

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL MINISTRY
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**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF
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**PROSTITUTION IN AFRICAN URBAN
CENTRES: A SPECIAL STUDY OF
GIRL-CHILD PROSTITUTION IN
KISUMU, KENYA AND NIGERIA.**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work, achieved through my personal readings, class sharing, research and reflections.

It has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

All information from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

Signed MEM
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Date MARCH 2001

Signed.....
Tutor - Fr. Francesco Pierli (MCCJ)

Date.....

DEDICATION

To my late mother, Mrs. M. Laraba Wakger, who taught me love for learning
and long for higher standard of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to God for the wisdom given to me to read and write.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. A GENERAL OBSERVATION OF THE PROBLEM AT HAND

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to portray the plight of African youth in the twenty-first century, Sam Mwale, a Kenyan social analyst says, ‘Many of them (youth) are brought up in destitution and deprivation in urban and rural squalor...crime, commercial sex and rebellion against everything.’¹ Most African youth are growing up in very unpleasant circumstances. It is no wonder then that phenomena such as prostitution, rape, domestic violence, child labour and drug abuse among others may sound so normal to a lay ear.

Prostitution, as in the granting of sexual favours in exchange for economic gain, is as old as mankind. However, as man has developed technologically, so has morality been degraded. Child prostitution has arisen over the centuries and is today one of the greatest anathema of modernity. In Kenya today, there is great evidence of child prostitution. A possible explanation might be that children are more naive than adults and may not have been previously exposed to STD infections, not to mention AIDS. As will be seen later in this paper, child prostitution is closely linked to domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual harassment, sodomy, early marriages and pornography among others.

Kisumu town is an important centre in Western Kenya. The provincial headquarters of Nyanza Province, it provides a central attraction to Kenyans and foreigners due to its proximity to Lake Victoria, the second largest freshwater lake in the world. Kisumu is also the homeground of renowned political heavyweights like the

late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, former Vice-President and later official leader of the opposition in the Kenyan parliament. The Luo people who inhabit the greater part of Nyanza province are renowned intellectuals, sportsmen and politicians. To say the least, most parastatal and private companies in Kenya and East Africa are led or managed by people from Nyanza.

However, Kisumu is constantly becoming the centre of attraction for non-governmental and church agencies concerned with AIDs or AIDs-related problems. In a 1989 report on children's rights done by the United Nations, Kisumu was found to have a 39% rate of child prostitutes, with the children ranging from 9-18 years.² This number may have doubled by now, ten years later. In my fact-finding report, the Pandipieri Counselling Programme for practising prostitutes and ex-prostitutes deals with child prostitutes as a majority of the reported cases. The St Mary Magdalene girl-child prostitute group deals with girls aged between 10-16 years from Kisumu town. Most confessed having sex with as many as six men a day and earning less than 1,000 Kenyan shillings for it.

Child prostitution is a demeaning and demoralising practice. A woman is made to carry and protect life. Her very biology is an inevitable "obedience" to life, an opening to it and for it. A Congolese theologian, Sr Petronilla Kayiba, says: "In Africa, even a young girl may often be called 'maman' or 'mamy', an endearing pet name expressing recognition of her maternity or her capacity to welcome and protect life".³

In African traditional society, a woman is greatly valued for her maternity. It was actually a curse for any woman who failed to bear children. John S. Mbiti, an

¹ Sam Mwale, "Theirs is the Future". *New People*, January 2000 Issue, page 7.

² Report of National Conference on promotion and implementation of the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, Nairobi, Dec. 4-8, 1989.

authority on African traditional religions, says that not having children was simply not excusable in traditional African society.⁴

Child prostitution is simply inconceivable in an African traditional set-up. Changing times and morals have brought about a whole new way of thinking and hence new modes of behaviour. The media, education, Christianity, new role models, neglect of cultural values and practices, ignorance and a myriad of other reasons all contribute to the viewing of a woman, not as a symbol of life and respect, but as a source of sexual gratification.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This paper intends to approach the question of prostitution in African urban centres and the perils to which it exposes women. However, special focus is to be laid on girl-child prostitution in Kisumu town. It must be noted that Kisumu can only be viewed as a typical provincial town to be found in any African country. My fact-finding report was basically centred on Kisumu. It was revealed that the largest number of everyday entrants into the sex trade are girls ranging from 10 years to about 16 years of age.

Projects like the Pandipieri Counselling Programme, among others, are doing all in their ability to help alleviate this problem. However, it is very sad to note that their attention is focused on putting into practice the Report of National Conference on promotion and implementation of the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, Nairobi Dec. 4-8, 1989. They do not try to provide counselling and other help to those at home who are not yet practising, but tomorrow may be involved in, the trade.

³ Sr Petronilla Kayiba, "Mothering a New Africa, New People, January 2000 Issue, Pp. 10-11.

⁴ John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1970, page 110.

Therefore, more girl-child prostitutes keep hitting the town while the understaffed, ill-equipped programmes strive to make them stop.

This paper works with the hypothesis that assumptions made by the public on girl-child prostitutes need a re-assessment. It is important to go beyond looking at the girl and her vice or vices. The paper will try to pay attention to the person herself, her background and a wholesome set-up which might help us to understand her behaviour clearly and possibly to help her. We find many child-prostitutes in Kisumu and other urban centres because we have helped create them and because we don't want to admit it; thus we cannot adequately provide solutions.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

I would wish to point out to the Church, the government and the public that child prostitution is a reality, which needs to be addressed as an issue requiring urgent focus. Youth are an important group in every one of these sectors and their disappearance into the vices of the world is a disaster.

