsterilized tools (Gitome, 2003: 191). According to the gospel of Jesus Christ the church is mandated to be a caring ministry for the people of all kind. Within this understanding, Christianity in Kenya plays a very vital role, though it cannot be approved that the mission of the church has been fulfilled since some of the churches are there only to benefit the individual. However, not only Christianity but all religions in Kenya have been in the fore front especially in addressing the socio-economic and political issues.

In 1963 when Kenya got independence the constitution allowed the freedom of religion which gave them access to all government activities (Constitution of Kenya, Article 8: 2010). Though churches are sometimes the most affected when it comes to violence in

Kenya especially during election, for example in the year 2007/2008 the church was burnt while people were in and hundred died most of them who had gone to seek refuge in the church (Kiambaa in Eldoret Kenya). Most of these, displaced people are still on run, seeking refuge in either schools or churches, with some local churches mostly aiding their survivals and championing their rights of placement.

2.3.2 Kenyan culture and its effect on women and children

Kenyan society, due to the vastness of its ethnic groups, consists of many different cultures. However, one distinct cultural feature that all Kenyan ethnic groups holds in common, is that of patriarchy. According to Dall (2001), culture can be described as a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values. Culture involves art and learning, additionally, institutions and ordinary social behaviors. Culture from such a definition means a way of life or a particular way of life.

The research is predominantly focused on Meru culture and its effect on children. Due to its strong patriarchal system, the place of women and children is minimal. In Meru culture, a child born out of wedlock is declared an outcast or bad omen. These children are not considered part of the community, neither did they have any clan. Clan (*mwiriia* – also meaning "gate") is a central system of the Meru people. It involves a patrilineal lineage that renders children the right to marriage and property inheritance. Children born out of marriage became victimized and rejected. Thus, there were some strict punitive measures to avert such thing from happening. If a girl was found to be pregnant, young men would step on her belly until the child is stillborn. Contemporarily this cannot happen, however, the pressure of pregnancy before marriage remains, which leads some girls to abortion. The abortions contribute largely to teenage mothers' maternal death through bleeding. For the abortions are mostly procured secretly via quark doctors.

However, some young women have been able to run away from their families after realizing that they are pregnant. And although these practices have become less frequent, the stigma towards women and children born out of the wedlock has remained. Women who give birth outside marriage are still abandoned or neglected, together with their children. Since a child in such situation is already a bad omen to the family and also to the community, mothers often hate to be associated with the child.

The patriarchal culture still does not have a place for a girl child or women, which greatly influence their progress and wellbeing in society. Sometimes, if a woman has only given birth to girls it is considered as her failure to produce a male child. Both the child and mother are victimized, and in most cases, the child is thrown out of the family. The culture of patriarchy has cemented sexual, social, and economic abuse of women, which in turn has great effects on their children. Shisanya, in this regard, comments critically that "child abuse refers to any act by a person or society, designed to inflict harm on a child, or prevent a child from realizing normal growth and development" (Shisanya, 2003: 151).

Different studies have shown that female genital mutilation (FGM) has also been on the front line of affecting the lives of a girl. Kerubo Abuya, in this respect, argues:

> FGM is a recognized human rights violation that undermines girls and women rights to life (When a death occurs as a consequence of the practice). Bodily integrity, and personal safety and security as well the right to protection from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (2015: 4).

Because FGM is still happening in Meru, I agree with Abuya that Meru culture has many effects on children especially those born out of wedlock and also on the mothers.

2.4   Current statistics of street children in Meru

According to Goodman, with the respect to the Kenyan context,

> the availability of baseline data for the street children in any specific location is very limited, but the best estimates for target baselines can only be imputed from other similar context or inferred from the similar vulnerable population in the specific location (2012: 3).

However, according to Kilbride et al. "street children are estimated to be 10,000 to 30,000 in Nairobi where the street boys always outnumber the girls" (2000: 4). In the *Daily Nation* (Kenyan newspaper), the Meru county commander and the council of elders *(Njuri Ncheke)* complained about the increase of street children which is caused by school dropout due to Khat (*Miraa*-Miraa is a stimulant plant whose leaves are chewed and is considered a drug and controlled in some countries), The county commissioner started a campaign to arrest anybody who will be caught working with a child under 18 (Muchui, 2017).

Many reports state that the reason why the full statistics have been hard to administer is because of the different types of children who are living in the street. Many are just vulnerable children who are working and going home in the evening. While they can also be described as street children, though their condition is different from those who were born in the street. The last group belongs to those children who moved from their homes and their dwelling place is in the street.

However, the case of street children in Meru is just the approximation where no one has given out the exact number of street children Meru county. But Sodzo gives an approximate number to be over 5,000 children in the whole of Meru County, where it is said Maua is leading with the highest number of street children due to many immigrants and a lot of school dropouts and early pregnancies.

2.5 Conclusion

Having understood the culture of the Ameru people, it shows that there are some cultural aspects which seem to be contributing to the growing number of the street children in Maua. Some of these cultural aspects victimize and dehumanize the women and children. The patriarchal-misogyny culture victimizes women who give birth outside marriage, give birth to twins, or bring forth only girl children. In return, these women are neglected, and the children rejected by their families and community, even though all children deserve care, love and protection. Those rejected and neglected children have nowhere to run but to the streets, leading to the rise of street children. We have also seen that the socio-economic factors play a great role. Poverty, as a result of employment and limited resources are key factors.

The church has been playing a key role in the society; informing and educating the society against some of these retrogressive cultural practices. However, the church being part of the society has also failed to entangle itself from some of the aspects (where individual interests override the communal interests). The local church has therefore become both a victor and a victim in addressing some of the socio-cultural issues.

Chapter 3

Street children and the challenge of human dignity

3.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the context of the study. This chapter offers a literature review relevant to the topical focus of the study. I present literatures relevant for understanding human dignity. I also present the literatures which help me to define street children myths and theories, then I give a conclusion in regard to the reviewed themes.

3.2   Review of related research and literature

What do we understand by the term literature review? (Mouton, 2001:87). "Literature review does not encapsulate all that we intend to convey by the term, but it helps in embarking to get the main aim of what has been done in the field of my study."

The life of a street child is believed to be the most difficult since they live a life of survival for the fittest. Some descriptions make them loose value or less human, a survey was conducted by some students in Kenya wanting to know how people describe those children, "a dirty person who everything in him or her is dirty since they have no money or people to take care of them, those who are always smelling and eating from the trash, children whose parents died or abandoned them or children who were born by prostitutes" (Kilbride, et al. 2000: 63).

However, some scholars have done research on human dignity in the lives of street children. Thus, for instance, a scholar like Mohammad A. Cheraghi observes that all religions understand dignity. He elaborates:

> Human dignity is an ultimate and irreducible phenomenon, valued incommensurably higher than other values, the standpoint about dignity is consistent with religious perspective where dignity is considered the ultimate and inherent intrinsic worth of every human being where in monotheistic religions such as Islam and Christianity, which believes in a supreme God, human dignity is one of the emphasized themes in their Holy Scripture (Cheraghi 2014: 917)

Although this nature uniqueness is never understood in some communities where discrimination and marginalization are the key points, people have to know that human dignity

existed since the conception of every human being (Dietrich, 2014: 30). Dietrich, further-more, "every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and thus has an intrinsic dignity which forms the basis for humankinds call to treat one another as human beings, with the same dignity, value and rights for protection and meaningful life as one-self." (Dietrich, 2014: 30).

3.3 Contextual perspective on the lives of street children

The life of the street children is believed to be the most difficult since they live a life of survival for the fittest. In presenting literature that is related to this study, I divide them into categories; those defining the street children, those presenting the myths surrounding the definition.

3.3.1 Defining street children

In defining the context and the meaning of a street child, this research is related to the study done by Lewis Aptekar (2009). In his research, he defines the context of street children and importantly also indicates that not all the street children who are on the street live there. Mark W Lusk, whose study focused on street children in Rio de Janeiro, developed four categories of street children. He shows how the categorization into groups generates stere-otypes and the society ends up marginalizing them.

1. The poor working children returning to their families at night who are likely to attend school and not be delinquent;

2. The independent street workers, who the family ties are beginning to break down, their school attendance is decreasing, and their delinquency is increasing;

3. Children of street families who live and work with their families in the street whose lives is related to poverty and the last one;

4. Residing in the street and they are the ones referred to as street children, they live under the supervision of the society where any danger is not accountable to anybody (Lusk, 1992:295)

C. S. Smith and J. Le Roux argues that there is no straight definition of street children since not all children who are on the street are "street urchins", "street dwellers". For example, it cannot be assumed that all children on the street are homeless. Furthermore, Smith et al

opine that "the great majority - well over three quarters and as many as 90% of the children on the street in various developing countries work on the street but live at home and are working to earn money for their families (Smith and Roux, 1998). Thus, Aptekar defines a street child as "any individual under the age of majority whose behavior is predominantly at variance with community norms, and whose primary support for his/her development needs is not a family or family substitute" (Aptekar:2009).

I present below other meaning and definitions from various related studies. A Nairobi related study by Amrik Kalsi, *Strategies to Combat Homelessness*, defines street children based on their age, means of shelter, location and what they feed on. Kalsi states that "a street child is a minor, below the age of majority in the society in question. The age of majority invariably brings the right responsibilities and expectations different from those of a child" (Kalsi, 2000: 73). The study further argues that:

> A child who eats from a dustbin, a child who feeds on waste food that is spoiled and rotten, one who comes from a poor family, one who sleep out anywhere because he has no parents, a child with a glue sniffing addiction, one who begs on street but goes home a child who does not wash dresses badly" (Kalsi, 2000:73).

