Understanding Exclusion and Creating Value: A Look at Youth livelihoods in Informal Urban Settlements in Zambia

1.0   Introduction

This report discusses the livelihood activities of young people in Chawama, a low income residential area in Lusaka. It examines the major sources of livelihood strategies adopted by 'non – proprietor' youth. In the context of this study, a 'non – proprietor' youth is defined as any young person who is not engaged in running an enterprise in the urban informal sector as the 'owner' or 'proprietor'. The non – proprietor youth are more likely to be engaged in short term survival strategies such as casual work, informal waged employment or apprenticeship. Others might be doing 'nothing' or might be working as family labour. The report also discusses other illegal options which young people pursue as livelihood strategies. This leads to an examination of the 'exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of the youth from mainstream institutions and their consequences. The expectations and future aspirations of young women and men are also examined. Finally, the report discusses what should be done in order to address the array of social and economic problems facing the majority of the youth in Zambia.

2.0   Understanding 'Youth' in the Zambian Context

The concept of 'youth' is highly contested. Not surprising, the continuing debate on who is a 'youth' in Africa and elsewhere has not resolved the confusion surrounding the concept. The existing literature indicates that the concept of 'youth' has been understood and used differently by different governments, Non-Governmental Organisations and the public in general in many African countries and elsewhere in the world (Bennell, 2000; Curtain, 2000; Mkandawire, 2000; White and Kenyon, 2000; Abdullah, 1999; Honwana and de Boeck, 1999; Stabbert, *et al*, 1994; Osie-Hwedie, 1989). In much of Africa, for instance, laws define 'adulthood' as commencing from the age of 21, although in recent years there has been an attempt to lower this age to 18 years (Curtain, 2000; Mkandawire, 1998). However, for most countries, 21 years still remains the age at which many of the activities and responsibilities of 'adulthood' are assumed legally.

In attempting to understand who is a 'youth', we need to recognize the complexity of 'youthhood' as a category. Youthhood is a social institution that has rule-bound or patterned natures of behaviour. It is therefore not biologically fixed in its details and shape. This means that it is variable across time, classes and cultures. For this reason, the idea of a 'youth' cannot be fixed. Outside forces, especially but not exclusively, political, economic and ideological factors, change our understanding of youth. Societies (however defined) seem to establish patterns that differentially make sense of the way youth interact with, and enter, the adult worlds. These patterns set conventions which are supposed to regulate the behaviour of young people; their tasks and responsibilities; and how they can enter adulthood. It is generally the case that the youth, especially in gerontocratic (age-based societies) societies, are rarely treated equally and societies variously use and abuse young people.

Sociologically, 'youth' denotes an interface between 'childhood' and 'adulthood'[1]. However, it is generally the case that 'youth' as a social group are defined in terms of age. For this reason, the spectrum of youth has been variously defined as ranging from the ages of 10 or 11 years (as in some cultural traditions in Africa) to as high as 35 years (as in South Africa, for instance). In an attempt to standardise youth programmes, international organisations like the United Nations and the (British) Commonwealth Association of Nations have come up with specific age categories to define 'youth'. For instance, the United Nations uses the age category 15-24 years to define a 'youth', while the Commonwealth uses the age category 15-29 years. It is therefore the case that most countries in the world have either adopted the UN or Commonwealth definition. However, the age range '12-24' years is pre-supposed as representing the category of youth, and is in many cases extended to '15-25' years. In some cases, it has even been stretched to over 35 years (as in of Malaysia where a youth is defined as any person between the ages of 15-40 years (Kenyon and White, 1997).

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[1] It should also be noted that the notion of 'childhood', like that of 'youthhood' and 'adulthood' is defined differently by different countries, development organisations and analysts (Boyden, 1997).

However, in much of Africa, 'youth' and 'adulthood' are not defined by biological age. In Mali, for instance, 'youth' and 'adulthood' are defined 'socially' by the productive capacity to sustain a legal marriage (Brenner, 1996). Brenner observes that this normative expectation remains in spite of the increasing failure by many young people to sustain a legal marriage due to deteriorating economic conditions. This is especially the case in urban areas where reliable income sources largely depend on salaried employment or engagement in more sustainable informal enterprise activities. However, the vast majority of young men are unemployed, or seriously underemployed. *This means that the youth risk remaining dependent on their families at an age when they would expect to be economically independent.* This situation in turn poses obstacles to possible marriage, because the costs associated with marriage appear to be beyond the reach of so many young people. [2]

These factors are advancing the age of entry into socially-defined adulthood and broadening the demographic category of 'youth'. Not surprisingly, young people in some African countries like Sierra Leone have coined a neologism of **'Youth Man'** to describe their status or anyone who has gone beyond the age customarily associated with 'youth'. In Zambia, such youth describe themselves as being '**John, isa tulye ubwali'**. This is a Bemba phrase which literally translates as 'John, come and eat nsima' – 'nsima' being Zambia's main or staple food. The youth appear to see themselves as being only good enough to be asked to eat. These neologisms are a reflection of the inability of young people in Africa to pursue 'independent' or 'sustainable' livelihoods as a consequence of the depressed or stagnant economic situation in Africa. It is therefore a metaphor for Africa's poverty and social misery. The report on the nature of youth enterprise activities in the urban informal sector examines the extent to which the youth in Zambia are becoming '**Youth Men'**. This is done by comparing the livelihoods of proprietor and non-proprietors youths.

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[2] Facing the prospects of prolonged spinsterhood due to lack of suitable marriage suitors, there is evidence which suggests that an increasing number of young urban women are prepared to contribute economically to sustaining a marriage. This is discussed in detail in later sections.

The preceding discussion has raised a number of complex issues that surround the concept of 'youth'. Among other things, the discussion shows that the definition and description of 'youth' among countries, and among organizations, as well as in different social contexts, vary, and has been changing in time and space. For this reason, in defining the concept of 'youth' in this study, we realize that we are dealing with a complex set and often a continuum of problems, with a range of characteristics and behaviours that cut across age segments in different environmental contexts. In this respect, this study treats the concept of 'youth' as a situated phenomenon that is socially constructed and varies across societies and cultures. In other words, we see 'youth' as a social construction that is applied to give meaning to different segments of the population for various reasons. This study uses the age category 15-25 years as the definition of youth. This is the official definition of youth in Zambia, as provided for in the National Youth Policy. It is similar to the UN definition of youth. However, in adopting this age cohort as our operational definition of youth, we acknowledge its limitations as an analytical category. Nevertheless, we have adopted it in the study because of three primary reasons: 1) the realisation that the majority of young people in Zambia leave or drop out of school when they are in the age group 15-25 years; 2) the realisation that an increasing number of young people aged 25 years and below are having to work in the urban labour market, and; 3) the realisation that Zambia's population is becoming more and more youthful, thus increasingly resembling the 15-25 age group. However, for analytical purposes, the term 'youth' is extended to 29 years, if only to highly the significance of age in the maturation and accumulation processes in the urban informal sector. The term 'youth' is used interchangeably with the term 'young people'. 'Non – youths' are those who are older than the employed definition of 'youth'.

3.0   **The 'Non – Proprietor' Youth**

This section discusses the major sources of livelihood strategies undertaken by 'non – proprietor' youth. It examines the adequacy of these strategies and how they serve as a livelihood strategy. The section also examines other illegal options which young people pursue as livelihood strategies. This examination leads to the discussion of the exclusion and marginalisation of youth from mainstream institutions and their manifestations. The expectations and future aspirations of young people are examined in another section.

3.1   **Sources of Youth Livelihoods in Informal Settlements**

For analytical purposes, we divided the youth living in informal settlements into two groups: the 'proprietor youth' and the 'non – proprietor youth'. The research results suggest that only 25.5 percent of the youth could be described as 'proprietors', running their own enterprises on a consistent basis. (The report on youth enterprises examines the activities of the proprietor youth) The overwhelming majority (74.5 percent) of young people could be described as 'non – proprietor youth'. The study reveals the existence of different livelihood activities undertaken by non – proprietor youths in informal settlements. At the time of the survey, the great majority (73.8 percent) of the non – proprietor youth in the study area indicated that they were doing 'nothing', with only a quarter (25.2 percent) saying that they were doing some 'something'. This includes those engaged in unremunerated household work. Of those doing 'something', 10.8 percent were engaged in casual work. The rest were helping out in a family business (3.6 percent); helping a friend (0.3 percent); and engaged in 'other' activities (11.5 percent). Presumably, 'other' activities include illegal activities such as stealing, selling prohibited substances like marijuana and fuel, and prostitution. Very few young people were formally employed. This situation is not peculiar to Chawama Compound.

Mulenga, in a study of youth livelihoods on the Copperbelt, came up with similar findings. His study revealed a total of six types of livelihood engaged in by young people (Mulenga, 2000). These included: wage employment; casual and self-employment;

household work; apprenticeship; and subsistence farming. However, self-employment and casual work were the main livelihoods of young people, accounting for 25 percent and 9.0 percent of young people in the sample, respectively. Wage employment and household work, on the other hand, accounted for 15 percent and 19 percent of young people in the sample respectively, while apprenticeship and subsistence farming accounted for just one young person each in the sample. Mulenga further observes that some young people were also involved in prohibited activities such as selling marijuana and petrol. The similarity between the findings in the present study and those by Mulenga are indicative of the validity of our research results. A study by the Ministry of Youth (1998) also concluded that the major problem facing youth in contemporary Zambia is lack of productive employment.

The unemployment and underemployment status of young people is also reflected in their major sources of income. The study findings indicate that many of the non-proprietor youth survive by relying on the goodwill of their parents, relatives or friends, while married young women depend on their husbands. Slightly over half (55.9 percent) of the youth in the sample indicated that they had some form of regular source of income, while 43.8 percent said that their income was highly irregular. Of those with a more regular source of income, more than a third (34.1 percent) relied on their parents and relatives for their income. Of these, almost a quarter (23.2 percent) were dependent on their parents, while 10.5 percent relied on their relatives. Only 33.7 person of the youth relied on piece work as a major source of income, while 29 percent (mostly females) were dependent on a spouse or boyfriend. The remaining few relied on their friends (3.9 percent) and 'other' sources.

