



Save the Children
United Kingdom & Norway



A Bridge Across The Zambezi

*What needs to be done
for children?*

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Save the Children

UK and Norway



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Save the Children fights for children around the world who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence. We work with them to find lifelong answers to the problems they face.

Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway are members of the International Save the Children Alliance, the world's leading independent children's rights organization, with members in 27 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.





Foreword

In a recent series of front-page articles in the national newspaper of Mozambique, considerable optimism was expressed at the pending construction of a new bridge across the Zambezi River, between Caia and Chimuara. There is little doubt that the bridge when finished in 2009 will be welcomed by travellers and business people in many parts of Mozambique. It will speed up the flow of traffic between the north and south of the country and reduce the considerable waiting time experienced by many drivers at the current crossing over the river serviced by an often slow and unreliable ferry. The construction effort itself will bring much needed jobs into the area. Work will be created not only in relation to the building of the actual physical infrastructure. Other opportunities will also open up to service the large number of employees, estimated at several thousand, who will be based in both Caia and Chimuara for a number of years.

Yet past experience in both these locations, as well as lessons from elsewhere, urge a note of caution amid the justifiable enthusiasm that has greeted this initiative. Previous infrastructure projects have brought economic and other benefits but have left a trail of negative social consequences behind them. As the following report documents, the presence of large numbers of single, male workers flush with money in an impoverished community has led in the past to the sexual and physical exploitation

of local women and children, prompted by their circumstances to enter into relationships which frequently pose a threat to themselves and their families around them. Workers' compounds and illegal settlements that have arisen to cater for stranded travellers and delayed truck drivers have, according to many community members interviewed for this report, produced an unsafe, unsavoury and dangerous environment, and one to which their children are exposed.

At a time when HIV/AIDS has assumed a prevalence rate of over 20 per cent in the provinces of Mozambique where Caia and Chimuara are located, the influx of a large army of men without their wives and with money to spend has spread concern among many local adults and children. Teachers warn about children dropping out of school in order to find employment on or around the construction site. Social workers warn about the potential exploitation of children in hazardous activities, including their involvement in prostitution in the shantytowns that have already developed on both sides of the river. Health workers are worried about an escalation in sexually transmitted diseases based on their past experience when migrant workers entered their locations for extended periods of time. And parents warn of the temptations offered to their children by the promise of easy money, and the risks posed to their education, health and social welfare as a result.

None of these negative consequences are inevitable if action is taken now to put in place measures to mitigate against the impacts mentioned above. Indeed the funders of the bridge, as well as the government of Mozambique, have indicated that social protection for indigenous communities has to be a part of this project as it develops over the next few years. With, however, the projected starting date only a few months away¹, this window of opportunity, which might allow agencies to establish adequate protection for children in these locations, is rapidly closing. This report concludes with a series of practical recommendations largely drawn from a process of community feedback, including children



themselves, as to what needs to be established now, and before any significant damage is done. This new bridge across the Zambezi River has been hailed as a welcome development for all of Mozambique in terms of what it will bring to economic progress. With commitment and foresight we also need to ensure that it does not harm the children and adults of the two locations where it will be sited.

Chris McIvor
(Programme Director for SC (UK)
in Mozambique on behalf of the
editorial team.)

¹ The final draft of this report was completed in March 2006.

Abbreviations

ANE	National Road Administration
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
SC	Save the Children





Introduction: **Why is Save the Children concerned?**



In 2004 and 2005, Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway conducted research with a view to gaining a better understanding of the existing vulnerabilities and risks facing children¹ in Caia and Chimuara prior to the pending construction of a new bridge across the Zambezi River. Save the Children's findings have created a concern that a combination of local circumstances and external factors have made this river area, located in the central region of Mozambique, particularly dangerous for children. The communities here already endure conditions of poverty and a weakening of family and community structures. Exacerbating these conditions are disturbing patterns of sexual abuse and exploitation² of girls in the form of child prostitution.

There is also the existence of hazardous child labour³ and incidences of children being mistreated and physically abused. These problems are mostly associated with the presence of high numbers of truck drivers and motorists at the ferry crossing site between Caia and Chimuara, and also due to the behaviour of workers who are brought in from outside to complete large infrastructural

development projects. These projects include an electrification plant, rehabilitation of Mozambique's national highway in the area and a de-mining programme. Save the Children is concerned that with a rapid influx of new workers from other parts of Mozambique with considerably more money than people in their host communities, local children will become even more susceptible to various forms of abuse

¹ Save the Children defines a child as a person under the age of 18 based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

² In Save the Children's policy, child sexual abuse and exploitation are defined as the imposition of sexual acts, or acts with sexual overtones, by one or more persons on a child under 18 years of age.

³ Article 32 of the CRC states children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

and exploitation during the construction of the Zambezi Bridge. With appropriate planning, programming and sensitivity in bringing this mega-project to fruition, many of the hardships to which children have already been subjected can be avoided, and their situations potentially improved.

This report focuses principally on examining the impact that the river crossing, and to a lesser extent other infrastructural projects in the area, have on children. These situations are described and better understood primarily through interviews with local children and their communities who are affected by child abuse and exploitation. The report also looks briefly at some facts and trends about child prostitution in Mozambique and elsewhere; and takes an in-depth look at the girls working in the commercial

settlements by the river. A short background and analysis of the bridge construction is provided in terms of some projected consequences on children based on information gathered in research. Recommendations are listed vis-à-vis how children's rights and well-being can be promoted and protected during the construction period. They are directed principally at three groups: those responsible for construction; those in charge of monitoring the project and creating programmes to address any negative social impacts on both local communities and workers; and those responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse and enforcing laws that should protect them. Before this, however, it is important to learn about the general situation of children and their communities in Caia and Chimuara.

Caia and Chimuara: Understanding the local context



History, geography and social dynamics

Both the town of Caia and the river-crossing site seven kilometres away are part of Caia District. They are located on the southern side of the Zambezi in Sofala Province. According to the most recent Census¹ in 1997, the district has 86,001 inhabitants, about 47,300 of whom are children. The locality of Chimuara is located in Mopeia District on the northern bank of the river in Zambézia Province. In 1997, Mopeia District had a population of 71,535 inhabitants, 39,344 of whom were children. Chimuara is situated three kilometres from the river crossing point. The main language spoken in the area is Macena, and a small percentage of the population speaks other indigenous languages and Portuguese.

Caia and Chimuara are in many ways typical of rural Mozambique. As in other parts of the country, this area was deeply affected by war in the 1980s. In some respects, the communities here have not fully recovered even after fourteen years of peace. Until the early nineties, the river crossing area – particularly in Chimuara – was a place where thousands of internally displaced people and refugees became concentrated and lived in difficult conditions. The United Nations reported that after the war, 5000 people who returned or arrived for the first time in Mopeia

District had been refugees in Malawi avoiding the armed conflict in Mozambique. An estimated 20,000 people were displaced inside Mopeia in 1992.² Newcomers and the host communities here have co-existed with some difficulty although there were no reports of significant disputes or violence over land or water after the war ended. However, some land that had once belonged to displaced or refugee families was subsequently occupied by new families during their absence. This has caused some social tension in the community.³ The war and

¹ A more recent census has not been conducted by the Government of Mozambique.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/United Nations Development Programme (1997). "District Development Profiles: Mopeia District Zambézia Province", p 3. Maputo. December.

³ Ibid., p.4.

post-war period have altered family and social dynamics in Caia and Chimuara because of the arrival of people external to this area, including children with no families of their own. This has put some strain on the communities that have taken extended family members into their homes because they already experience poverty and struggle to provide for their own families.

Economy, employment and development

The inhabitants of Caia and Chimuara are dependent on small-scale subsistence agriculture to provide for their families and earn income. The most important crops in Mopeia and Caia districts are maize, sorghum, mexoeira,⁴ sesame, cotton and rice. According to interviews with local children, the sale of products from family plots of land known as machambas⁵ is the main source of the income generated in over 50% of the homes although other evidence would point to a much higher figure.⁶ Some residents also depend on fishing. Informal trading, particularly on the Chimuara side, also contributes to livelihoods. In some cases, adult males in the household have jobs as civil servants or as employees of the electricity plant in Chimuara. There is also a trend towards selling wood in these districts, which has become a lucrative business for some. The interviews with children also revealed that more than two-thirds of them work in order to sustain the family. The activities involve farming in the machambas, small-scale commerce, providing services in the commercial settlements by the river known as 'barracas'⁷ and doing 'ganho-ganho'. Ganho-ganho is an activity involving informal work and errands generally paid on a daily basis, usually with money but sometimes in food. Most children in Caia and Chimuara who do this regularly have lost a mother or father.

The town of Caia has a better developed infrastructure overall compared to its neighbour across the water. Caia and Chimuara both sit on the path of the National Highway Number One (EN1). The highway, which connects the southern, central and northern regions of the country, meets the river on either side due to the recent road rehabilitation. This area is also home to a ferry service, which carries large volumes of traffic to the other side. With the increase in road traffic beginning in the late nineties, the area has also registered growth in commercial activities. Many informal traders and business owners have established barracas, crude guest houses and vending stalls along the river for the purposes of providing goods and services to large transport companies and other motorists passing through.

According to a 2004 poverty and social impact analysis of the Zambezi River crossing project funded by the government of Sweden, the region has started to benefit from several infrastructural development projects in recent years – some already completed and others in planning stages. Chimuara now has access to rural electrification. Caia town depends on a diesel-run generator to provide power for a few hours each night to residents. In December 2005, the generator provided approximately three hours of power in Caia per day. There are also water supply programmes benefiting the communities in Caia and Chimuara. The rehabilitation of the railway (Linha de Sena) is scheduled to begin in 2006 and will likely hire local labour. The Planning and Development Office of the Zambezi Valley has prepared several projects for the sub-region with special focus on agricultural development, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry and wild life, trade, transport and communications.⁸

⁴ A type of cereal indigenous to Africa and widely consumed in Mozambique.

⁵ Small plot of land generally farmed by individual families.

⁶ In early 2005, Save the Children interviewed 120 children ranging in age from seven to sixteen from Caia and Chimuara to learn more about their situations. Most of the children who we spoke to were in primary school, but some others were out of school.

⁷ Informal road side beerstalls and restaurants which are pervasive throughout Mozambique.