Another United Nations (UN) related study of 1985 done in Zimbabwe defines the street children as any boy or girl from whom the street in the widest sense of the word has become his/her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood. I present the quote below:

> Any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the world, including unoccupied dwellings, wastelands etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and or source of livelihood and who are inadequately protected supervised or directed by responsible adults (UN, 1985).

Arlin Mickelson, has America definition of street children. He argues, "street children in America are homeless adolescents who live on the streets, working, begging, socializing and occasionally trading sex for money" (Mickelson, 2002*).*

In the above definitions, I find that there is a contradiction in defining street children, with the difference between the "on street", and, "of the street children." "Of the street", defined as those children who just go to earn a living on the street to take care of themselves and their families. While the ones who have no connection to any family member and their only survival is on the street are "on the street." Both the on street and of street children

are prey to society. They are subject to abuse, neglect, exploitation and discriminated by everybody in society. This study, therefore, looks onto the context and the meaning of both the "on street and of street" children.

3.3.2   The street children myth

There are some commonly held myths and believes that street children are found only in the poor countries, which is not accurate because the street children are found in both rich and poor countries.

Children on the street of Europe, United States, Brazil and some large economy countries shows us the face and the image of homeless, inequalities and sufferings. I explore Michelson, who studied street children in USA, Brazil and Cuba. In her studies, she argues that the United State is the quintessentially developed country, while Brazil is the rapidly developing one. But both are characterized by concentrations of the extreme affluence and extreme poverty. He argues that Cuba is much poorer than either Brazil or the United State, but some indicators of child and adult well- being surprisingly surpass those of the other two, whatever the difference among the three they are all affected by the increasingly globalized economy. These similarities and differences shape the contours of homelessness in the three countries (Mickelson, 2002)

Further, the myths and believes are that street children are criminals because they struggle to earn a living by themselves. Colette L Aureswald, in an article, Adolescent and young adult Health Stigmatizing beliefs regarding Street- Connected Children and Youth. Criminalized not Criminal confronts this myth and believe. In her study, she argues that the statement of criminalization of youth or rounding them to send back to abusive homes can only be justified if one believes either those youth are criminals, or they have chosen to live in squalor on the street despite having a home that will welcome them back. She views this belief as one which rationalizes the mistreatment and abuse of the street children. The idea that some individuals deserve to live in subhuman conditions, characteristics of societies rationalization of stigmatized identities (Auerswald 2016: 420.

In Kenya, there are organization myths about the street children which the society has used mostly in attacking and neglecting some of the children. One of them is that the street children who take drugs do not deserve society support. However, Michael Goodman, 2012, thwarting the myth argues that some of these children take drugs to relax their minds to

forget about all the trauma, and challenges. Goodman further argues that substance abuse is a common habit among street children across the globe. In Maua Kenya, the substance of choice, based on Goodman observation and evidence is huffing industrial glue or "shoe glue" (Goodman, 2012).

All the above myths and many more that the society has against the street children discriminate and deny them the rights that every child deserves. In summary, I can state that many people in society have used these myths and many other to separate these children from society and from integrating with the rest. Every street child has a story and a reason why they are on the street. The society should not use just how the street children look in judging them even before they know why they are on the street. They should be reached, given hope and be treated in a humane way by being offered a secure place away from rape, killing, and other negative acts. This study explores those myths and believes, in trying to explore how the church is thwarting or may thwart them to restore value and dignity to the street children in Maua Kenya.

3.4 Relevant theoretical perspectives

This part reviews the literature that relates and offers the theoretical perspective of the study. These are theoretical perspectives related to the street children culture, and human value and dignity. The section also presents some of the literature that inform the main research in defining who are the street children and how we can evaluate the dignity and value of being a street child.

3.4.1 Human dignity

Some scholars have written on human dignity. Mohammed A Cheraghi in one of his articles *argues* that all religions understand dignity. He expresses that human dignity is an ultimate and irreducible phenomenon, valued incommensurably higher than other value, the standpoint about dignity is consistent with a religious perspective where dignity is considered the ultimate and inherent intrinsic worth of every human being. The monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam believe in a supreme God, and human dignity is one of the emphasized themes in their Holy Scripture (Cheraghi, 2014).

Stephanie Dietrich, argues that

dignity is a nature uniqueness; however, it may not be understood in some communities where discrimination and marginalization are the key points. In the context where people have only known indignity; it charges the conception understanding of every human being. But the study contends that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and thus has an intrinsic dignity which forms the basis for humankinds call to treat one another as human beings, with the same dignity, value, and rights for protection and meaningful life as oneself. (Dietrich, 2014)

I also review the study of the *Lutheran World Federation (LWF),Diakonia in context.* In the study, it is argued that "diakonia is the caring ministry of the church. It is the Gospel in action and is expressed through the loving your neighbor, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation and struggling for justice" (LWF, 2009: 27)

The African-Ameru concept of *umuntu-(a person is a person, through other persons is equal to Ubuntu)*gives some highlights philosophically that human dignity is there to reflect ways that hierarchy is sustained or undermined. A "dignified" person of social standing may be recognized as honourable because of virtue, self control and reputation. While a "dignified" socially humiliated person such as slave may be able to maintain self-respect or inner freedom which comes with the suggestion of democratic ideal of equal worth. While theologically *umuntu* brings the idea of human worth that every *Muntu* is *one* of God's children, where dignity is in the relationship to the doctrine of the trinity, eschatology and the sanctity of life. (Dreyer, 2017:15). On the other hand, Nassbaum explains that human dignity is not only to be included or to be valued there are things that should be consindered in ones human capabilities that all are functioning

Kant, on the other hand, explains that human dignity is based on autonomy, where one has freedom over his own sorrounding. Where the individual autonomy helps one to be able to conceive the goals and plans over his life according to ones one desires and preference and also to be able to pursue and realize them through action and activity (Schmidt, 2010:16).

This study is informed by theories related to human dignity. This is because the whole project is based on how the church is restoring dignity to street children.

3.4.2 Empowerment

In exploring empowerment in relation to the street children dignity, this study reviews various scholarly works and studies argued in this section. Empowerment theories are highly

relevant for the concept of diakonia because they bring together the basic understanding of everyone's dignity and the emphasis on diaconal acts as a means of assisting the 'other' to help 'self' without patronizing. They contribute to improving the diaconal agencies competencies in helping other people in a way that helps then to use their own power and potential. The theoretical understanding is based on the fundamental respect for the capacities and resources of all human beings which also serves as a basic principle within Diakonia (Dietrich, 2014: 23).

The empowerment theory makes us understand that we are equal before God. In theological perspective, empowerment refers to the "biblical understanding of creation that every human being is created in the image of God with capabilities and abilities, independent of their apparent social situation" (LWF. 2009: 45).

Kjell Nordstokke in an article titled "Empowerment in the perspective of ecumenical diakonia", states:

> The concept of empowerment is there to help in the diaconal work as committed to the cause of the poor, affirming their right and dignity that has made the concept of empowerment relevant. Secondly, they claim empowerment is more than a method in development work, but a term loaded with theological significance that requires reflection with consequences for the understanding of being the church (ecclesiology) and of what the church is mandated to be in today's world (missiology) (Nordstokke, 2012)

Ham argues that empowerment being the diaconal backbone and the integral part of being church brings the biblical notion of the *imago Dei* which is all human being is created in the image of God where they have abilities and gifts from God, (Gen 1:26). We can also it is a slogan in expressing the good intention of achieving the goal of improving the lives. Ham in his expression of empowerment, presents five dimensions which bring out the practical theology or the gospel in action stand. They are:

1. Visional: This refers to the ability to envision future reality so as to consider prophetic action with imagination and wisdom which is the main vision which motivates our engine, ideological foundation to all the embracing goal of any action.

2. Normative: Relating to or deriving from a standard or norm, particularly of behavior, which therefore has ethics connotations. It is there as a commanding point of reference, which provides meaning for the actions of a particular group, which is expressed in

our core value, principles and standards of comportment in our judgement of what is important in life.

3. Need oriented: This is where we point at materials and spiritual necessities or circumstances requiring action particularly for humankind where the focus is on the causes of asking not only what the needs are but why they are in those needs and what are the consequences of such needs. This scope is much connected to the church, social intervention in order to comfort people in the need holistically and prophetically. When we see the need of others our values are activated from a perspective of solidarity, the need oriented does not mean having pity on people but by to challenge the reality of people by restoring their dignity when they are being neglected and when values are also challenged.

4. Contextual: When we are considering theological and a praxis that is contextual, we are guided and informed by visions and also the social-political-economical-theological context in which the church is serving, therefore, diaconal involvement is concerned with the community, society in general and environment as well.

5. Transformation: This is a diaconal vision that argues and empowers us to address the needs of people and of the whole creation both locally and globally, which becomes effective through concrete prophetic actions towards transformative justice.

In understanding the empowerment, the marginalized and the discriminated street children have a room to explore lives' meaning in a way which they can be independent from needs and pity of the society.

3.4.3 Marginalization

In this section I relate some literature which presents the understanding of the concept marginalization in relation to my study. This study is approached in diakonia perspective, and the World Council of Churches (WCC) describes diakonia as being for the marginalized "where they are known to be the ones struggling for a better life, it is also a biblical accounts of God's attention and caring to love people in situation of oppression and consequent deprivation, that is the diakonia of liberation as well as of restoring dignity and ensuring justice and peace" (WCC, 2017: xx).

The LWF has also shown that the gospel of Jesus is all about the marginalized, poor, captives and the vulnerable people. Diakonia being the church and church acting as the body of Christ is there to stand and act to bring justice. The church gets motivated when every act like marginalization, the gap between the rich and powerful and the poor are recognized sinful. This brings humanity which is a diaconal fellowship to bring social development education development and fighting for justice, human dignity and development (LWF, 2006).

