

# IN DEFENSE OF CHILDREN AGAINST FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

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## *Abstract*

South Africa has a history of healthy child rearing based on African traditional values, before the coming of squatter camps. The aim of this article is to identify some historical values and incorporate them in future for child rearing in informal settlement. The article will also discuss the way informal settlement children are exposed to violence to which they are most defenseless. Violence refers not only to physical bodily harm, but also to its psychological and spiritual effects on children. It hampers the normal development of children to maturity. We argue that violence cannot be a foundation for children to cope into adulthood. It is a gruesome experience fuelled by lack of social and moral constraints resulting from factors such as poverty and lack of parental care. Areas like informal settlements where violence is rife deprive children of normal social, mental, physical and spiritual development. By way of discussion, intensifying campaigns against abuse will be described with a view to encouraging adults to be responsible and to take clear stand against child abuse.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

**Informal settlements are mushrooming at a fast pace in South Africa. Squatters' establishments need attention since they are havens for**

violence, crime and poverty. This essay will highlight some ways in which violence manifests itself and threatens families especially children in these areas. Some forms of violence are historically justified as part of the traditional and moral fabric of African child rearing. We will explain some causes of violence and the need for overall engagement to curb it. The inadequacy of child rearing in every family and society is a problem for its future survival. We will employ a 'qualitative method'<sup>1</sup> in the process of writing this article. In conclusion we will emphasise children's rights and communal parenting as the important factor for the survival of children as the future society. Simulating healthy lineages<sup>2</sup> as in biblical times and good aspects of African traditional experiences should appeal to the moral consciences of the people living in these areas. They will have to be encouraged to be responsible for and supportive of children's well-being. Buchanan (1996:4) believed that children are the bricks and mortar of our future society. Did South Africa in her history experience a quality life, to which she could refer in modern days? Can the disadvantaged Africans refer to something in their history as a memory of a better life?

### 1.1 The life in Africa and its implications for children two hundred years ago

This history was captured well by Callinicos (1980) in his book *Gold and workers 1886-1924*. In this work he observed that people in pre-colonial South Africa had no money but grew crops and kept cattle, sheep and goats for food (Callinicos 1980:2). This was an era<sup>3</sup> associated with pre-industrialisation in South Africa. People then were subsistence farmers living in a subsistence society. Subsistence society in South Africa was much the same as subsistence society anywhere in the world: people aimed to reproduce themselves and to feed their families. The most important things were: land, domestic animals such as sheep, cattle, or goats; the family and family labour, the community and trade.

Members of the families worked together to produce their basic needs. They shared many of the daily tasks. At the same time each member of the family had his or her own job (Callinicos 1980:3). The women would grow food and prepare it. They were skilled in pottery

and made other things for the home. They also raised children who were involved in healthy family activities like sharing in the produce of the family. Girls were brought up and taught to do the house-hold chores like cleaning, cooking, taking care of other children and pottery. They also worked on the land in smaller groups. This is basically the work that was done by women. Similarly wise boys would be taught to do the work done by men.

Some men were trained to do specialist tasks. For example there were people who were healers and spiritual leaders, some were musicians, and others learnt the craft of iron-work. Iron-workers held an honoured position in subsistence society. They had a valuable skill, providing farmers with iron implements and soldiers with weapons for war. It is easy to see why people wanted large families in a subsistence society. More people would make work easier to share out. Even children played their part in helping the families to survive doing whatever small tasks they could do.<sup>4</sup> Children were always welcome in subsistence societies.