The unemployment and underemployment status of the youth is further reflected in the almost visible phenomenon of 'idleness' (locally known as 'kucheza-cheza') among young people. Observations revealed that many unemployed youths tended to congregate at their friends' *ntembas* (make-shift stalls), bus stations, bottle stores, *shebeens*, taverns and bars. In South Africa, this practice is known as 'parkshopping' (Makandawire, 2000). It involves unemployed young people 'shopping' around in shop corridors without buying anything. Investigations in the study area revealed that while 'kucheza-cheza'

appears to be a popular 'aimless' form of passing time among young people, it is also emerging as an important social institution. The young people who regularly meet together tend to talk about a wide range of issues, especially personal problems, affecting them. In some cases, the youth listen to music, play cards or engage in similar amusements. For the most part, however, these are places where the youth go to relax and meet friends. They discuss issues that they would not otherwise talk about in a home environment. The youth exchange information on where the next source of casual work (legal or illegal) might be, they learn about the latest (rhumba) songs and fashions on the market and the new lingo on the streets. They also learn to bond together and help out each other in times of trouble. Thus, while 'kucheza-cheza' is widely seen as a 'culture of laziness' among young people, it is emerging as an important social institution which allows young people, especially young men, to vent their anger and frustration over lack of jobs and other problems. It also serves as a means of socialization for urban youth into various aspects of urban life, and even into recruitment into youth gangs.

Informal discussions with youth found idling at various premises revealed their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with lack of jobs or 'something to do'. The majority expressed concern that the government was not doing enough to create jobs for them or address their problems. They bitterly complained that while they were willing to work, 'noone' seemed to care about them. Others expressed their incapacity to go for skills training due to either limited education or lack of money for fees. The study findings suggest that young people in urban neighbourhoods generally lack the capacity to set themselves up in business due to, among other factors, lack of initial capital, skills and business contacts. In the survey, the great majority (72.4 percent) of the youth cited lack of *initial capital* as the major reason why they were not involved in running informal enterprises. Other reasons given were lack of technical skills (14.8 percent) and lack of business management skills (6.7 percent). The last two reasons appear to suggest that some young people had probably attempted to go into business but were forced to quit due to lack of suitable skills.

It is this lack of access to productive resources that appears to force the youth into short

term survival strategies. In an informal division of labour which is a microcosm of the actual division of labour in wider society, young men largely tend to look for casual work to raise an income. Some are employed to sell merchandise for established traders on a commission basis, while others work as part-timers in informal trade, selling simple items like razor blades or chewing gum. On the other hand, young women tend to look for work as domestic servants or child minders. The tendency to work as maids among young women and girls appears to be a reflection of the socially prescribed traditional roles of women in African society. In Zambia, women are culturally expected to handle household chores while men are expected to provide for the family in their role as 'nsima winners'. Thus, from an early age girls and boys are brought up to assimilate these cultural values. This socialization process finds expression in the informal sector, as in the formal sector, with seemingly 'feminine' roles such as domestic work being taken up by women and girls. However, possibilities for accumulation from such activities appear to be very minimal for the majority of young people. Casual work and waged employment in the informal sector are largely characterized by very low earnings and high insecurity. This situation has led some young men and women to go into what we may call 'unorthodox' means of livelihoods, mostly of a criminal nature.

3.2   **Issues of Criminality in Youth Livelihood Activities**

In a context of minimal choice and opportunity, some youth are compelled to engage in pernicious livelihood strategies, some of which are of a 'criminal' nature. In Chawama, the research team was informed that difficult livelihood circumstances had forced many young people to engage in activities such as theft and sheer trickery as a means of earning a livelihood. Others were involved in selling prohibited substances such as marijuana and fuel (petrol and diesel). These activities constitute what is generally referred to as the 'underground' economy. It is also alternatively referred to as the 'shadow', 'hidden', 'secondary', 'black', or 'invisible' economy.

For analytical purposes, it is important that the concept of the 'informal sector' is distinguished from the concepts of 'illegal' or 'illicit' production and of the 'hidden' or

'underground' economy which may largely involve criminal enterprises. Hussmanns (2000) suggests that this requires understanding the motives for participation in the informal sector. Several informal sector surveys indicate that motives range from pure survival strategies undertaken by individuals facing a lack of (adequate) jobs, unemployment insurance or other forms of income maintenance, to the desire for independence and flexible work arrangements. In some cases, operators are motivated by the prospect of quite profitable income-earning opportunities, or the continuation of traditional activities. Available literature suggests that the vast majority of informal sector activities provide goods and services whose production and distribution are perfectly legal (Husmmanss, 2000; de Soto, 1989; Teszler, 1989). This is in contrast to criminal activities or illegal production, or activities prohibited by law such as extortion, drug trafficking, smuggling, prostitution, illegal currency dealings, tax evasion, and so on. It is these activities that should be referred to as the 'underground' or 'hidden' economy. However, we should admit that it is difficult to distinguish some 'informal sector' activities from 'underground' activities.

The arena of 'underground' social activity appears to have become a paradigmatic shift where the dialectic of the 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' of youth may be perceived. In informal settlements, underground economies involving both illicit or illegal work such as illicit trading that is prohibited by law (i.e selling drugs, prostitution, 'kachasu' and other illicit brewing, shebeens, and so on) seem to have become more than mere survival strategies. The study findings suggest that they are becoming part of the overall incorporation of the non – proprietor youth and other urban poor people such as women into the urban political economic regime. As the following discussion shows, young people can be seen 'idling' outside construction sites and factories waiting for *hypothetical* jobs. Others work as casual workers, domestic servants, security guards and as part-timers in informal enterprises. Many more work in dangerous activities such as selling marijuana, fuel (petrol and diesel), prostitution, extortion and arson rings.

Among female youths, in particular, prostitution was identified as a major means of livelihood. Focus group discussions revealed that most unemployed and unmarried

female youth, and in some cases even married ones, were involved in the business of selling their bodies at night as a means of earning a livelihood. In some cases, girls as young as 11 and 12 were said to be selling sex for as little as K500 (the equivalent of US$0.15). The commercial sex workers and child prostitutes operated independently, often without any form of harassment from pimps and other ruffians. This suggests the lack or absence of organized criminal gangs that deal in prostitution in informal settlements in Zambia. The young women were engaged in what Mkandawire (2000) refers to as 'free lancing'. This means that they live normally in their homes, or in some cases with their parents and guardians, but largely operate at night in streets or at drinking premises, including night clubs. A group of young girls interviewed by the research team revealed that they were engaged in prostitution as a means of earning a livelihood. Various reasons were cited for their involvement in this practice. Some girls claimed that they were orphans, were looking after their grandparents, or simply that their parents could not provide for them. In this sense, the female body, including that of young girls, is employed as an economic resource or as a means to economic viability. However, the young women expressed willingness to quit prostitution if alternative sources of income could be provided for them, including putting them back in school.

Focus group discussions also revealed that other young people, mostly young men, were involved in not only illegal, but also highly dangerous activities, such illegally draining petrol and diesel from oil tankers or corruptly buying such fuel from tanker drivers. It was said that the youth (commonly referred to as the 'Kuwait Boys') were involved in this activity because it was widely perceived as a highly 'lucrative' activity despite safety concerns and other dangers involved.[3] The 'Kuwait Boys' sold their fuel mainly to buses operators as well as to vehicle and grind-mill owners within the area. Other young people were said to be selling prohibited or banned substances such as marijuana. However, it was difficult to establish the extent of illegal activities due to their secretive nature and the unwillingness of those engaged in such activities to openly discuss them. Nonetheless, informal discussions suggested these practices were becoming an increasing source of livelihoods among young people, especially young men.

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[3] The name 'Kuwait' is taken from the Middle East country of Kuwait, a major oil producer.

The issue of criminality was also evident in some youth enterprise activities. Some young people operating in the informal sector were perceived as dishonest, crooks and even criminals who were said to take advantage of the ignorance or lack of alertness of their customers. This negative perception of youth enterprise activities arose from the apparent dishonest business dealings of some young informal traders who sold seemingly cheap counterfeit or underweight products to unsuspecting customers. The research team was informed that these youths even swindled their customers out of their money in transactions of a dubious nature. A case in point are young men selling cooking oil. These youths are said to fill cooking oil containers with plain water, often obtained from unsafe places. They then top up the water in the container with a slightly thick layer of cooking oil which they sell to unsuspecting customers. In extreme cases, the youth fill up the bottles with urine (See box below). Those young people selling drinks and juices were also said to be putting false labels of genuine brand products on empty bottles and containers which they then filled with their own solution of water and artificial sweeteners.

Box 1: Five Vendors Nabbed for Mixing Urine with Cooking Oil

According to press reports, five vendors of Ndola's Chifubu township were arrested by police for allegedly mixing urine with the cooking oil they were selling to unsuspecting customers at the market. Police spokesman, Lemmy Kajoba, confirmed the arrest of the five suspects and the confiscation of the cooking oil they were selling near Chifubu market. Chifubu police sources said one woman who was making fritters was the one who discovered the scandal of mixing urine with oil. She is said to have bought cooking oil in a bottle to make fritters but the foul smell of urine hit her nose just as she started frying the fritters. The woman told police that the oil in the bottle smelt like urine. The police spokesman further announced that other people had also reported that the same vendors urinated in the bottles to avoid using fee paying toilets, but later emptied the bottles before filling them up with oil without washing them. The vendors had allegedly been in this practice for a long time before some people who knew what they were doing reported them to police. During the arrest of the vendors, police confisticated 56 bottles of cooking oil which were taken to Chifubu Police Station for laboratory tests.

Source: Times of Zambia, 17th June, 2000

It was also claimed that some young people were using their informal enterprises as a 'front' for selling stolen goods. Some key informants argued that the street youth were using 'vending' as a pretext for disposing of stolen contraband. Paradoxically, some young people operating in the informal sector admitted that crime was a problem in their area. However, they tended to blame the crime wave on foreigners, especially refugees fleeing the fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A small minority of the unemployed youth simply appeared too 'wasted' to engage in informal enterprise activities. Observations suggest that this was largely due to drug and alcohol addiction. The distinguishing features of these young people were their blood shot eyes and long and crisscrossing knife marks on their faces. The youth looked drunk most of the time and could be seen either sleeping in the shop corridors during the day or engaging in vicious fights with each other over small amounts of money. However, some

of the seemingly 'wasted' youth could also be seen ferrying loads on wheel barrows. This is a practice locally known as 'Zam cab' (Zambia cabs). This refers to the youth ferrying luggage as some kind of 'cabbies' or 'taxis'. Informal discussions with selected 'Zam cabbies' revealed that most of them did not own the wheel barrows that they were using in 'their' business. They were largely working on a 'commission' basis for the owners, mostly non – youths, resident in the compound. However, even youth working or posing as 'cabbies' were said to be stealing from unsuspecting customers. It was alleged that the 'cabbies' tended to disappear with their customers' goods.