The LWF has guideline documentation for sharing among God's people, by declaring to commit themselves to help the marginalized by taking the center of all the decision and actions as equal partners, identifying the poor and the oppressed and their organized movements. This brings up the theology of togetherness sharing and taking care of God's creation.

3.4.4 Social exclusion / inclusion

Rawal defines social exclusion as "the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live". (Rawal, 2000: 5). Rawal continues to say, the concept of social exclusion has been figured out in so many countries where its aim is to fight poverty, marginalization, ethnicity, gender equality and many other acts that bring down human dignity and value. He presents the case of Nepal, where they recognized inclusion as a policy issue of the four pillars of the 2003 poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) (Rawal, 2000).

Dudley shows that in French, the government has the excluded as those who are mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, age invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problems households, marginal asocial persons and other social misfits. The persons or groups may be marginalized and excluded based on ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, physical or mental disability, education, employment and economic status. The study shows that exclusion, apart from reducing the quality of life of marginalized persons it threatens social cohesion within communities and limits opportunities for widespread economic prosperity. It can thus be understood that social exclusion threatens the health of communities and must be taken seriously by society as a whole (Dudley, 2013).

Dudley goes further to show that the social excluded are described as dangerous people where the tension arises when some individuals start dealing with them. For example, the department of culture, media and sport in the United Kingdom set a precedent for welcoming the marginalized groups into libraries with the publication of libraries for all. But some opponents start to voice the opinions for example information science professor Blaise Cronin describes homeless people in the library for antisocial conducts or in essence "different". This, he argues, leads to many patrons in the library to bring in security guards after the complaints by staff and the public that the libraries are unsafe after allowing the marginalized and minority group to use the libraries (Dudley, 2013)

Exclusion is an old concept; it is seen even during Jesus time. In Matthew 19: 13-15 the disciple of Jesus stopped children from approaching Jesus. But Jesus offered an inclusion approach through love. He stated, "let the children come to me for the kingdom of God belongs to such". Maybe the disciples were afraid of the disturbance children will cause or they will be uncontrolled. It also happened to the woman with the flow of blood, Mark 5:25-34. The Woman was declared unclean and she was not allowed to associate with other people.

3.5 Children's rights

Children's rights are a very old concept. It is also revealed in the bible that children were there to bring hope to the next generation, to liberate them from slavery, iniquities since they were God's voice. In the Old Testament, we find children like Samuel, Moses and David, while in the New Testament the child Jesus came to bring new life to the world (Breed, 2016: 45). The United Nations defines a child as any human being who is under eighteen years. The United Nations published the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. This declaration was designed to serve as guidelines and recommendations to countries to protect their children from negative effects. The declaration was however not sufficient to mobilize countries to implement radical measures. Therefore, in 1989, the Declaration was complemented by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR). The governments such as Kenya who accepted the Convention are obliged to amend their legislation to accommodate the provisions of the Convention and to commit themselves to the implementation of the Convention in their country.

Kenya has been committed to the Convention guidelines, however, based to the fact that Kenya is a developing country (middle-income country) it has been possible to meet all

the needs of every child or strictly see to it that every child need is meant and away from abuse and neglect. In Meru culture, for example, a child was believed to belong to the community *(Mwana nwa Mwiriia)*. They were much protected since they knew every child deserves a good life. Then children had rights under community protection and within a properly constituted family. However, it was a challenge and questionable for those born outside wedlock.

Shisanya defines the essential purposes of children's rights as follows:

> A child is supposed to have right of special protection, name and nationality, right to social security, special care for handicapped children, parental love, education, priority, protection and relief, protection against exploitation and protection against discrimination (2003: 152).

Every child has the same childhood characters, playing with toys, thumb sucking, crying and also breastfeeding. Thus, the street children are not left out as not being children but all they have no space or room to express their childhood behaviors.

> Their story is sad, a tragic tale, because the highest point of the social ladder can never be reached, and they are always achieved and always anxious that they can lose their status that they have already achieved, they live under deeply personal need that can never be fulfilled, longing for dreams that can never be fulfilled, try to reach for ideas that can in principles that are never reached, that means they try for happiness but precisely because of the nature of this longing, they shall never find the happiness for which they long for". (Breed., 2016: 27).

According to Swart and Yates, poverty is the primary determinant when it comes to the well-being of children, other things can be good healthcare, health environment, education and information. Therefore, the commitment to the legal binding agreement can serve a valuable instrument for improving the circumstances of children (2006: 320). They continue to observe:

> It will be true to when we will consider the case of children how we understand what children are the meaning of childhood, what impact our institution have on what children might become the suffering of children and how we should reconstruct the principles of social life to provide optimal conditions for the flourishing of children's lives that will be the meaning of children's rights (Swart & Yates, et al. 2006: 350).

3.6 Conclusion

I presented some of the literature which relates to this study in terms of the contextual and theoretical perspectives. These studies and research present in parts some of the issues related to the street children, value and dignity. My study goes further in exploring the two (context and theory) in a diakonia perspective.

The theories are there to support the study in exploring the laid down frameworks of empowerment. These will help me to understand how Sodzo is trying to achieve their goals in adding value and dignity to the street children in Maua town. The frameworks act as pillars, since when a child is transformed from the poor life their value changes, so is how they approach the society. This makes them to be included in the activities of society building, and their dignity is restored.

<p style="text-align:center">Chapter 4</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Researching Methodist involvement with street children in Maua</p>

4.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter I have defined who are the street children and myths related to them which sometimes are used to deny the street children value in the society I have also described some theories related to street children. In this chapter I will describe the methods applied in carrying out this research. According to Mouton, methodology is the study aimed at developing new methods (such as questioners, scales and tests) of data collection and sometimes also validating a newly developed instrument through a pilot (Mouton, 2001: 173). The methods used for this research is approached within the understanding of methodology as defined above. The study uses qualitative methodology as a research strategy. This is because as held by Bryman, "qualitative research is constructed as a research strategy that usually emphasis words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2012: 36).

The chapter is arranged in different sections, i.e. research design, case study, participants and location, interviews, research challenges and constraints then summary.

4.2   Research design

A research design is the norm or a formula that is used when evaluating social research since it "provides a framework for the collection of data" (Bryman, 2012: 46)**.** Research design brings together all the required elements of the research. (Flick, 2006: 141).

In my study I have used case study research design explain the research question of this study.

> Case studies are believed to be more or less empirically verifiable as such, they are theoretical construct that exist primarily to serve the interests of investigators, the normalist also sees cases as the consequences of theories or of conventions. In the second understanding case s categories are case designations specific the authoritarian personality or anti-colonial revolutions and developed in the course of research e.g. individuals, families, cities, firms and relatively external to the conduct of research (Yin, 2014: 4).

Some scholars like Yin, explains that case studies are preferred when answering the "How" or "Why" questions and when the researcher has limited control over the events and finally, when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life. (Yin, 2014: 15).

Yin has furthermore given two definitions for the case studies as an empirical inquiry, namely that it investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident (Yin, 2014: 16).

My research question shows the phenomenon because cases are selected to bring out how the phenomenon exists within a specified case. Whoever is experiencing the phenomenon are all treated as suitable cases for analysis. In my research the phenomenon of study is the street children, and the analyzation of the research is restoring dignity the organization working for the street children and the church (Methodist). The study was carried out in Maua Kenya, and all the participants are allocated within my case study area.

4.3 Case study location and informants

To make my study successful, I chose Maua as the case study location, Maua is a cosmopolitan town where all religions are present, tribes, people of all classes, ages and many more. Maua is a small town in Kenya as I stated earlier presenting people from other parts of Kenya though by studying Maua, the research is not there to give full reflects of other parts of Kenya as street children are concerned. The understanding of the criticism given to the generalization paradigm in the qualitative study helped me in the understanding. Bryman says.

> A case study is not a sample of one drawn from a known population, similarly, the people who are interviewed in the qualitative research are not meant to be representative of a population and indeed in some cases like female intravenous, drug user, we may find it more or less impossible to enumerate the population in any precise manner (2012: 406).

Out of my personal networking to get the informants I relied on the director of Sodzo International where he had to give me the go ahead to visit the place of my case study. I had to call some of the participants who works with Sodzo, I also consulted the hospital Chaplain and the Methodist church Reverend.

4.4 After entering the field

When looking at any qualitative research as a researcher, communication and the respondent are the important instruments in the journey. I travelled from Oslo to Kenya on the 26th of November 2018 to do my data collection where I had already sent an email to the organization that I will be visiting them for my research. But things did not go as it was planned. The people whom I expected had a lot of commitments. The day I expected to meet with the Sodzo coordinator, Sodzo leaders had a function in the same day to celebrate the student who were graduating. The hospital chaplain was also travelling for church mission and the Maua Methodist Reverend was away too.

My main challenge was how to gain access to the field, with most contacts becoming so intense and closed. I had the worlds of "Flick". That's why it's called "Field" where you have to know only those who will express their willingness and will help you achieve your goal (Flick, 2006: 114). I did not have the phone numbers for the parents I wanted to visit, so, I opted to wait until when schools will open in January, so that I could also meet with the teachers.

When all my participants responding positively to my appointments, I decided to make it a bit faster since Christmas was almost near, and I already knew is I miss one all my plans will be shattered since participants are the important characters in the field. "Participants are known to be a person interviewed or observed where in research institution they are referred to as those who authorizes or facilitates access" (Flick, 2006: 114).

But since my study was based on an institution many were always asking if the director knows that you are here, and some were making clarifications from him if they can continue with the interview. Where it is a problem or more complicated to do interview in an organization than in the field since at one point different levels are involved in the regulation of access, where there is the level of the persons responsible for authorizing the research in case of difficulties they are held responsible for this authorization by external authorities, also the ones to be interviewed or observed who will be investing their time and willingness (Flick, 2006:115).