⁸ Akesson, G. Poverty and Social Impact Analysis in Connection with the Zambezi River Crossing Project at Caia, Mozambique: Part 1 of a Preliminary Report, p. 6. Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), 2004.

According to community members interviewed on both sides of the river, food insecurity is the most pressing issue in their lives.

Difficulties facing the communities

As was highlighted above, some progress in development and improvements in quality of life have been made possible by local and outside efforts. However, children and their families face ongoing insecurity and hardships resulting mostly from chronic poverty, but also because of unequal gender relations, and a gradual but steady weakening of family and community structures. These daily struggles are manifested in many forms. A child interviewed in Chadimba, a small village close to Caia, described his observations of poverty:

Poor people are those who do not have the necessary support. Their clothes are worn and dirty. They work for food or money from other families and their children do not go to school. Poor people cannot find things such as food, clothing, and they live in poor houses.

According to community members interviewed on both sides of the river, food insecurity is the most pressing issue in their lives. This is aggravated by weather patterns leading to hot and dry conditions making it difficult to grow crops. This affects the availability and diversity of food throughout the year. At the end of the rainy season, there is more variety and a greater abundance of crops. However, during this more plentiful period some families must sell their produce to earn income to purchase

goods and end up with inadequate crops for their own consumption. During the dry season, few varieties are available and amounts of food diminish quickly. This is when the situation becomes particularly critical for residents. Occasionally, there are natural disasters such as droughts, floods and cyclones. A flood in 2001 hit this region of Mozambique particularly hard and displaced 70,000 people from their homes in the Zambezi River Valley. There is also a problem of pests. For example, cattle farming has been limited by the presence of tsetse flies.⁹

Food insecurity is also caused by families having insufficient time to farm their own fields. This is most evident in single parent households or those in which family members are sick and therefore struggle to grow their own crops. Adults and children are often required to find other means outside of agriculture to provide for the household. People in Caia and Chimuará are sometimes forced to work as labourers with food serving as their only payment. As a consequence, the people who are working for food do not have sufficient time to manage their own fields. Thus these families have few possibilities to establish long-term sustainability of their own production. In such a situation, children and youth are the ones suffering most according to the poverty and social impact study.¹⁰ The possibilities of going to school dwindle and children can be forced into situations of exploitative labour.

⁹ UNHCR/UNDP. (1997) District Development Profiles: Mopeia District Zambézia Province, p. 14. Maputo.

¹⁰ Nilsson, Anders. "Conflict analysis regarding two infrastructure projects in Mozambique." Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University. March 2004

One result of this food insecurity is high levels of chronic malnutrition. Of those children interviewed by Save the Children in February and March 2005, 37.8% had only one meal a day. Children from this area typically eat maize porridge with vegetables. When it is available, children will sometimes eat fish, fruits, corncoobs, sugar cane, manioc, sweet potato and inhame.¹¹ A thirteen-year-old from Chimuara who is not presently attending school described his desire for meat in his diet. He said, "If my family would have the means, I would like to eat rice, chicken, goat and pork." In December 2005, residents of Caia and Chimuara reported the food situation to be critical. Some people have resorted to eating 'aquatic fruits', a sour food found in the river that is low in nutrients and toxic if not prepared properly.

Orphans and vulnerable children

There are reports of an increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs)¹² in the area. In 2002, there were an estimated 5824 orphans out of a total 47,300 children in Caia District.¹³ A District Education official in Caia believes that the number is much higher today though he does not have official statistics. Save the Children did not find a recent figure for the number of orphans in Mopeia District. There are more orphans and vulnerable children reported in Caia than Chimuara.

Save the Children interviewed a member of the local council in Chimuara about the situation of orphans. He explained that:

There is no care for orphans here. Adults treat them with contempt and when no one helps them, they are cut off and left vulnerable and begging. Orphans suffer all types of violence and abuse of their rights.

These children do not have any protection from family and even less from friends and neighbours. They take the blame upon themselves when they are abused or violated. They say nothing, maintaining silence because of shame. Orphans encounter various problems here. They sleep rough, without blankets, without food, and they live to do sex work at night with older people and run all sorts of risks.

Unlike the reality of some homeless orphans found in cities, orphans in Caia and Chimuara are generally taken in by relatives such as aunts, uncles and grandparents, and sometimes by other families not necessarily related to these children. This is beneficial because they are provided with shelter and food. However, as was mentioned previously this situation adds a financial strain on already impoverished families. It also creates pressure in turn on these children since they are then regarded as a burden that the original family cannot carry. However, not all children who lose both their parents are adopted by their relatives. A group of adults interviewed in Caia District told Save the Children that: "When the parents of a child die some of the other family members seize their goods but do not take care of the child. The neighbours then have to take care of the orphan but it is difficult to do this as they themselves are in need of help."¹⁴

Child labour

In interviews with children, 77% indicated they do some form of work that contributes to household income or food production. Children work in the family fields (machambas) and have domestic responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning. Fifty-seven percent of them practice 'ganho-ganho' or informal sector employment.

¹¹ Generic term for plants producing groundnuts.

¹² An orphan or vulnerable child can be described as 'a child under 18 years of age whose mother, father, both parents or primary caregiver has died, and who is in need of care and protection'.

¹³ Sofala Orphans Database. Provincial Directorate for Women and Social Action. Mozambique, 2002.

¹⁴ Save the Children Alliance. Mitigation of HIV/AIDS Impact on Orphans, Vulnerable Children and their Families. Chimuara and Caia Baseline Study: An Annex to the Save the Children Overall Baseline Survey, 2005. The data is based on a survey of 300 households in Caia and Chimuara.

The most frequently occurring diseases in children are malaria, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea, which is sometimes a sign of malaria.



Examples are going from house to house to pound maize, repairing toilets and selling fish, flour, fruit and other products by the river. Children are more likely to work, sometimes at the expense of attending school, if they live in a household with unemployed or ill family members, or in households headed by women. Some children who work for barraca bosses are involved in heavy labour. They are required to carry large bricks and construction materials, and fetch water in big pots. They often work long hours without a break. There are also high levels of unemployment, particularly among young men and women in the area.¹⁵ (The existence of child labour at the river settlements and in workers camps will be discussed later in the report.)

Health issues

The most frequently occurring diseases in children are malaria, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea, which is sometimes a sign of malaria. In adults they are malaria, pneumonia, anaemia, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Caia and Chimuara are located in the hydrographical basin of the Zambezi River, which offers a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. Children interviewed in Caia and Chimuara also talked about toothaches, earaches, abdominal pains and chest pain. Seventy five percent interviewed in early 2005 have their illnesses treated in the rural hospital in Caia. Some residents visit traditional healers to cure illnesses. A 15-year-old boy

from Chimuara said, "I often have headaches, and pains in my belly, my leg and in my neck. I normally go to the hospital and there they give me chloroquine. When they give me pills I take them and go to sleep."

A health official in Chimuara described the local clinic as being understaffed. He added that the clinic itself was in poor condition and needs an enlarged facility with a maternity ward and new lab equipment for testing of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Education and premature marriages

As is the general trend throughout Mozambique, there is a problem in Caia and Chimuara of children dropping out of education before completing the 5th grade in primary school. This situation is particularly serious in terms of girls leaving school prematurely. This is often attributed to a necessity for children to work in the family machambas or provide other sources of income to the household which reduces available time for attending school. In Zambézia province, the gross admission rate to the fifth grade among children is 15%, which is low compared to the southern provinces.¹⁶ In 2003, in Mopeia District, 40% of the students in the 1st to 5th grades were girls. This number of girls dropped to 19% in later grades. In Caia District, the same percentage of girls attended the 1st to 5th grade while only 16% attended later grades.¹⁷

¹⁵ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft 12, p.8.

¹⁶ The gross admission rate is the total number of students enrolled in a specific grade, regardless of age, over the age-specific population.

¹⁷ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft 12, p.53.

Some girls also leave school early due to premature marriages. They are generally promised in marriage for two reasons, which can be interrelated. One is attributed to the traditional system of polygamy practiced by some families where men can have several wives. In Caia and Mopeia, marrying more than one girl or woman is still considered a symbol of prosperity.¹⁸ The other reason involves parents and families offering their daughters to men to help alleviate their own situation of poverty. Quite often, girls are given to men who are considerably older.¹⁹ Yet not all early marriages are supported by a girl's family. One community member in Chimuara explained that, "The men now take girls without the consent of the family and put them in their homes to pass off as their wives. This is done without any guidance and eventually what takes place is that they are divorced." In the town of Sena located in Caia District, some girls leave school as young as 12 or 13 years old to marry or move in with the 'Ndadjanjis'. The 'Ndadjanjis' are youth who engage in informal commerce in the area and can sometimes offer girls more financial stability than they have at home.

The children interviewed also expressed some dissatisfaction with school conditions and facilities. They explained that their schools are in short supply of materials such as desks, blackboards, pens and notebooks. Others said they did not like having schools made of

sticks and mud because the rain leaks through the roof and makes them wet during classes. They also mentioned that some teachers beat children who did not do their school work. Some children also complained about a lack of play activities and facilities in Caia and Chimuara inside and outside of school. Boys in particular are also known to watch violent and pornographic²⁰ movies in the video clubs. Some children loiter in the barracas at night. A child living in Caia elaborated on this:

We don't have fields where we can play different kind of sports such as volleyball, basketball and football. We do have a rough pitch, but that is not enough. The club pitch that exists is not good. The lack of entertainment means that the disco in the barracas is the only place where one gets together during the weekend.

All the persistently difficult conditions stated above account for many of the hardships facing children and their families. Upon closer examination, however, this does not provide a complete picture. As highlighted earlier, the presence of large infrastructure and development projects in the area – particularly the ferry service – have created a dangerous situation for children. They are subjected to many forms of abuse and exploitation at the hands of motorists, workers and the barraca owners who employ them.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The manager of the video club at the Chimuara river settlement said children were denied entrance into pornographic videos that are shown after midnight, but others told Save the Children that children do in fact watch these movies.