The era of industrialisation in South Africa came as a new life to the subsistence society of South Africa. For most people the key factor of life was to work for a wage, buying food and clothes from stores, and life in the compounds, a township or suburb was a new experience. It was the pressures of modern survival that left children abused and exposed in the city streets and squatter-constrained living. Pre-colonial healthy African family life became immensely constrained. The post-colonial dispensation has emerged as the era of survival of the fittest in South Africa,<sup>5</sup> even among children. All its complexities such as labour recruitment, formation of compounds, townships and squatter-camps presuppose poverty and gruesome experiences among the poor in South Africa - the majority being blacks. Children in modern South Africa have been left alone at home to look after themselves while parents were at work for many hours a day. Children are neglected as result of absent parents who have gone to work. In most cases uncles and aunts who are unemployed are potential perpetrators of violence and sexual harassment. They may abuse drugs or indulge in excessive drinking which may lead to the harassment of children. What is the current situation in the squatter-camps?

*1.1.1 Meaning of the squatter-camps and the definition of child violence*

Due to the booming economy, black labour became increasingly important for mining and manufacturing industries. Enormous squatter camps grew up on the outskirts of major cities. This was due to the influx of the people from the rural settlements into the cities in search of employment. Despite the appalling conditions in the townships, not only blacks experienced poverty: wartime surveys discovered that 40 percent of white schoolchildren were also affected. They were affected deliberately or through ignorance and were exposed to violence, which interfered optimally with their development (Khathide 2000:100).

In reality child abuse is not an exclusive characteristic of some marginal parents, but is part of society, culture and daily lifestyle (Gilbert 1997:187).<sup>6</sup> This includes the experiences of those living in the squatter areas. It is the responsibility of the entire community to encourage the well-being of the children. The official report of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the theme: 'Gathered for life' in 1983 in Vancouver Canada views children as the living parable of the way the kingdom of God is to be received and appreciated (Gill 1983:35-36). This was based on the question posed by Jesus Christ: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of God?" Having called to him a child, he said:

... Whoever humbles himself or herself like this child, that person is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3-4, RSV).

Children's problems already existed during the time of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. Jesus Christ knew what he was talking about. This is a sign that child violence could be traced far further back than we thought. By 1212, for example, a 'Children's Crusade' attempted to reach the Holy Land in an effort to deliver the city from their innocence (naturally children were viewed to be innocent and blameless from violent activities) and some of them ended up being sold as slaves in North Africa (Douglas 1974:216).

Children bring a special quality to the family of God and are held up many times in the gospels as examples of Christian behaviour. As a result they must be protected at all costs. Their spontaneity and simple trust are special gifts (Gill 1983:56). They are however, excluded from full participation in the church because of their inability to comprehend faith rationally and to make 'adult' decisions, even when decisions affect their lives in a community.<sup>7</sup> In some societies they are seen as non-producers and therefore marginal, while in others they have been forced, through poverty and injustice, to work for a living, even to prostitution. They increasingly suffer physical and mental abuse. Children and women represent the highest number of refugees around the world. Also in many societies they suffer greatly as family growth is complicated by depressive economic factors.<sup>8</sup> Children who embody so much of the future hope of both the church and society need to be given their rightful place in the community.

#### *1.1.2 Effects of domestic violence on African children*

It is Wasike (in Waruta & Kinoti 2000:130-31) who uncompromisingly mentioned that African children are directly beaten in domestic violence or they are indirectly affected when they see their mother being beaten. It is reported that about 50 percent of children in violent households are also victims. Some are physically abused, their fathers or relatives sexually abuse some and all are emotionally abused. Some husbands beat their wives in front of their children in order to humiliate and cover their wives with shame. As a result children will experience shock and are afraid to do anything while their mother is being beaten.

In some cases according Wasike (in Waruta & Kinoti 2000:131) older children may beat up their fathers or even kill them. Children who grew up in a context of domestic violence display nervousness, withdrawal, anxiety, bed-wetting, restlessness, low school performance, headaches, stomach pains, asthma, stuttering, cruelty to animals, copying aggressive language and aggression, running away from home, and teenage boys beating their girl friends. Children in violent homes come to accept violence as a way of life. They see violence as a way to cope with stress and pressure. Boys

develop disrespect for women and the girls develop an inferiority complex. Children could also be neglected emotionally, since the mother spends all her energy struggling to survive. It has been discovered that 50 to 80 percent of men who abuse, come from a violent background. The criticism of African perspective on violence does not suggest it has no conscience.