I had to promise to observe anonymity, by concealing the identity of every participant, and I was not in any case going to investigate their organization. I had to bring out my research

question for them to understand why I chose their institution as my field of study. The aim being to help me in answering all my question.

4.5 Interviews

David Silverman has given some of the description of what interviews mean. Interview accounts to provide a meaningful opportunity to study and theorize about the social world. It provides us with access to realities. Interviews reveal evidence of the nature of the phenomena under investigation, including the context and situations in which they emerge as well as insights into the cultural frames people use to make sense of these experiences and their social world (Silverman, 2011: 51).

In my research, I used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured are more flexible and the respondents can use their own ways in defining and giving answers to the questions they are asked. They also give room for a backup question. That is asking questions that might come up during the interview and were not yet included in the interview guide.

4.5.1 Individual interviews

The individual interviews are the main body in the data collection study. Individual interviews are estimated to be within a minimum of twenty-five minutes and a maximum of forty-five minutes to every individual interviewer. I conducted the interviews between the month of December 2018 to January 2019. I used phone calls to book appointment with every individual and also visiting their respective offices. Below is the way my interviews were distributed.

Table 4.1: List of participants

Interviewee role	Number
Coordinator Sodzo International Maua (CO)	1
Programme manager (PM)	1
Social worker (SW)	2
Teachers (TR)	2
Hospital chaplain (HC)	1
Reverend (RV)	1
Parent (PR)	2
Driver	1
Total Interviewees	**11**

4.5.2   Secondary materials

I was given some materials from the organization. The materials are the statistics of street children in Maua and the documents showing how the Sodzo street children project is helping and improving the community. The material also contains the number of children who have benefited from the organization. These materials and others will be helpful in the discussion.

4.6   Research challenges and constraints

Any research that relates to the lives of individuals is so challenging due to its sensibility. I stated earlier that I made contact with my interviewers when it was almost Christmas and I knew many people would go on holidays. This was a challenge I encountered. When I arrived in the hospital, I did not get the chaplain, since he had gone for a mission. I met his assistance who did not want to be interviewed because of one reason or another. She said that she was newly employed, and she knew nothing about the organization, and she did not want to give wrong information.

Another challenge was the place where the organization is situated is very far from the normal and modern means of transport. The children center (Sodzo) is in one of the remotest parts of Meru area. Thus, to get means of transport was a problem. I had to use a motor bike which was a bit risky since I had no helmet and also the uniform to protect me from cold.

Some of the parents I Interviewed were also afraid to give some information. It seems that they have been exhausted by such interviews. One asked me, *"umetumwa kwangu kunichunguza"* (Are you sent to investigate me?) it was very difficult to convince her but later she allowed to open up. Teachers the same, afraid that I am one of the child trafficking group, but I showed them my school ID and the questioners.

Time was also a big challenge, especially when explaining some questions where one will spend al-most one hour, and you cannot stop them. Also, time to meet with my interviewers some were not time conscious the time we agreed to meet they will come two hours late or even cancel the appointment of which I had nothing to do than to agree and wait for the next day. But despite all the challenges the research went out smoothly and I got all the necessary data making my data correct and positive.

But despite all the challenges and limitations, I had one or two advantages that I was from the said town and I could understand the cultural limitations, especially the language to my interviewers who did not understand Swahili or English, also, I am the member of Methodist church though not the said church in my study I understood the protocol.

4.7   Conclusion

Methods and Methodology that has been used are reflected in this chapter. The point of analysis began from the time I came up with the topic, leading to the selection of the case study area, the interviews and to the collected data

In this chapter, I have described in detail the methods used in data collection procedure, research design, research challenges and limitations that I went through in the process of my data collection activity, and the interviews I made with my participants. In the next chapter I am going to do present the findings of the interviews I conducted.

Chapter 5

Presentation of the research findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to present the findings from the collected data as per the interview questions. The main reason for doing data interpretation is to give a usable and useful information based on the informant views. The presentation is done in two different sections. In the first section: the Sodzo organization and its objective to the street children. In the second: the support Sodzo receives from the church and experience working with the street children.

5.2 The organization and its objective to the street children in Maua

In this section, I present from the informants what inspired the Methodist church and the hospital to come up with the idea of rehabilitating the street children in Maua town and its environs.

5.2.1 Seeing the sufferings of the children

Most of the leaders I interviewed said that they were aware of the suffering of the children and how they were living a hopeless life. One official responded:

> Imagine a small child who has to live hand to mouth to survive, sometimes it makes me feel like crying when I see them running and begging for food or eating food from the trash. It really breaks my heart. With this in the year 2007 I shared the idea of bringing those children out of the street with one who is the president of the organization and he was happy to hear my thoughts. Since he was also so disturbed by the life of those children.

Furthermore, the official explained after seeing the suffering, how the organization began, "it took a long time since we had some hindrances, most in finances, but the church gave us a land where we built the center. In the year 2015 we started using the 3R's model which means 'Rescue, Rehabilitation, and reintegration'. At this point we had already registered 37 boys who wanted to be taken out of the street." The official went further and explained the 3Rs for me to understand. Having seen the suffering of the street children, the Sodzo organization had to rescue them. Before the rescue began, the leaders made contact with the street children through different activities like ball games, running and other social

gathering. This was done in order to know those children willing to be rescued from the street. As the official explained to me, they started a drop-in center where they did detoxification from the substances abuse, such as glue, which the street children sniffed. He further explained that in rescue, they did not use any force since this could have been a challenge and the children could have reacted with indifference. They had to use the natural method, keeping the children busy and allowing them to sniff the glue. They had already got addicted to sniffing glue, which he explained, "street children sniff that glue to keep their stomach full because they cannot afford even a single meal in a day". They also gave them the food; breakfast, lunch and supper.

To the official, this generated a close contact, where they learned what made them to go to the street. The children eventually expressed willingly their need to be rescued from the street. The official further expressed the cry of most of them, "I wish you can help me go to school and learn at least to be somebody in future to help my mother".

After the rescue, the official stated that the children needed rehabilitation. This was the second phase and per the official, the most important one to all the street children who accepted to be rescued. In this, the official stated that they tried to help them to forget the life outside, the insecurity they faced, struggle and also give then parental love. Since the Sodzo center has a land, it kept them busy by giving each a portion where they planted vegetables and took care of some animals; rabbits and chicken. This created a sense of responsibility, which made them active and how to be independent even when they will leave the center.

The official opened further that they have taught them how to do savings, especially after selling their vegetables. They do what he referred to as table banking. "everybody has his or her personal needs and it good to save the money one has worked for through table banking. It motivates them to do more if they see they can afford all what other children have". In the rehabilitation process, the official stated that the center involved the parents. Since most of the children have parents or guardians, they had to trace them in order to know exactly what made these children to be in the street. The rehabilitation involved also teaching the children how to read and write. The informant observed:

> The children had no knowledge on how to read or write anything whether in Kimeru, Swahili or English. To make a start point we employed one teacher in the center who helps them at

least to know how to write their names and also to construct a sentence in either English or Swahili. This will help them to communicate with our visitors who come to learn from us since we have green house where many people not only from Maua are always coming to learn agricultural practices from the center

Once the children have been rehabilitated, the official held that they had to be reintegrated. Reintegration is where the children were reunited with their parents and in the society. This official held that they had to do this since the society had all sort of negative attitudes towards them and seeing them as if they are not human beings. The official stated:

> We took them home to meet their parents, because that is where true love is. It does not matter how cruel or hard things might be, home is always the best. But before we leave them, we first train parents and the community the non-skills for sustainability and acceptability. From there we enroll now the parents or guardian into a family strengthening programme where we teach them the importance of positive parenting, livelihood, resource management, life skills on acceptability and self-esteem issues. This is because most are very hopeless. The acceptability is very high since the children are now reformed and very focused. But though we reintegrate them we their parents or guardians, our responsibilities are still intact we make sure that their school fees are paid, have uniforms and books, have a good place to sleep and also eating well. In short, we give them a comfortable life.

From the official, I learned that the 3Rs model are an important part of the organization. The model has helped them to understand the life cycle of street children. Using the model, the organization has so far succeeded in helping 2000 street children in Maua, and they are hoping God will enable them to achieve their dream of bringing joy to every child in the street of Maua town.

I created the table below to show how the 3Rs+P models works in the Center.

Table 5.1: My understanding and interpretation of the Sodzo 3R+P model.

Rescue (R)	Rehabilitation (R)	Reintegration (R)	Prevention (P)
Drop-in center	Younger children	Family tracing	Targeted family strengthening
Develop rapport with children on the street	Dormitory	Family activities at farm	Clark ECD schools
Identify candidates for leaving the street	Farm life skills at farm	Family strengthening programme	Seminars and courses targeting the immediate communities
Children expressing the need to be rescued	Natural detox	Reclaiming street space.	
	School initiation or starting back	United with families and the society.	
	Recreation	Claiming their independent position	
	Street-based job skills start-up kit		

5.2.2 Need to rescue the children

A respondent stated and expressed the teamwork and determination to rescue the children.

> I have a group of people who helps us in running the organization. First, we have the top people who have sponsored us to the far we have come and who came with the vision of starting the organization to rescue the children from the street. Then on the ground here in the center we have the following staff such as, social workers, chaplain, house father and cook whose interests are to rescue the children.

In this case, the respondent held that their activities are motivated by what they see; the need, and the sufferings of the children. While they rescue the children, it is part of their God's mission; where their work is an expression of Christian compassion, grace and committed in serving others.

5.2.3 Restoring hope to the children and parents

The respondent held that during the rescue process, they talked to every child to know what made them to be in the street. To the respondent, each child had a story. The majority were from domestic violence, orphans and poverty. However, the stories varied from each child and each parent.