I would also like to highlight the efforts made by non-governmental agencies and church-based organisations like the Pandipieri Counselling Programme towards alleviating or reducing the problem of child prostitution. It should be noted that most African governments tend to concentrate more on politicking than on important issues hampering development. It is only through the efforts of non-governmental and church agencies that problems like prostitution will be alleviated.

I wish to show the factors contributing to girl-child prostitution in Kisumu and Kenyan urban centres. It is my objective to highlight the nature of the family as a major contributing factor to girl-child prostitution. It is only by reinforcing the family that we shall help solve the problem of prostitution.

This paper also intends to bring in related issues of HIV/AIDS, rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment and gender imbalance as vital factors to be considered in trying to eliminate child prostitution from Kenyan centres. I will try to show how various issues bring about child prostitution. I will point out that child prostitution in isolation cannot be our dilemma at present, but that it must be seen in context.

1.4 METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

At the fact-finding stage of my research, I was personally involved in the day-to-day activities of the Pandipieri Counselling Programme in Kisumu. I was able to collect information through personal interviews with practising girl-child and adult prostitutes as well as the administrators of the programme.

Through reading of text-books, newspapers, both local and foreign, magazines, research work by students and renowned scholars on gender and social issues, radio programmes, television and the internet, I was able to get a glimpse of the topic from varied sources. All of these sources are properly acknowledged at the end of this paper.

Through observation as I grew up in Nigeria, during my stay in Nairobi and also during my brief visit to Kisumu, I was able to form a perspective on the matter of girl-child prostitution. I do not wish to assume that this problem of prostitution affects only girls but as will be seen, bias against women is not a new thing in Africa.

This paper uses the see, judge and act method. The “see” part, is where information on the ground will be analysed. This information has been obtained largely from the Kenya National Library in Nairobi, the Tangaza College Library and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa Library. Textbooks on social issues, newspapers and other already mentioned sources have proved useful.

1.5 SUMMARY

In this first chapter, an attempt is made to concentrate on facts on the ground. Using the fact-finding report, information collected from texts and other sources, the chapter will explore the nature of girl-child prostitution with a view to exposing it as needing attention.

The second chapter will show the causes and factors contributing to prostitution and in particular girl-child prostitution, in Kisumu, Kenya. I will pay attention to other issues related to girl-child prostitution and try to show how their resolution will most likely help the resolution of the problem at hand.

In the third chapter, I will give my recommendations and proposals to the Church, scholars, the government, non-governmental agencies and the public as to how to curb prostitution, and in particular girl-child prostitution, in Kisumu, Kenya. An attempt will be made to pay attention to spiritual, legal, social and political solutions that may most likely be given to this problem.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Having to conduct research alongside other college work has been one huge hurdle to surmount in this study. This is due to pressing deadlines of assessment papers, tests, lecture attendance and extra-curricular activities. Being an official of the Student Representative Council, I have had quite an uphill task in completing this paper on time.

Availability of written information on prostitution has also been a hindrance. This is probably due to the fact that some topics are considered to be taboo in African societies. Most available information that addresses prostitution explicitly is possibly done by non-Africans. It must be mentioned however, that where such work is done by

African authors, it is quite commendable in style and content, derived from a rich background.

In this same light, it has been quite taxing getting the prostitutes to talk. Society considers prostitutes as misfits, outcasts who should not be spoken to. Getting practising prostitutes to accept that they are important and can be helped has been a Herculan task. However, because of efforts made by programmes such as the Pandipieri Centre, it has been possible to get to some, albeit institutionalised, prostitutes.

1.8 THE SOCIAL PLAGUE OF GIRL-CHILD PROSTITUTION

In an article, “A Government Policy on AIDs in Kenya”, Wanja Githinji notes that children between the ages of 10 and 17 are not only aware of sexual matters but are becoming more sexually active by the day.⁵ In Kisumu town, either through the media or life experiences, a child aged five years is completely aware of sexual practices. Girl children aged ten years will have witnessed or experienced sexual activities at least once.

Cases of girl children being involved in pre-marital sex abound in Kisumu. On Friday, 24th March, 2000, a teenage girl was killed by her elder brother after spending a night out without permission.⁶ This is not a justification of the murder act but an indication of the extent to which immorality has afflicted Kisumu society.

Although the dictionary definition of “child” is “newly born or unborn human being”,⁷ this paper will refer to a child as a person below the age of twenty-one, which

⁵ Wanja Githinji, Government Policy: “Little Progress so Far” Sunday Nation, October 31, 1999, page 14.

⁶ Beattah Omanga and James Owino, “Teenager Killed over Night Out”, Daily Nation, March 24, 2000, page 20.

⁷ A.S. Hornby, Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, 1975.

is the age at which one reaches adulthood. However, the girls who were basically targeted by the original research were within the 10-16 years age-group.

The dictionary definition of “girl” is “female child, daughter, young woman.”⁸ However, girl and child cannot be defined together, girl-child will be viewed in the light of activities that they may indulge in as opposed to adult females doing the same. It is as if there is an age at which we could not expect a girl to engage in prostitution. Though the moral stand to take is that at no age should a girl engage in prostitution, children of 10-16 years of age should not be expected to even harbour such thoughts. Hence, the “cliche’-like” reference to girl-child prostitutes.