## 2 HISTORICAL NORMS FOR CHILD REARING

Child rearing in Africa was made historical by the dawn of mining and industrialisation in South Africa. Christianity was already excelling in both rural and urban areas (because of missionary work and evangelism), and it was a new experience to Africans. The idea of initiation for example, was mainly the icon for responsible growth into maturity but it was tremendously affected by the new change. Graduates from initiation schools were facing the challenges of industrialisation. They had to be responsible and grapple with overcoming the temptations of this new paradigm through which many young rural men and women were affected by urban life. The result of this was the collapse of the traditional African moral support system.

The African common trend of life order of immediate parental support, extended families and the community life at large was seriously affected. The continuity of life that was to be maintained was governed in four areas of life that included birth, adolescence, adulthood, and death (Mugambi 1988:97-98). Historically these four stages were carefully and responsibly maintained under traditional guidance. Christian moral emphasis on the one hand was based on the same factors guiding people into Christian living. During these changes traditional childcare were also affected.

Originally the birth of a child was a great joy to the whole family and the whole clan (Mugambi 1988:97). Relatives and friends would come to visit the mother and child for many months after delivery. There would be much feasting to express joy and support of the mother to restore her health. Bringing food and drinks will be done to celebrate birth and to temporarily relieve the mother from the work at

home. In African tradition prayers of thanksgiving, for example, would include reference to the deity, spirits and ancestors. The ancestors would be beseeched to keep the child healthy and remove any curses which might negatively affect the child's life. They would be requested to bless the child and guide him to grow in wisdom, courage, generosity and any other values that were cherished by the community.

Christian parents would be expected to take their newborn baby to the church for thanksgiving. The ceremony of thanksgiving was an expression of appreciation to God for the gift of a child, for its safe delivery and the healthy condition of its mother. In the ceremony the child and its mother would be committed to God's care and guidance. Infant baptism was practised, as a wish of parents for the growth of children within the setting of the Church. The idea of 'god parenting' was to ensure growth through Christian instruction and infant baptism. Children would be expected to learn the catechism of the church and be confirmed as a full member. Baptism as a Christian sacrament was taken as a serious commitment. In the Anglican church catechism, for example, the 'god parents' make three promises to God on behalf of the infant being baptised: that while growing up the child will renounce the devil and fight against evil, that he or she will believe and hold fast the Christian faith and put his or her whole trust in Christ as the Lord and Saviour; and that they will obediently keep God's commandments and serve Him faithfully, all days of his life. At confirmation the child is expected to express that same ready acceptance publicly before the faith community.

The bottom line is that both African traditional life and Christianity are more concerned about the welfare of a child. They both deny the idea of isolating children from all natural stages of life with their accompanying care. In reality children are powerless and vulnerable; they respond to God's love with warmth and accepting ways. However, children are not idealised by the Bible. They stand in need of the grace and love of God. And yet Jesus proclaimed, "There is the kingdom" (Mat 18:3). Their vulnerability and powerlessness demand that we speak for them and stand with them, that we use their needs and situations as a yardstick for our churches.

People who live in the squatter camps are Africans who have inherited the good side of life from their predecessors. Many of them attend services in their respective churches where they learn about good living, especially the Christian lifestyle. The problem is their attitude towards life. The recognition of good morals is often obscured by a directly opposing, volatile lifestyle. African Christianity<sup>9</sup> is not different from Christianity in modern Africa for it encourages good moral and mutual living as the community of God. Kinoti (in Moila 2002:106-7) regrets the way modern parents are even afraid to call their mischievous children to order, fearing victimisation and possible being accused of assault. However, by the same token, adults feel no responsibility for someone else's child who may be treading a dangerous path.

