

**THE SILENT VOICES OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN LIVING IN THE HIV AND AIDS ENVIRONMENT IN
URBAN ZAMBIA: A PASTORAL CARE CHALLENGE**

by

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

**FACULTY OF THEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

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April 2012

SUMMARY

Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) living in the HIV and AIDS environment in urban Zambia face numerous challenges. In most cases the children are either infected or affected by the HIV and AIDS crisis. The majority of orphans have lost one or both parents, while vulnerable children are too poor to afford basic needs of life (food, clothing, shelter). The challenges faced include lack of parental nurture and care when needed most at a critical period of growth. They suffer poverty, lack of health care and education, homelessness, violence, community scorn and humiliation.

The research's aim was to listen and gain a deeper understanding of the children's circumstances as they tell their silent stories and experiences of care and/or lack of it. The other specific objectives were: to provide an enabling environment where the children could voice their "silent" voices freely, and to disseminate the study findings to policy makers for consideration in formulating developmental and children care policies.

The research was carried out from a narrative approach within a postmodern social-constructionist paradigm. The listening of the stories and experiences of the OVC was done from a Practical Theological perspective. In the research process, various discourses about orphans, vulnerable children, care, HIV and AIDS and urban Zambia were examined and described.

Three separate groups of children participants were drawn from 3 care giving non-governmental organizations (NGOs) located in separate peri-urban areas within Lusaka city. These were: Cheshire Homes Society of Zambia: Divine Providence Home, St. Lawrence Home of Hope and Kondwa Day Centre for Orphans (Seko House).

The first two are faith based organisations (FBO) while the third is a community based organisation (CBO). St. Lawrence Home operates two ministries: one provides residential holistic care to the OVC, and the other is a street children ministry whose main objective is to reintegrate street children with their families.

The researcher also interacted and listened to the voices of the care givers about care of the children. The NGOs also talked about the various aspects and challenges they encounter in their efforts to provide holistic care to the marginalized children.

To enhance the understanding of the co-researchers' stories and experiences, the African world view with regard to children and their care was explored and described. In addition, the various voices and discourses that affect OVC were brought into conversation as research done in Africa was reviewed. The feedback and reflections by the researcher and the various co-researchers was mainly based on the emerging research data categories and themes.

The implications for practical theology were discussed. In particular, the various pastoral care challenges in this era of the HIV and AIDS crisis and the phenomenon of OVC were explored and described.

As an outcome of the research, various care narratives were described. In addition other outcomes were identified, reflected upon and described. Finally, while evaluating the research process, issues of reliability, validity, credibility, transferability, and consistency in conformity with qualitative research were discussed.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis entitled:

**THE SILENT VOICES OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN
LIVING IN THE HIV AND AIDS ENVIRONMENT IN URBAN ZAMBIA: A
PASTORAL CHALLENGE**

is my own original work, and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Deborah Wanjiku Shawa

April 2012

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the courageous children orphaned by AIDS and vulnerable children who accompanied me on my research journey.

I commend you for having the courage to tell your story and determination to fight for your survival.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to the research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all my dear companions on my life and research journey

The Holy Trinity for His enabling Grace

Alfred Shawa

Carol Hamane

Richard & Hannah Chivaka

Kalunga Shawa

Nyambura Shawa

Thank you for your prayers and technical support.

The research participating NGOs.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Prof. Rev. Andy Dearman, Tx, USA

Rev. Dick Powell, Tx, USA

Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, Tx. USA

Mr. Benson Njobvu, University of Zambia

Thank you for your prayers, financial and logistical support

Dr. Amanda Richter, University of Pretoria

Thank you for your encouragement and editing

Professor J C Müller, University of Pretoria

Thank you for your encouragement and guidance

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Zambia is a consequence of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Many of these children are orphaned at a critical developmental stage of their lives when parental care and nurture is most needed. In the African world view, children's opinions in matters concerning them including care are rarely sort or heard.

The main aim of this research was to gain a holistic understanding of the silent voices of children affected and/or infected by the HIV and AIDS, and specifically about their experiences of care and/or lack of it. The other aims were: 1) to research alternative means of getting the silent stories of the marginalized children heard by the Zambian society; and 2) to disseminate the research findings to policy makers.

Ten children orphaned by AIDS and vulnerable children, who are the co-researchers, drawn from three Lusaka urban based NGOs participated in the study. The research process and experience was reflected upon by the researcher, co-researchers and the care givers. The research was carried out from a Practical Theology perspective and the narrative approach within the postmodern social-constructionist paradigm. The ABDCE model for fiction writing as a metaphor for doing narrative research was used. This approach enabled the researcher to carry out the research in a systematic manner. It also allowed the researcher and the co-researchers to begin and work together throughout the research process, as the researcher listened to the co-researchers' stories and experiences of care and/or lack of it and was drawn into them.