“Prostitute” is defined in the dictionary as “person who offers himself/herself for sexual intercourse for payment”.⁹ Prostitutes here will also encompass the person who chooses to use the one who offers himself or herself. This implies that a prostitute can also refer to the male who approaches a female for sex and pays for it. The bottom line of it all is that both engage in sexual intercourse for personal gain. Sex is meant to be a means of procreation. When anybody who harbours thoughts of indulgence in sex for economic or other gain, it amounts to practising prostitution.

Girl-child prostitution in the context of this work will be viewed as the indulgence for gain in sexual activities of young women below the age of 18 years. I state below eighteen years because I would like to have a limit beyond which actions done by the person will be regarded as having an adult and responsible mind behind them. Eighteen years is the age when one is completing high school. In the traditional set-up, a woman of over eighteen is even ripe for marriage. This paper may thus focus on girl-child prostitutes below this age.

⁸ Ibid., 363.

In an article entitled "Child Prostitution hits Kisumu town", Frederick Odiero says that children as young as nine years are involved in prostitution in brothels in the town.¹⁰ Male clients are lured into the brothels by elderly women prostitutes while the young girls remain in the rooms to do the work of serving the men. They are paid on a commission basis which on most occasions is a paltry amount.

Surprisingly, the clients are men who are very highly regarded in society. In the same newspaper article,¹¹ the author says that Muslims and Christians alike will be noticed in the dark hours of the night emerging from the brothels to sneak back home to their innocent, unsuspecting wives.

Related to this is the problem of drug abuse. A drug called "kuber" is said to have fertility potential and is peddled in the brothels. Quite similar to the "ecstasy" drug popular in the west, this "kuber" drug is said to increase the sexual urge in its users. "The drug which is sold in Shs. 5 satchets is easily available in a number of shops in Kisumu. It causes dizziness and general excitement to consumers".¹²

* In a related article, there is perceived closeness between child prostitution and the impact of HIV/AIDS on society. Jacinta Akolo, 14, is reported to have lost both her parents to the AIDS scourge. She indulges in prostitution to provide for her siblings.¹³ It is quite hard to believe that she herself is not heading for the grave. Furthermore, continued participation in sexual intercourse exposes the victim to further infection and weakening of resistance.

Pregnancies and death are also inevitable outcomes of child prostitution. Unless the girl uses birth control methods, she cannot avoid getting pregnant. Due to

⁹ Ibid., 672.

¹⁰ Frederick Odiero, "Child Prostitution hits Kisumu Town", Kenya Times, May 3, 1999.

¹¹ Frederick Odiero, "Child Prostitution hits Kisumu Town", Kenya Times, May 3, 1999.

continued exposure to venereal diseases, the embryo cannot survive and miscarriages are the order of the day. Still births are also quite common, while other babies die soon after birth. Some could also experience delivery complications such as toxæmia, anaemia, excessive bleeding, poor nutrition and sepsis infections.

Though abortion is illegal in Kenya, it thrives underground. In Kisumu town, for instance, two abortions take place every day.¹⁴ This is a 1989 statistical fact and is likely to have doubled by now, ten years later. In most, if not all, the cases, abortion is carried out by non-professionals, who may cause harm to the victim. Actually, the mother's life is put at risk. The mothers (girl-children) may choose to perform abortion on their own, thus tampering with their physiology either through prohibited drugs or by use of crude instruments. This further makes their life more vulnerable and dangerous.

When all is said and done, it is the society in which we bring up these children that comes up with these vices. It is the society which creates labels for activities such as prostitution, abortion, drug abuse and many others.

As this paper will reveal, the solution of the conflict will have to come from the members of society who bear, throw away and then stand to condemn the young girls. We cannot throw away the bathwater together with the baby. We have to choose between one of them. Before we address the solutions however, it is important to look at the causes. By this I mean going back to the homes of the so called girl-child prostitutes and trying to identify what could have led them to this kind of behaviour.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Child Prostitution thrives in Kisumu", Kenya Times, June 29, 1997.

¹⁴ Report of National Conference on Promotion and Implementation of the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, Nairobi, 1989, PP. 4-8.

We might, at the end of the day, realise that we were indeed part of the structure that enabled that to happen.

CHAPTER TWO

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CHILD PROSTITUTION IN AFRICA.

In recent times, structural changes worldwide have led to spiralling insecurity for the most vulnerable people in society: women, children and the aged. Though change is inevitable and intrinsic to human life, it brings about uncertainty, hence insecurity. Women, especially in third-world countries, have had to experience the worst effects of this insecurity.

Economically, there has been a global crisis spanning the decades since 1970's. This badly affects the developing countries as Structural Adjustment Programmes, debts and reforms have been imposed on them by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This in turn has led to abject poverty for the population, unemployment and lack of any reasonable protection for small-scale business and low-wage earners.

Women have had to experience economic insecurity, because they are further enslaved by the social set-up. When men, who are considered to be the “ providers” fail to earn enough to feed themselves, they will most likely project their frustrations on the women. The women therefore end up feeling very insecure all the way from the household, to the community level, in trade, in Church, politically and even in organisations.

