



The river crossing and infrastructure projects

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

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

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

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

The ferry service and 'barracas'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Child sexual abuse and exploitation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Harmful child labour

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft.12. p.12.

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

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

⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

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

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

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

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

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

⁹ Ibid.

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

¹¹ Ibid., p. 89.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who are the 'barraca girls'?

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

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

¹⁵ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12. p. 47.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

²⁰ Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²¹ A popular brand of condom

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²² Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

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

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

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

Consequences of large infrastructure development projects on children

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 83.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Children, communities, HIV/AIDS and STDs

HIV/AIDS

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹ Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 13.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Local children's knowledge of HIV/AIDS and STDs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³² Akesson, G. op.cit. ft. 12, p. 56.