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that young people living in urban informal settlements have especially been affected in the area of employment. The youth are largely doing nothing, while some are involved in low remunerative short-term survival strategies and underground activities that only serve to further marginalize them. Significantly, these activities do not generate sufficient means for young people to pursue 'independent' livelihoods. As discussed in the report on the nature of youth enterprise activities in the urban informal sector, the great majority of non – proprietor youths live with parents and relatives; less than a quarter (18.5 percent contribute to household income; and less than a tenth are household heads. In contrast, more than a third of the proprietor youth live with a spouse or alone; the majority make contributions to household income; and almost half are household heads. The predominance of youth proprietors among young people who both live with a spouse and contribute to household income suggests that they have a more definite and sustainable source of livelihood than the non – proprietor youth.

These findings suggest that the current economic liberalization programme in Zambia has not been able to provide young people with the livelihood and economic opportunities they had hoped for. The present study contends that while the past decade has seen important economic policy changes, the overall social and economic position of the majority of the youth in the country remains somewhat bleak. This is particularly true of young men and women from low resource endowed communities such as Chawama Compound. The youth in these areas have limited access to resources, especially capital

and training opportunities. While these problems are not unique to youth, they tend to affect disproportionately young people. As a group, young women tend to be more vulnerable than young men. In a highly patriarchal environment, female youths tend to be marginalized in relation to skills development and institutional support. This often leaves them vulnerable to behavioural and health related hazards.

Against this background, the involvement of young people in short-term survival strategies, including underground economic activities, does not seem to evidence a 'temporal' tenure. Given the current high rate of youth unemployment and lack of access to productive resources such as credit and training, the chances for eventual 'existing out' to a more stable 'mainstream' job is no longer the norm among youth in informal settlements. *In this context, short-term survival strategies and the underground economy seem to have become a long term venture that occupy the youth in informal settlements, with intervening prison and jail sentences becoming more common*. This is also reflected in the bizarre 'desire' of some young people for 'prison life'. Our interviews suggest that destitution and desperation of some youths appear to have made them prefer 'prison life' to 'life in the streets'. In informal discussions, it was revealed that some youths would deliberately steal and get caught so that they could be sent to prison. This was done as a way of 'escaping' the hunger in the streets, or at home. These factors point to, and result from, the 'exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of youth.

4.0   The 'Exclusion' and 'Marginalisation' of Youth

In our view, an appropriate place to begin examining the 'exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of young people in informal settlements is to look at the negative stereotyping of contemporary urban youth in Zambia. In this study, 'youth exclusion' is defined as the detachment or alienation of young people from mainstream institutions in society that facilitate the acquisition of skills and other resources. On the other hand, 'youth marginalisation' is taken as referring to young people who perceive themselves as having little or no future, who have a poor self image, or who are not involved in any organization or structure (Stabbert, *et al*, 1994). It may also be taken as the lack of effective participation or representation of youth in mainstream institutions in society. This report examines the 'exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of young people from a premise of their stereotyping and identity transformation as they attempt to cope with an uncertain social and economic environment..

Observations and media reports show that the urban youth in Zambia are widely stereotyped as 'criminals', 'violent', 'hooligans', 'hoodlums', 'malcontents', 'rebellious', 'irresponsible', 'deviants', or 'pseudo lumpen – proletariat'. Young people that are engaged in petty trading in the urban informal sector are derogatively referred to as '**Kaponyas**' or '**Eagle-Eagles**'. In the public eye, 'kaponyas' and 'eagle – eagles' are widely seen as a violent and undisciplined criminal element. They therefore tend to be despised and looked down upon by 'high' society. The ambivalent attitude towards the informal sector among policy makers is partially a reflection of this perception. The negative stereotyping of youth appears to be common in Africa (Abdullah, 1999). In Tanzania, the unemployed youth in the informal sector are derogatively referred to as the 'Manchicha'; in Uganda and Kenya they are known as 'Bayaye'; in Nigeria they are called 'Jan Banga', 'Jaguda Boys', or the 'Area Boys'; in Sierra Leone they are known as 'Rarray Boys'; in Algeria they are referred to as 'Hittiste'; in South Africa they are called 'Tsotsis'. Abdullar (1999) has termed the urban unemployed out of school youths in Africa the 'pseudo lumpen proletariat'.

These terms evoke negative connotations which often lead to the 'criminalisation' of unemployed young people. In most cases, the tendency among policy makers and the general public is to view the street and non-proprietor youths as the 'problem'. At best, this perception of youth motivates the state to limit and undermine the autonomy of young people through certain aspects of youth policy; for instance, those on the registration of youth organisations tend to be restrictive. Politicians and policy makers generally fear the consequences if youth are allowed to set their own agenda, articulate their own interests and translate their own needs into demands. During our fieldwork, we were informed by several representatives of youth organisations that the state was hesitant to register their organisations. Indeed, an official at the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development informed the researchers that they were not interested in registering what they considered 'political' youth organisations. At worst, the negative labeling of young people seems to provide cover for repressive state policies towards what are officially regarded as 'undesirable' social elements in society. This is evident in the manner in which the state and council police chase the Kaponyas and Eage-eagles up and down the streets, sometimes 'brutalising' them and confisticating their goods.

The existence of an independent youth culture is also viewed as being somehow a 'cause' and 'effect' of the economic problems being experienced by the country. Our position in this report is that YOUTH ARE NOT THE PROBLEM. We are arguing that the problems affecting the youth DO NOT start with young people, but rather the result of the crises and disintegration of educational and other social institutions that are supposed to facilitate the entry of youth into socially-defined 'adulthood'. As Slabbert, *et al*, (1994) observe, youth as a social category reflects society's potential for the future. If society is in crisis, then that potential is threatened and youth in its various manifestations will reflect that crisis. However, this does not imply that young people are not in problems. If we argue that youth are not the problem, we are simply stating that youth finds itself in problems because of the crisis in social and economic institutions. To argue that youth are the problem, as is generally the case, is to suggest that despite all attempts at assisting them, young people refuse or fail to respond and remain a 'problem'. This is apparently not the case in Zambia. For various reasons, social support institutions in Zambia are

increasingly failing in their responsibility to shape the youth into personalities acceptable to the wider society. Thus, the so-called 'youth crisis' or 'youth problem' is largely a reflection of the crisis in social institutions.

It is our contention that the social flux that has occurred in Zambia over the last three decades has had the effect of undermining established authority patterns in society. In particular, traditional age-based social relations and social institutions, which have been the major determinants of the youth 'problematique' in the past, are disintegrating, especially in urban areas. Other contributing factors to this phenomenon are social change, urbanization, education, mass media and 'globalization'. As discussed later, the widespread and deepening poverty in Zambia also seem to have considerably contributed to the breakdown of traditional value systems and social institutions. We in this regard draw upon material from Pinnock (1997) to look at the consequences of the collapse of social institutions on youth in informal urban settlements. Pinnock has contrasted rites of passage in stable and supportive settings with those in less stable (disintegrated) settings. In the former, at a particular stage of the young people's growth they socially separate from the community in search of their own identity. Pinnock characterises this as a *traditional rite of passage*. In this rite of passage, childhood ends as the young person goes into what is known as 'free fall'. At this point, however, social rituals and understandings take over and guide the young person through a period of liminality (symbolic death) towards social re-integration.

This process moves from symbolic death to symbolic re-birth. Through this transitional stage, it is anticipated that the young person will be re-integrated into society through the symbolic re-birth that comes from *liminality*. At this stage, the young person is said to have reached 'adulthood'. By contrast, in disintegrating societies, social separation may result in *eternal liminality*, as the society lacks resources to hold the young person through this transition. Pinnock characterises this as a *gang rite of passage*. In this rite of passage, the young person invokes a break with his or her society and goes into 'free fall'. In the absence of a ritual social safety net, such as an initiation ceremony or a properly functioning educational system, the young person goes into 'eternal *liminality*',

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bringing about 'dispersion' and often even actual death. This results from difficulties with re-integration into society which becomes an increasingly remote possibility. Consequently, the young person enters adulthood with no re-integration process, metaphorically dispersing them from the norms and values of society.

The *gang rite of passage* described by Pinnock seems to aptly describe what is happening to youth in contemporary Zambia, especially those in informal settlements. In a context of breaking down traditional value systems and social support institutions, young people seem to be in a state of free fall, with remote chances for re-integration into the social mainstream. *The crisis in social institutions appears to have resulted in the lack of predictable rites of passage which develop characteristics that are consistent with taking control and responsibility as one grows older.* As a result, young people in Zambia are entering adulthood without proper reintegration. Below is a discussion of the crisis in key social support institutions for young people in Zambia.

4.1   Elements of Crisis

The youth in Zambia, as elsewhere in Africa, acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, manners and behaviours from a variety of institutions including the family, the school and the community at large. The sections below examine the crisis in key social support institutions for young people.

4.1.1   The Local Community

The community as a larger entity has various institutions that play a significant role in the education of the youth. These include community leaders (elders), peer groups, religious institutions, cults, and so on. In this study our focus is on community leaders and the family. The study shows that although the local community is expected to play an active role in the education of youth, it lacks the necessary organisational capacity to do so. Discussions with community leaders revealed that they were generally not aware of initiatives that were being undertaken by NGOs and other external organisations. This

lack of awareness seemed to have been worsened by lack of financial capacity by the local leadership to introduce initiatives aimed at promoting youth development. *Several community leaders wondered how they could they help the youth when they themselves were struggling to survive.*

A similar view was expressed by young people in focus group discussions. The youth said that they did not expect much help from their local community, especially their parents given the financial and economic problems that they were facing. Some young people observed that they had dropped out of school due to failure by their parents to pay school fees and buy other educational requirements. The views expressed by both young people and their community leaders suggest that local communities, in the current socio – economic environment in Zambia, cannot be expected to provide any meaningful service to youth proprietors on their own. This is largely due to deteriorating economic conditions.

Although an analysis of poverty reports in Zambia suggests that the urban poor are, on the whole, better off than their rural counterparts, poverty in urban areas has been steadily increasing in recent years. In informal settlements, young people are therefore growing up in a 'culture of poverty'. This culture is characterized by disease and lack of adequate food, shelter and clothing. It is also characterized by broken marriages and families, alcoholism, a high rate of teenage pregnancy, a high school drop out rate and school absenteeism. Several reports on poverty in Zambia attest to this situation. Given this environment, young men and women are finding it increasingly difficult to rely on traditional support structures.