Although the problem of child-prostitution has its base in tradition and history, it will be noticed that the impact of modernity on the human person has greatly influenced his/her behaviour, it may also be noticed that prostitution as a practice has

increased with the passage of time. There is no doubt then that people's behaviour patterns tend to change according to time.

In this second chapter, prostitution will be looked at with regard to the traditional or historical perspectives, its causes: social-economic, emotional and even spiritual, its impact on the individual, the family and society. It will be noted that violence, gender insensitivity, humiliation, fear, vulnerability are themes inevitable to mention whenever prostitution is discussed.

2.1 CAUSES FROM THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE.

In a book on violence against women, Mary J. Mananzan and Mercy Oduyoye say that in African societies a man has exclusive rights and power over the woman's body. The sexual act is not seen as a participatory act between spouses but one in which the woman should submit to the man's wishes without complaint or objection. Any attempt by a woman to initiate sex is traditionally viewed as unbecoming and one that should be checked.

This view of women is further elaborated upon by Caroline Sweetman in a book on women empowerment, where she says:

... young women still expect men to act as providers of capital and subsistence expenses, taking on the role associated with a "husband". In return, the women take on aspects of the role of "wife" a mentality that keeps women submissive even in other areas of life.¹⁵

¹⁵ Mary J. Mananzan and Mercy A. Oduyoye (Eds.) Women Resisting Violence, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, 81.

This kind of attitude by women towards themselves deprives them of an opportunity for self-awareness. When a woman starts to believe that her traditional role is at home, waiting for the husband to provide, then trouble starts.

In most, if not all, African traditional societies, sex was the preserve of married people, meant for procreation. Even where this rule was violated, either a form of punishment was meted out on the errant pair, or both were banished from the society. During initiation ceremonies, like circumcision, young men and women were properly advised regarding the dangers of pre-marital sex.

✱ Prostitution as it is known today, was not known in traditional Africa. This was mainly because of polygamy whereby the man was allowed control and even absolute power over as many women as possible. The relationships were not evident then as they are today. The man provided food, clothing, housing and any financial security that was needed. Whatever the woman needed, the men were considered to be the owners and proprietors of land, women, children, goats, cattle, other livestock and all the material and animate wealth in the vicinity.¹⁶

In traditional Africa, it was simply inconceivable to find a woman who was “independent” of the control of a man here or there. Women, from the time of birth, were viewed as needing the support and upbringing of a man. In fact, in some societies, widows would be inherited by brothers or closer relations of the deceased so as not to lack “support” of a man.¹⁷

¹⁶ Suzane Williams, et .al The Oxfam Gender Training Manual Oxfam UK and Ireland: Oxford Press, 1940.

¹⁷ Mary J. Mananzan and Mercy A .Oduyoye (Eds.) Women Resisting Violence, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, 81.

Related to this view, Rosemary Thee Morewedge says that “women’s history has been traditionally written by men.”¹⁸ This can be further proved by the fact that a lot of statistics on women are vague and have not been correctly noted in history. It is apparent that the woman has been traditionally viewed as a subordinate to the “superior” man, the provider, caretaker, policemen, controller and what can be hereby referred to as “minister for sexual needs”.

✱ The body of the woman has been seen as sensual and causing excitement to the man. In the African traditional set-up, the man, head of the family, switches from wife to wife depending on which body warms him best. This can be closely linked to several problems today such as drug abuse, extra-marital sex, prostitution and even lack of spiritual identity for women. It is the woman’s body, for instance which is found “catchy” enough to advertise cigarettes, beer, cars and, in some extreme cases, pornographic literature. In the streets of Nairobi today, a lot of “gutter press” publications parade almost-nude photos of young women to make money.

Many women have been arrested in the developed world, suspected of trafficking drugs, which may be later found on their bodies. Humiliating searches are done especially for women from the third world at major airports, harbours and train stations. The arguments here is that the traditional view of the woman’s body as subordinate, sensual, receptive and potentially exciting has led to a lot of abuse against it.

The stereotypes associated with man-woman relationships in African cultures are therefore a carry-over from the traditional way of life. While prostitution as an exchange of sex for money has its roots in a modern set-up, the mental attitudes

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

associated with all have to do with the traditional way of life and thinking. When a girl-child becomes of age (starts menstruating, develops breast and rounds up her hips) she is considered to be a candidate for marriage. This leads to an approach directly or indirectly by suitors who propose marriage. In most cases, the girl does not make the choice but her parents or elderly relatives make it. She is then handed over to the man as his wife.

When looking at prostitution in African urban centres, it will therefore be important to keep in mind the view that traditionally a woman has to come into contact with a man so as to be assured of survival. Though most prostitutes do not “marry” their bed-partners, the assumption is that they are “alternatives wives”. At one point, they may even justify their action by pointing out that they too need to eat, drink, clothe and shelter just like the otherwise “good” women left at home by their husbands. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to startle people from the complacency of old and destructive attitudes:

On July 13th, 1994, 271 girls were attacked by rampaging boys at St Kizito boarding secondary school in central Kenya. 19 girls died of suffocation in a crowded dormitory while 71 were brutally raped. Later 29 boys aged between 14 and 18 were charged with manslaughter while 2 were charged with rape. Joyce Kithira, the school's deputy principal, was later quoted in the press as dismissing the whole incident with the following words: “The boys never meant any harm against the girls. They just wanted to rape”.¹⁹

¹⁹ Caroline Sweetman (Ed.) Women Employment and Exclusion, United Kingdom: UK. Oxford, 1996, 9.