This is contrary to caring for children in African historical society where children are the responsibility of the whole community they belong to. Mbiti's (1969:121-132) opinion is that there should be no break in the process of child rearing in an African setting. From birth, through initiation and puberty up to marriage, family and community support is needed.<sup>10</sup> Mugambi's (1988:157-8) view is that many of African traditional norms are educative. For example, young people approaching puberty will undergo systematic instructions to prepare them for future. This is a form of heritage that needs to be introduced into schools and supported to bring changes into the lives children and people.

## 2.1 Other helpful sources relating to child rearing in Africa

There are volumes of written materials relating to child violence, abuse and how they can be counteracted in Africa. Among others, the work of Harvey (1957:5) cannot be ignored. He wrote: "no one but the heart of the parent that can know the strange conflict of emotions of joy and awe as the new mother takes into her arms for the first time that little bundle of life". Harvey (1957:7-8) sees child rearing as the parent's responsibility that should not be despised. Part of his poem, 'Soul Gardener' contains these words:

O my child I hold your hand and tremble, when I think of all  
that you must meet on the way that there is naught to

guide you. Save my clouded eyes and stumbling feet ... So I fear from finger all unskillful. Some rude touch your perfect growth may mar; if the pruning knife slips but little, you must carry all your life the scar. O my child unknown, unconscious currents, meet and mingle in your young warm blood! Son, God, help me when your soul shall blossom. And God help me should I blight the bud (Harvey 1957:6-7).

These words remind us of the natural responsibilities packaged for every parent to impart to the new lives they are bringing on earth. For children to be born out of parental care should be worrying. There are many souls in the world that bear the marks of human blundering. These may have been incurred when the world for them was young. A blundering foot may leave many 'marks'<sup>11</sup> on the young life. What parents have imparted to their children may be emulated forever unless 'someone'<sup>12</sup> brings a change. Children in violent situations have very little to boast about since what their parents may offer is in itself meagre.

Khathide's 2000 book entitled *Bone of my bones* presents a simple view of marriage and family life. This book contains information relating to child rearing in South Africa and it is easy to read (Khathide 2000: 93-103). Indeed, white scholars have written most of the books on this topic and some Africans tend to complain that certain thoughts are not representative. Nothing is wrong with sources produced by whites as long as African could put their side of stories in written forms as well. For example, it could have been interesting to extract detailed stories and passions from people living in informal settlements. Also many of the materials written by Africans are extremely academic and not accessible to ordinary people.

There are white scholars in and outside South Africa like March (1995) who have discussed the significance of child and mother attachment. On the same note Dunn's (1993) work entitled *Young children's close relationships: Beyond attachment* is a fantastic work dealing with child violence. Most important is that, although children are borne by parents who are members of the broader society,

immediate parenting is the most important for their growth into adulthood. This perspective is also maintained by the African traditional view for raising children. Mother and child (infant) were kept for sometime away from the public for bonding before they could be seen in public. Temporary separation is an attempt to increase bonding between mother and child and this should be seen as sacred.

If a child or any minor is deprived of parental relationship it is equivalent to denial of that child's right to life. Miller (1995) expressed this in her book: *When parents have problems*. Her theme expresses the resultant breakdown between children and parents. If separation occurs between children and parents as result of violence or abuse, not only the family but also the whole society is affected. Miller (1995:141) maintains that interactions between parents and infants occur from birth within matrix of meaning that serves to shape a universal human capacity for social, emotional and linguistic expressiveness into cultural elaboration, attenuation, and conceptualisation. At this stage infants learn to produce and to respond to interpersonal norms that will organise and inform social interactions throughout. Is there any hope for women and children who are trapped in violent and abusive situations?