The river crossing and infrastructure projects

For relatively small rural areas, Caia and Chimuara are quite well known in other parts of Mozambique. Those who have travelled to the Zambezi River on the main national highway by truck, chapa (mini-bus), car, motorcycle or even bicycle know of these places. The national highway meets the river on both sides, and the National Road Administration¹ (ANE) runs a ferry service transporting traffic across the water. Besides the ferry, the crossing area on both sides is home to rustic, bustling commercial settlements that provide an assortment of goods and services to those passing through. This area is also known by some as being the future site of the Zambezi Bridge. On the surface, this all appears to be very productive and harmless, and another example of Mozambique's continued pursuit of economic development and self-reliance. However, the river crossing and infrastructure development projects have in many ways taken a negative toll on children in these communities.

On the one hand, these projects have brought many benefits such as the creation of much welcomed jobs in the community. They have also injected outside capital and goods into the local economy. Electrical power has been provided to residents of Chimuara and thanks to the de-mining program, fields have been made more accessible for subsistence farming and safer for children to play in them. On the other hand, these projects bring in large numbers of

outsiders for both short and extended periods of time – mostly men – who have considerably more money than the communities in which they work or are passing through. Some of the motorists and workers engage in activities that harm and take unfair advantage of children. These negative consequences on children will be discussed further after a description is provided of the ferry service and the commercial river settlements called 'barracas'.

¹ The National Road Administration (ANE) is a government agency responsible for administering and overseeing all road infrastructure projects in Mozambique.

The ferry service and 'barracas'

For many years, the ferry service across the Zambezi River was a one-boat, slow and often unsafe operation. Vehicles and pedestrians were subjected to lengthy waits as the small, unreliable, often overloaded ferry carried vehicles back and forth. These waits were often extended for indefinite periods when the ferry broke down or did not run due to a lack of regular maintenance. The occurrence of natural disasters such as floods and droughts also affected this service. Sometimes the ferry was not broken down at all. As one Caia district government official claimed:

It was normal to have over one hundred trucks lined up on both sides waiting to cross, which often took days, weeks, even up to a month when the ferry had to be fixed. We know the previous ferry operator and at least one barraca owner along the river were in collusion. They sometimes shut the ferry down to keep as many people there for a long time so that their businesses would benefit. Sometimes the ferry would really breakdown, but other times the ferry's operator pretended it was broken and he sent a crew member to Beira to have the part fixed or replaced. The truckers would have to wait for up to a week or longer...

In October 2004, the government purchased new ferries amid growing concerns that the traffic delays were hurting the national economy. The newer service, which now offers two larger, faster and more reliable ferries, is owned and operated in a joint arrangement between the Ministries of Public Works and National Defence. The National Road Administration (ANE) manages the service. The actual barges are crewed by the Mozambican Marines who sport military fatigues. When there is a manageable amount of traffic, one ferry is sufficient to transport motorists back and forth throughout the day. When traffic increases, such as during the festive season in December, ANE will run both. Members of the community who

were interviewed noted the new ferry system has speeded up the flow of traffic considerably, and as a result there has been a decrease in commercial activities of all types.

In response to an obvious demand for goods and services by lingering motorists, small business owners and informal traders, including women, opened and managed 'barracas', guesthouses and vending stands on both sides of the river. These establishments provide those waiting for the ferry with basic amenities such as food, water, soap, alcohol, accommodation and various forms of inexpensive services and entertainment including video clubs² and sex. In December 2005, Save the Children (UK) made a mid-week visit to the commercial settlement by the river on the Caia side to observe the 'night' culture.

On this particular evening, the barracas were only partially occupied by motorists and local people, and there were only a few trucks at the site. The team visited one barraca. The boy who manages it told us that at night there were a lot more people on the Chimuara side. The music could be heard from across the river. This barraca offered a basic restaurant/bar in the front facing the river. In the back, dark, rudimentary sleeping quarters are available at a rate of 50,000 Meticais (US\$2.00) a night per room though prices can vary throughout the year. There were twelve open-wall shacks with dirty mattresses made of sacks that had been sewn together. This establishment supplied mosquito nets above the beds. We learned from the boy that some truck drivers choose to sleep in their vehicles rather than pay for a bed.

Though the town of Caia has a large generator, the settlement by the river does not have access to it. Most barracas are lit by candles and lanterns, and a few establishments have their own small generators that provide minimal lighting. There was a stench of decomposing fish and urine on both sides of the river. Garbage and mango peels left by vehicles passing through littered the

² Residents relate that children do attend these clubs and that at times violent and pornographic movies are shown

A culture of sexual abuse and exploitation in the form of child prostitution, as well as wide-spread child labour and incidents of physical abuse have developed in the river crossing area.

uneven, muddy roads. A 25-year-old male youth we interviewed in Chimuara finds the garbage problem troubling: "These men are bringing in lots of rubbish and leaving it here. This makes people staying here sick." Some children complained that the motorists drive at excessive speeds on the highway past their homes and that they are at risk of being run over.

A dangerous situation for children and the spread of HIV/AIDS

A culture of sexual abuse and exploitation³ in the form of child prostitution, as well as wide-spread child labour and incidents of physical abuse have developed in the river crossing area. This area is also a transit point for the transmission and spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, Mozambique's largest and most worrying social nightmare. The Mozambican government, national media, non-governmental organizations working in the area, and of course the local communities are aware of the social ills the river crossing site has hosted over the past half decade or so. It is a seedy and unsanitary settlement housing sex workers and on many occasions drunk, abusive truck drivers and other motorists who have been known to fight among themselves. The visitors

also threaten, beat and sometimes 'deprive' working children of their daily earnings. Many of the children present at the site are orphans or from unstable homes.

The Learning Clinic, an organization in Johannesburg concerned about the spread of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, describes the risks associated with places such as this river crossing in Caia and Chimuara in the following terms:

It has been known for a long time that people whose jobs require them to travel a lot, such as truckers, traders, seafarers, army personnel etc. are extremely vulnerable to HIV and STIs. In the case of truck drivers, overnight stays away from home, less social control, long waiting periods in ports and border stations and the availability of commercial sex, and other factors work together in creating this vulnerability. Truck drivers travelling the national long-haul freight routes in South Africa are away from their homes, families and friends for long periods of time. Many of the truckers encounter sex workers and other women who exchange sex for money or presents at truck stops and along major trucking routes and are tempted to start relationships with these women.

³ According to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, child prostitution is defined as the 'use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration'.

⁴ Matthew, Paul. "Roadside Wellness Centres in South Africa – mobile health services for mobile people." The Learning Clinic, Johannesburg. Viewed on Sexual Health Exchange website.

Child sexual abuse and exploitation

A disturbing fact is that a considerable number are girls, some as young as ten years old. Save the Children interviewed a 12-year-old girl who was with her father by the Chimuara river crossing. She described the scene there:

Many young girls in this area chat with men. They get pregnant and make abortions here at the river. There is no playground here. Sometimes we play rope games, but some girls do not want to play and come to the river looking for men. They do not know how to use condoms and do not want to go to school. I came here with my father but I do not walk alone. Many people die here, maybe because of illnesses. There are young boys who are sent to look for young girls by adults. The men pay the boys 5 or 10 000 Meticais (less than 50 cents) for finding them, depending on how fast they are. There is a beer party here everyday. The men drink and get drunk and then sleep with girls. Sometimes they fight. They are going to die soon but I do not want to die. Someone should take these people away from here because this dating business only brings trouble.

Another 12-year-old girl attending Chimuara Primary School told Save the Children that: "... the men who were involved in construction of the Electricity Plant used to go to the barracas. They used to call girls to talk with them, and then sleep with them." An adult from Chimuara and former barraca owner, who asked not to be identified by name because he did not want to anger the current owners, told Save the Children:

I had a barraca by the river and moved into town a while ago because the construction of the bridge will begin soon and the barracas will have to be relocated. Five years ago, the problem of child prostitution began and I observed it. I have contributed to this business because I had six girl sex workers working for me, and I had rooms in

the back. I have stopped this business but others continue to have bars and rooms available, and hire girl sex workers. On the Caia side, the same problem exists.

Some people in the community told Save the Children that this problem originated with the arrival of road workers years ago. It evolved over time with the increasing volumes of traffic using the ferry service and the presence of workers doing other infrastructure projects in the area. In some cases, local children claimed to have been sexually abused by motorists and workers. Children interviewed by Save the Children in February and March 2005 explained that many girls experienced sexual violence including unwanted attention, being touched, being forced to touch adults in sexual ways, or being forced to have sex. The children also said that girls experienced sexual violence more often than boys. In Caia and Chimuara, a distinction is seldom made between consensual sex and rape. A health official in Chimuara explained this problem: "There are cases of rape in Chimuara but there are no reports of this to the health centre. Parents and children do not fully understand what constitutes child sexual abuse and do not report it to the police, but this doesn't mean it is not happening. They do not understand their rights." A senior police official in Chimuara echoed this statement explaining that the community in Chimuara do not always understand the difference between consensual sex and child sexual abuse, and how to deal with the latter scenario if it occurs. He said there is a lack of communication between children and parents about the topic of sex in general, which means that young people have no one with whom to discuss issues surrounding sexuality.

Some girls and boys have dropped out of school and left their families to live and work by the river. Often they are required to pay the barraca bosses rent for their room and board. Other children had abandoned their homes to stay with workers in the camps. A few girls have actually been encouraged by their parents to do this for reasons described earlier, but for

Many young girls in this area chat with men. They get pregnant and make abortions here at the river.



the most part this phenomenon is causing local families and communities considerable distress and grief. The most unfortunate have become pregnant by men who visited a barraca along the river and left soon after by ferry or lorries. Other girls have had similar experiences through contact with the workers who eventually packed up and departed from their base camps, leaving them and their babies behind.

Harmful child labour

Boys as young as ten or eleven are working and living by the river. Some attend primary school while others have dropped out. These boys seldom have time to play and endure precarious and unsafe conditions, often assuming 'adult-size' responsibilities over long days and nights. Most do this out of necessity to provide for themselves and their families. A few children with somewhat more stable lives at home are attracted by the idea of making their own money to purchase various items. Boys working in the barracas are required by their bosses to wash dishes, sweep the floors and work long hours without a break. Sometimes they must move heavy bricks and building materials, and carry water in big pots. A 15-year-old boy working at a barraca on the Caia side described his daily routine:

I wake up early at four o'clock, I clean inside and outside the barraca. I clean the house while I prepare tea for my master. After that I fetch water in the river and I start cooking for the customers. I go to sleep at eight o'clock. I earn 150.000 Meticaïs (which is about 6 US dollars) at the end of the month. My rest is on Sunday afternoon.