2.2 SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CAUSES.

“Quantitative and qualitative information about women can only be made sense of when studied in relation to its social, economic and cultural context”.²⁰

Until the 1970s, mainstream research, policy and planning ignored the economic role of women. Development plans were based on men and then generalised to all people or they would be made to prescribe a development future in which men were assumed to be the only breadwinners, while women and children were their dependants. In 1975, the United Nations Decade for Women was inaugurated, prioritising the desegregation of national economic and social statistics by virtue of sex.²¹

This desegregation has been fairly uneven, slow, cumbersome and even costly. Desegregating concepts on the basis of sex may not be sufficient for improving data collection on the situation of women. This explains why very few and limited statistics exist on women and related issues of prostitution, gender inequality, violence on women, abortion and rape among a myriad of others.

In understanding girl-child prostitution therefore, a lot of attention needs to be focused on the socialisation of the individual and the attendant economic factors leading to the behaviour. The majority of women who indulge in prostitution do it for economic reasons alone. Given alternative skills and ways of earning a living most would probably give up prostituting themselves. Now, such are factors that statistics available may not adequately portray.

²⁰ Caroline Sweetman (Ed.) Women Employment and Exclusion. United Kingdom: UK Oxford, 1996, 20.

²¹ Maureen Chigbo (interview) ‘Our Girls dragged into Prostitution “Newswatch, October 9,2000, p.17

Economic pressures, among other things, provide the background for most sexual relationships, both within and without marriage.²² Sexual services are exchanged for material gains: money, clothes, food, a good time etc. However, given the chance, most young women will quit prostitution for a more secure and better paying occupation. However, petty trading may not necessarily be a woman's first choice. Most young women aspire to be professionals with responsible positions by virtue of their education.²³

It sounds a good idea, especially to a lay ear, to advise young women to initiate credit facilities or to look for credit from banks. However, as is evident from the foregoing, most small-scale businesses do not gain enough money to even support the immediate families of the people involved. To start a bank account is also quite hard, since the basic minimum is unaffordable to them. In Kenya for instance, the Kenya Commercial Bank charges 2000 shillings to open a saving account. Barclays Bank requires one to pay 10,000 shillings to open a similar account. Others include: Standard Chartered – 5000 Shillings, such premiums are obviously too high for petty traders such as cabbage sellers, porridge makers, fast-food sellers and second-hand clothes sellers.

Moreover, credit facilities (Loans and Hire Purchase) are in most cases given to well established traders. Such traders can be in most cases married women, well connected people and organisations. This kind of situation ends up relegating the poor low-income earner to a deplorable state of despair and prostitution may occur as a choice. Maureen Chigbo, a Nigerian social commentator says that poverty and hunger,

²² Caroline Sweetman (Ed.) Women Employment and Exclusion, United Kingdom: UK Oxford, 1996, 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, pg.43.

brought about by lack of enough economic resources, lead most Nigerian girls into prostitution.²⁴

It will be noticed that when young girls indulge in sexual intercourse with men, they expect to have several things in return. These include living maintenance, provisions, rent, household effects and financial security. Traditionally, the “unwritten marriage contract” agreed upon by the man and his lineage is to provide living and maintenance for the family. The wife obtains food from the man’s farm, while the man provides meat from hunting game or from fishing.

Given the current economic hardships, and the social status of male-female relationships (involving prostitutes and male customers) it is hard for the man to “keep” a wife, as it were. However, urban economies are totally dependent upon cash provisions and all food, rent, and clothing is only obtained through the use of cash. Money therefore becomes a very central player where the man does not obtain favours from the woman unless he pays cash. Nearly all women interviewed in a research in Ghana and Nigeria by Caroline Sweetman concurred that “chop money” (or money for food and general maintenance) should be provided by the man to the woman. One woman was reported to have said, “Of what use is a man if he cannot give me money?”²⁵

To many young unmarried women, the main expectation from a sexual relationship is marriage. Tied to this very closely, is the issue of financial security. In marriage, it is customary for a man to look after all the financial needs of the family. Pre-marital relationships may take up this obligation to marriage. For the unmarried

²⁴ Akuffo, *Prostitution in West Africa*, United Kingdom and Ireland: UK Oxford, 1987, 158.

²⁵ Wanja Githinji, “Government Policy: Little Progress So Far” *Sunday Nation* October 31, 1999, p. 14.

though, the capital to start off might be difficult to find. They may look upon male “customers” (sex-partners) to provide capital for petty businesses like hawking, hairdressing and sewing among others.

However, actual material gain falls short of expectation and the proportion of women who receive very little financial help from men is greater than imagined. This is in a society where men monopolise most positions of power and influence. The men tend to wrongfully think that they are the sole providers for women. Women on the other hand, believe that “no self-respecting woman would remain in a relationship without material recompense.”²⁶

Sexual activity outside marriage is easily labelled “prostitution”, but without an understanding of the economic pressures which underlie these behaviours, Caroline Sweetman argues that “it is in the sphere of sex that women’s bargaining power can be primarily brought to bear, given that acute imbalance of allocation of resources.”²⁷ However, in a world ridden with AIDs and STDs, we cannot propose such a remedy for the improper allocation of resources. It may as well be suggested that marriages take up such a face, which would make them a disheartening experience.