4.1.2 **The Family**

Another example of a social institution that is currently experiencing a crisis or is under severe stress in Zambia is the family. Our research suggests that fewer and fewer children have a stable family environment expected of an 'ideal' family (however defined) in Zambia today. This is especially the case in informal settlements where many families are increasingly characterised by absent parents, lack of communication between parents and children, domestic violence, 'token' marriages, the 'mistress' phenomenon or outright broken marriages. The intensification of poverty and its resultant economic hardship has resulted in the inability of parents to fend for their children. This often leads to various psychological pressures and, increasingly, abandonment of parental responsibility to provide for their children. In turn, this means that the family is increasingly losing the credibility and authority to mould the youth into what is 'expected' of them by society.

The research findings also suggest that the composition of households (or families) in Zambia is changing as a result of rising adult mortality and morbidity due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a context of high poverty levels. This is evident from our sample selection. A total of 440 households were selected for the study. Given that an average urban household in Zambia has an estimated average number of six members and that the average number of children per household is 3.2 (Mukuka, 1999), it was expected that at least three people aged between 15-65 years would be interviewed from each household. Thus, in theory, selecting a sample of 440 households would mean interviewing a maximum of 1,320 respondents. However, this was by no means certain. In reality, it was more likely that we would find fewer households with many people aged between 15 and 65 years. This is apparently because of the reported devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on the composition of urban households in Zambia. It is argued that AIDS mortality can result in low life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, low population growth rates and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex. Although there was no readily available information on the extent of this phenomenon and its impact on household survival or coping strategies in Chawama, the research team believed that the

phenomenon was becoming prevalent in the area, as was the case in other townships in Zambia.

To a certain extent, our study findings confirmed these assumptions. Several numerators reported that in some households they only found elderly people presumed to be above 65 years who were looking after orphaned grand children. Other enumerators reported finding only children aged below 15 years in some houses. These were presumed to be street children, some of whom were reportedly working for small wages in the informal sector, or begging in streets. Subsequently, a new phenomenon of 'grandmother' and 'child-headed' households has started emerging[4]. However, we could not statistically establish the prevalence of the phenomenon of 'grand parents' and 'child'-headed households in Chawama. But taking the difference between the expected and actual number of respondents, we can assume that about 30 percent of households were either headed by grandparents or children. Interviews with community leaders confirmed the existence of this phenomenon. The community leaders explained that the rising adult mortality rate due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the area meant that relatively young people were dying, leaving the elderly to look after orphaned children. In other cases, orphaned children were fending for themselves due to lack of support from relatives. These factors suggest that the composition of urban households in Zambia is changing as a result of the rising adult mortality rate due to AIDS which largely affects the sexually active group aged between 15-49 years. More research is therefore needed to investigate this phenomenon.

4.1.3 **The School**

The 'school' is another institution that is going through a crisis. Here we are using the term 'school' to refer to the educational system in all its forms and levels, from primary up to university level. A review of the economic literature indicates that the last decade

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[4] The strange phenomenon of a 'growing' population of elderly people in some parts of Africa was recently highlighted in a magazine article by Tom Nevin (African Business, March, 2001). Nevin observes that while in the West, medical science is helping people live longer, thus increasing the population of the old, in Africa the proportion of the old is also growing but for entirely different reasons. As the adult mortality rate rises due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the old are left to care for orphans. In some instances, the very burden of looking after the old is falling on the very young.

has witnessed a disintegration in public schools in terms of quality, infrastructure and teacher and student morale. Media reports and anecdotal evidence indicate that many school children are attending schools in conditions that 'brutalise' them physically and psychologically. For instance, some boarding schools are said to lack the capacity to feed students, thus forcing them to look for alternative ways of surviving. In others cases, some primary schools lack even basic necessities such as chalk or desks.

In nearly all schools, the poorly remunerated teachers are turning to the 'commercialization' of teaching by introducing 'tuition' classes at additional cost. Passing examinations is linked to attendance at the extra – tuition classes, and in some instances, 'leakages' which involve teachers, and in some cases education officials, selling examination papers to pupils. This puts pupils, especially girls, from poor families at a disadvantage. Informal discussions revealed that girls were generally expected to give sexual favours to teachers in exchange for 'extra' tutorials, 'leakage', and other curricula activities. In some cases, these abusive relationships lead to the impregnation of school pupils. Informal discussions and media reports suggest that impregnation of young girls by their teachers is a common occurrence, especially in rural areas.

Another factor affecting influencing the school drop out rate is the cost – sharing policy introduced by government. The effect of this policy is yet to be properly evaluated. Nonetheless, initial surveys and media reports show many examples of the mismanagement of the concept and the inability of many schools to translate cost sharing in a way that does not penalize pupils from very poor families. Our study shows that many children in informal settlements are dropping out of school due to the inability of their parents to pay school fees. The majority (68.3 percent) of respondents in the survey cited lack of financial support or sponsorship; 13.6 percent lack of interest; and 7.4 percent (girls) cited pregnancy as the main reason for dropping out of school. Other reasons given were expulsion (3.0 percent); early marriage (1.1percent) and withdrawn by parents or guardians (0.2 percent).

That the majority of young people in the study area cited financial reasons as the major reason for dropping out of school is indicative of the severe financial pressures that parents in informal urban settlements are facing as a consequence of the rising and deepening poverty levels in the country. It suggests that most parents are facing serious difficulties in sending their children to school due to lack of money to pay school fees, buy uniforms, books, and so on. In several instances, the research team was told that most households had to make a choice between sending their children to school or buying food for the whole family. The later tended to be the option. To a certain extent, this explains the nationwide drop in school enrollments in Zambia. It is currently estimated that over 600,000 children of school going age are out of the school across the country.

It is also important in the light of the high drop out rate among children to pause and consider the implications for much younger people. Children who drop out of school, especially at a very young age, are vulnerable to what the International Labour Organization (ILO) describes as 'the worst forms of child labour'. According to the ILO, insufficient opportunities for education and training are responsible for an increase in child labour[5]. The ILO estimates that worldwide there are over 250 million children aged between 5 and 15 who are workers and 80 million of them are in Africa. In most Third World countries, children who do not go to school are expected to work. Most of them do odd jobs, including child prostitution and other 'worst forms of child labour'.

However, addressing the problem of child labour may prove difficult in Zambia and other African countries. High poverty levels, low incomes and high unemployment in informal settlements will always provide a strong incentive to households to force their children into the streets in order to supplement household incomes. In this regard, a necessary condition for the elimination of child labour, especially the worst forms of child labour, is the absorption of excess supplies of domestic labour and a subsequent increase in household incomes. When incomes rise, families are not likely to force their children to work, but will actually provide them with an education and childhood. But this will require strong and sustained growth in the economy.

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[5] Remarks attributed to the ILO Resident Representative in Zambia (Times of Zambia, 24th May, 2000).

Among female youth, there is also the pressure to quit school to get married. In the the study area, the research team was amazed at the large number of female youths who were not in school. Investigations revealed that this was largely due to cultural expectations by parents regarding the economic and social returns for investing in a girl. The research team was told that, in a situation of scarce financial resources, parents would rather send their 'boy child' to school than their 'girl child' for fear that the latter would drop out of school due to pregnancy or marriage. It is therefore important to pause and consider the implications of pregnancy and early marriages for young girls. The pressure to leave school early and early family formation appears to trap many women and girls in situation of low skills, with poor prospects for productive work and improvements in health and family nutrition.

It is also important to raise the issue that schooling itself is increasingly put to question in relation to its relevance. Until recently, the 'school' in Africa has been widely seen as an important means for social mobility. Parents sent their children to school in the hope that education would guarantee a better future for them. To many people, education meant a well paying job, a big house, a car and other fringe benefits. Nowadays attending school no longer holds the hope for employment or a better future. Not surprisingly, in some focus group discussions, some young people tended to perceive formal education as 'useless' to their lives. Indeed, the youth, especially the school-going ones, see their friends, brothers, sisters and cousins who complete school before them staying for long periods at home without gainful or productive employment. The perceived 'uselessness' of education among youth appears to arise from the type of education that the students receive. The educational system in Zambia does not equip young people with skills to compete in the labour market. Neither does it prepare them to go into self – employment enterprise activities. It is largely geared towards providing basic literacy and numeracy skills for eventual expression in the formal labour market. It is therefore a type of education that does not adequately prepare the learners to face the practical realities of their environment. Some community leaders also made this observation. *Unsurprisingly, most young people in the study, who are already affected by poverty and unemployment,*

claim that education has no relevance to their livelihoods. They key lesson here is that schooling has not adjusted to the changing demands for knowledge, skills and aptitudes that young people need to look after themselves. ***As Brenner (1996) observes, the school nowadays mainly trains students for unemployment***.

This situation offers little incentive for young people to study. This is evident in the proportion of young people who dropped out of school due to lack of interest in Chawama. Community leaders in the area complained that nowadays they even fear to tell their children to go to school. As one leader put it, "Masikhu yano nikhu muyangana mulinso mwana pamene ukalibe kumufunsa kuti ayende ku sukulu. Ngati linso niyo sweta, usa kambe naye ndaba aza kutukana!" (Nowadays, you should look at the eyes of your child before asking him to go to school. If he has blood shot eyes, don't even bother asking him to go to school because he will just insult you!" In focus group discussions, it was revealed that the children would first pass by a tavern or bar to drink beer and smoke (often marijuana) before attending school. Some community leaders complained that bar and tavern owners were contributing to the problem by opening their premises very early in the morning (sometimes as early as 06:00 am as opposed to the gazetted time of 10:00 am).

Another contributing factor is the environment in which young people grow up in informal settlements. Observations and informal discussions in Chawama revealed that the home environment was crowded and therefore not conducive for studying. Many houses have no electricity and other amenities. There was also a problem of hunger (and food insecurity in general) in many homes. In the absence of school feeding programmes, as is the case in some African countries, this made it difficult for children to concentrate on their work at school. Field reports indicate that even when the children return from school, there is no guarantee that they would find food at home. Where they do find it, the food is either inadequate or largely starchy, poorly cooked and quite unhygienic. Current estimates suggest that over 40 percent of Zambian children are stunted due to chronic nutrition (low height for age; 25 percent are underweight for their age; and 5.0 percent are wasted (low weight for age) (Chigunta, et al, 1998). Accessing reading

materials at home, including pencils and books in some cases, was also a widespread problem. This situation was not helped by the lack of a library in the neighbourhood.