Another 12-year-old boy, who does not attend school, told Save the Children:

As soon as I get up at 6:00 o'clock in the morning, I wash dishes in the barraca of the boss, I sweep the yard and I sell fried fish. At night I go with those who drink and dance in the barraca. I go to sleep very late when it is busy. There is neither Saturday nor Sunday. All days are alike.

The director of a local primary school in Chimuara locality talked about how orphaned children were particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the commercial settlements by the river:

There were two orphans in my school who both lost their parents. They are between 11 and 13. They recently left school. I went to visit these children who were staying with their grandparents. The grandparents said they couldn't afford the school materials for the children, so I paid for them. The orphans returned to school but left soon after. Now they're down by the river taking care of goats for those who use the ferry. They walk up to 10 kilometres per day to collect goats for their bosses. They are paid very little and have difficult lives.

Some children observe inebriated lorry drivers publicly fondling girls and women. A girl from Chimuara talked about the abusive behaviour she experiences when selling fish by the river:

We sell well when it is busy, but at the same time when the people in the barracas drink a lot they take the fish and don't pay. And when we ask for our money they get mad and insult us. Others want to make love to me. It is not good to be there at night.

Motorists have also been known to physically abuse children. A boy attending primary school in Chimuara claimed that, "Boys suffer more than girls because we are beaten up by adults. Some adults at the river are mean to the children. They are too rough with us." Boys are sometimes given the task by men of finding girls and women sex workers in exchange for a small finder's fee.

The fact that the two new ferries have sped up traffic across the river does not mean that these problems facing children have disappeared, though they have diminished according to the people Save the Children interviewed. Some residents explained that truck drivers will strategically arrange their arrival at the river after 5:00 p.m. when the ferry stops running for the day. They do this so they can stay overnight and have sex with prostitutes. Some of the motorists visit their regular, favourite girls, while others simply find a suitable one for the night. In addition, the 'chapa' drivers will sometimes spend extended periods waiting at the river crossing for people who need transportation. The drivers, and sometimes passengers waiting with them, are also known to have sex with girls in the barracas. Another consequence of lower volumes of traffic is a migration of sex workers who go back and forth between the river and town. Some local boys and young men are now sleeping with the child prostitutes. An education official in Caia District claimed that: "The decrease in traffic at the river crossing has meant that discos and bars have spread from the river into the towns, bringing the sex workers from the river along with them."

Obstacles to preventing sexual abuse, exploitation and prostitution in Caia and Chimuara

Investigations and prosecution of sexual offences in Caia and Chimuara are uncommon. A senior police officer in Chimuara explained that very few cases of sexual abuse are reported, nor do the police go out of their way to investigate or make arrests based on allegations. In December 2005, this same officer told Save the Children that the police only investigate allegations of child sexual abuse if the child is under 12 years of age. If the child is over 12 years old, there is nothing the police can do unless the victim or the family complain. Another police official explained that, "People who have sex by the river, have an interest in doing it, which means nobody goes to the police to complain. When there is no plaintiff, there is nothing the police can do. The police would never be able to interfere just because they heard about it."⁵ A male youth sitting outside a video club on the Chimuara side explained that, "The police don't come to the river to deal with truck drivers and girls. They only come to deal with reports of theft."

Mozambican law is inadequate in terms of protecting children from sexual abuse, exploitation and prostitution. National laws concentrate more on possible penal sanctions for certain sexual offences but provisions of these laws are not properly implemented.⁶ According to a UNICEF Mozambique-funded study: "There are no provisions in the penal law that criminalizes child prostitution, except where parents facilitate the prostitution of the child."⁷ In addition, "The right to protection against sexual abuse is not dealt with in the Mozambican Constitution."⁸ It is important to

⁵ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft.12. p.12.

⁶ Sloth-Nielson, J. and J. Gallinetti, (2004) "Legal Reform for the Protection of Children in Mozambique". p. 40. February. Prepared for the Government of Mozambique.

⁷ Ibid. "Legal Reform for the Protection of Children in Mozambique". p. 6. February 2004. Prepared for the Government of Mozambique by the Community Law Centre at the University of the Western Cape.

⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

“There are no provisions in the penal law that criminalizes child prostitution, except where parents facilitate the prostitution of the child.”

recognize, however, that the penal code does prohibit rape, seduction of a virgin, facilitation of prostitution by a parent, and procurement for the purposes of sexual intercourse.⁹ There is also a legal reform process underway in Mozambique that will hopefully address issues of special protection for children in the future.

The most recent UN Study on Violence Against Children reports that the most common measures for the resolution of child sexual abuse in Mozambique are negotiations between the affected families and not through victims taking legal action against the offender. The authorities only become involved when there is no consensus in the negotiation, for instance, when the accused is not willing to pay the fines imposed.¹⁰

Another dimension of this problem is that there is no official scheme that shows clearly how different Mozambican institutions are organized to penalize the sexual abuse of minors.¹¹ There is no lead agency that is legally bound to ensure enforcement. International experience has shown that in order to ensure the effective application of protective measures for child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, very

clear guidelines, protocols and responsibilities need to be assigned by law, and that mere criminal prohibitions do not suffice.¹²

It is important to note that some efforts have been made by district authorities and communities in Caia and Chimuara to keep children out of the barracas, but these measures and interventions have for the most part been ineffective. At one point, the police in Chimuara tried to intervene by attempting to forbid girls to be in the barracas if they were not employed there. The result of this attempted intervention was that owners gave symbolic jobs to the girls such as cooks and waitresses but they continued to sell sex. The local police have also made attempts in the past to enforce a law enacted in 1999 restricting access of minors to nightclubs and bars, which includes barracas.¹³ Police have the power to fine owners of these establishments if children are present after 9 p.m. However, the legislation has not yet been implemented successfully.¹⁴ The police official also explained that insufficient numbers of officers and inadequate access to transportation from Chimuara town to the river settlement makes it difficult to monitor the situation and enforce existing laws.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ International Save the Children Alliance. (2005) "UN Study on Violence Against Children, p. 78.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 89.

¹² Sloth-Nielson J. and J. Gallinette, op.cit. p. 40.

¹³ Prostituição, Abuso Sexual e Trabalho Infantil em Moçambique: o caso específico das províncias de Maputo, Nampula et Tete: João Gabriel de Barro, Gulamo Taju, Maputo, Maio de 1999.

¹⁴ Lei 6/99, Lei que Restringe o Acesso de Menores a Clubes Nocturnos e Outros Locais de Diversão Pública.

The police in Caia and Mopeia districts receive and investigate complaints relating to many crimes not necessarily associated with sexual abuse and exploitation. These types of crimes include theft, physical assault, slander, road accidents, excessive consumption of alcohol, domestic violence and homicide. There is a district judicial court in Caia which tries these cases, but no judicial court in Mopeia District. All serious cases in Mopeia must be transferred to Quelimane, Zambézia's provincial capital. There are also community courts in Caia and Chimuara that deal principally with family problems, disputes between people (often relating to accusations of witchcraft), thefts from machambas and land conflicts.¹⁵

There is one notable example of an arrest and prosecution of a worker who raped a local girl. The manager of a restaurant in Caia recounted the incident to Save the Children:

A few years ago, one worker raped a 13-year-old girl who was the daughter of a local family. The family took him to the police station and he was arrested and sentenced, and now in prison in Beira. The girl was taken to the hospital but is now home safe with her parents. I think after that the number of rapes went down because the workers were scared of being prosecuted.

Families and community leaders have attempted to deal with the problem of child prostitution but, like the police, have made little progress. About five years ago, when prostitution involving girls and women first emerged in Chimuara, local parents and community leaders tried to intervene but the attempt was unsuccessful. A Chimuara resident explained that this failure can be attributed to difficulties in communication between adults and children: "In 2000, people in the community tried to speak with girls working at the barracas

about stopping this business but one of the reasons for the failure is that adults here could not convince the girls to stop this work. Parents and communities have felt powerless against problems by the river."

Who are the 'barraca girls'?

Before examining this question, it is useful to consider some trends and statistics about child prostitution in general in Mozambique and in Southern Africa. Child prostitution is most prevalent in Maputo, Beira and Nampula and is reported to be growing in the areas around Nacala. It is also prevalent at border towns and overnight stopping points along key transportation routes.¹⁶ According to officials from the Ministry of Welfare, and also street educators, social workers and other researchers who interviewed Mozambican child sexworkers in the late nineties:¹⁷

- 98% of the children involved in offering sexual services in Mozambique are female.
- most of the girls involved in prostitution are around 15 or 16 years old. Twenty-six percent are between 10 to 14 years of age.
- of these, only 14.1% of the girls attend school.
- of the others, 69% have dropped out, owing to a lack of financial means to remain at school.
- only 12% of these children had reached second grade in primary school, while 7.4% attended secondary school.
- most of them also work during the day, either domestically or in subsistence agriculture, for their own families or for employers.
- some of the girls eventually give up their day work because they can earn more from prostitution.
- when asked about their first sexual encounter, 22% of the children interviewed said they had been sexually abused. Of these the

¹⁵ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12. p. 47.

¹⁶ US Department of State. (2004) "Mozambique: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices." Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. February 28, 2005. Available at: www.state.gov

¹⁷ The interviews were conducted in Maputo City and Province, and in Beira and the Beira Corridor.

majority had been abused by members of the family (father, brother-in-law, stepfather, and so on), by neighbours or by people at school.

