

DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

A MODEL FOR PROVIDING EDUCATION TO CHILDREN LIVING ON THE STREETS

1. INTRODUCTION:

The needs of Street Children are unique in the sense that some of the children did not have any formal schooling while others dropped out of school at different levels. The dynamics of the Street Child are complex, especially with regard to provision of formal education. To address the specific educational challenges of Street Children is not based on an easy and quick solution. It will need a well planned, holistic and inter-sectoral approach to be effective.

2. CURRENT SITUATION WITH REGARD TO EDUCATION TO CHILDREN LIVING ON THE STREETS AND OTHER CHILDREN AT RISK (STREET CHILDREN)

Work with Street Children can be divided into the following categories:

1. Prevention work
2. Rehabilitation
3. Follow up support

Each category presents its own challenges in regard to the education of the young person. Below is a broad outline of a model practiced in various forms, by most organizations working with street children in our country, followed by a brief identification of some of the challenges experienced in the different categories.

2.1 PREVENTION WORK:

Where does it take place? In the communities from where the children originate
Reason for required intervention? (As regards education) Poverty levels dictate that families are unable to afford the school fees or school uniform required for the child to be admitted to school. Despite assurances of free education, this is contrary to what is experienced by most organizations, and schools do not accept children without school fees having been paid or without a uniform.

Consequences for the young person? The child is not accepted in the community, hangs around bored, gets involved in negative activities eg drugs, crime, sexual activities resulting in teenage pregnancies, STD's and HIV transmission. Very often he / she will leave his home in the community and look for a better life on the streets.

Benefits of Prevention Programmes:

- i) This is by far the most cost effective intervention
- ii) It is without doubt in the best interests of the young person
- iii) It preserves the family

2.2 REHABILITATION:

An international, three phase model aimed at rehabilitating a young person that is already on the streets, back to his home and community, has been adopted by most organizations working in this sector. An essential underlying principle of this model, is that the young person comes into the organization on his own accord, and *is free to leave should he wish to do so.*

Phase 1: An Outreach Worker works on the streets, identifying children living there, and forming a relationship with them. He establishes the cause for his leaving home and what his family and background is. He offers him the opportunity of coming to the shelter and leaving behind street life. Depending on a variety of factors, largely depending on the length of time he has been on the streets, the child may choose to enter into the shelter programme. This phase takes place on the streets.

Phase 2: This phase is conducted at a halfway-house, sometimes referred to as a drop-in centre, normally situated in, or very close to the town or city centre. Here the children will receive food, a place to sleep and wash. Daily activities will be arranged including basic education classes. The objective here is:

- * to re-introduce some structure and routine into the life of the child
- * to assess the education level of the child

- * to meet the education requirements of the child
- * to prepare him to be returned to mainstream education if possible
- * if not possible, to establish other paths for him to follow that would equip him to provide for himself and a family in the future

- Notes:
1. Dept Welfare states that a child may not remain in this phase for longer than 6 months
 2. Children come and go as they please, so numbers and attendances fluctuate
 3. Children of a wide range in ages, education levels, skills and ability etc are all mixed together during this phase

Phase 3: Once a child has been stabilized, weaned off any substances etc and it has been established that he cannot immediately be reunited with his family – *and when he has indicated that he would like to return to school* – he is transferred to a third phase shelter which in essence functions as a children’s home. Here the child lives and attends the local school. At the same time, work continues at restoring the family relationships, or assisting the family to become self-supporting, or bringing it to a point where the child can be successfully returned there.

- Notes:
1. Dept Welfare states that a child may not remain in this phase for longer than 2 years if the shelter is registered as a children’s home.
 2. Currently, the daily subsidy by the KZN Dept Welfare for a shelter is R 40.00 per child per day, which equates to R 1200.00 per month if the child is there for the full month. The subsidy for a children’s home is R 1500.00 per month per child.

2.3 CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION IN EACH PHASE:

Phase 1: While living on the streets, children receive no education. The longer they spend on the streets, the further they get left behind by their peers, and the more out of step they get for their age / grade. This results in it becoming increasingly difficult for the child to be returned to mainstream education.

Phase 2: Currently each organization operates in isolation, developing their own informal education programmes, conducted very often by unqualified volunteers, with varying levels of competence. These educators are not registered with the Dept Education to conduct assessments, nor are the programmes offered recognized by the Dept Education. The result is that from an education point of view, any time spent at the phase 2 shelter, which is crucial in the rehabilitation process, is time wasted in the child’s school career. This sometimes results in the organization ‘rushing’ the child through this phase, and transferring him to ‘normal’ school and the third phase shelter, when he is not yet fully prepared. This in turn means he is unable to cope with this next phase, and will ultimately drop out of the programme.

Another challenge faced during this phase is of older children or youths, with very little formal education. It is impossible for them ever to attend school, and as a result they are basically unemployable with little chance of successful permanent rehabilitation.