KEY TERMS

Orphans and Vulnerable children (OVC)

HIV and AIDS

Care

Silent voices

Pastoral care

Narratives

Social constructionism

African world view

Extended family

Urban Zambia

Shanty compounds (slums)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	1
CHAPTER 1	9
1.1 INTRODUCTION	9
1.2 CHILDREN ORPHANED BY AIDS ON THE STREETS	11
1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH	13
1.3.1 Statistical information of children orphaned by AIDS	14
1.3.2 Comparative regional figures of children orphaned by AIDS	14
1.4 INTEREST AND MOTIVATION	17
1.5 RESEARCH TOPIC	19
1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW	19
1.6.1 Review of research done in Zambia	21
1.7 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY	24
1.8 RESEARCH QUESTION	25
1.8.1 Aims and objectives	26
1.9 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY	27
1.9.1 Positioning	27
1.9.2 Practical theology	27
1.9.3 Narrative approach	31
<i>1.9.3.1 Co-researcher</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>1.9.3.2 Researcher</i>	<i>32</i>
1.9.4 Postmodern paradigm	34
1.9.5 Social constructionism	37
1.9.6 Qualitative research	38
1.10 THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH	40
1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	42
1.11.1 Research method	43
<i>1.11.1.1 Action</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>1.11.1.2 Background</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>1.11.1.3 Development</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>1.11.1.4 Climax</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>1.11.1.5 Ending</i>	<i>53</i>
1.12 RESEARCH DELIMITATIONS	54
1.13 ETHICS IN RESEARCH	55

1.13.1 Informed consent.....	55
1.13.2 Confidentiality and anonymity.....	57
1.14 CHALLENGES.....	57
1.15 KEY CONCEPTS.....	58
1.16 RESEARCH CHAPTERS.....	60
1.17 CLOSING REMARKS.....	62
CHAPTER 2.....	62
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	62
2.2 THE STORY OF URBAN ZAMBIA.....	63
2.2.1 Needs in urban areas.....	63
2.3 IDENTIFYING CARE GIVING NGOs.....	64
2.3.1 Criteria for selecting participating NGOs.....	65
2.3.3 Cheshire Homes Society: Divine Providence Home.....	66
2.3.2.1 <i>Research participants living in Divine Providence Home</i>	66
2.3.3 St Lawrence Home of Hope.....	68
2.3.3.1 <i>Research participants living on the streets</i>	70
2.3.4 Kondwa Day Centre for Orphans (Seko House).....	70
2.3.4.1 <i>Research participants living in Seko House</i>	71
2.3.5 Similarities and differences among the NGOs.....	71
2.4 PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING CO-RESEARCHERS.....	73
2.4.1 Criteria of selecting research participants.....	74
2.4.2 Introductory sessions.....	74
2.4.2.1 <i>Session 1: Street children at Soweto market</i>	75
2.4.2.2 <i>Session 2: Divine Providence Home</i>	75
2.4.2.3 <i>Session 3: Seko House</i>	76
2.4.4 Reflection on the three sessions.....	77

2.5 SELECTION OF STORIES: DESIGN, SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION.....	78
2.5.1 Sampling.....	79
2.5.2 Data collection strategies.....	79
2.6 CO-RESEARCHERS SPEAK.....	81
2.6.1 Babra – ‘When I wanted to bath they were saying ‘go back to mother’s death’.....	81
2.6.2 Brenader Sasha – ‘When my father died he took everything, we where only left with one chair and our cloths’.....	83
2.6.3 Katty Perry – ‘I was sleeping, he came and removed his pajamas he wanted to sleep with me then I screamed and ran away’.....	85
2.6.4 Preta – ‘After my mother died, my brothers and sisters left me alone with my father’.....	88
2.6.5 Albert – ‘Life is good here because the Sisters are giving us everything’.....	93
2.6.6 Horace – ‘I can’t say that my father is dead, but I don’t know where he is now, he just left’.....	94
2.6.7 Jatropa – ‘I once stayed at St. Lawrence Home then my friend told me ‘let us go to town’.....	95
2.6.8 Oliver – ‘When I started my education, that’s when I thanked God’.....	96
2.6.9 Villa – ‘When I was in the compound there was no one to take Care of me’.....	98
2.7 REFLECTIONS.....	102
2.8 CLOSING REMARKS.....	102
CHAPTER 3.....	104
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	104