- of the children who had been initiated into sexual relations through rape, 39.9% of them were under 15 years of age at the time.
- when asked about what they did with the money they earned from prostitution, 46% of the children said they used the money to buy clothes and shoes. Thirty-seven per cent said the money was used for buying food for themselves and their families.
- these girls will sometimes agree to sex without condoms, if the client pays more money.
- ninety-one percent of the children had some knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and 48% had already contracted one, usually gonorrhoea.¹⁸

Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe have also been confronted with the problem of child prostitution for many years. At preparatory meetings of the 1996 First World Congress on Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children, several Southern African countries reported an increase in the number of girls who support themselves and their families through sex work.¹⁹ The Institute for Security Studies describes the problem of child prostitution in this region:

Child prostitution is a growing phenomenon in Southern Africa. Many young women turn to prostitution as a means of supporting themselves and their families financially. Some girls already have low-paying jobs but work as prostitutes because of the higher income it provides. The growth of child prostitution... is due largely to poverty, unequal gender relationships, a breakdown



of family structures, limited access to education by young girls and sexual abuse. The escalating number of people infected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa seems to be a major reason for the increase in child labour in general, and child prostitution.²⁰

In conversations with some adult members of the communities in Caia and Chimua, it is often difficult to learn exactly from where the child prostitutes, or 'barraca girls', originate. More specifically, it is difficult to determine whether any of these girls who work in the sex trade are local. This is partly due to misinformation and misunderstanding among parents and community leaders, but also due to an unwillingness and discomfort in acknowledging that some of the communities' own daughters are involved in this business. Some community members, including children, told Save the Children that older girls and young women sex workers come from Nampula, Chimoio, Beira, Quelimane, Mocuba, Gurue, Nicoadala and elsewhere within Mozambique. There are also girls and women, they say, from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe and Malawi. These are people who either came to Caia and

¹⁸ All statistics taken from: A Implementação da Convenção sobre os Direitos da Criança em Moçambique, 1990-1999, p.116.

¹⁹ Perschler-Desai, Viktoria. "Children on the Market: Teenage Prostitution in Southern Africa." African Security Review, Vol. 10 No. 4, 2001. Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria.

²⁰ Ibid.

Chimuara deliberately in search of work, or who stumbled upon the area and decided to stay and try to make a living. One girl interviewed early in 2005 who has worked at a barraca in Caia for over a year talked about her situation:

I'm working here in this barraca. I cook and take care of the rooms. I came here with a gentleman who drives a truck. I wanted to get to know Caia and he took me here from Nicoadala. When he passes by we get together. He is very good to me because when he passes through he brings me presents. I already have my house covered with corrugated zinc. I would like to start a barraca of my own, but right now business is slowing down.

Upon closer examination, Save the Children learned that girls from Caia and Chimuara also work in the sex trade, and they tend to be younger than the girls and women who come from outside the area. It is said that the latter influence the former. An education official in Chimuara explained that: "The local girls first come to the river area to help older girls doing small jobs, but eventually they end up imitating the older girls and do sex work too." A 12-year-old orphaned boy who lives with a friend on the Caia side of the river confirmed this: "There are many girls from here. During the day some of them go to school and in the evening they come here to do the life." The Chimuara businessman who admitted to profiting from child prostitution as a barraca owner explained that there are 14 girls working permanently as prostitutes along the Chimuara side of the river, and that they are generally from outside of the area. However, he went on to say: "There's another place just before the river in Chimuara, just a few hundred metres away, where local girls and women have built their own huts and are doing sex work there. There are about 14 of them between 15 and 35 years of age."

In Save the Children's research, it was revealed that girls and young women who engage in prostitution in Caia and Chimuara have a complex sexual network involving multiple partners including both transactional and non-transactional relationships. Those who range in age from 14 to 20 do not talk very openly about earning money in prostitution, but they do talk about the relationships they have with the truck drivers and other motorists. The older girls who are between 20 and 25 speak openly about getting money in exchange for sex.

The implication of having 'relationships' with motorists is that a barraca girl often changes partners. When her 'lover' disappears she has to find another one to replace him in order to sustain her. Some of these girls hope one day to encounter a driver who will marry her and take her to cities such as Beira, Quelimane or as far away as Maputo. A girl living in a barraca described her relationship with a motorist: "My lover lives in Nhamatanda. He often passes through in his car. We want to marry and move to Beira. I want a house of stone, not like this barraca where water enters when it rains. And now I have a cell phone."

A 16-year-old girl and mother of a four-month old baby, who arrived in Chimuara from Dondo in 2003, now lives with her 'sick' mother, an 11-year-old brother and an aunt who owns three barracas. She described her relationship with a bus driver. The baby's father lives in Tete province and he drove a chapa on the Chimuara/Quelimane route until last year. In Save the Children's conversation with this girl, we asked about condom use. She said, "I don't use 'jeito'²¹ because he was the only man I was with, but now he doesn't want to be with me. When we try to call he disconnects the phone."

During Save the Children's December 2005 visit, we spoke early in the morning with a group of young men sitting in front of the video club at

²¹ A popular brand of condom

“The local girls first come to the river area to help older girls doing small jobs, but eventually they end up imitating the older girls and do sex work too.”

the river crossing in Chimuara. One youth who manages the video club explained that it was obvious who the sex workers were:

We know these girls who are prostitutes very well. One just passed by us. They are 13, 14 and 15 years old. Some girls have come from Zimbabwe and Malawi. These girls come from outside Chimuara and stay for years and years. That girl there is about 12 years old and is from Zimbabwe. She is returning from her night with men. She will sleep with seven men a night sometimes. She will start to work at 7 p.m. As soon as she has a bath, she starts her 'business'. Her sister is also a prostitute. They work here, but are not from here.

According to the previously mentioned poverty and social impact analysis, “There are also cases where parents know about their children’s involvement in prostitution and accept it as a necessary evil. Some parents proactively send their daughters to contact lorry drivers.²² The Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria explains that child prostitution can indirectly be encouraged within communities by forms of gender stereotyping and discrimination:

As in most parts of the world, raising a girl in Southern Africa still means to prepare her for being a good wife and mother. Thus, girls are taught to manage a household, to help raise their smaller siblings, and above all to please men. Consequently, for girls without any

professional training, prostitution is a means to earn a cash income. Indirectly, a family can encourage a girl to take up sex work, to contribute to the household income.²³

Another dimension to this problem is that girls are often blamed for causing and encouraging the spread of prostitution. Communities in Mozambique generally respond to child prostitution in a negative way, often rejecting the children, which leads to their isolation. In a study of child prostitution in Mozambique, several people who were interviewed were of the opinion that children do this job out of a whim and because of peer pressure. Some girls testify to facing problems from either their parents, their peers or members of the community because of the work they are doing.²⁴ A 25-year-old male youth at the river crossing in Chimuara blames girls for the problem of prostitution in the area. He explained bitterly: “This really bothers me. Can there be a law which keeps girls out of this place? I will belong to a group that is created that keeps them out of here.” He did not mention the fact that men at the river crossing create a demand for sex workers.

Generally, however, the communities here are very concerned about girls being involved in prostitution. A Chimuara resident described how a young relative came to visit his family and soon became involved with men by the river.

²² Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

There are 13- and 14-year-old girls who are now pregnant. One is my in-law. She's in the back of the house sleeping now. She is now 15 years old and recently became pregnant. She has added to my responsibilities. I can't take care of her. I have my own children to take care of. She used to ask my daughter to help sneak her in and out of the house at night so I wouldn't know. She used to go around to many barracas by the river, so she has no idea who the father is. I'm afraid my daughter may have gone with her too. I also have another child in-law staying with me. She's very sick. I believe she was sleeping with men when I owned the barraca by the river, but I'm not sure. Something must be done about this problem.

In the same study mentioned above, adults were interviewed in different areas of the country:

They recognized that children prostitute themselves because of poverty and a need to support themselves or their families. Others stated that many of the girls were orphans who had to fend for themselves, or that girls had few opportunities to undertake other work. Almost all interviewees said that girls were in danger of contracting diseases, many specifying the risk of STDs and HIV/AIDS. Unwanted pregnancies, abortions thefts and rape were other dangers enumerated by the interviewees.²⁵

Consequences of large infrastructure development projects on children

Over the past few years, several infrastructure development projects including the electrification plant, national highway (EN1) rehabilitation and a de-mining programme in the area have also had negative consequences on children. The common occurrence here

essentially involves girls, and sometimes boys, going off to camps with workers to do domestic labour in exchange for small sums of money. Some girls also look to establish relationships with the workers. But for girls, this has evolved over time into providing sexual services. In interviews held early in 2005 in Chimuara, school teachers, health officials and some older children told Save the Children that a considerable number of girls aged 14 to 17 from Chimuara had abandoned their families and left school to live in camps with staff from the electrification plant camp, known locally as the 'substation'.

In some cases, girls had become pregnant and were said to be infected with STDs due to these interactions. Members of the community explained that some parents encouraged their daughters to meet a worker who could potentially provide for them. Local girls were also curious about meeting men from outside the area who had money and nicer housing than their own, so they were easily convinced to visit the camps. In a few instances, some older girls and young women left their husbands to live with the workers, and others visited the camps discretely to have sex for money with these men. Other girls came from outside the area to have 'relationships' with the workers. During the Inchope-Caia highway rehabilitation which took place in the area, it was reported that many girls from Quelimane, Chimoio and Beira showed up in the labourers' camps.²⁶

A local youth who works with Elos Clube, a national non-governmental organization which conducts HIV/AIDS and STD awareness activities, talked about the evolution of the problem from one of domestic labour to eventual prostitution:

At first, boys who went to the camps would do small jobs and run simple errands for the workers. The girls would often go and cook and clean there. Eventually, the girls were

²⁵ Perschler-Desai, Viktoria. op.cit. ft.43.

²⁶ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 83.

giving sexual services to the men for a bit of money. It is understood that girls have two responsibilities as domestic servants at the camps: cooking and cleaning, and sex work. There was no way to prevent girls visiting these camps. Where there are opportunities, the girls will go with the men. We observed the girls going there with our own eyes.

An 18-year-old from Chimuara Primary School told Save the Children:

During the Electricity Plant Construction, the workers used to go to the barracas to drink soft drinks and beer. They became involved sexually with our sisters. Some were left pregnant and now they have children without parents. Other girls and women were infected by HIV. In that period other girls abandoned their parents' houses and went to live at the barracas in order to take advantage of the workers' presence.

An 8-year-old girl living in one of the barracas on the Caia side of the river explained that: "During the construction of Chimuara Electricity Plant and the Inchope-Caia road, the workers left pregnant girls and women. Today, they have children who do not know their fathers and are without care and support from them." There were also instances of child rape by the workers. A manager of a restaurant in Caia town, talked about a case involving rape of a local girl by a worker on the road rehabilitation project. He said that, "During the road construction, there were many instances of rape of children by road workers."