These factors suggest that the 'school' as an institution is not necessarily a place adequately equipped to handle the youth. In recent years, the capacity of the school to handle youth seems to have been taken unawares in dealing with drug and substance abuse among pupils, leading to increased incidences of violence, including riotous behaviour, vandalism, and destruction of property. This implies that both teachers and students are longer safe from drug and alcohol related violence in schools. The 'school' also seems incapable of dealing with the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on teachers and students. Here attention is drawn not only to the death of teachers[6] and students, but also to the effect on students by the long illness and eventual death of their parents or guardians. As discussed later, the consequences of being an AIDS orphan on schooling and the trauma that surrounds the child in a family that is a victim of HIV/AIDS should be of concern to all. At the core of the loss of capacity by the 'school' to handle youth is declining resource allocations. This is discussed in Section 4.1.5 below.

4.1.4 Youth Development Programmes

In Zambia, an attempt has been made to establish institutions that exclusively deal with various aspects of youth development. As discussed in the report on the existing policy and institutional framework for youth, a separate ministry responsible for youth affairs exists. This is the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development whose major function is to provide direction for sport, youth and child services, to set policies and translate them into strategies and priorities. In order to discharge this responsibility, the Ministry in 1993 undertook a review of its youth policies and programmes. This resulted in the formulation of the National Youth Policy (NYP) which was approved in August, 1994. To translate this policy into strategies and priorities, the Ministry came up with the National Programme of Action for Youth (NPAY) which was approved in 1997. In

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[6] It is currently estimated that over 600 teachers die each year in Zambia. This figure is roughly equal to the number of new teachers recruited each year.

addition, there are some NGOs that have initiated programmes targeted at the youth. The major ones among these organizations are the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and Human Settlements of Zambia (HUZA).

The existing policy and institutional framework for youth is discussed in detail in another report. Here we can only briefly summarise the key findings. In brief, the study findings indicate that the field of youth development is characterized by isolated, stand – alone programmes with divergent objectives. The Ministry of Youth lacks adequate resources to effectively discharge and scale up its operations, while NGO programmes generally suffer from limited coverage. There is also little or no operational relationship between the government and civil society organizations working in the area of youth, possibly leading to duplication of efforts and waste of scarce resources. It is therefore not surprising that the great majority of young people were not aware of the existence of the National Youth Policy and youth programmes. The survey results show that 80.2 percent of the youth were not aware of the existence of the NYP, while slightly more (87.2 percent) were not aware of the existence of youth development programmes in their area. These findings suggest the gross inadequacy of the existing youth policy and institutional framework in promoting youth development.

4.1.5   The Impact of Economic Restructuring

The breakdown in social support institutions has occurred in a context of retrenched state support for social services that have a direct bearing on youth such as education and health. The adoption of restructuring programmes under the dictates of multilateral institutions (principally the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) has resulted in declining allocations of resources to education, health, social welfare and other services in real terms. This has had an adverse impact on the provision of social services to young people. For instance, in the area of education, the state – funded educational system has disintegrated in terms of quality, infrastructure and teacher and student morale.

The restructuring process has not only affected the youth, but has also adversely affected the employment status of the heads of the households in which young people live. The survey results show that the majority of young people come from homes where the household heads are mostly employed in the urban informal sector. The predominance of informal enterprise activities in the livelihood strategies of Chawama residents is largely a reflection of the overall decline in the formal employment situation in Zambia. A study by Muller (1977) indicates that, before the 1980s, 96 percent of the employed male households heads in Chawama were in wage employment, with at least over 70 percent employed in the formal sector. In recent years the formal employment situation in Chawama has considerably declined, with the majority of people employed in the informal sector. However, this situation is not peculiar to Chawama. Mukuka (1999), in a study of informal enterprise activities at market places in five selected compounds in Lusaka, indicates that over 95 percent of the respondents in the sample were not formally employed.

The preceding discussion suggests that existing social support structures have collapsed or are under severe stress. However, the disintegrating authority patterns are not being replaced with new forms of effective socialization and social control. The broader consequences of the collapse of social institutions that support the transition of youth into adulthood and the withdraw of the state from actively supporting youth development have led to the growing 'social isolation' of young people from mainstream institutions. In turn, this has given rise to the phenomenon of youth sub cultures, as discussed below.

5.0   The Emergence of Youth Sub-Cultures

In the absence of social control or properly functioning social support institutions, young people tend to be alienated from mainstream society and largely end up in the streets where they create their own social worlds. Many of them are developing their own sub-cultures in the streets, which lead to *adaptive* behaviour to the prevailing socio-economic circumstances. Coincidentally, many young people are exposed to a global youth culture that makes them feel increasingly less attached to their families, communities and

traditional support institutions, contributing to their own sub cultures. However, global lifestyles in a largely stagnant economy do not often correspond to local realities, leading to the generation of aspirations that cannot be met. This is reflected in the identity transformation and activities young people in the streets.

In the processes of adjusting and coping with the situation in the streets and neighbourhoods, the youth have undergone an identity transformation in their attempts to find space in the economic dispensation. The deepening economic and social crises in Zambia compel many young actors in the streets and informal settlements to redefine themselves in social terms that reflect their marginal status in society. The symbolism of this redefinition is not only reflected in their form of dress, but also in their types of activities in the streets. The language that these youths use in the streets and their patterns of dressing reflect the phases of their experiences that are very different from that of their parents or the wider society. It appears to be a language of protest that is distinct from the mainstream language and culture. It is subtle, often ridiculing the language of the mainstream culture. Observations revealed that these youths wear what may be described as 'weird' types of hair-do and clothes, speak with a coarse voice and brag a lot. To understand the language of the street youth is to understand the culture of young people and their lived experiences in the streets as well as their perception of mainstream society.

The sense of alienation among youths is also reflected in the activities of young people operating in the streets. Denied legitimate means of earning a living, the non – proprietor youth in informal settlements are forced to live by their wits. They are therefore brought up in a culture which facilitates acquisition of criminal values. Mkandawire (2000) observes that these young people are compelled to develop highly competitive survival strategies and compensatory behaviour to cushion their mutilated lives and lack of social security. The youth are prone to aggressiveness, criminal behaviour, petty theft, drugs, drunkenness, gross indiscipline and violence. Collectively this may be referred to as 'anti-social culture'. Our observations and informal discussions revealed that the youth in Chawama were earning their livelihood by a set of ingenious variation of petty trading,

casual work, borrowing, stealing, pick-pocketing and other illegal activities. Some were on alcohol (most of it illicit brews); others on drugs, such as marijuana (dagga), while others were sniffing glue and petrol. This ant-social culture seems to lead the general public to view the street youth with "awe, sensitivity, contempt and vicious passion".

The consequences of this situation appear to be the further 'social isolation' and 'criminalisation' of youth. The general public tends to perceive the street youth as 'criminals' or potential criminals who should be avoided. As Abdi (1993) observes in the case of South Africa, in the public eye street youth are being converted into latter day 'savages' who are seen as 'destructive'. The paranoia about the street and non-proprietor youth has occasioned a situation whereby any form of crime, robbery, rape, burglary, and so on, is associated with, or blamed on, them, even though many of them may be innocent. If caught stealing, they tend to be subjected to 'instant justice', or thrown into jail. When sentenced to prison (as is usually the case for such criminalized youth even if the concerned juvenile only stole a loaf of bread due to hunger), chances are that the young offender will steal again upon release from jail. This is reflected in media reports which suggest that young offenders tend to engage in crime and anti-social activities soon after their release from prison. This is apparently due to lack of skills and access to productive resources such as credit. It is our assumption that juveniles are not reformed by the prison system. Rather, their prison spells tend to turn them into hardened criminals. This is apparently due to the breakdown of the reformatory system for young offenders. In the absence of such a system, it is highly likely that that the juveniles will assimilate the values and skills of older and sometimes hardcore criminals. The relationships that the young offenders form with hardened criminals appears to facilitate and reinforce a combative life style. Hence, in the absence of socially productive skills and access to resources such as credit or even employment, the young offenders will steal again upon their release. As noted elsewhere, such youth are increasingly viewing 'prison life' as better than 'street' or even 'home' life. More research is needed to examine the impact of the prison system on young offenders.

Observations and informal discussions revealed that many street youth sleep rough under bridges, in garages, open parks, market places, shop corridors, bus stations, uncompleted buildings, on pavements and open spaces. Some of these young people seemed to be drunk most of the time and were clad in tattered rags, while the mentally disturbed among them fed out of dustbins. Others looked simply too 'wasted' to engage in informal enterprise activities or look for piece work due to drug and alcohol addiction. Probably these are what Abdullah (1999) calls the 'unemployables' or what Harpers (1989) refers to as 'sub-marginals' at the fringes of the informal sector who may not even be part of it. These young people are obviously a highly socially isolated group that has not been targeted by existing interventions. As already noted, these youths mainly go into menial and pernicious livelihood activities which offer few or no future prospects. The estimated over 600,000 'AIDS orphans' are swelling their ranks.

It is in this context that one can talk of the 'exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of youth from mainstream societal institutions. Young people from disintegrating families, or those in a Pinnockian 'free fall' as a result of disintegrating social support institutions, are highly likely to drop out of school due to lack of school fees, uniforms, books, among other necessities. With their exclusion from the educational arena, such young people are also high likely to be excluded from the formal economic arena, especially from the shrinking, metamorphosing productive sectors. This is manifest in not only increasing joblessness among young people, but also in their general lack of a discernible political 'voice' and entrenchment in menial street activities that offer few long-term prospects for growth and development. The consequences appear to be the concomitant economic disenfranchisement of youth as a contemporaneous twin of their criminalisation in the streets. This disenfranchisement is characterised by denial of either full waged citizenship or lack of access to productive resources such as credit and training.

The process of economic restructuring appears to have pushed the youth further to the margins of society. The withdraw of the state from the management of the economy and provision of social services has left young people in a precarious situation. In the past, the state used to provide 'free' education for the youth population – at least basic primary

education. The state also used to provide employment in the formal sector. Today all this has changed as a result of the economic restructuring programme under the dictates of multilateral institutions. Young people are widely expected to compete in the emerging market economy and pay for education, health and other services. This suggests that youth livelihoods are taken for guaranteed. However, many youths currently lack resources and adequate training to look for jobs in the formal productive sector or alternatively to establish viable enterprises in the growing urban informal sector. As a consequence, many are engaged in menial activities with few or no future prospects, or where they are constantly harassed by police.