### 3 FAITH COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SQUATTER AREAS

Khumalo's (2003) book entitled, *From deserts to forests* is a good example. He discovered a niche, in which informal settlements and their people could forge a survival. To him life in the squatter areas is a mixture of joy, celebration and pain, especially when taking poverty into account. There are celebrations of birth, death, marriages; parties, braais, ancestor veneration and prayers (Khumalo 2003:67). All these suggest there is food and plenty of drinks at celebrations in the squatter camps. People in these areas live an inclusive life for they share in these celebrations. There are other factors, which obscure possible developments and breakthroughs. For example,

informal settlements are prone to violence because of unemployment and lack of space. The nature of violence is expressed in random fights in taverns after drinking. Street fights often break out and people are easily killed in these fights. Violence is also apparent in the way women and children are treated and abused by men. According to some statistics in some areas five women are beaten every day and five children are sexually abused every week (Khumalo 2003:70).

A positive indication, however, is that signs of good moral standing or respect, are becoming more visible from the mutual self-help gatherings and in the activities of religious communities.<sup>13</sup> The bible study groups that are established by some churches develop the conscience of people towards welfare and moral support.<sup>14</sup> Some of the churches have introduced the network processes, partnerships and financial supports groups for mission in action (Khumalo 2003:85). Through these efforts they are able to carry out responsibilities for the survival of their families.

Tshilenga (2005:101) equates Khumalos'<sup>15</sup> view with that of the Negroes who found themselves in a strange land where they were compelled to design methods of survival to mourn their conditions. He concurs that Negroes had to rely on themselves in a geographic situation requiring a minimum effort at adaptation. Echoing this, Khumalo (2003:85) identifies some positive social and economic possibilities for the squatter areas. Strong teams are needed for mutual support and to educate others to help themselves in areas of need. Children will always benefit from such initiatives and the local churches must play a prominent role in this.

### 3.1 Faith communities defending the abused children in the squatter areas

Where there is poverty, the ability to create a livelihood is weakened. The church is widely appreciated by the poor communities for the role it is playing among them, materially as well as spiritually (Narayan & Petesh 2002:412). The major challenge for the church is lack of material resources. This forces churches to find ways of helping poor communities to help themselves to fight poverty before

they could feed them with spiritual nourishment. Narayan and Petesh (2002:490) are pleading for support and partnerships with the poor as a meaningful way of reducing the frustrations of poverty among the poor communities. There are of course no easy solutions for identifying local partnerships that do not reinforce existing hierarchies but rather build on the strength of local cultures to foster more inclusive development processes.

There is also an urgent agenda to reduce the extreme vulnerability of poor children. Inadequate supervision, street crime, drugs, and pollution pose widespread dangers to children and youths in urban and squatter areas. Perhaps the single most important public action in this respect is devising means for providing child care, youth care and nutrition programmes for poor families. In addition, poor households need scholarships to make it possible for poor girls and boys to stay in school rather than leave in order to contribute to the family income.

The involvement of the church in the processes of community development will help to stabilise the conditions in the poor areas by means of its religious and spiritual support. Khumalo (2003:114) suggests that the Bible could be used as the conscience of the people, to help them stand for themselves and change their condition. This could be done by the preaching of the gospel for the 'first six months' to the people as a means of encouraging them to stand on their own. This message will encourage people to take initiatives in delivery programmes.

#### 4 LET THE CHILDREN BE

Narayan and Petesch (2002:483) argued that children bear the brunt of their family problems that include poverty and insecurity. Without means to provide for their children, parents face agonising choices over using extremely limited resources to somehow make life better for their children. Despite their efforts, many poor parents are unable to protect their children from the dangers that surround them in their environment. From the Biblical perspective, Pais's (1991:23) perception of Christ and the child from attitude to relationship is

relevant.<sup>16</sup> If we were seriously to take Jesus's words and receive each child in the name of Christ, then we might not have had questionable attitudes towards them. We might all have shared the responsibilities for the fate of the children. Our collective efforts are supposed to form individual attitudes (and vice versa) and limit possibilities for free relationship.