In June 2004, Save the Children carried out a study on the situation of child abuse in Chimuara. The study reported that local girls went to visit the camp of a de-mining company in search of relationships with the personnel.²⁷ The personnel would pay girls between 10 and 25,000 meticaís for sex – less than one



dollar. According to a leader of a local non-governmental organization, he observed and became embroiled in this problem in 2004 in Chimuara. He explained that personnel from the de-mining company often came to town to 'recruit' girls for their camp:

When the de-mining group arrived in Chimuara, they showed they had money. The girls saw this and wanted some money. The workers would come to town and meet in a hut that played loud music and served alcohol. Then they would ask local boys to find girls to go with them to the camps. They gave the boys some money for doing this. Then they would take the girls off to the camps with them in their trucks. Up to ten girls from Chimuara went to the de-mining camp at a time. The land rovers would come pick the girls up in town and I would see how many would go.

He was concerned about this situation and eventually complained at a meeting he attended in the town of Mopeia. He subsequently became fearful of reprisals from personnel in the de-mining camp:

²⁷ Etelvina da Cunha/Julião Novela. "Relatorio das actividades de recolha de informacao na localidade sede de Chimuara", p. 7. Save the Children. June 2004.

I went to Mopeia to speak about the de-mining camp situation at a meeting with district government officials, NGOs and associations. Save the Children was present and then tried to investigate. Save the Children called the company's headquarters to tell them about the problem. I heard the headquarters phoned the camp in Chimuara to find out what was going on. The de-miners were angry and then started looking for those who were making problems for them. A group of de-miners got in the truck and went to the school. They suspected either me or an education official for complaining. I watched from a distance as they intimidated him and tried to take him in their truck. But he refused to go. So I became aware they were looking for me so I hid in the village for two weeks. I was afraid of being found by them.

The NGO worker also talked about some of the consequences of the de-miners' relations with local girls:

The girls are not knowledgeable of risks of HIV/AIDS. Now the local boys do not want to marry these girls who spent time in the de-mining camps. The boys think these girls are sick with HIV/AIDS, and do not want to touch them. So the girls go to the river instead in search of relationships. Some of the girls who spent time at the camps got pregnant. Then the girl's family now has to support the daughter and new baby, which is difficult.

Children, communities, HIV/AIDS and STDs

HIV/AIDS

The central region of Mozambique shows a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS than the rest of the country for those aged 15 to 49. In 2004, it

was reported to be about 20.4%. During the same year, there was an infection rate of 26.5% in Sofala – one of the highest provincial infection rates in the country. In Zambézia Province, the infection rate was also high at 18.4%. In 2002, Caia District registered an infection rate of 12% of those aged 15 to 49 for a total of 4835 people. In Mopeia District, which includes Chimuara, there was a 14% infection rate among the same age grouping totalling 4643. This combined figure is 9479.²⁸ The infection rate is predicted to be higher than the official statistics, particularly on the Chimuara side where the local health clinic is unable to test for HIV/AIDS because the lab is not equipped with the appropriate technology. In Caia District, taking into account the tests that are made on people suffering from other illnesses, around 50% to 60% of the adults hospitalised are HIV positive.²⁹ Both districts have orphans whose parents have died from this disease and some are infected themselves.

On the Caia side there is a rural hospital and a recently installed GATV centre (Office for Advice and Voluntary Testing of HIV/AIDS). At the Chimuara Health Centre across the river, the head nurse explained he was unable to test patients for HIV/AIDS. He also explained that a counselling centre at the clinic would help residents of Chimuara, including children, learn more about the risks of HIV/AIDS, STDs and other diseases.

Some local members of the community commented on the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS at the river crossing. The former barraca owner in Chimuara quoted earlier talked about the fate of several girl sex workers who once worked for him: "When I closed the barraca by the river a while ago, five of my girls went back to their home towns outside of Chimuara, and I found out later that all of them are dead. They all slept with truck drivers. I believe they died of HIV/AIDS, but I don't know for sure."

²⁸ "Impacto Demográfico do HIV/SIDA em Moçambique" Actualização Ronda de Vigilância Epidemiológica, Instituto Nacional de Estatística. Maputo, 2002.

²⁹ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 13.

Some of the girls who spent time at the camps got pregnant. Then the girl's family now has to support the daughter and new baby, which is difficult.



Another Chimuara resident explained that the community is, "Fighting with all its might against the situation that is destroying us, namely HIV/AIDS. It is growing worse every day that passes and the number of orphans is growing."

A local male youth who cuts hair and takes photos for a living at the Chimuara river settlement described his concerns about HIV/AIDS. "I don't like that these girls are prostitutes. They have sex with truck drivers and then get sick. Then I also want the girls but then I get diseases too. The girls here hide their sickness. They say we have headaches and stomach aches and then eventually they die."

All those adults interviewed by Save the Children in December 2005 predicted that HIV/AIDS infection rates would increase during the bridge construction project.

There are also reports of increasing rates of STD infection in Caia and Chimuara. In 2004, 4403 cases of STDs were reported in Mopeia District. Mopeia ranks ninth in terms of districts most affected by STDs in Zambézia province³⁰. The head nurse in Chimuara reported two disturbing trends when comparing 2004 and 2005. Although he has not yet compiled official data for 2005,³¹ he said there was an increase in the number of cases of STDs among children compared to 2004, and the children infected were younger than the previous year. Children with STDs as young as 12 visited the clinic in 2005, whereas in 2004 the youngest child found

with an STD was 15 years old. A 16-year-old boy who attends school in Chimuara said: "A couple of days after 'playing' with a girl near the river I got this burning sensation in my penis. The nurse said that it was gonorrhoea and that I got it because I hadn't used a condom when I was with a girl."

The head nurse attributed this increase in STD infection to a migration of the population from the Chimuara region into the town, and also because of the sex trade at the river settlement. He also remarked that some local girls had returned from the de-mining camp with STDs over the past few years, and that a high number of workers and personnel from the various infrastructure projects had visited the clinic and were diagnosed with STDs. The Chimuara clinic is able to test for STDs, but these are not always accurately diagnosed. STDs are divided in two categories according to the head nurse: genital ulcers and vaginal discharge. Again the lab is not adequately equipped, which means the nurse cannot always identify the specific disease. This is a problem in terms of the provision of appropriate treatment.

Local children's knowledge of HIV/AIDS and STDs

The majority of the children interviewed early in 2005 by Save the Children know about HIV/AIDS and that the disease is transmitted by having unprotected sex. Some children said that people with HIV/AIDS have pimples, lose their hair,

³⁰ Matsinhe, C. Pesquisa Rápida: Perfis Distritais do HIV/SIDA. Provincial Nucleus for Fight Against AIDS – Zambézia. 2005.

³¹ The Chimuara Health Centre will compile data for 2005 STD infection rates early in 2006. In December 2005, the head nurse of the clinic was in a weakened state due to malaria so he may be unable to compile the statistics quickly.

and that their fingers get thin and long. Others have learned that condom use helps prevent HIV infection, and that abstinence is a form of prevention. A few children said that there are people in their families who have been ill for a long time, or have died in the last four years but they weren't sure if this was caused by HIV/AIDS. An 18-year-old from Caia told Save the Children: "I know a boy who sold fuel. He was ill for a long time, but he didn't know what he was suffering from. He ended up in a hospital and died. The problem is serious." Some children said that they do not have information on HIV/AIDS, especially those living in the river crossing.

The health services co-operate with local organizations in the fight against HIV/AIDS and implement advisory programmes in schools and other locations in Caia and Chimuara. In Mopeia District, there is an advisory office for people living with HIV/AIDS and health workers also pay home visits. Caia District also has an HIV/AIDS Combat Centre that consists of various local organizations. The centre has trained local leaders in HIV/AIDS issues.³²

Some of the children interviewed have listened to talks, and seen theatre performances and videos about HIV/AIDS and STDs by the river crossing area. These activities are generally well received by children and their communities.

Motorists are also warned of the risks of HIV/AIDS as they approach the river crossing outside of Chimuara. A large sign on the side of the road has been posted by a local NGO called Kukumbi and Christian Aid. It reads: ***Stop! Remember that HIV/AIDS is a reality. Protect yourself from HIV/AIDS before it becomes a nightmare.*** There is also a large sign on the road just outside of the Caia river crossing area that reads: ***"Papa, drive with Jeito. Avoid crashing with HIV/AIDS. Good Journey."***

A 14-year-old girl talked about an information campaign organized by one NGO: "I watched the theatre near the river, performed by some lads who came by car, even to our school here. They say that for preventing HIV/AIDS one should use a condom. Many people attended, adults and children. They talked about gonorrhoea but I don't know what happens to the people who catch it." A 13-year-old from Chimuara who is not in school told Save the Children: "I hear that when a girl plays with men who have AIDS, she is going to die." A male youth in Chimuara remarked that girl sex workers attend these activities as well. He told Save the Children: "The groups that come to the river to do theatre and talks are doing good work. The girls who are prostitutes in the barracas fill up the place to watch the theatre."

³² Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 56.



Zambezi Bridge **Construction Project**

Background and description

Before examining the possible consequences of the Zambezi bridge on children and how these problems could be averted, the following section provides a brief background to the project. The bridge is actually an old plan that has been on the government's drawing board for about three decades following Mozambican independence from Portugal in 1975. A start was made to the access roads to the bridge area in the late 1970s, but the project was abandoned because of the war.¹ When completed, the bridge structure will be 16 metres in width and over 2,300 metres long with two lanes and a walkway.² Major funders of this mega-project include Sweden, Italy, Japan and the European Union. The government of Japan has already conducted an environmental impact assessment and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded a poverty and social impact analysis in 2004. In late December 2005, the government awarded the bridge contract to a consortia of two Portuguese companies: Mota Engil and Soares da Costa. It will take at least three years for the bridge to be completed.

The bridge is predicted to help Mozambique in gaining significant economic benefits. The donor-funded bridge with a price tag of 66 million euros (80 million US dollars) will connect Mozambique's national highway across the

river, thereby allowing an uninterrupted, free flow of transportation and commerce from the north to the south of the country. Before the rehabilitation of the north-south national highway, roads were used for transporting

¹ Mozambique News Agency, "Zambezi Bridge Construction Office established", August 12, 2006.

² Xinhua, "EU launches tender for building bridge in Mozambique", August 14, 2005.

resources from the east to west. In other words, from the inland area to the coast. The consensus for Mozambicans is that the bridge will be a giant step forward. The government and donors of the project say it will contribute to the fight against poverty by stimulating national, regional and local economies by attracting investment and encouraging business and agricultural development.