The situation of young people has not been helped by lack of a discernible 'youth voice'. As noted above, young people generally lack representation at various political levels except as members of the 'youth wings' in political parties. The youth have not evolved any large-scale organized system of either coping with the SAP-induced hardship or to advance their cause. Lacking a readily available organizational platform and sustainable means of livelihood, the street and non-proprietor youth are increasingly becoming an army for anyone who can afford them. In an attempt to sustain their material life, many unemployed urban youth are hired, or hire themselves out, as political thugs to politicians. However, these youths have not internalized a clear-cut political consciousness, even though they seem to be politically informed and do freely discuss political and other matters relating to democracy. In other words, although street and non-proprietor youth appear socially cohesive in they way the go about the pursuit of reproducing their material lives, they lack a political agenda of their own. *This has led some observers to argue that much of the transformative capacity ascribed to the youth is misplaced (Imboela, 2000).* It is argued that it is restless capacity that has no sense of purpose or direction. The youth seem to have no clue as to what they are fighting for or against, even more so what to replace it with. Hence, it is argued that their actions tend to be sporadic and uncoordinated. To a certain extent, this partially explains why young people never possess power but are always conduits of power for those who are smart enough to use them as 'pawns' in the political game. Moreover, in social and political terms, young adults in patriarchal and gerontocratic societies are widely regarded as

'minors' until well into their 30s. This situation has allowed male adults and the elderly to continue to dominate the political, social and economic institutions and processes in society. These factors, combined with weak advocacy and the political vulnerability of youth, result in superficial and fragmented interventions for young people, as manifest in lack of adequate or disintegrating support institutions, little budgetary allocation to the youth ministry, and so on.. This situation only serves to further marginalise the youth.

The socio-economic situation of youth in Zambia contrasts with what obtains in developed countries where 'youthhood' is a 'protected stage' in the life-cycle of an individual and the state ensures opportunities for learning and career advancement in society (Comaroff and Comaroff , 1999; Venkatesh, 1999; Boyden, 1997). As Comaroff and Comaroff observe, industrial capitalist society has been more or less unique in turning childhood into a site of self-conscious cultural reproduction, releasing its young from the workplace so that they might enter the rarefied world of education; the latter being the space in which the nation-state seeks to husband its potential in which it invests its capital. Boyden (1997) notes that the general Western view of a successful nation state in the modern world is one that ensures the extension of welfare services to the most needy sectors of the population, especially the young.

6.0   The Manifestations of Youth Exclusion and Marginalisation

In the absence of full waged citizenship or access to productive resources such as credit and training, including social and political capital, the study findings indicate that the *exclusion* and *marginalisation* of youth manifest themselves in crime and other anti – social behaviour. In Chawama, the research team was informed that, in spite of current attempts to preoccupy young people with sporting activities, the township has a high rate of crime, most of it allegedly committed by young people. Informal interviews revealed that some young people had organised themselves into 'gangs' that terrorized people, especially at night. Although none of the youth openly identified themselves as gang members, focus group discussions with community leaders revealed that the young people would target a home during the day and then attack it at night. A number of these

youths were even said to be known by the police, who seemed reluctant to arrest them. In the absence of discernible livelihood opportunities for young people, 'gangsterism' appears to have become a meaningful space of what Venkatash (1999) calls 'participatory expression' in which young people are able to see the outcome of extended participation in others who have either 'failed' or 'succeeded'.

This view is supported by Pinnock (1994) and other observers. Pinnock argues that 'ganging' is primarily a survival technique in response to a socio-economic system that reproduces poverty. Gang functions confer upon the youth what society has failed to give them. In this context, 'ganging' becomes an attempt by young people to resolve the contradictions that remain unresolved in the wider society, such as unemployment and poverty. It also appears to be an attempt to recover some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in the mainstream culture such as family and community care. Above all, in an environment of limited choice and opportunity, short term survival strategies and the underground economy appear to have become a major source of income and petty accumulation to both young men and women in informal settlements. As Mkandawire (2000) argues, in an environment where youth have no access to productive resources in a context of collapsed social institutions, crime and its associated violence emerge as a major livelihood strategy.

However, the perceived growing culture of stealing and pick-pocketing among youth in urban areas has not been well investigated as a growing livelihood strategy among unemployed out of school youth[7]. Nonetheless, it is an issue that has been given added urgency in recent years because of the apparent rise in juvenile crime and violence. We can in this regard assume that urban society in Zambia is becoming increasingly criminalized, especially with the proliferation of youth gangs. Some observers are likening the rise of a youth gang culture in urban Africa to inner city gangsterism in the USA (Mkandawire, 2000; Comarrof and Comaroff, 1999; Venkatash, 1999). The youth in these cities are said to constitute a 'counter nation', often evolving their own illegal economies with their own spaces of production and recreation. Within their own spaces,

the youth have developed not only their own distinct sub-culture, but also their own social structures that are well guarded by a clear hierarchy. As in the USA, the youth gangs and their 'criminal micro enterprises' in Africa are likely to display features of a 'career path', with an identifiable ladder of promotion, salary augmentation and status attainment where the participants can see a horizon of personal development.

The Chawama community leaders also bitterly complained about drug and substance abuse among young people and the anti-social culture it was spawning. The leaders lamented that there were just too many taverns in their area. Along the main road in the township, the research team identified several beer-drinking places which continue up to the main market where there are several more, including 'open-air' ones. Community leaders in Chawama attributed part of the problem to lack of community or 'welfare' centers for young people, as was the case in the past. In the absence of recreation facilities for youths and children, beer drinking appears to have become the major source of leisure and *social escapism* among young people. Seven types of beer are widely consumed in the area: 'chibuku' or 'opaque' beer, Mosi lager, black whisky, 'shake shake', 'chinyika', 'kachasu' and 'nsekisa'. The latter two are highly potent illicit brews which are widely consumed because of their low price and potency. 'Chibuku' and 'chinyika', a prepacked opaque beer, are also relatively cheap and therefore widely consumed. In focus group discussions, it was revealed that the abuse of beer among youths, especially of the 'lethal' 'kachasu' and 'nsekisa', was turning many promising young men into 'vegetables'. Several community leaders argued that this situation has given rise to a threatening anti-social culture, as manifest in substance and drug abuse, a high crime rate, fighting and violence, and prostitution.

Several community leaders in Chawama also blamed the increase in the anti-social culture among young people on the lack of jobs or 'something' to do. As one leader put it, "anga nkhale mu youth bwanji uyo alibe 'pini' mutumba?" (" how can one be a real youth without money?"). The leaders emphatically argued that lack of engagement in productive activities, especially jobs, was the major cause of the high abuse of beer and drugs and the resultant increase in juvenile violence and crime. Other leaders blamed

substance and alcohol abuse among young people on the failure by the Lusaka City Council (LCC) to enforce by-laws which bar those aged 18 and below from entering drinking places or drinking beer. The leaders said that prior to the 1990s there was strict enforcement these by-laws by the local authority. Over the years, however, the lack of enforcement of the by-laws has resulted in a perceived increase in drug and substance abuse among young people.[8] Some leaders further pointed out that this abuse is reflected in the current trend of watching 'blue' movies or pornographic films among young children who are less than 12 years. A visit to some make shift structures 'video halls' by the researcher revealed that the children, some as young as seven years old, watched pornographic videos in the company of adults. Informal discussions with young people found 'idling' at the make - shift cinemas revealed that the children were not even required to pay money to watch the videos. All they needed to was to collect 9or even steal) empty beer or soft drink bottles. The researcher learnt that the video owner would later 'convert' the bottles into cash by selling them to beer or soft drinks companies in down town. This phenomenon raises questions about the morality of the practices of some bottling companies. While these firms may not be aware of it, they are unconsciously promoting a practice which is corrupting the morals of young children.

In the area of reproductive health, focus group discussions held with young people and community leaders attributed the growing problem of prostitution in Chawama to the changing composition of households as a result of the adverse impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It was believed that the pandemic had created many orphans in the area who were without support from relatives or social welfare. As previously noted, in the absence of such support, young females are forced to go into prostitution in order to survive. The interviews also suggest that the failure of the education system to accommodate a growing youth population, coupled with failure by many parents to pay 'school user fees', has resulted in a high school drop out rate in the area. Young females who drop out of school or cannot find jobs go out into the streets at night to sell sex for money. Others patronize drinking places and night clubs at night. The were also widespread complaints

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[8] While these by-laws are still in force, there was evident lack of capacity by the local authority to enforce them. Interviews with Council officials in the City Planning Department revealed that the Council lacked

about what the community leaders described as the 'invasion of the compound' by Congolese women known as 'Kasais'. These women, most of whom have fled the on - going fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are said to have introduced illegal sex brothels in Chawama[9]. They are also said to have introduced the brewing of a highly potent illicit brew called 'nsekisa'. According to the community leaders, 'nsekisa' is so potent that those who abuse it have been rendered 'useless' or 'vegetables'.

In these circumstances, the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has continued to increase in Chawama. Although the research team could not obtain statistics on the impact of HIV/AIDS in the area, at the time of the study, the Inter-faith Community Home-based Care Providers, a group of 60 volunteers in Chawama, was looking after several patients suffering from an assortment of HIV/AIDS related disease such as tuberculosis. The research team also visited Chawama Clinic where some AIDS patients were being looked after. The Chawama clinic, which is modern by Zambian standards as it was constructed a few years before, publicly markets itself as 'youth-friendly' in an attempt to promote reproductive health awareness among young people. Apart from the threat of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, informal discussions suggest that there was a high rate of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. The research team was informed that although condoms were freely available at the clinic, many young people were seemed unwilling or reluctant to go and collect condoms from the health centre. Focus group discussions with young people revealed that the health centre was viewed as not 'youth friendly' enough and for this reason, they felt shy to approach the clinic staff to ask for condoms. Young women also complained about the bleeding that they experienced after taking contraceptive pills obtained from the local health centre.

Given the foregoing, the emerging picture of the socio-economic situation of the majority of youth in informal urban settlements in Zambia is one of exclusion, marginalisation, privation and poverty. In this context, it is to be feared that the young generation in

operational funds to enable them enforce by-laws.
[9] The Congolese women were said to be doing rolling business by selling sex at extremely low prices of between K5,000 (90p) and K10,000 (£1.80). There was widespread concern among the community leaders

Zambia, who constitute the majority of the population, will have a much less successful future than previous generations. The youth are likely to be poorer and less educated than their parents, aunties, uncles, and even their grannies. Thus, unless the authorities address the crises in education and other institutions, the 'crisis' of youth in Zambia will remain unresolved and possibly worsen. As this study demonstrates and as experience from elsewhere in Africa suggests, in the absence of engagement in productive activities, frustration makes the youth prey to social and behavioural problems (Mkandawire and Mtonga, 1995). As previously noted, these problems expose the youth to serious personal hazards, including exposure to drugs and substance abuse and the risk of HIV/AIDS infection. Other young people engage in criminal and other anti-social activities.