One parent' respondent narration almost made me cry.

> My son left the family when he was too young after his father threw us from the house, I tried to struggle with him but since I am not educated, I could not get a good job or anything to take care of him and his siblings. I therefore abandoned them, with hope a good Samaritan will come and rescue them. I have always felt like committing suicide every time I walked in the street, and met with my own son sniffing glue, in tatters and nothing I could do to help him. I suffered depression, until when Sodzo rescued him from the street and he is now okay and going to school. I really thank God for whoever came up with this idea may God bless him mightily. Sometimes, when you come in town you hear news *kwina chokora iraurairwe utuku* (there is a street child who was killed at night). I had to run to where he used to stay check if he is still alive.

Per my interpretation, the Kimeru word used by the respondent '*ira-urairwe*' portrays street children as people robbed off their humanity. In Kimeru language, you can only use the term '*ira*' when describing a non-human being, for example *ng'ombe ni-ira-urairwe* (a cow was killed). For human being we use '*ura and ara*' for example, *muntu ni-ara-urairwe* (a man was killed). Based on the view of the respondent, I can state that language shapes how we conceptualize our world and treat others, or the *vis-à-vis.*

5.2.4   Restoring hope to the community

I also learned from a respondent that what Sodzo has done is restoring hope, not only to the street children; but to the families and community. A guardian (not related) to a Sodzo's child had this story.

> When the father of the boy died, the mother decided to marry again. The stepfather to the boy was treating him very badly. Sometimes they will accuse him of stealing Miraa (Khat, then beat him up and lock him in the store without food or anything. The boy then decided to go back to his grandparents who were very old at that time and they could not help him in either going to school, food, clothing. So, the boy decided to run away from home. The boy had to struggle to feed the old grandparents with the money he was begging in the street. Unfortunately, the grandparents too died, and the little boy was left stranded with nowhere or no one to turn to. And that's how he moved in the street. Since they were my neighbors, I saw how the boy was suffering and when I heard of Sodzo and they had taken him I was very happy. Now, he is doing fine in school and I thank God for Sodzo and whoever came with the idea. It has not only helped the street children, but it has helped the community because we don't hear death of small children in the street again.

The director too had words to share with me about the information they gathered. On restoring hope, the director said.

> Many are orphans whose parents died of HIV and Aids and they were left alone. Many were thrown out by their relatives in order to inherit the properties of their parents. These children can make you think and ask yourself, what did I give God that I grew up with parental love? Their lives have really changed me a lot because sometimes we judge things within our first approach when we have not gathered the reality of the whole story. I wish the society can know some of the children in the street are just victims of circumstance. Children who had dreams and visions, but were all shuttered by either death, divorce or poverty. The majority being boys (because girls get married or even be employed as house helps and earn a living) are living in this squalor life.

5.2.5 Love for the street children

The informant held that in the street, children are prone to all negative acts. They are children whose life is always at risk. But despite the challenges, as the informants held, they love each other and know that they are brother's keeper. I tried to ask the house father since he is the one who is closely connected with them how they share about their lifestyle in the street.

The housefather held that the main challenge on the street is where to sleep, what to eat and drink, toilet, clothes etc. Furthermore, life is so difficult and challenging in the street even to define. He held that it is painful when reminding the street children of their experiences. They have many things; how the society does not care or value them as human being and how they only just focus on death (just surviving for a day). They explain how they slept under bridges where there are heavy rains and cold. Life in the street generates a do not care attitude, ready to face whatever may come.

Other times they fall sick, and no money for the hospital bill and no hospital will accept to treat them for free. When you listen to them narrate their stories, you just cannot imagine the pain they go through. They say life becomes normal, getting used to pains and sufferings. Being beaten every day, sleeping without food, and other challenges they experience. They just learn all in all to survive. Faced by such situation, the informants stated that the only assurance them love and care.

5.3 The local church representative view of the street children

In this section, I present the Sodzo experiences working with the local church, how the local church views the street children and how they are creating awareness in reducing the increase of street children. The topics below are arranged from within the above thematic understanding, but not directly following the order.

5.3.1 The local church leader's definition of the street child

The response I received from the local minister was:

> The church has different definitions according to ones understanding of who the street child is. This is because, the same people who are in the church are the same within the society. In his view, the street children are children like any other, only that fate has made them to be in the situation they are in. I remember when I was just in high school there was a very old man who was preaching around this town and he was a member of this church, but he is now late, he used to say *"wendo"* (love) and we respondent *"thiiri",* (peace). He used to preach even to mad people, the street children used to follow him behind responding to his preaching. You will see them happy drumming tins and broken plastic containers. Since the day he died, a good number of the street children died too. I can say he was like their spiritual father. He offered them hope. He used to gather them at one place, feed and preach them. He was not getting any support from nowhere or anyone, but he did good.

The ministers' view show that the local church can generate and create an impact towards how the society view and define the street children. If the church can speak love and present the street children as human beings created in the image of God, the society will reciprocate love towards them.

5.3.2 Biblical interpretation in relation to street children

Furthermore, the minister respondent responded that the street people existed even in the time of Jesus.

> When you look at the bible, you see the story of a lame beggar who was sitting at the temple gate. You can clearly see this man was begging like any other street person in the city. People maybe were passing him away, insulted him and offered every kind of negative understanding. That is the same thing with the street children in the society we are leaving. Sometimes, we meet them at the church gate begging money, waiting for food that will remain after service.

Sodzo came like Paul and Silas to rescue them they did not give them silver or gold, but they gave them a bright future, a hope and a new turn. And that's all I can say.

The message of the minister here can be viewed as presenting the Kairos. His views here focus on the ways the Bible can be used to call for socio-economic justice and against the scourge of indifferences against the street children.

5.3.3   Church teaching on the issues of street children

The chaplain respondent stated that street children are human beings, and in need of love.

> When we chipped in the programme, we did not look at what religion those children belong. Though we had to know the background, about their parents and everything. We took all them as children who are in need and needs help. As I said earlier, the response and understanding depends on individuals, but as a minister of God, my response is that they are human being who were created by God like me, who needs love, benevolence and security, who needs to be treated like any other person.

The chaplain here portrays a pastoral action that does not need any praises, but that which arises out of the general concern of the underlying challenges. In response to the challenges, the local church will not be answering a denomination call, rather, the goodness of the Lord towards his creation (street children). It is a koinonia, or a fellowship of love, through God and to the fellow human beings.

5.3.4   The church is seemingly silent

Though the local church is active and trying to shape the life of the local street children, an informant held that, when talking of church, we should not look at Maua Methodist only, but the entire church in Kenya. Thus, the respondent held that the nation church leadership is seemingly silent and not creating a good image on the issues of the street children.

> The church is silent and abusing the street children projects. This is because some churches start these projects in the name of the street children just to generate money from donors and these children do not get any help at all. To manage the projects is a calling. Knowing the mission that God sent you to accomplish. To go out and make people my disciples and baptize then in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. You cannot preach the word to a hungry person, Jesus Himself was feeding them before preaching, let church go back in the time of Jesus and that's how we will grow together. Service and the gospel must accompany each other.

5.3.5 Creating awareness

A participant stated that they are currently working on making sure that all the street children are safe by creating awareness.

> I can confess that Maua Methodist Church and Hospital wanted to make sure that children who are in the street are safe. As the reverend in charge of this church, we create awareness to people around us that those children are not there because they are lacking. We are trying as much as we can to eradicate poverty in areas that are mostly affected. Maua Methodist hospital have a lot of groups to help the communities to stand on their own. The Methodist Sacco is empowering and making sure that parents can now have something to support their children. We create awareness about HIV and AIDS, since most street children are orphans whose parents died. I thank God because they have reduced in our town now. Also, the community is very supportive through the village stewards in the church *(arithi ba ntuura).* These are the eyes of our church; helping us to know the problems which are in our villages because we cannot be able to know all problems, for we have many members in this church.

In this case, I learned from the respondent that the street children are mostly 'invisible'. We see them sleeping in the streets and begging for food, but we do not value their humanity. By awareness, we present a new discourse and a perspective which defines their existence. They become members of community; whose problems deserve a communal solution. Awareness also challenges the misconceptions associated with the street children; enabling the street children to be incorporated in the social, educational, and financial space like any other member of the society towards self-empowerment.

5.3.6 Challenging calling

A teacher respondent expressed working with street children as a challenging calling.

> Working with these children is not easy, but a challenging calling. The only good thing is that before they are brought here in school, they are already detoxicated, though the rough life is still in their lives. We try to talk to them in a way that they know how to be at the same level with other children. Sometimes it becomes hard since other children too have the stigmatization that they do not want to be associated with them since they are from the street and from poor background and so many things. I can say currently the attitude is changing and the children in school are welcoming them very well. So far, we have not witnessed any case of indifference, but sometimes you can see some reactions especially during parent meetings, now that this our school is full of children from all tribes.

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The other teacher respondent was not that clear since she had joined the school recently and she had not interacted much with the children, but she had some few words to share with me.

> The children are a bit different from others. They are very intelligent children, with a very bright future. Though we do not understand them at sometimes, but with time they will adjust. This is the case since in the street they lived a carefree life, they had no one to supervise them or to tell them that this is right or wrong. Also, sometimes they live a life of fear, they get lost in thoughts, and they get upset very first because of the trauma they faced in the street. But we have to be soft with them and give them guidelines to be at the same level with other kids. We are counselling them, which is very important to them, since everything looks so new to them.

5.4 Support from the church and government

The hospital chaplain held that the project could not have reached this far without the church support and the cooperation they have with the Sodzo organization. He held that,

> This was a dream from the then coordinator of Sodzo International and his colleague who came up with the idea of helping the children from the street of Maua and its neighboring towns. During the journey, they wanted first to do some study for them to know how they will respond to the problem. The plan started by involving the Maua Methodist Hospital school of nursing and medical students from United States of America. In this process, they wanted to get some information from children themselves and community as well who were willing to help us.