The bridge construction will also create much-needed jobs and some have already been promised by the government to local communities, including women and youth. The provision of these jobs is crucial for families here and will provide income and opportunities for skills transfer during the actual building period. In addition, construction jobs will allow families to devote money they earn towards longer-term subsistence agriculture and food production on which they so heavily depend.³ There is also the possibility that new local businesses and employment opportunities will emerge such as the creation of restaurants and guesthouses for construction workers that will hire residents of Caia and Chimuara. Residents with skills in a variety of trades who have been unable to earn a living in this area previously may also be able to find work associated with the construction project.

When the bridge is completed, there will likely be better travel access to emergency health care for residents on both sides of the river. Inhabitants of Caia will be able to travel to health care facilities in Quelimane, which is several hundred kilometres closer than Beira. It will also be easier for residents of Chimuara to go to the hospital in Caia, which has better care and facilities than their small clinic. In addition to the economic, employment and health care benefits that the bridge will bring, the government and local communities predict that it will help reduce the prevalence of certain social problems in Caia and Chimuara which were described

earlier, specifically the transmission and spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs, and the prevalence of prostitution. Trucks and other vehicles will no longer be required to experience delays by having to wait for transportation across the river. Without the accumulation of motorists at the crossing, demand for prostitution will likely decrease.

Other potential benefits include a reduction in child mortality and improved access to education. The maternity ward in Mopeia does not presently have the expertise and facilities to help women with complicated childbirths. The hospitals in Marromeu and Caia are better equipped for this. Sometimes women must be taken to Marromeu in the middle of giving birth and have to cross the river by canoe. This takes time and increases the chances of mortality for both women and babies.⁴ Children on either side of the river will also be able to more easily access schools when the bridge is completed, particularly for those in secondary school. Children from Caia will be able to study in Zambézia Province and those from Mopeia will be able to study in Sofala Province. For example, if the nearest secondary school that offers a student the training that he/she wants is situated in the neighbouring province, it will be easier for them to cross the bridge more quickly than having to wait for the ferry.⁵ Children also complain of the dangers of strong currents and crocodile attacks when they cross the river by canoe. The bridge will allow them to cross without encountering these risks.

Risks and vulnerabilities of children during construction

The rationale and need for a new bridge are not in question. However, the negative consequences that the river crossing area and previous infrastructure development projects have on children have raised concerns among residents in these communities that the

³ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 7.

⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

⁵ Ibid.

construction period could exacerbate an already difficult and dangerous situation. The project will bring in a large influx of outside labour with money, probably several thousand workers, for at least three years. The male workers will be away from their wives and families, which will increase the probability of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and children. There is also a concern that the transmission and spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs will increase over the construction period, affecting workers and local communities alike.

A local businessman explained to Save the Children: "Now imagine the bridge will bring many men of different races, full of dollars and they will not care if the girls are on their period or not. The construction of the bridge will bring lots of death and illness because of more HIV/AIDS. It will bring a lot of problems, but the truth is we need the bridge."⁶ A female youth working at a restaurant in Caia expressed her concern: "When the bridge construction begins, there will be an increase in AIDS because girls here are already used to this way of life. AIDS will spread from the river area to communities all over Mozambique." A male youth in Chimuara echoed this sentiment: "The situation will get worse when the bridge construction starts and many people will die. All the money coming in will create big problems for people living here."

There are also parallels between the river crossing situation and infrastructure projects in Caia and Chimuara, and a reality observed elsewhere in transit areas and construction sites. The European Commission, which invests heavily in the transport sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, recognizes this problem. The Director-General for Development explained that: "While new and improved infrastructure brings economic and social benefits, it can also facilitate the spread of disease. Opening up new



traffic routes and improving access and personal mobility can contribute to the rapid spread of communicable disease such as AIDS."⁷

For example, studies have shown that in Malawi road construction has been linked to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The International Aids Economic Network reports this phenomenon in some detail:

*The building and maintaining of transport infrastructure can involve groups of workers who are housed away from their families, often for long periods of time. For example a construction company might send a team into a remote part of the country to build a new road or carry out maintenance. The workers are usually men, housed in all male environments, and being away from their families increases the likelihood of their having more sexual partners. Furthermore, their comparative wealth enables them to purchase sexual partners.*⁸

In November 2005, the head of a UN agency working in Malawi expressed concern about the Mwanza border crossing through which motorists travel to Mozambique, Zimbabwe

⁶ Etelvina da Cunha/Julião Novela. Relatório das actividades de recolha de informação na localidade sede de Chimuara, p. 11. Save the Children UK. June 2004.

⁷ Fransen, Lieve and Whiteside, Alan. "Considering HIV/AIDS in Development Assistance: A Toolkit." Document 3(A) HIV/AIDS and the Transport Sector. International Aids Economic Network. Date of publication not found.

⁸ Ibid.

and South Africa. The Mwanza border post handles 70% of all road freight in Malawi where drivers can spend several days waiting for their trucks to be inspected by the national revenue agency. As a consequence, the border site has attracted a number of sex workers.⁹ He explained that, "Long nights, young men far from home and an abundance of poor young women makes ... a perfect location for HIV to spread."¹⁰ A Zimbabwean truck driver echoed this observation:

Truck drivers are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because they are always away from their families and wives. Sometimes women ask for lifts, but in actual fact they are after the drivers so that they can sleep with them and be paid some cash. Drivers who are weak have fallen prey to it and many have died.¹¹

There are also examples outside of the African continent. India experiences a similar problem with truckers and prostitution. Truck stops with prostitutes waiting for drivers are pervasive in the sub-continent:

Local truck stops, called dhabas, litter India's highways. They provide warm food and bodies for truckers with no questions asked. The prostitutes are poor and uneducated – forced to sell themselves for pennies inside trucks, parking lots or even outside in the bushes. Negotiating condom use simply isn't an option for most who work alone instead of in more organized brothels.¹²

Save the Children is also concerned that children may be given construction jobs involving heavy lifting and hazardous work, making them prone to injury. There will likely be an increase in jobs for children in the informal, small-scale trading sector which supplies workers with basic amenities. Both scenarios could lead to

increased school drop-out rates. An education official in Chimwara believes that children will be given jobs but not necessarily as workers on the construction site: He claimed:

The construction companies will hire children to be domestic workers and do other jobs not related with actual construction of the bridge. If this happens, I think more children may leave school. The government has laws about not hiring minors but they are not followed here.

An education official in Caia believes that children will in fact be hired by construction companies and that children will drop out of school as a result. He vowed to monitor this situation when the construction begins and report cases to the Sofala provincial government.

Stated intentions of the government and donors

The government and donors have announced that they will take precautions to help reduce some of the potentially harmful social impacts of bridge construction. The government of Sweden is aware of the current situation at the river crossing and says it will support the mitigation of any eventual negative impacts of the bridge in the area.¹³ For its part the government of Mozambique, through both the National Road Administration's (ANE) Unit for Social Affairs and Environment and the Zambezi Bridge Construction Office, claims to have concrete plans to reduce some of the negative effects of bridge construction for both workers and the local communities. The number one stated priority is controlling the transmission and spread of HIV/AIDS. In Save the Children's research, addressing issues of abuse and exploitation in the form of child prostitution

⁹ UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "Malawi: Project aims to put the brakes on spread of HIV/AIDS." IRINnews.org. November 29, 2005.

¹⁰ Zavis, Alexandra. "Pit Stop Teaches Truckers About AIDS." Guardian and Mail. November 30, 2005. ¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Wilson, Margie. "HIV is Spreading Via India's Highways." Associated Press. November 29, 2005.

¹³ Agência de Informação de Moçambique. (2005) "Agreement with Sweden Over Zambezi Bridge." Article posted to All Africa.com at <www.allafrica.com/stories/200512060601.html>

The prostitutes are poor and uneducated – forced to sell themselves for pennies inside trucks, parking lots or even outside in the bushes. Negotiating condom use simply isn't an option for most who work alone instead of in more organized brothels.

and labour are not explicitly stated as being part of the government's plans, though it is possible they are implicit under the larger HIV/AIDS umbrella.

Combating the spread of HIV/AIDS during the construction period is to be achieved through, "Preventive activities directed towards information, and the social unit of ANE has well prepared programmes for intervention."¹⁴ The construction company that was awarded the bridge contract by the government is responsible for facilitating the organization of activities to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The contractor will be required to subcontract a non-governmental organization or other institution which will be responsible for the provision of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programmes. ANE also has the task of supervising, monitoring and evaluating activities in the field. ANE has established rules for funding the implementation of activities of the HIV/AIDS programme.¹⁵

The Ministry of Health has also built a GATV (Office for Advice and Voluntary Testing of HIV/AIDS) in Caia, partly in response to an increased need for such a facility during the

bridge construction. The GATV is an office that is part of the national programme for HIV/AIDS prevention, where anyone can get advice and be tested. The health centre in Caia is in the process of being transformed into a rural hospital that is better equipped than the previous unit. This will include a lab with more testing capacity.¹⁶ The complete transformation into a hospital is not yet complete.

In addition, according to a recommendation by ANE's Social Unit, this project should create a Project-Community Liason Committee. The aim of this committee would be to act as a link in helping to establish and maintain contacts between the project, the local community and its structures. This proposal is supported by a company called Impacto, which presented the environmental study conducted in 2003. The study contains detailed recommendations, which include a need for the project to hire a Community Relations Officer. Some of the proposed tasks to be performed by this officer would be to inform people about the project, to receive and answer possible complaints, to support local development programmes and to disseminate information on vacancies and job opportunities.¹⁷

¹⁴ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

The government of Japan has also pledged nine million dollars, part of which will help fund the relocation of affected homes and businesses (barracas) in the bridge's path. This funding will also be spent on health and water supply infrastructure on both sides of the river.

Why are communities still concerned?

According to the Chief Engineer of ANE, construction is scheduled to begin in March/April 2006, a mere two months away. Save the Children interviewed members of the community in Caia and Chimuara in mid-December to find out to what extent they are being considered in the government's plans for bridge construction. Those interviewed were district government officials including police, traditional leaders, health and education workers, parents, youth-led NGOs and associations and their international partners, and children.