Phase 3: Challenges faced by the child and/or the organization on his returning to mainstream education are varied. These include:

- i) reluctance on the part of the school to accept children from shelters, labelled as street children
- ii) victimization of the children by teachers and scholars
- iv) inability of teachers to cope with these children
- v) financial burden on organization in terms of school fees and uniforms
- vi) opportunities for children who are not academically inclined, to develop skills that will lead to their becoming employable
- vii) high numbers of learners in a class result in little individual attention being able to be given to each child. Children with a background from the streets often need more attention.

2.4 FOLLOW UP SUPPORT:

The ultimate objective in the Rehabilitation Programme is that the child return to his community, placed in the care of his family / extended family / foster family. When both the child and the receiving family are ready for reunification, the child is returned home, and transferred to a nearby school. This involves a crucial transition period, when the child is extremely vulnerable, and during which he requires the support of people around him, whom he can trust. There is currently no funding for this essential step in the process, and as a result it is often neglected, simply due to lack of funds on behalf of the shelter.

In the event that a child is experiencing difficulties with his new environment, he will often stop attending school, or display behavioral problems at school. If attended to quickly, the underlying cause can often easily be sorted out, or an alternative placement found for the child. If however, they are not identified and addressed, the child will eventually drop out of school, leave his home again and return to the streets.

His negative experience of the shelter programme and intervention in his life, will have contributed to his distrust of adults and society, compounded his hurt, anger and despair, and will make it almost impossible to reach him again. All the time, resources and energy that was spent on him during the failed rehabilitation process would have been wasted. His options in life are extremely limited, and although some do create for themselves a positive life path in society, many resort to crime for their survival.

3. EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6 – SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION. BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM (EWP 6)

Education White Paper 6 outlines an inclusive education and training system that provides education to all learners. The Ministry of Education is committed to the provision of educational opportunities in particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs. Children living on the streets are among these learners whose educational needs should be addressed by the Department of Education.

All barriers to learning and development should be addressed in our classrooms and schools. Amongst the more frequent causes of barriers are:

- Disability as a barrier
- Language and Communication
- Lack of Parental Recognition and Involvement
- Socio-economic Barriers
- Attitudes
- Inadequate opportunity for programme-to-work linkages
- Inflexible curriculum and assessment practices
- Inappropriate teaching methodologies.

WP6 emphasises that all children can learn and all children need support.

Support is defined as all the activities and assistance needed that would increase the capacity of the school to respond to diversity, thus ensuring effective learning and development. The Revised National Curriculum Statement is the curriculum that has been identified as the only curriculum for ALL learners. Adaptation within this curriculum is advocated. For learners experiencing barriers to learning, the strategy of “designing down”, “breaking down” or “scaffolding” the assessment standards into manageable steps, allowing enough time for learners experiencing barriers to learning to demonstrate their attainment of the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes practically, is essential and recommended. All learners may not attain a General Education and Training certificate, but they will all achieve to their full potential which will be acknowledged through certification. The adaptation of the curriculum for the design of learning programmes could influence:

- The straddling of Grades and Phases

- The number of learning programmes
- The weighting of learning programmes
- The duration of learning programmes
- The use of programmes-to-work linkages to facilitate access to the curriculum
- Measures for portability
- Decision-making criteria around progression and certification.

The White Paper 6 refers to creating support services along three levels:

- low-intensive support which would be provided at ordinary schools,
- moderate support which would be provided at Full-Service schools and
- high-intensive support which would be provided at Resource Centres /Special schools.

To determine the intensity of support required, the needs of the learner, educator, school and system at large need to be considered. Therefore the intensity level is arrived at by considering more than individual learner needs; it will involve an assessment of the nature of barriers experienced. The range of barriers could include factors such as inappropriate /inadequate policies, overcrowded classrooms, language of teaching and hearing, poverty, inadequate teaching and learning resources, etc.

Support needs to be provided as far as possible within the curriculum and not as a separate programme.

4. SUGGESTED MODEL FOR THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STREET CHILDREN:

SUGGESTED MODEL

Children living in a shelter who can attend neighbouring schools	Children not living in a shelter, but live on the streets	Provision within the shelter
Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Assessment • Good prognosis • Funding for school uniform, etc • Participating schools 	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Assessment • Taking “school” to street – Mobile “school” • Well trained educators able to teach at all levels and able to manage specific behaviour problems • Adapted curriculum • Resources • Involvement of different Directorates within Department of Education, i.e. Curriculum, PGSES, Arts & Culture, Sports & Recreation, Elits, ABET • Education Programme, i.e. Remedial Education 	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Assessment • Learning site for cluster of shelters • Bridging Programme • Multi focal education – GET, FET, ABET & Skills Training • Well trained educators able to teach at all levels and able to manage specific behaviour problems • Adapted curriculum – remedial programme • Resources • Involvement of different Directorates within Department of Education, i.e. Curriculum, PGSES, Arts & Culture, Sports & Recreation, Elits, ABET
ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Schools as centres of care and support – MiET project • Implementation of Inclusive Education Framework • Life Orientation Learning Area to include programmes on care and support • Appointment of school counsellors 		

5. BRIDGING PROGRAMME:

Start from where they are; build on what they have : Bridging education for street children

Where they are

- a. On the streets, long-term, with the intention of not entering a shelter or returning home;
- b. On the streets, short-term, with mixed feeling about entering a shelter or returning home;
- c. In a shelter and not attending school;
- d. In a shelter, attending school;
- e. Back “home”.