In this part the government was also involved, especially the administrative officers, children office and non-governmental organization. He explains,

> We were surprised by the rate which local community responded to this matter; the elders were not left out because they had to start family meetings to all who had neglected their children. The children office gave the full support especially where their attention was needed. The church Maua Methodist on the other hand made a big shoot gave out a piece of land, 73 acres to build a transitional center where children will be able to grow vegetables, go to school, be detoxed from glue and helped psychologically.

He had a concluding remark that, their dream could not have come true without the church, and government cooperating to help the children. He emphasized on the need of the local problem having local solution, then teaming up with the government and local and international well-wishers.

I asked, what more can the church do? An informant responded that currently the church is doing a lot of activities. Every Sunday they send a preacher to go and share a word of God with the street children. They also do counselling and help the street children to know that they are important in the society. They also involve them in all the activities connected to the church.

5.5   Financing the organization

A social worker respondent said that the highest percentage of support is from donors and the well-wishers.

> We are supported by donors from outside where one of the supporters is the first who teamed up with the director to start the organization, we make sure that we have remained faithful to those who invest in the organization by giving a meaningful impact in the life of street children who are under our care, we always seek for transparency and accountability by providing our donors with timely results of their donations keeping available financial documents to demonstrate our use of funds.

Within my interpretation, this is the only challenge I realized with Sodzo organization. Its dependency only on the donor's funding to its sustainability is detrimental. Though currently the program is functioning well, it should try local means of sustainability such as utilizing the local farms. Donor dependency might threaten its effectiveness. Some donor directed and funded projects never become 'integrated' wholly within the mindsets of the local people. In most cases, they remain foreign, lacking a strong foundation. The ideas and modalities remain those of donors, hence foreign. This creates a dangerous situation where the locals might revert to the old or worst habits once the funding and support are withdrawn. If not be the case, it creates dependency syndrome, which fails to address the underlying challenges with all due seriousness.

5.6   Other organizations offering the similar services

A social worker respondent said that there are many organizations in Kenya as a whole. But for this area there is no any other organization dealing with street children. She added that, they are dealing with vulnerable children especially orphans whose parents died of HIV and AIDS. Where they are much concerned in empowering them. She was disappointed that in their organization they only have boys, because in Maua town there no girls

who are in the street. Most girls are working as house maids, while others are married so young.

Furthermore, in the conversation, I asked how many children accesses their service monthly, daily or yearly? The respondent said that, children come for help daily. There are those who are only coming to eat and go, and there are those who come to seek help be out of the street. But, before they take any child they first have to know their background; if the parents are alive, if the child has a guardian, then they go to the children office to get a letter of approval that the child is under our care and if anything happens they are responsible. Shaking head, the respondent held that taking care of these children is a very risky task. You have to be strong and know what you want to make out of their lives, what you want to achieve and to fulfill your calling of taking care of God's creation.)

5.7   Different cases or types of street children

An official respondent said that the cases of street children are different since each has a story how they ended up in the street. Thus, they address and handle each case separately from the other.

> Like the case of children, we have in our organization many are victims of domestic violence, irresponsible parents, and orphans where some narrates their stories of how they suffered in the hands of stepfather or stepmother. The types of children from the street who are in our organization are some who joined the organization direct from the street, while there are others whose parents came to ask for a chance for them to be in the organization since they were unable to take care of them and they were ending up in the street. There are some others who were born in the street and they lived there with parents to earn their living. Let me tell you one thing, (*holding his mouth*) there are some children who are living with both parents, but their lives are as poor as those of orphans. The contemporary parental irresponsibility's in our community has been affected much by the khat (miraa). Sometimes women (*I noted the emphasis on women*) get up early in the morning to go for the job, leaving children without anyone to take care of or with any food. They come back around midday, while children are loitering in neighborhoods looking for food and finally, they will end up in the street.

The official respondent mentioned the ones who live in the street without parents, where I asked do you do follow up to know the family status of every child? The respondent answered that the center cannot just pick any child and put him/her in the organization without getting full information from where they come from. In the respondent view, not all

children are local born. Some are from different small local towns. Thus, the center has to know where they come from by working with the children office and the chief of the area.

5.8   Need for interdenominational integrated program

The minister respondent expressed the need of an interdenominational or ecumenical approach in addressing the issues of the street children. I present a long quote so that I might not lose some of its contents. The respondent held that:

> You know the thing is, many churches are afraid to integrate because of honesty and accountability, to be honest to have such an organization and make sure all is going well is a great sacrifice, so to avoid a lot of misunderstanding because at the end are the children who are going to suffer we normally see it's better to have it as an individual church. But we will think about it, (laughing). I asked him in your opinion what do you think the church can do to stop increase of street children? (Shaking his head) their people who have lost hope in life, most of the problem we have now fathers have left family responsibilities to women and them they have turned into drunkards. At the same time, they will not allow even those women to work for their families in peace. What church and the government are doing now is creating awareness on positive parenting, because most of the children who are in the street are there because of poverty. It's better we start from grassroot by empowering the community so that we eradicate poverty and also create family unity since family violence is really affecting children a lot. Church also has started teaching on HIV and Aids because of increase of orphans and also early pregnancies to youths. We are doing seminars against female circumcision and early child marriage; these have affected the area so much especially in the interior parts of Meru county. After circumcision girls stop going to school and get married. After some years you will see most of them in the street with small children. We are trying as church and government to educate the community against such unproductive cultural practices and positive approach to life. With that every child will experience parental love, he added.

As I was almost to leave the driver who is working with the organization just came in. I tried to know little about his experience working with the children. He was very happy to share with me, he said.

> It's a nice feeling seeing someone you took from the street with tatters, who was living a life full of frustration, sniffing glue, eating from trash bins is and now, doing well with a bright future. Sometimes when I am driving them back, going for a tour, I do feel exited sharing with me their life experiences in the street. It's so emotional seeing small children whose

dreams were shattered by deaths, divorces, cultures or poverty revived. I thank God for Sodzo who have not only helped the street children, but they have created jobs for many young people in this area, me being one of them *(laughing)*

5.9   Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the findings of this study by laying out the responses from the interviewees. In doing so, the research drew the attention of identifying the challenges of taking care of the street children which needs to be attended and lots of patience. In the interpretation, the respondent expressed the need to meet up the transformative goals in the lives of the street children in order for them to be included in the society. From the respondents, Sodzo is creating initiatives which have achieved much in restoring the dignity of the street children in Maua area.

Chapter 6

Discussion and interpretation of the research findings

6.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter I have presented the data from interviews which were carried out from the 29th of November 2018 to the 11th January 2019. I have introduced different themes from the interviews I conducted concerning Sodzo as a rescue center for the street children in Maua. This included interviews with church clergy, the hospital chaplain and all social workers and finally I made the conclusion.

In this chapter I am going to discuss the findings of the empirical data collected from the field as per the themes from the data. I divide the chapters in three topics as follows: causes and factors leading to children being in the street, challenges faced by street children and finally how Sodzo has restored dignity to street children in Maua.

6.2   Causes and factors leading to children being in the street

6.2.1   Push and pull factors

In this study I discovered that there are 'push' and 'pull' factors leading to the street children in Maua town. Children are driven to the street by many factors. Push factors describe those factors which force the street children to go to the street voluntarily. They feel at risk if they stayed in their homes, and instead they choose the street as the 'better option'. These are factors related to poverty and economic issues, social and cultural issues.

In this case, children are prey to all negative acts in the society. As I learned from the study, push factors are connected to the economic and social factors because they affect most families and the entire society, making the children victims and venerable. In this study, most families with high cases of street children are characterized by single parenthood, low income, lack of education and developed skills, and lack of employment and joblessness. Equally, there are cases of majority from the broken families, parents who lack jobs or are in petty businesses like street hawking and *changaa* brewing (local beer), bar attendants, commercial sex workers and house maids. One interviewee held that "street children prevalence is connected to economic pressure, poor family relationships, parental deprivation, parental separation or death, defective discipline and overcrowding in the house"

Pull factors on the other hand are factors that attract the children to go to the street. In this study I learned that some children are attracted to the street by mare thoughts that in the street, there is a free life, with no one questioning them as it happens at home. Others think that different sweet foodstuffs (food which kids likes such as bread, *mandazi, samosa* etc.) and money is realized easily in the street than at their homes. According to the interviewee, once they go to the street, they realize too late that they were wrong when some have already been hooked to drug and glue (sniffing). This is related to the peer pressure, corporal punishment at home, being deviance and seeking personal freedom.

In this part of thesis, I will discuss the causes of the children being on the street as argued in data analysis and in the most other parts of the project.

6.2.2   Economic factors

Meru people generates their income from agricultural produce, khat (Miraa) being the main cash crop in the area. This means the poverty in the area is at the highest level due to lack of education, unemployment and skills to make anything positive. The burden of the extreme poverty was causing some parents to neglect and abandon children as they struggle to make the ends meet. In this case, children life becomes hard since their parents cannot provide their daily life needs, where children are sometimes required to become the breadwinners of the family. This pushes them into the street, some becomes beggar and others find no meaning to why they should return to their home and street becomes their new homes.

This study found out that economic challenges and poverty (lack of food and basic amenities) as the main reasons that makes most children to leave their homes and end up in the streets. It was held that most families love their children, however, the pressing economic situations and poverty leave them with no options. It was indicated that most children in the street are from the poor families, drunkards with pathetic living conditions, and moving to the street is in search of a better living conditions. Others are orphans, who have lost one or both parents and living under difficult economic situations. There are also economic related challenges in relation to many children, beyond the capacity of the family resources to cater for them. In the end, these children are neglected and go to the street to find their means of survival.