Where a woman barter her body as a necessarily step towards attaining material gain, then she herself becomes very insecure; she allows the man full power over her body, her independence, her dignity. She cannot even protect herself from abuse by the malicious. The man argues that he has paid for the “product” and is therefore free to do as he wishes with it. Thus, issues of rape, violence (beatings, scalding etc.) and other gory details arise.

²⁶ Suzanne M. Sgroi, Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse (1985) Lexington Books, Toronto.

²⁷ Eki Igbiniedion, ‘Prostitution Dents Our Image’ News watch (Nigeria) October 9, 2000, p.11.

2.3 THE FAMILY SITUATION CONTRIBUTES TO LATENT PROSTITUTION

A case study conducted in Nigeria in 1987 revealed that 70% of interviewed mothers claimed that their 15-19 year old daughters were old enough to provide their own clothes and pocket money. In all these cases, the girls involved were attending high school children. It further revealed that 30% of school girls claimed that their mothers encouraged them to have boyfriends, saying, "others girls of their age are doing it"

In most cases, prostitution is not something that a person just decides to indulge in. Although we cannot rule out the aforementioned economic factors, the upbringing of the child has a great bearing on what the child turns out to be in later life. A girl who grows up in a home where the mother, the aunt or any elderly female is a sex- worker is bound to become one herself.

In such a family, sex is shown as a cause for friendship between men and women. The young girl grows up knowing that one day she will have to give in to the sexual demands of a man and will have no choice. The young boy grows up knowing that he has a right over the woman. He considers himself the source of economic and physical power and can demand and almost always obtain sexual favours from a woman. This is very fertile ground for indulgence in prostitution.

A woman grows up in a state of social and personal insecurity. In today's world a lot of changes are taking place on the economic, political, social, emotional and spiritual fronts. The household provides the ground in which to nurture the seed of freedom. However, it is here where the woman is relegated to the kitchen. In

cases where she works outside the home, it may be mostly part-time, casual, flexible employment which pays poorly and has no security whatsoever.

The woman grows up in a family where the most prominent out-of-home politician is the man, where, the lawyer, doctor, civil-servant and policeman is a man in the family.

This kind of mentality leads her to believe that men are powerful behemoths who must be submitted to and whose every wish must be done. It all has a great impact on her sound psychological and even physical health.

Child sexual abuse has been rampant within most families. Wanja Githinji, in an article on women's rights, says that most cases of child sexual abuse in Kenya involve girl-children and go unreported.²⁸ Suzanne Sgroi defines child sexual abuse as "luring a child into a sexual relationship based on the dominant all-powerful adult perpetrator, who is in sharp contrast to the child's age, dependency and subordinate position."²⁹ She goes on to give examples of sexually abusive behaviours to which young children can be exposed by their parent or elder relatives. These include nudity, disrobing, masturbation, kissing, penetration of mouth, anus, vagina or the rectal opening of the child by the male penis or by either female or male fingers. These and related exposures work to bring up a mentally demented personality that has a great risk of indulging in prostitution in later life or even other more dangerous practices like homosexuality.

A drastic change in the family set-up therefore is needed if we are to focus on and understand the root causes of prostitution in our society. The basic view of the women (read, women's body) as a sex object has its root, not in the minds of the

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.13.

perpetrators, but in the socialisation that society has put them through. Women must view themselves as equal partners in creation and should not be relegated to a subordinate role, even when sexual matters are involved.

2.4 PROSTITUTION AND THE YOUNG GIRL

“...I had never seen them before. I saw a lot of young girls, promising looking girls on the street almost stark naked and very late in the night...”³⁰

These are the words of a Nigerian mother, who was on a trip in Italy when she encountered several Nigerian girls who migrate to Europe to look for potential sex partners for money. The image created here is that of a pervert, a carefree girl exposed to all imaginable risk: death, rape, killer diseases and even madness. This is a deep look into what people see when they come across a girl-child prostitute.

The young girl seeks out a secure and homely environment where she feels wanted. The turn to a man for financial assistance is only an amplified need for personal security. As in the case of the above-mentioned Nigerian girls, it is apparent that back at home, an environment exists which does not in any way encourage one to enjoy life. In some cases, organised groups of men contribute money to send girls abroad and the wealth they earn is shared out among the so-called “sponsors”.³¹

The young girl is driven by the need to look fashionable and wealthy. The in-thing is the get-rich-quickly scheme, which in most cases is superstitious and out of place. In the case of the aforementioned Nigerian girls, they were driven to Europe by

²⁹ Joy (14) Interviewed, Kisumu, Dec. 1999.

³⁰ Kenya Association of Promotion of Adolescent Health, “ Study of Kenya Adolescents” p.7

³¹ Kenya Medical Association (1989), Child Abuse and Neglect (Nairobi) English Press ,LTD.p.14

maddening advice from elderly ladies who had gone and made money (probably stolen it) out of prostitution and now had big houses and drove flashy cars.

The girl-child engages in illicit sex sometimes as a way of seeking personal security. Girls will sleep with a man who is in a position of power, one who can protect them from the harsh realities of the world. They may even fail to get paid after the sexual activity, given their age, vulnerability and inability to bargain. When police raid brothels and streets, the children become victims of arrest. Ironically though, the male-perpetrators are not arrested. A girl called Joy said in an n interview:

At night I'm always in conflict with the police.