In extreme cases, young people in Africa have resorted to, or joined armed conflict, as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with the prevailing political and economic order in their countries. Emerging literature on youth and conflict in Africa suggests that youth culture, in particular the problem of unemployed and disaffected youth, appears to play a significant role in the African conflict experience. Mkandawire (1998) observes that young men and women who are frustrated in their expectations of social and economic advancement are lured into war because it appears to be an option that requires few skills, does not require capital investment yet provides quick returns. Sichone (1999) adds that the gun gives the youth 'informal' control over resources, or as Williams puts it, "with many combatants unable to read or write, they rely on the gun to bring them money and respect" (Daily Mail, 28th August, 2000). Abdullah (1999) observes that the majority of young people currently fighting in rebel wars in Africa can barely explain why they are fighting. According to Abdullah, these young people (most of whom are recruited from among the 'lumpen' youth in the streets) have hardly had a regular job. What they have in common, however, is a *marginal existence* prior to their recruitment as combatants. This view is echoed by Curtain (2000). Curtain argues that young people who are 'economically insecure' and 'alienated' from the political process are major contributors to civil and military conflict around the world.

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about the prevalence of condom use, especially among the youth, in the area. The fear was that low condom use posed a real risk to the future of the young generation in Chawama.

However, despite their evidently bleak situation, the present study suggests that young people still have a positive outlook on life and hopes for the future. Thus, a first step in attempting to address the problems facing young people lies in meeting their expectations and future aspirations. This will require mainstreaming youth in the development process. As Kopoka (1999) has argued, putting the youth at the centre of the development process can in part be achieved through an understanding of youth problems and aspirations from young people's own perspective. Below is an examination of the aspirations of young people.

7.0   Expectations and Future Aspirations of Young People

The present study suggests that young people's current socio-economic circumstances mediate not only actual livelihood activities but also their aspirations and perceptions with respect to employment and livelihoods. Thus, in spite of the many problems that the youth are currently facing, the majority of them still nurse hopes of finding a better future as they grow older. This is evident from responses on their future aspirations. The study shows that slightly over half (51.3 percent) of the non – proprietor youth expressed a desire to improve their lives by starting business ventures in the urban informal sector. The rest of the youth expressed a desire for waged employment. Of these, 23.1 percent indicated that they would look for waged employment in the formal sector, while 19.4 percent expressed interest in informal waged employment. This is evident from the graph below.
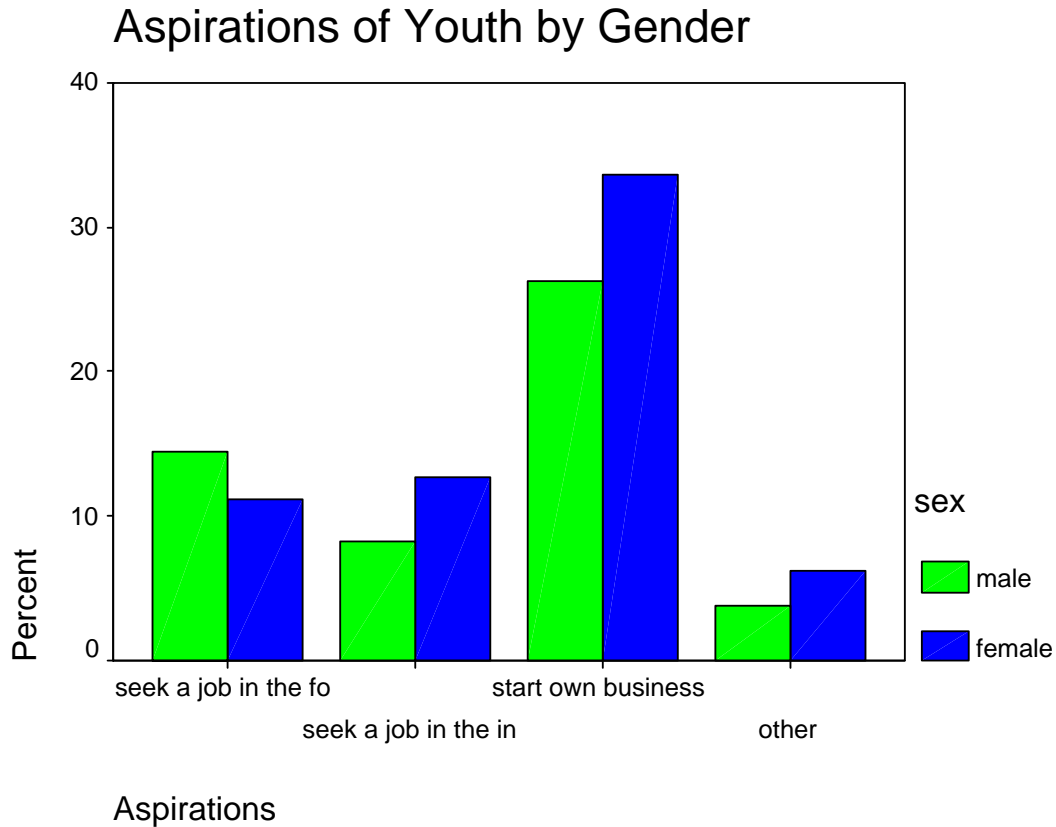
Graph 1:

Aspirations of Young People
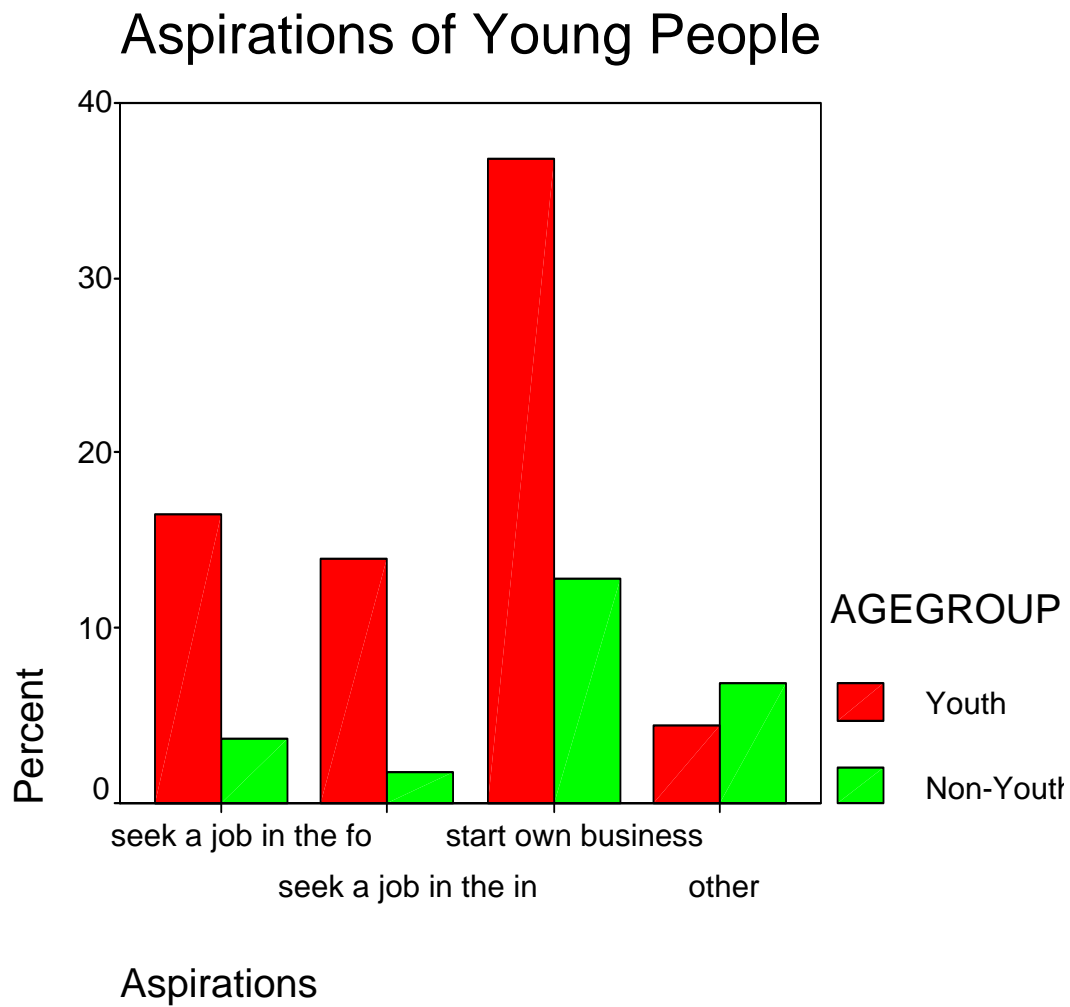
There were no significant gender variations in aspirations among young people. Indeed, more female youths expressed a desire to start an informal enterprise than male youth, as shown in the graph below.

Graph 2:

Aspirations of Youth by Gender

These findings suggest that self – employment in the urban informal sector will continue to attract youth. The study indicates that declining expectations in urban areas are compelling young people to go into enterprise activities in the urban informal sector as a means of earning a livelihood. Thus, contrary to received wisdom, there is a lot of interest in self – employment among young people. These findings seem to contradict the conventional wisdom that young people have a negative attitude towards self – employment in the urban informal sector. It is generally argued that formal wage employment is preferred to other livelihoods, because it promises higher wages, fringe benefits and relative security.

Indeed, while this might have been true in the past, it does not seem to be the case any longer. As discussed in the report on the nature of youth enterprise activities in the urban informal sector, the expressed desire for waged employment among youths is driven

more by the need to raise sufficient capital to start an enterprise in the informal sector than to rely on waged employment as the major source of income. This is apparently because most of the non-proprietor youths lack sufficient resources to engage in lucrative self-employment activities. They are consequently mostly engaged in low value trading related activities, selling food stuffs, groceries. A few even trade in restricted and prohibited commodities, such as marijuana and petrol. Thus, while it is tempting to view the expressed desire to engage in informal enterprise activities as a desperate attempt by young people with few alternatives, rather than a conscious choice, the present study seems to suggest that this is the outcome of a much larger and complex attitudinal change in young people's perceptions of the benefits arising from entrepreneurship and waged employment in the formal sector.