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6.2.3 Social and cultural issues

Within the traditional African society there was nothing which may equal the today's street children. In the traditional African society, there was a safety net provided by the extended family in taking care of the orphaned and those suffering out of the neglect. The extended family was the traditional social service system. This is where members were responsible for protecting the venerable, caring for the poor and sick family members. In Kimeru language, which is the local language of the Maua residence and the study area, the term *ukia* (poverty) was never in the traditional terms referring to the material poverty, rather to the orphaned kids. *Nkia*-as orphans were cared for as the responsibility of the extended family and the clan (community). There was no clear definition of an individual poverty, because of the shared responsibilities by all in the spirit of the ubuntu.

However, some cultural elements under the patriarchy were detrimental to women, which equally effected the society. Men were elevated more than women and boys over girls. Thus, in sharing food proportions and resources sharing women were discriminated over boys. Boys could inherit family property, but not girls who were exempted from property ownership. Additionally, children born out of the wedlock were viewed as social misfits and social outcasts. As it was also cited from an informant, there are issues of the female circumcision or the female genital mutilation (FGM) which leads to early marriage of the circumcised girls. These are girls who lack education or any economic empowerment. Family breakups in such situation force the mothers and their children to the street.

Come modernity and urbanization the extended family bonds and ties have been broken. The community ownership and caring of the less fortunate has been eroded. This has happened despite lack of a proper social services system from the government. The patriarchal system is still ingrained in the society, which has impacted negatively mostly to the single mothers, and widows. Single mothers' families, widowed women have the highest poverty prevalence, where their kids lack food, parental care and other basic amenities.

Also, as this study found from one informant, women were traditionally expected to work in the homes. However, in the contemporary society there are those who have defied such position and have taken over the role and position of their family bread winner. But due to the patriarchal system, they are equally expected to be the house makers. In such cases, with some irresponsible husbands, no places like kindergarten to provide care to their children and low income which cannot afford a house-helper their children have been affected.

These children are therefore subjected to neglect, and some end up in the streets. A respondent said, "sometimes women (I noted the emphasis on women) get up early in the morning to go for the job, leaving children without anyone to take care of or with any food. They come back around midday, while children are loitering in neighborhoods looking for food and finally, they will end up in the street"

6.3 Challenges faced by the street children

From the study there are lots of challenges faced by the street children. In this study I have divided them into two categories, these are the livelihood related problems such as lack of food, lack of shelter, torture, abuses (including sexual abuses) etc. The others are the condition, value and identity related challenges. In both challenges, the street children are robed off their value, dignity and identity. They are subjected to conditions of living in an inhuman status; being viewed less children and as worthless creatures.

6.3.1 Livelihood related challenges

As the study found out the street children in Maua town experience most challenges related to what is essential for the human livelihood and general wellbeing. These children lack daily food, and in most cases, they search the remains of the foods thrown in the dustbins hence the name *'chokora'*. They have no place to sleep but on the cold pavements and houses verandahs. Regardless of the weather conditions, may it be raining, cold or hot they have to remain there. Most of them fall sick due to the weather conditions and malnutrition. However, inability to access medical treatment is acute among the sick street children. Additionally, these children face numerous forms of abuses. Some few girls as the study found who happens to be street children are raped by fellow street boys and other people within the general public. Some boys are equally raped, molested, exploited and used in unscrupulous business such as stealing, selling drugs etc.

6.3.2 Condition, value and identity challenges

Condition, value and identity challenges have a close relationship to the livelihood related challenges. In this case I refer to the challenges which rob the street children their human identity, their value and innocence as children. A street child is just another child who lack basic amenities and forced to live in the street. They are children who deserve love and care, however, lack of such love and care leads to both physical and mental challenges.

From the study I learned that most street children feel unloved, uncared for and unprotected. These challenges become emotional threats to the lives of these children.

The continuous feeling of such conditions makes the street children to come up with some copping mechanism. They create ways and means of surviving different problems already highlighted above. Some abuse glue, and other drugs in order to press down their feeling of being unwanted and rejected. Others result to begging, stealing or prostitution. All these factors push them far away from the society. Their behaviors are defined as 'unbecoming' and 'uncouth'. They therefore cease to be children or human beings to social crooks and outcasts; they are marginalized. No one is ever willing to tolerate their ill-behavior. They are scorned and beaten by the people and police without mercy, and without any sympathy. To try and avoid that they withdraw from the society and 'inexistence'. In response to the physical, social insecurity and emotional vacuum, the street children within the surrounding environment feel scared and unwanted. All these conditions destroy the value and dignity of the street children.

6.4   How Sodzo is restoring value and dignity

As we have seen from this study, the street children in Maua are disadvantaged, abandoned, and vulnerable kids. They are children robbed of their humanity. They face intense threat to humanity and children rights. They lived an endangered and chaotic life. They face multifarious problems, related to economic, social and emotion issues. They lack powerless, illiterate, deprived of their security, social status, and being physically and mentally harassed. Sodzo restores their human value and dignity by providing some of those basic things which are rights to every human being. According to the universal human rights, what entails human value and dignity is reflected on the minimum standards necessary for people to live. One of the conditions of the human rights related to the human value and dignity is means necessary to satisfy basic needs such as food, housing and education. There is also the guarantee of equality and security.

From the study, we have seen numerous ways through which Sodzo has restored value and dignity of the street children in Maua town. I cite some of the ways Sodzo is restoring the value and dignity of the street children in Maua town; reaching and rescuing them, meeting their basic need (offering the children food and shelter), offering them love and affections, offering them skills through education and training, and finally reuniting them with their families and society. An informant said, "we saw the increasing number of orphans, the

street children within the town… we have a transition center where we rehabilitate them from sniffing the glue, train them on some life skill, and also try to train these children on how to be responsible, how to care for themselves and participate in many programs."

6.4.1 Reaching and rescuing street children

If one is living in a physical and traumatic condition, rejected and neglected it feels good to be reached out. What Sodzo does first as this study learned is reaching out the street children. However, as it was explained by some informants it is never always easy. This is because some kids having been subjected to numerous abuses, both physical and psychological they are suspicious of the motive of those reaching out to them. What Sodzo does is proving that they are different, safe and secure and coming with nothing but a helping motive.

Once they have reached them, they rescue them. By rescue I mean that they restore their hope. The first stage of rescue is restoration of the basic needs. This happens before the psychological help or the spiritual help is done. Sodzo stated that is what they do different from most other organization who start by preaching to the street children; a factor that leads into suspicion and rejection. In this case, children need food, shelter and someone to love them.

6.4.2 Meeting basic needs (food and shelter)

Rescue is one steep, but meeting their basic need is part of a permanent solution towards coping with fear, insecurity, abandonment, exploitation and other forms of abuses. An assured shelter and constant provision of food and clothing portrays care and concern. What Sodzo has done is creating a shelter for the rescued street children. A place that those who were homeless can refer as home and starting place for better things. In this center, children are helped to develop trust, away from fear. This trust is nurtured through love, acceptance, forgiveness, a sense of belonging, responsibility and value that comes with being a member of the family (center).

In the center, the children are natured towards responsibilities, from damaged childhood to respecting one another, while assuming different roles and responsibilities. One of the informants said that children are taught to take care of rabbits and have some small kitchen gardens. Sodzo offers a more integrated and holistic approach, where the children do not become just beneficiaries of basic things like shelter, food and clothing, but contributors

in their wellbeing. This has forged a community that is social bound together and prayers together.

6.4.3   Offering love and affection

The value of human life is intrinsic, for it is derived from God who made human beings in his own image (*Gen. 1: 26-27*). Therefore, the principle of the street children worth, value and dignity are to love and to be loved. Based on God's love, Sodzo extends the self-giving care and compassion to the rescued street children and even those in the street. The Sodzo's drive and main reason are that these children are created in the image of God. As stewards, they have to uphold the value of God's creation.

Based on the study, the street children are like any other child who need love and affections. They are like to play, learn and be equipped to be better adults. Sodzo gives love, care, affection and security which the children lacked in the street. They also focus on the main community social development, by improving the quality of life through social work, policy and social protection programs for the children.

6.4.4   Offering skills through education and training

An informant said that their aim is to teach the children how to fish, and not merely giving them a fish. The main principle of Sodzo is to empower the rescued street children and create a long-lasting impact in their lives. Sodzo as an organization as seen that a good number of the street children have gone back to school, both in the primary and secondary school. These street children, as I learned from the schoolteacher takes time to get integrated to the school system. However, the teachers remarked that the street children are just normal children, with some being so clever and smart.

Through Sodzo, the children are also taught skill course and vocational courses such as carpentry, tailoring, farming, animal keeping and how to take care of environment. They are also taught basic life skills, personal hygiene and health. Such activities have boasted the children self-esteem, knowing that they are now fulfilling their lives and contributing to the well-being of the society.

6.4.5   Reuniting street children with family and society

Sodzo does not only target the street children, but they also have programs which aim is to transform the entire society towards how they view the street children. Through such an

initiative they search for the parents or guardians of the rescued street children. The parents and guardian are enrolled into a program before they become reunited with their children. After reunification, the children continue to receive support, where I learned from this study that some families also become beneficiaries of better housing. Parents or guardians are also trained some basic skills and supported on a self-help project. Sodzo also conducts seminars within the community which entails psychosocial support, and topics against some of the social-cultural issues contributing to the neglect of some children who eventually end up in the street.