What they (mostly) have to build on

- Cognitive capacities, developed outside of the classroom – as other children – such as recollection, logical reasoning and the formulation of concepts;
- Street-smart capacities:
 - Situation-based skills – e.g. researchers(1973; 1988) found child street vendors able to solve complex, context-embedded problems which other children could not do & Richter (1996) found about a third of street children in her study to have intellectual and problem-solving capacities beyond expected for their backgrounds;
 - Exceptional fortitude, a creative mind and an astute knowledge of human nature – required for street survival.

Divergences from (average) suburban children in school

- (Routine), skilled impression management – of individuals and institutions – a necessary survival skill, but one that sometimes makes it hard to reach the core truth;
- Valued personal autonomy that militates against long classroom routines and formal structures;
- Emphasis on social co-participation in learning (situational learning) rather than abstract skills to employ in varied contexts;
- Extended time on South African streets leads to gradual lose of abilities and acquisition of “handicaps” (Richter 1996);
- Relatively high incidence of personal stress or trauma, often unrecognized unless symptoms very obvious (e.g. bed-wetting, inappropriate sexual advances, aggression, etc.);
- Previously unrecognized learning difficulties leading to categorization of lack of classroom achievement or truanting, as “naughtiness”;
- Due to very poor home backgrounds, often little understanding of routine and household products and processes with which middle class families are familiar, e.g. toolkits and how tools are used, other machinery and technology, etc.

Venue for bridging programme

- Different from the space in which children normally sleep or have meals;
- Consider the inclusion of a small “do nothing” room or section for the occasions when a child rebels disruptively and refuses to do anything – usually the space is seldom inhabited for long if the program is working well;
- Preferably small rooms and flexible furniture for both interactive and formal learning rather than huge blocks of learners at desks;
- Children recommend name for the venue; vote on those found acceptable.

Possible effects at school (without prior bridging programme)

- Poor concentration span

- Disruptive behaviour (including disobedience)
- Hostility towards other learners
- Labelled, targeted for discrimination by staff and other children
- Diminished self-esteem through poor shelter back-up (wrong lunches, no books, breakfast etc.)

Needed in bridging program

Individual assessment to establish:

- Basic capacities and appropriate school grade;
- Areas of personal stress requiring attention;
- Potential career orientation.

Programme:

- "Team agreement" – developed in a participatory process with the children – on how the program will work best (i.e. old fashioned rules, based on personal respect and respect for others);
- Bi-faceted practical level and academic learning process;
- Transformation process from situated (contextual, social, negotiated) learning to abstract level;
- Tutoring in school curriculum to bring up to appropriate grade for re-entry to school, or
- Basic literacy and numeracy leading to subsequent appropriate skills training.

Networking cooperation:

If bridging programme is shelter-based, feeder NGOs need to agree and commit:

- times for delivery and collection of children;
- adequate feeding of children – before delivery (and snack packs?);
- clothing to be worn;
- reporting system, including commendation (frequent), absentees, difficult behaviour, shelter problems that might influence a child's behaviour during the programme;

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Table 1 Paradox apparent in current research evidence on street children

Developmental Areas & coping	Evidence of risk & vulnerability	vs	Evidence of adaptability
Shelter	-Exposure		+Ingenuity
Safety	-Pedestrian accidents -Violence / victimization		+Group protection
Nutrition	-Unreliable -Insufficient		+Sharing resources +Ingenuity in acquisition
Health	-Intoxication -Sexually transmitted diseases -Untreated illnesses / injuries		+Peer support
Emotional			
Attachment	-Loss/ lack of adult caregiver relationship		+Peer bonding
Emotional stability 'freedom'	-Anxiety, regression, depression		+ Value placed on +Autonomy
Social			
Social identity	-Social reject		+Peer morality

	-Criminal / Amoral -Deceiver / Opportunist	+Survivor
Peer relationship	-Erratic/unstable	+Mutual caring
Cognitive		
Basic cognitive functions	+Problem solving +Ingenuity	-Attention/concentration
	-Visuo-Spatial -Memory	
Scholastic skills skills	-Loss of schooling (basics)	+Informal computational

Donald, D. & Swart-Kruger, J. The South African street child: developmental implications. S.Afr.J.Psychol.1994, 24(4):169-174

6. REINTEGRATION PROCESS:

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has approved a project by the Media in Education Trust to establish schools as centres of care and support. The overall goal of this project is to reduce the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on impoverished rural communities, and specifically on orphans and vulnerable children. The Primary objective is to establish clusters of schools throughout the Province that can lead a strategy which responds to HIV/AIDS and improves care and support for orphans and vulnerable children, This will be achieved by:

- Establishing self-reliant school cluster and community structures which can deal with issues related to HIV/AIDS ;
- Empowering these school and community structures, through a capacity building and support programme, to care for orphans and vulnerable children.

The project will commence in 2006 targeting 1200 school throughout the Province. It will take five years to establish this concept in all school within the Province. At each of the clusters a child care co-ordinator will be appointed to mobilise the community and to coordinate the process within the schools.