Apart from declining expectations of finding formal employment, low formal sector wages and the desire for independence seem to be the main factors that influence young people's positive attitudes towards, and therefore choice of, self – employment in the urban informal sector as a 'career' path. It could also be argued that the expressed interest in starting enterprise activities among young people reflects an awareness that their limited education and lack of training would only confine them to poorly paid formal occupations. The probable perception was that earnings from such occupations would still constrain their capacity to 'make ends meet'. Available literature suggests that the on-going economic crises and restructuring programmes in most African countries have adversely impacted on the professional classes (see Mustapha, 1991). Consequently, an increasing number of professionals are also being compelled to engage in multiple livelihood activities in the urban informal sector. Thus, the combination of a lack of formal employment opportunities and declining formal wages have not only resulted in the 'devaluation' of the educational certificate, but also seems to have resulted in a positive change in attitudes towards the informal sector. In addition, the current liberal economic environment tends to encourage a spirit of entrepreneurship.

However, the desire by youth to start enterprises in the urban informal sector should not be over – generalised. The research results indicate that while youth as a group expressed

strong desire to start enterprises in the urban informal sector, desegregation of the results according to specific youth categories reveals significant variations in the aspirations of younger youths and older youths. The younger youth tended to express a strong desire for wage employment in the urban informal sector compared to older youths, while many more were uncertain about what they intended to do. This seems to be a reflection of the differing life experiences of younger and older youths. The declining expectations among older youths seem to compel them to seek new forms of livelihoods in the urban informal sector. On the other hand, younger youths, fresh from school or just starting out in life, seem to have high expectations. Moreover, the desire by almost half of the non – proprietor youth for waged employment, be it formal or informal, suggests that not all young people can be entrepreneurs. This implies that other sources of youth employment should be explored.

The study findings also indicate that there is a lot of interest in informal and formal vocational training among the youth proprietors in the belief that training could enhance the performance of their enterprises. However, there is also a sense that the training available is not ambitious enough and does not direct young people to pathways out of poverty. This implies the need for great flexibility in state – sponsored and NGO – sponsored training programmes. In particular, the training programmes should focus on the needs and capabilities of young people working in the informal sector. The pervasiveness of gender discrimination against girls impacts on their ambitions and educational access.

8.0   Conclusion

This report demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of young people in Zambia face a daunting array of social and economic problems, especially unemployment. The research findings indicate that a combination of factors has led to huge numbers of young people being socially and economically excluded and marginalized from mainstream institutions in society. Key to this exclusion and marginalisation is the collapse of social support institutions for young people as a result of the combined adverse impact of

economic restructuring; unemployment; poverty; and HIV/AIDS. The responses that marginalized young people are devising to an uncertain economic and social environment in which they live seem to result in their further social alienation of from the social mainstream. The youth tend to go into menial and pernicious jobs, including crime, as a means of earning a livelihood. The tendency among policy makers and the general public is to perceive such youths as 'the' problem. This perception stigmatises the street and non-proprietor youth and ignores the factors that give rise to problematic conditions for young people and their identity transformation. The street youth are a product of contradictions in urban areas and crisis in support institutions. It is our contention that the duration of involvement in underground economies and short-term survival strategies exclude the youth in relation to detachment from educational and labour market arenas where state and institutionally-sanctioned social and political capital may be accumulated, and where human capital development may occur to facilitate productive transition into 'adulthood'. It is this Pinnockian exclusion and marginalisation that compels young people to engage in menial activities and anti-social activities.

However, in stating this, we are not trying to 'moralise' the anti-social activities of young people. Rather, our aim is to problematise the subject matter and lay bare its broader causative agents in an effort to provide a firm basis for addressing the problems facing young people in urban areas. Central to possible solutions is the role and social responsibility of the state. The government can no longer continue to chase kaponyas and eagle-eagles up and down the streets. The challenge for the government and civil society is to husband and harness the youth potential so as to transform it into a dynamic force for socio-economic development. *This is the essence of creating value for youth*. But creating this value poses a huge challenge to both the state and civil society organisations. It will largely require doing the following:

- **Addressing the crisis in educational and other institutions**

There is need both for initiation of more support structures for socially isolated and excluded urban youth and strengthening of existing ones. In particular, there is need to address the factors which make young people vulnerable to the negative aspects of urban life that result in juvenile crime and poor health. At the same time, it is important for the government to critically examine the socio-economic context in which young people develop. Disincentives relating to the cost of education or health may have long term effects, especially for female youth, that may outweigh the revenue collected through the application of 'cost sharing' or 'user fees' principles to the provision of services. If young people, especially girls, fail to attend school due to the imposition of user fees, the government may incur great costs in the long run through having to provide education and training at a later stage or from the consequences of the negative social outcomes from the exclusion and marginalisation of youth. For this reason, there is need for the government to critically examine and revisit the long term relative costs and benefits of the principles of 'cost sharing' and early intervention in youth development activities. This requires increased investment in education *in real terms* both from the government and the private sector. Above all, the educational and training systems – not just technical education and vocational training – must be transformed so that young people can aquire relevant skills that can help them master their lives and contribute to socio-economic development in the country. This change has to occur at all levels of learning, from primary school up to university.

- **Strengthening the Ministry of Youth**

Currently, the allocation of resources for youth development activities is compartmentalized under separate sectors such as education, vocational and technical education, health, agriculture, and so on. Thus, the responsibility for youth development is spread across a range of government agencies with differing agendas and priorities, rather than under the effective control of a single ministry. It is therefore difficult to determine the total resources that are available and which might impact on the situation

of youth. An analysis of budgetary allocations over the years suggests that the Ministry of Youth receives the least amount of money despite the expectation that it should be the focus of young people who comprise the majority of the Zambian population.

At the same time, conditions in the environment in which young people grow are determined by a complex set of social, political and economic interrelationships over which no single ministry can be expected to exert total influence. This suggests the need for one central agency to be responsible for overseeing, integrating and coordinating programmes across the wide range of government departments with responsibility for the various aspects of national youth development. While the Ministry of Youth is currently tasked with this role, it lacks the necessary resources to be expert in all areas of youth development. For this reason, there is need to capacitate the Ministry of Youth in terms of human and financial resources.

More importantly, a new definitive role for the state must be carved out. The harsh economic conditions brought about by economic restructuring require a strong role for the state in youth development – from that of a mere creator of the so-called 'enabling environment' to active participant and promoter of the interests of young people. However, the government alone cannot effectively handle the youth. It is therefore important that the roles of the government and NGOs are clarified and that NGO activity does not substitute for government involvement in youth development. Rather, the government and NGOs need to work closely together to ensure that the needs of youth are met in the most efficient and effective way. There is also need for more voluntary organizations to initiate youth development programmes.

- **Cultivating strong political 'will' to address facing the youth**

Nothing much can be achieved in youth development without the commitment of political and government leaders. Without genuine political commitment to improving the situation of youth, there will be no improvement in resource allocation to youth policy, programmes and services, and the ability to implement programmes will be

constrained. There is therefore need for a greater degree of political commitment to youth throughout government agencies and political parties. Hopefully, this could also lead to abandonment of the tendency to view youth groups as mere stepping stones to higher political office.

- **Addressing the issue of 'youth citizenship'**

As noted in the study, an increasing number of youths are being forced into the streets as a result of poverty and lack of employment. This represents a large concentration of 'need' without 'voice'. These marginalized youths are engaged in menial and pernicious activities that make them vulnerable to abuse and violations of their rights such as the right to security. This suggests that there is need to address the issue of 'citizenship' for young people. This should be conceived as promoting the rights and justice for all youth groups within the broader context of civil and socio-economic rights. These rights should be defined in a manner that is not exclusionary and limiting.

- **Need to de-criminalise youth**

Related to the issue of youth rights, is the need to de-criminalise street youths. These young people should be made to feel 'secure' and should be facilitated to take advantage of emerging opportunities in mainstream society. More effort should also be put in rehabilitating young offenders and drug addicts among them. An attempt should therefore be made to treat non-proprietor and street youth in a positive light. This calls for a change in attitudes and outlook among policy makers in respect to the activities and aspirations of young people, especially those working in the streets.

- **Need to 'engage' the youth**

The finding that the overwhelming majority of young people were not aware of the existence of the National Youth Policy and existing youth programmes, especially state initiated ones, is not only troubling, but alarming. It is a strong indicator of the alienation

of young people, especially the street and non-proprietor youth, from the decision making processes. This suggests that there is great need to involve the youth in the design of policies and programmes that have a bearing on their lives. Youth organizations can be capacitated in this regard to provide effective representation of young people.

- **Need to promote youth empowerment**

Given the fluidity of the socio-economic situation in Zambia, there is great need to empower the youth economically and socially by doing the following:

1) **Promoting youth enterprise development**

This is widely seen a possible solution to the problem of youth unemployment. Given the great interest expressed in starting an enterprise in the informal sector many youths, there is need to address the constraints that the non-proprietor youths facing in establishing and running enterprises in the informal sector. This is discussed extensively in the report on youth enterprises.

2) **Promoting labour intensive public works**

Not all young people can be entrepreneurs. In the absence of job creation in the formal sector, there is need to promote labour-based methods for infrastructure development. It is our view that optimal use can be made of labour as the predominant resource in infrastructure products while ensuring cost-effectiveness and safeguarding quality. This would require a careful combination of labour and appropriate equipment, which is generally light equipment. This would ensure that employment intensive projects do not degenerate into 'make-work' projects, in which cost and quality considerations are ignored.

3) Strengthening social welfare schemes for younger youths

Addressing the problems of youths at the lower end of the segment provides a moral dilemma. Young people in this *formative* category are just starting out in life and are uncertain about the future. These youths may therefore be viewed as 'vulnerable' for a range of adverse behaviors, from drug and substance abuse to teenage pregnancy. This vulnerability arises from adolescents' developmental status as people in 'transition', or people in 'formation'. The youth in this age category are making transitions from 'child' status to 'adult' status, from the 'security' of their parents' home to the responsibility of their 'own' families and homes, and from school to work or to tertiary education. These youths therefore require other non – enterprise support systems to guide them in their cognitive, emotional, and sexual maturation which tends to involve experimentation, growth, and reversals.

- **Need for gender sensitivity in policing and programming**

  Whilst poor conditions affect all young people in urban areas, female youths are significantly worse off than male youth and special priority needs to be applied to the social, cultural and political recognition they deserve.

- **Need for more research**

There is clearly a need for research and information on the specific needs of young women and men growing up in informal urban settlements, so that they could be incorporated in the planning and provision of services such as education and training, including provision of resources such as credit.

All the above recommendations are discussed in more detail in the reports on the nature of youth enterprise activities in the urban informal sector and the existing policy and institutional framework for promoting youth enterprise development.