They arrest me, take me into custody... I have no money for bribe, so I offer them sexual services and they release me.³²

Prostitution ruins the child mentally, physically and psychologically. Children are supposed to be "sweet, innocent angels". It gives them traumatic repercussions from which they may never recover. Children are treasured assets to a home, since their future may hold great things for them and all those around them. Though we are admittedly living through a hard time, one sure way of coming out of this crisis is by preserving the innocence of our children.

The young girls cannot avoid the consequences of unsafe sex outside marriage. AIDs and other venereal diseases like Syphilis and Gonorrhoea are but a tip of the iceberg. In today's Africa, millions of people, a majority of whom are women, will soon die of full-blown AIDs. It is hard for these children to seek medical treatment, given their low financial turnover. Being young, they are also shy to explain their

³² Maureen Chigbo, "Our Girls Are Dragged Into Prostitution", Newswatch, October 9, 2000, p17-18

ailments to medical personnel. As a result, they might end up asking for inappropriate drugs, which only increase their poor health. They live in unsafe and unhygienic environments like the slums, where it is very easy to contract HIV from use of dirty objects like razor blades, scissors, knives and other sharp things.

Sex workers, among a range of other people are the main abusers of drugs. These range from cigarettes, cannabis, cocaine, heroine and power alcohol. Just recently (2nd week of November 2000), more than 100 people died in Nairobi slums from taking Methanol, which was mixed with their normal illicit drink, called Chang'aa.³³

Sex workers see these drugs as a solution to their problems. In Kenya, youth make up 60% of the population. 20% of them, aged between 10 and 14 years, smoke tobacco, 44% aged from 5-19 and 69% aged between 20 and 24 smoke tobacco. 49% of Kenya youth at teenage are abusers of alcohol, miraa (khat), tobacco, mandrax, cannabis and glue. Young females in Kenya are four times more likely to engage in sexual activity if they have used drugs, while males are twice as likely to do so.³⁴

Another impact of prostitution on children is that their abuser gives/ feeds them a lot of distorted information to justify their wayward sexual behaviour. This is also common in non-commercial sexual exploitation. Child prostitutes however suffer more. A girl will take a man to bed who promises her greater things than she has. Others are even made to believe that they are the actual "wives" of the men abusing them. This leads to a mind distorted with many unfulfilled ambitions. The girl loses her focus and despairs when she realises that the man is only lying to achieve his own ends: sexual gratification.

³³ Op. Cit.

2.5 EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY, CHURCH AND SOCIETY

A) EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY.

The child often experiences isolation from the whole of society. Her immediate family are normally the first people from whom isolation is experienced. Some girls who come from relatively moral backgrounds will feel that they have done something completely unforgivable and may experience dejection and complete removal from the erstwhile “safe” and warm family environment. In most situations, patronising parents who are strict moralists end up bringing up some very wayward characters. The children brought up in such families feel that the world is an unfair place, where no matter what they do, they may never experience any form of acknowledgement. They believe that nothing they ever do will please anyone. They become the “bad girls” or “bad boys” and they relax in it.

Other children experience hostilities at home which lead them to escape into the larger world where they feel it is safer. A report by the Kenya Medical Association revealed that 25 to 30% of children in Kenya are abused at family level through bartering, humiliation, encounters with careless and hostile parents as well as direct insult from grown-ups in the family.

The family is a very important unit in the wholesome development of a child. It may make or destroy a child, depending on what he or she undergoes while growing up. Habits like prostitution are formed very early in life when the responsible people; parents, elderly relatives, peers and grandparents fail to advise the child accordingly. A child who grows up in a family where there is freedom of expression, where topics of

³⁴ Part of Poem by Normagene Warner "If I could run life through again".

sex are discussed and where there is warmth and safety, cannot get into prostitution even when faced with bigger and more intense crises.

B) EFFECTS ON THE CHURCH.

It is very likely for a child to feel that there is no place for him or her in the Church before God. They may feel that God loves only good and pure people and that he condemns and judges all dirty people. The Church can sometimes encourage the child into prostitution, albeit indirectly. Where the ministers in Church openly humiliate the “bad” and praise the “good” people, the message so explicitly imparted is that God is merciless and cannot forgive. This raises the very difficult question of the role of the church in reformation of people.

The child prostitute may feel that she has nothing better to offer to society other than sex. If the Church minister, the people in authority and other organisational leaders do not encourage such girls to come back to the fold, then more and more others will easily drift towards prostitution. At times Church Ministers are reported to have sexually abused their female flock. In such a case, the child may view God as just another sex maniac.

Jesus encourages children to come to him. The role of the Church should thus be emulative of this. Ministers and other people alike need to reach out to youth and make them feel wanted. They should not feel that the Church is only for the elderly “good” and morally straight people. The patrons of youth groups should encourage peer counselling among their members. Those considered more wayward than others should be encouraged and more attention paid to them than to the others. The child

prostitute should view the church as a beckoning family, which invites her to sanctuary any time she meditates reform. She should not feel condemned and judged.

C) EFFECTS ON SOCIETY

By Government, reference is made to the legislative body, parliament, and the executive arm including the president, the provincial administration, the police and the civil society. The judiciary is also included. All these bodies have a role to play in moulding the outcome of the individual behaviour of a person.