Biblical responsibility of the church against violence is to curb it before it happens or heal and give the victims hope. Sandford (1988:121) is quick to warn us that, while we want to encourage forgiveness, we must also give the perpetrators a chance to account for their deeds, so that they may not repeat them or let others do similar things. He says, often people fail to see the relationship between sowing and reaping. He warns against the present reaping that has to do with judgmental responses made by wounds in the past when we were little children. Practising responses to wounds since childhood, may have coloured and controlled our entire way of seeing and interpreting life (Luke 6:22, 23).

All of us build powerful unconscious defensive coping mechanisms that provide us with a measure of safety from pain (Luke 6:45). This keeps us from a wholesome, intimate relationship with God and from people who could teach our hearts to trust and nurture us to grow. And thus we consign ourselves to doing what has been done to us, both because of the law, and because of love we have never really known.

Research (Sandford 1988:122) reveals that most of the abusers are involved in service-oriented occupations and activities. It is not uncommon for them to be teachers, leaders, day-care workers, ministers, youth leaders, et cetera. They are often charming, intelligent people who have gained a good measure of respect in the community.<sup>17</sup> To this fact women and children in disadvantaged communities are victims. The biblical message will have to help perpetrators as well. Sandford (1988:122) suggests that healing should not only be offered to the victims alone, but also to the perpetrators and their families.

#### 4.1 Children's rights in violent communities

In taking action for children's rights there is a need to understand the causes of violence in a society and its effects on children. It is important to look at ways and means of interventions that will break the cycle of violence against children. There is emotional damage to children who live in violent societies.<sup>18</sup> Children from this environment do not develop a secure and happy sense of their identity and self-worth. Lack of self-confidence may make them aggressive or timid. They often lack continuity and regularity in care and fail to form bonds with and attachment to caregivers and may not grow emotionally. They do not develop a sense of trust, which allows them to explore their world and their capabilities, because they do not experience the world as a predictable and a safe place.

Mugambi (1988:160-162) went as far as investigating and challenging the compatibility and conflicts between Christian and traditional values including African child support. To both Mugambi (1988) and Mbiti (1969) belief in the continuity of life is an antidote. In other words, tendencies like various forms of child abuses seem to occur outside the true African traditional moral principles. Other African scholars<sup>19</sup> support the notion of Mugambi and Mbiti that African child rearing and moral value systems need to be revisited.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Squatter camps are socially and economically depressed areas and as a result are severely disadvantaged. The faith communities themselves have no resources to boost those areas. Churches could only support the efforts by local government in creating opportunities for growth and development of children (Slack 1986:84). Young people are aware of being children and poor because they themselves have passed the stage of childhood of poverty. This makes them more mature and better at getting knowledge about children. They learn to amuse themselves together and, to be cheerful despite the problems.

The only way of ensuring that what children have learnt lasts and will have some impact on homes and communities, is by getting the parents involved; they discover their capacity for self-education; they discover how to bring up their children in freedom, better ways to survive, how to organise themselves and join in (Slack 1986:85). Faith communities need not isolate families in their communal setting by isolating certain members to be their members while the rest of the family is left out. This causes division and conflict of interests among families, especially those of weak background as in the squatter areas. The unity of the faith communities must be extended by building family units to accommodate families larger than one or two people in a family. The notion of *ubuntu* will then come into the picture and help to build a strong child support base.

The resilience of children who are disadvantaged must be encouraged so that they can better cope in a violent society. Trotter (2004:137-163) suggests building skills to improve relationships. Resilient children are less likely to be abused since perpetrators often target children who appear to be easy victims. Resilient children are said to be more likely to seek and get help if they are abused. They also recover more quickly from hurt. They are less likely to perpetuate the spiral of violence in their communities.