6.5 Challenges facing Sodzo and church in creating value and dignity

6.5.1 Challenge of donor support

I found from the study, Sodzo organization activities with the street children are mostly funded by the donors. The donor's fund goes in paying the workers, running the activities of the organization, feeding the street children etc. So far, the activities of the organization as I discussed above have been a great success and have positive impact to the lives of over 2000 street children, and their immediate community. Sodzo organization has also created jobs and embarked on farming one of their vast land allocated them by the church. This is done in order to see that the program is self-sustaining, with less reliance on donor funds. However, the challenges which face Sodzo organization is the future if it does not become wholly integrated into the local context. Failure to do so, Sodzo and its ideas will remain a foreign project or what a *mzungu* (Global North) in 'an easy fix it' mentality expect the local (Africans) to do but not what they wish to do.

Previously, most of the projects initiated and fully funded by the donors (case of Plan International) in Maua region have eventually failed after the donors left. These organization lacked grassroots perspectives and most became marred with corruption, for lack of community authentication. However, the great advantage Sodzo has over the rest been teaming up with the local community and with the local Methodist church. The church has roots within the local community and has spearheaded quality community-based projects. One of them is management of a missionary hospital for over 50 years since the church became autonomous, and self-sustaining from missionary support. The local church call to the diakonia work with the street children in restoring hope, value and dignity is also a key pillar to the sustainability and growth of the Sodzo organization.

6.5.2 Language and conceptualization

This is based on a respondent view how news is disseminated when a street child dies in Maua town, "sometimes when you come in town you hear news *kwina chokora iraurairwe utuku* (there is a street child who was killed at night)." I had stated earlier, I took keynote in the word used, *'iraurairwe'* instead of *'araurairwe'*. In Kimeru language, the term *'ira and ara'* creates different meaning in describing a human and non-human being. In this case, the respondent should have used 'ara' describing a human being, instead of 'ira' describes non-human beings. An announcement of a street child death in terms of 'ira' is equal to how we may describe the death of a cow, dog, lion etc.

I am not a language expert, neither am I informed so much about semantics, however, I can argue that the language used here describes a contextual profiling of street children. This shows how language makes us to conceptualize and describe the worth of others, or how we conceptualize others, makes us to come up with terms which describes their worth. The explicit and implicit meaning of the street children based on the above sentiments is that they are worthless human beings (non-human beings). The grammatic aspects have a great role to play in this case towards how we perceive the street children. By calling them *'chokoras'* (those who scratch the ground like chickens), we have robbed them their humanity, dignity and self-worth. Thus, for Sodzo and the church to succeed wholly in their activities, they must take note of the linguistic aspect and its role towards how the locals conceptualize the street children.

6.6 Conclusion

From the study I have learned that before Sodzo stated the programme, they first did a scientific assessment of the situation of the children in the street. This is where they explored the real issues at stake in relation to the street children needs. It is evident that most programs within and without the context fail or have failed because they do not meet the needs of the children involved. In fact, most contribute to failure and make any future street children rehabilitations difficult. Most focus only on the model of behavior changes, as I had stated above, through preaching. The reason being that they attribute the being on the street of the children to errant behaviors, hence deserving behavior transformation. They fail to account for the socio-cultural and economic issues which the study found as the main causes of the children going to the street.

Furthermore, I learned from Sodzo that to restore value and dignity for the street children there is a need for an integrative plan which involves the centers, street children, parents and the community. The answer for the street children challenges lies in the economic empowerment of the local communities. It was evident that most children in the street are those from the poor, unemployed or low-income families. It is also necessary to address socio-cultural issues such as FGM, patriarchal practices, gender/family violence, and address the issue of the childbirth and child preference. Such issues have an indirect impact to the rise of the street children.

Chapter 7

Conclusion, summary and recommendations

7.1   Introduction

In this chapter I now by way of conclusion summarize the study findings and present recommendations in accordance with the study objectives and findings.

7.2   Study findings

The increase of street children is rising each day in Kenya and the entire world. This calls for need and attention to see how this can be solved. This is because even though street children are referred to as hopeless, children who have no future every child has a reason why they are there in the street. The church, society and the government seem to be silent in matters concerning street children, their sufferings and challenges they are facing in the street. Through self-motivation being born in Maua town as I mentioned in the introduction, I have witnessed the sufferings the street children go through. There is marginalization, rejection and sometimes death.

To answer the research question, *What is the Methodist Church in Kenya doing to affirm value and dignity to the street children, with specific reference to the activities and programs of Sodzo International in Maua?* I conducted a case study research in Maua in the Sodzo center for the street children. The study was conducted among people who are directly involved in the center, church, clergies and institution offering education to the children. The answer to the research question as it emerged from the research findings is that there are many street children in Maua who lack love, protection and care through absence of anyone. Further, the study found out that these children need psychological support because of their experiences in the street.

The study regarding the question found out that through limited and challenging the Methodist Church in Kenya-Maua as part of its Christian social practice, under Sodzo center is adding value and dignity to the street children and community in general. Through their 3R+P models they are rescuing, rehabilitating, reintegrating and preventing further influx of the children in the street. Their activities are also aimed both to the children (already in the street), their families and the entire community.

7.3   Study recommendations

In relation to the study, this research offers five recommendations: one, the place of the African values and ethics such as Ubuntu in addressing the issues of the street children. This is where the African concepts of communality may be relevant within and without the church context aiding the community to taking care of all the children. The future of any society is based on how it treats and holds the children. A community may be judged based on how it treats and protects its most venerable members; the children, women, disabled and old. Most communities in Africa survived due to the communal bonds, which sought to protect every member of the society. Yes, there were some retrogressive cultural practices which existed, which ought to be addressed even within the contemporary society.

Second suggestion, local churches and organization such as Sodzo should work more closely with the government (national and county) in order to getter deeper into the local communities towards poverty mitigation and in addressing unemployment challenges, a factor impacting largely to the rise of the street children in Maua. The government will also be in the forefront in addressing some of retrogressive cultural practices such as the FGM and teach the community about family planning. Single mothers too deserve to be empowered socially and economically in order to make them 'self-standing'.

Third, the result found out that most of the rescued street children are boys. Informants held that no girls end up in the street (a case specific in Maua town). Most of them as the study found out are forced into early marriages, others work as house-helpers, while the remaining one end up in prostitution. Following this study, I recommend further studies regarding girls who are unequally faced with neglect, marginalization, and other forms of abuses within and outside their families. The study should be guided by the question, in wish way has the church responded to the cases of street girls who are the 'invisible' children? This is where the study will identify the social and health challenges related to street girls.

Fourth, the local church, in collaboration with Sodzo should champion and teach the local community about the child rights perspectives. In the contemporary society, not only the street children, but the local society and culture having undergone a tremendous change has 'lost' some of the traditional elements governing child's rights and protection. The society in general is bruised off some of its cultural identity and values, which protected every member of the community. To address the current challenges facing each child, there

is a need to come up with a contextualized message about child rights. This will shape how we conceptualize childhood, and child rearing practices. In this case, children should be incorporated, and be partakers in the discourse. Such programmes should reflect and interpret the Convention on the Rights of Child and its fundamental principles. However, not a far-fetched abstract as they exist today, but in creating viable meaning towards change. The idea should be that no child is discriminated regardless of their socio-economic, or cultural situation they might find themselves in.

Firth, the church in diakonia perspective should ground its theology of the children in order to become the transformation and change agent. Within the local society, the church plays a fundamental role in shaping the spiritual, ethical and social issues. The church should uphold its teachings, that all (including those in the street) children belong to God by creation. The church should also deem it worth to adjust some of its practices-where single mother's children are never baptized; which discriminates single mothers and creates a notion that some 'children are mistake'. By doing this, the church will be sending a message that it cares for all the children, just as Jesus said, 'let the children come to me' (Matthew 19:14). This will also assure the children that the church incorporates their needs in their programmes.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Questions to leaders and other representatives of Sodzo International and Kenya Maua Methodist Hospital

• What is the main aim and objective of your organization?

• Who are involved in running this organization?

• How is your organization financed?

• Do you know of any other organizations in this area that offers similar services to yours? If any which?

• In your experience what makes children to be in the street?

• At what level can we classify one as a street child?

• What can be termed as normal or abnormal with being in the street?

• In your knowledge, what are different cases or types of street children?

• Who are the majority in terms of gender, and age in the street?

• How does the street life affect the street children?

• How are the family affected; especially the parents whose children are in the street?

• What kind of help does your organization offer to the street children?

• Roughly, how many street children accesses your services monthly?

• Can we say enough is being done to provide protection and care for the street children?

• To what extent are you satisfied with the church's involvement with street children issues?

• What more can the church do?

• Do you think there is enough education and awareness done in relation to the street children? Can you specify, give examples?

• In your opinion, what do you think can be done to stop the increase of street children?

Questions to church leaders & laity (Methodist)

• How does the church define a street child?

• How has the church been involved in the religious and spiritual wellbeing of the street children?

• How can you interpret the Bible in relation to the street children?

• How is this church addressing or preaching about street children?

• How are other churches responding to the issues of street children?

• Do you think the church is silent? If yes, why?

• How much has St. Joseph done in relation to addressing issues affecting the street children?

• What kind of special programmes for the street children does this church have?

• What kind of support and care is the church offering to the street children?

• How can a possible interdenominational integrated program work in addressing the issue of street children?

• What is the family status of the street children?

• How does the church follow up the street children in the organization?

• What (more) do you think can be done (as a church in general and your church in particular) to address the issue of street children?

Questions to (selected) street child from the organization

• How did you end up in the street?

• How were you affected by street life?

• How did you come to this organization?

• How does the organization meet your dreams?

• What are some of the challenges you faced out in the street?

• Between boys and girls, who are more affected by street life?

• What kind of support have you received from this organization?

• How has the church contributed to your well-being in this organization?

• Do you know other street children who need help? If yes, how can the church and the organization reach to them?

• How satisfied are you by the services that you are getting from this organization?

• What (more) would you like the organization and the church to do for you?