3.2 VIEWS ON OVC RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN	
IN AFRICA.....	105
3.3 TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING A WORLD VIEW.....	107
3.3.1 Understanding an African world view.....	108
3.3.1.1 <i>African traditional culture.....</i>	109
3.3.1.2 <i>Children in the African culture.....</i>	112
3.3.1.3 <i>The extended family.....</i>	114
3.4 AFRICAN THEOLOGY.....	118
3.5 DISCOURSES IN THIS RESEARCH.....	122
3.5.1 Towards understanding a discourse.....	122
3.5.2 Discourse of multi ethnicity.....	123
3.5.3 Urbanization discourses.....	124
3.5.3.1 <i>Urbanization and disruption of African family.....</i>	125
3.5.3.2 <i>Urbanization and Western influence.....</i>	127
3.5.3.3 <i>Urbanization and Western social amenities.....</i>	128
3.5.3.4 <i>Urbanization and African child care discourse.....</i>	129
3.6 CARE DISCOURSES.....	129
3.6.1 Views on care by the OVC.....	130
3.6.2 Care and/or lack of care for the OVC.....	130
3.6.2.1 <i>psychosocial needs of orphans.....</i>	131
3.6.2.2 <i>Trauma of an orphan family.....</i>	132
3.6.2.3 <i>Stigmatization.....</i>	133
3.6.2.4 <i>Discrimination.....</i>	133
3.7 OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES TO ORPHAN CRISIS.....	134
3.7.1 Government response to the OVC crisis.....	135
3.7.2 Non-governmental organizations care response.....	136

3.8 CLOSING REMARKS.....	137
CHAPTER 4.....	139
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	139
4.2 STORIES OF OTHER ORPHANED CHILDREN.....	140
4.2.1 Difficulties in accessing health care.....	140
4.2.2 Problems faced with education.....	141
4.3 LISTENING TO CO-RESEARCHERS' EXPERIENCES	
 OF CARE.....	141
4.3.1 Co-researchers' experience of extended family care.....	142
4.3.2 Co-researches' experiences of NGO's care.....	147
4.3.3 Reflections on co-researchers' experience	
 NGOs' care.....	149
4.4 FEEDBACK SESSIONS WITH THE PARTICIPATING	
 NGOs.....	151
4.5 TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING CARE.....	156
4.5.1 Care described in various forms.....	157
4.5.2 Care narratives from this study.....	159
<i>4.5.2.1 Destabilizing care.....</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>4.5.2.2 Torturous care.....</i>	<i>160</i>
<i>4.5.2.3 Conditional care.....</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>4.5.2.4 Burdensome care.....</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>4.5.2.5 Unconditional care.....</i>	<i>163</i>
<i>4.5.2.6 Community care.....</i>	<i>163</i>
<i>4.5.2.7 Empowering care.....</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>4.5.2.8 Present care.....</i>	<i>166</i>

4.5.2.9 <i>Storying care</i>	167
4.6 LESSONS LEARNED	168
4.7 CLOSING REMARKS	169
CHAPTER 5	170
5.1 INTRODUCTION	170
5.2 THE PROCESS OF ARRIVING AT THE OUTCOMES	170
5.2.1 Narratives of good care.....	171
5.2.2 Stories of other care.....	172
5.2.3 Silent narratives.....	173
5.2.4 Faith in God.....	174
5.2.5 Children’s stories of preferred care.....	176
5.2.5.1 <i>Orphaned siblings should live together</i>	176
5.2.5.2 <i>State should care for the OVC</i>	176
5.2.6 Institutional care.....	177
5.3 A FRESH UNDERSTANDING OF OVC CRISIS	178
5.3.1 Reactivation of the African care system.....	178
5.3.2 Children’s views to be taken seriously.....	179
5.3.3 The pastoral care challenge.....	180
5.3.4 Narrative outcome.....	181
5.3.5 Personal outcome.....	181
5.4 CLOSING REMARKS	182
CHAPTER 6	183
6.1 INTRODUCTION	183
6.2 THINGS I OVERLOOKED IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS	184

6.3 CRITICAL REFLECTION ON ETHICAL MATTERS.....	184
6.4 WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE RESEARCH.....	185
6.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	186
6.6 EVALUATION CRITERIA OF THE RESEARCH	
PROCESS.....	187
6.6.1 Reliability.....	187
6.6.2 Validity.....	187
6.6.3 Credibility.....	188
6.6.4 Transferability.....	188
6.6.5 Consistency.....	189
6.7 NARRATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS.....	189
6.7.1 Was space created by the study for new stories and restorying?.....	189
6.7.2 Did the researcher listen and report the stories truthfully?.....	189
6.7.3 How did the researcher involve others in the Interpretation?.....	190
6.7.4 Was transformation/reframing effected by the research process?.....	190
6.7.5 How will the dissemination of the research be done?.....	190
6.8 CLOSURE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS.....	192
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	193
APPENDIX 1:	
CONSENT LETTER TO THE CARE GIVING NGOS.....	203

APPENDIX 2:
INFORMED CONSENT205

APPENDIX 3:
CONSENT FORM FOR CO-RESEARCHERS/PARTICIPANTS.....208

APPENDIX 4:
**GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CO-RESEARCHERS’
INTERVIEWS.....209**

APPENDIX 5:
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REFLECTIONS.....210