Parents, caregivers and educators need to encourage the attitudes, qualities and skills that make for resilient children. In his *Challenging issues*, Moila (2002:107) views caring for children as a responsibility of both Africans traditional society and Christians alike. In Africa culture, children belong to the whole community. Socialising interaction with a Christian community shapes Christian self-identity. Within such a community children come to appropriate Christian symbols which carry forward the Christian community. In the squatter situation faith communities must be sought to reach out to the families where they have members and attempt to conscientise them into caring for children. The problem of children cannot be addressed without the involvement of parents or responsible guardians. African Christian parents have to ensure that their children receive Christian nurturing and so must the community at large.

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ENDNOTES

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- 1 Qualitative research does not necessarily mean interpretative research. It can be used in different paradigms. Qualitative research can be positivistic, interpretive, or critical. This exemplifies the dynamic characteristics of this method. A study can be changed if a person or subject changes. Example: If a student is interviewing victims of sexual assault and one of the interviewees presents a journal to be read because he or she feels uncomfortable about the subject matter. The researcher can change the constraints of the study and still extract necessary contextual information about the victim's experience.
- 2 Jesus Christ has generally been viewed as the Son of God and God has never betrayed or rejected him like we see many children abandoned these days (Acts 5:30, 31). The interesting idea in this scriptural verse is: the God of fathers who raised up Jesus (Sandford 1988:151). In this way we could conclude that God is the God of families.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 In 1939, the Natives Land Act was enacted, setting aside eight percent of South Africa's land for black occupancy. Whites, who made up only 20 percent of the population, were given 90 percent of the land. Black Africans were not allowed to buy, rent, or even be sharecroppers outside their designated area. Thousands of squatters were evicted from farms and forced into increasingly overcrowded and impoverished reserves, or into the cities. Those who remained were reduced to the status of landless labourers. This has remained to brew an unruly struggle for survival to this day.
- 6 It is normal to expect parents to be violent to their children when society has nothing else to offer than exclusion. Poverty, unemployment, and inaccessible health care and education are the roots of violence. We may therefore conclude that informal settlements are peripheral zones which the government is unable to develop due to their illegal standing. But there are many children born in these areas. Whose responsibility are these children? Let us turn to investigate the African position on this view.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 African Christianity is Christianity taking into account African principles, the context of which does not promote a Christian lifestyle. African Christianity appears mostly among the African Initiated Churches (AIC).
- 10 If the blame for lack of caring for children is referred to one family in our community, the whole community is expected to intervene in one way or the other. We are simply encouraging the retrieval of 'ubuntu' or 'humanness', where someone's problem becomes others' responsibility.
- 11 The behaviour of parents is the mirror for the future of children. What about the unfortunate children with parents who model evil practices to children. Think of child rape, beating of children and forcing them to be street kids? What about children without parents possibly through AIDS or any natural causes?
- 12 Someone is referring to individual Christians, Churches and other religious organisations, youth clubs and other welfare support groups.
- 13 As a researcher I visit these areas often in and around Gauteng Province. Indeed over the weekend of the month-end, they tend to gather in the nearby school, houses, shacks and open field to ponder their business.
- 14 The Malawian people who live in squatter areas will organise to send one of their members back home to be buried. It is an obligation of each and every Malawian outside their country. This practice is now common among most of foreigners in South Africa.
- 15 Khumalo 2003, 85.
- 16 Pais (1991:23) reads the section in the Bible where it is written, "And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me'". (Mk 9:36-37).
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 In African societies violence in a community is regarded as counter to normality and should be avoided at all costs. No child can grow on his or her own. Mbiti (1969:121-

- 132) supports this when referring to no break in the process of rearing children. From birth to death community support is imperative.
- 19 Boateng (1979:14) discovered that social scientists in western cultures agree that the transition from youth to manhood with its sexual ripening is accompanied with prolonged conflicts marked by varying degrees of frustrations, guilt and at times a total break in inter-generational communication. As a result emphasis should be on separate or special child education.