Some believe the government is doing an adequate job of consulting the local communities prior to construction. A local council member said he had been in dialogue with ANE over the past few months and had a good sense of the project. There have been meetings organized by ANE to which community leaders have been invited. However, other community members are sceptical that a meaningful dialogue exists. These residents felt they were not consulted adequately and were in fact being left in the dark about a number of issues. They believe that whatever social problems arise during the construction of the bridge the communities will have to deal with them without assistance. In December 2005, a Chimuara health official who

is responsible for caring for and treating children with illnesses in the area said he has not been consulted about health concerns and needs of either the local population or the construction workers. A Caia district education official was concerned about a lack of consultation so close to the commencement of construction. He claimed ANE was supposed to share a report it had written about some of the projected social impacts of construction but he was not aware if anyone had seen it. A Mopeia district government official suggested the national government could reach a larger audience by using radio to educate the local communities about the benefits of the bridge project, and how to avoid possible consequences on children and other residents.

Other community leaders were not aware of the existence of a social unit within ANE and that the government had plans to deal with social problems associated with the bridge. Save the Children interviewed an NGO worker who had been told that prior to the commencement of the bridge construction the barracas by the river would be relocated by the government to a designated area in town. He was told the new site would offer better facilities and that the relocation was to have been accomplished by September 2004. This was welcome news because of his concern for local children who spend time at the river crossing and in worker camps. He believes that with the barracas relocated into town, the children would be safer because they would be closer to their families and support networks. Save the Children visited Chimuara over a year later in mid-December 2005 and the barracas had still not been relocated.

Recommendations



To ensure that the rights of children are protected and that their well-being is promoted during the construction of the Zambezi Bridge, the following recommendations have been made by members of the communities in Caia and Chimuara. These include suggestions from various sources including district government officials, civil servants in the health and education sectors, traditional leaders, representatives of local and national non-governmental organizations and associations, businesspeople, youth and children.

Prevention

- Construction contractors and sub-contractors should make their employees aware of and enforce company codes of conduct prohibiting acts of child abuse or exploitation in any form.
- The government of Mozambique, through the National Road Administration (ANE) and Zambezi Bridge Construction Office, should encourage the contractors to establish (if necessary) and enforce codes of conduct designed to protect children. These offices should also play a role in monitoring this situation throughout the construction period.
- The district governments should provide their police forces with additional training or refresher courses on rights, laws and enforcement relating to child sexual abuse, exploitation and prostitution. There are past examples of this where the government of Mozambique has provided training to police in how to aid child prostitutes, and held seminars to assist police in handling cases of child sexual abuse.¹
- The National Road Administration (ANE) has proposed a Project-Community Liaison Committee that would be comprised of representatives of ANE, the construction companies and members of the local communities. As one of its mandates, this committee should devise a strategy to address a potential situation of child sexual abuse, exploitation and child labour. The committee would also be served by involving children themselves in their deliberations.

¹ US Department of State. (2004) "Mozambique: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices." Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. February 28, 2005. Available at: <www.state.gov>

Children have indicated, for example, that boredom and a lack of other recreational facilities in the community draws them to barracas and workers' camps for entertainment. The committee should come up with suggestions as to what alternatives could be set up to prevent this. This could include youth clubs and a location for children to spend weekends and evenings in positive play and recreation.

- The contractor is responsible for sub-contracting an NGO or other institution to design and implement HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention activities. In addition to this, it is strongly recommended that this organization create programmes to educate the communities about their rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis protecting children from abuse and exploitation. Other NGOs and associations working in Caia and Chimuara would be effective partners in this work.
- The contractors should financially assist employees from outside the area to bring their wives to live in the camps. If this is not possible, the contractors should provide adequate leave for workers to visit their wives and families. Both policies could help reduce sexual contact between workers and girl and women prostitutes.
- Children under 18 years of age should not be hired to do heavy, dangerous labour during the construction of the bridge. In order to prevent child labour associated with the project, those in charge of hiring should ask applicants for proof of age (e.g. birth certificates²) so children are not given construction jobs. Although many children in Caia and Chimuara do not have such documentation, all employee applicants should at least be asked for this. The National Road Administration and Zambezi Bridge Construction Office should work with the contractors in monitoring hiring practices throughout the construction period to ensure children are not employed.
- In terms of reducing child labour in the barracas, owners should be discouraged from hiring children. If children are employed, they should be given work that is not hazardous, does not require them to work long hours, especially at night, and that does not conflict with school enrolment and attendance.
- Some members of the local communities have suggested that one way of reducing the problem of prostitution of young women and the related issue of the spread of HIV/AIDS is to ensure they are given jobs associated with the construction project. If women are given other employment options to support their families they would not necessarily be forced to become involved in sex for money. In addition, one way of reducing demand by construction workers for prostitutes is to recruit local labour because these male workers will be in close proximity to their wives and families.
- There are few play and positive forms of entertainment for children in Caia and Chimuara. For example, children are exposed to violent and pornographic movies by the river crossing. Some children also spend time in the barracas at night with adults and are therefore exposed to negative influences. The creation of new spaces, resources and activities on both sides of the river where children can play and learn such as community centres, football pitches, children's gardens and educational movie centres would help improve this situation. The theatre and videos on HIV/AIDS prevention by the river settlements have been popular among local children and their communities. These existing programmes should be expanded with more funding and resources.

² According to a 2004 Save the Children baseline study of 300 households, only 13% percent of households have birth certificates for all those aged 0-18 years. Only 8% of households have birth certificates for all those aged 0-18 years in Chimuara. In addition, between 79% of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in Chimuara and 87% of OVC in Caia indicated they did not have a birth certificate. Furthermore a similar percentage indicated they did not have a personal identity certificate.

The owners of barracas in Caia and Chimuara have encouraged the situation of child prostitution by allowing girls to sell sex on the premises.



Protection

- Strengthen the capacity of district police forces and the legal system to deal more effectively with possible cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation by workers during the construction of the bridge. This can be accomplished in a number of ways by:
 - increasing the number of district police officers in Caia and Chimuara and having the police posted near the new barraca sites, workers camps and by the construction site during the day and the night;
 - enforcing existing Mozambican laws to protect children from sexual abuse, exploitation and prostitution;
 - investigating allegations of child sexual abuse or exploitation based on reports made by children and people in the local communities. The police should be prepared to make arrests based on evidence gathered in their investigations. If these cases are reported, it is important to set a precedent early on in the construction period demonstrating that these offences will not be tolerated.
 - In community meetings and in everyday communications with the public, the police and district government officials should encourage children, their families and civil servants such as teachers and health officials to report cases of sexual abuse and exploitation to the authorities.
 - The District Courts in Caia and Provincial Court in Quelimane should prosecute workers who are accused of child sexual offences.
- The owners of barracas in Caia and Chimuara have encouraged the situation of child prostitution by allowing girls to sell sex on the premises. The owners have also profited directly from the money these girls earn. This happens elsewhere in Mozambique where there is a demand for child prostitution such as in Beira and along the Beira Corridor. Owners of bars and discos use children to attract customers.³ Barraca owners should be prosecuted if cases of child prostitution take place in their premises. In addition, they should work with the local police to enforce existing laws that prohibit children from being in the barracas at night. Owners should also ensure that adequate lighting is installed to reduce dark places in and around the barracas that expose children to danger, and ensure that garbage is disposed of away from the sites to avoid unsanitary conditions that can cause disease.
- The district police forces should enforce a national law which regulates access of children to public night entertainment areas including bars, discos and barracas. To date the government and police have not had adequate resources to enforce this law effectively in Caia and Chimuara. Resources should be provided to ensure that improved policing of these provisions takes place. All groups should work together to enforce this law that prevents children under 17 from being on adult premises after 9 p.m.
- There is also a role for Save to Children and other child-focused NGOs in monitoring

³ Perschler-Desai, Viktoria. op.cit. ft. 43.

and reporting cases of child abuse and exploitation, particularly around the workers camps and barracas where children are more vulnerable to these risks. This should also be accompanied by a campaign of education to ensure that children, parents, communities and construction workers are aware of children's rights and the negative impacts of the involvement of children in prostitution, child labour, premature marriage and leaving school early.

- Children have complained of risk of injury due to speedy driving by motorists and drunk driving. With the increased volume of traffic during the construction period this risk will also increase. Speed limits and reckless or drunk driving should be strictly monitored and enforced, and offenders fined and prosecuted.

Care and support

- Since local agriculture is so important to the short and long-term health and well-being of children and residents of Caia and Chimuara in general, activities promoting agriculture development should be created and supported in parallel to the bridge construction project. Learning new farming and animal husbandry methods and having access to much needed agricultural equipment and implements would benefit these communities. Since the majority of children in Caia and Chimuara will likely depend on small-scale farming to sustain themselves and their families, those associated with construction of the bridge could help fund

a young farmers programme to teach new agricultural techniques. This could be done in collaboration with the district education authorities. For example, a model similar to the junior farmers programme in Manica and other areas of Sofala funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) would be useful here.

- Food insecurity and children dropping out of school have been identified by the communities as major problems facing children in Caia and Chimuara. Providing a daily meal at school for vulnerable children would benefit their physical and mental development and would encourage them to remain in attendance. In some schools in Caia District, the World Food Programme (WFP) has a similar initiative which district government officials believe has been beneficial. This could be extended to assist other children, removing one of the reasons for school drop out and their subsequent engagement in hazardous labour or prostitution.
- To the extent possible, it would be beneficial for the communities if the construction companies were to purchase local food products to help maintain or improve livelihoods of children and their families in this area during the construction period.
- More funding and resources for local health facilities should be provided. Children would benefit if both local health facilities and temporary facilities for construction workers collaborated to provide better overall health care for everyone in the area.

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Commencing in 2006 a bridge across the Zambezi River will be constructed in central Mozambique to better link the north and south of the country. There is little doubt that this project when completed will have positive consequences for the national economy. Local communities will also benefit from jobs and new investment. Yet past experience urges measures to be taken now to protect children from abuse and exploitation that is often associated with the realization of large, infrastructure projects in impoverished rural areas. With large numbers of single, male workers projected to enter the area for two to three years the risks of child prostitution and labour exploitation are very real, and are a source of concern to Save the Children, local communities and children themselves. Drawing on interviews and discussions with children, parents, teachers, community leaders and district and national level officials and stakeholders this publication identifies the problems that children may face as the project develops. It concludes with a series of practical recommendations that if carried out now will help ensure that these risks are diminished, and that this project will not only benefit the nation but the people of the area in which it is located.



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