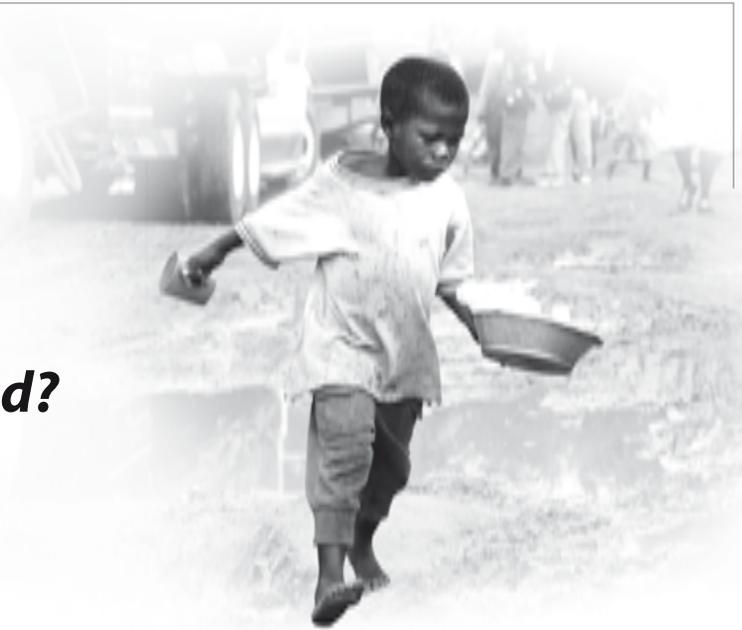


Introduction: **Why is Save the Children concerned?**



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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