Prostitution is outlawed in all African Countries, Kenya and Nigeria included. However, the government agents appear to abet the underground progression of prostitution. A Nigerian chief was reported to have been involved in the trafficking of young women to Italy for sexual exploits. Cartels of powerful civil servants are reported to be deeply involved in this illicit trade. This shows how lax Government policy and legislation can be in dealing with prostitution. It will be noted that most brothels are either directly run by a powerful figure in the Government or are operated under the noses of government agents, who may be bribed to keep quiet.

Unemployment, lack of affordable educational opportunities, poor remuneration of the salaried employees, unclear policies, legislation and corruption are just but a few of the areas where the government can put remedies into place to save the child involved in prostitution. Maureen Chibgo, a social commentator in Nigeria, is an example of one of the people committed to reforming the prostitutes and rehabilitating them. Her National Commission for Women has set up strategies to curb prostitution at local and international levels. This is by offering them credit facilities and obtaining public support to press for better legislation to fight this evil.

African governments should feel that it is their responsibility to have morally straight citizens. This is the only way forward. In this respect, educational centres and rehabilitation opportunities for practising and reformed prostitutes need to be established. Polytechnics and other skill-training programmes need to be initiated at village levels so as to allow those girls who cannot proceed to high school or who may not have any chance to go through formal school to have access to help. It is only the goodwill of politicians and the properly motivated executives that will promote the development of a more morally straight citizenry.

2.6 CONCLUSION

As has been noted in the preceding pages, child prostitution thrives only because it is entrenched in our minds, our families and our society. Its causes notwithstanding, the impact is felt on a very broad spectrum; from the individual, to the family, the Church, the government to mention but a few areas. It is high time that people stopped passing the buck and addressed the problem squarely right from their own selves.

Children who live in abusive environments learn to abuse. Those who grow up in violent situations learn to be violent. If they develop mistrust and hatred of self and others, it is because they are not trusted and loved. "A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). It is a matter of tending the tree: the family, the Church, the government and society in general in which the evils are so deeply rooted.

For the individual girl who persists in prostitution, the following lines in a poem by Normagene Warner may be vital:

If I could run my life through again...
then children would be given one match
just one match to start a fire and thereby
they may be taught if indeed they can be
taught the awesomeness of only one.

The futility of most of our struggles is realised in death. The children of the age which is the focus of this paper may not acutely understand the above lines because theirs is only a world of sweet innocent dreams. However, the socialisation they undergo determines how they end up behaving.

As will be seen in the next chapter, prostitution is adequately addressed in the Bible as a social and theological issue. The Church is categorical in its stand on such matters, but it is important to mention that it will help to move from a prescriptive moral level where despite what is the norm, those that have tripped may not feel dejected and forsaken; but that they are part of the flock and cannot be left out if we who are supposedly “on the right track” are to remain strong and safe. Prostitution needs to be approached from the level of the individual commitment to change, not from the level of condemnation of already evil practices.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON GIRL-CHILD PROSTITUTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

After having looked at prostitution in terms of its causes and the impacts that it generally has on society, it is vital that this paper addresses itself to the spiritual or theological side of the coin. This chapter therefore shall centre its attention on the biblical vision on child prostitution as well as prostitution as a social evil. It will address both the Old and the New Testament perspectives, then pay attention to the social teaching of the Catholic Church and of theology as a whole.

The Bible makes social comments on many issues, prostitution included. It may be argued that the Bible does exclusively refer to particular tribal groups or cultures. However, it is itself a universally relevant book which does not include any cultural conditioning. In Lev. 18:3, 24-30 Moses explains the forbidden sexual practices among the Israelites. From verse 3, he says, "Do not follow the practices of the people of Egypt, where you once lived, or of the people in the land of Canaan, where I am now taking you. Obey my laws and do what I commend. I am the Lord your God. Follow the practices and the laws that I give you: you will save your life by doing so. I am the Lord".

The commandments are seen to be neutral and without bias for tribe or whatever identity.

In addressing the Biblical perspective, attention needs to be paid to the Old Testament practices as well as the New Testament practices which will be seen as the

Christian teaching. In the Old Testament, the covenant between God and the Israelites was a binding one in all aspects, inclusive of moral behaviour. The commandments were therefore the light to guide behaviour. In the New Testament, Jesus emphasizes the same message as was taught by Moses and even adds a new dimension to it. At no point does the Bible show conflicting viewpoints regarding any issue.

As will be seen, the Bible can be seen as addressing prostitution through laying down of rules and regulations to be followed by society, one of them being that sexual perversion is unwarranted. In the Old Testament, the ten commandments link up the people with God in an everlasting and peaceful covenant that outlaws mistrust and any kind of immorality. Though people still show disobedience at some point, God in return metes out punishment through disease and death.

The New Testament brings in the issue of not just following the commandments blindly, but also of having a clear conscience, Jesus says that he comes to put more emphasis on to the laws laid down by Moses, not to disagree with them. In addressing the connection between obeying the Law of Moses and the idea of the Messiah, Jesus says, "The Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were in effect up to the time of John the Baptist; since then the Good News about the Kingdom of God is being told, and everyone forces their way in. But it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the smallest detail of the law to be done away with". (Luke 16:16-17)

In looking at the social teaching of the Church on the issue of prostitution or sexuality as a whole, it will be important to remember that the teaching is actually based on the sound guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Biblical teaching plays a vital role in shaping the opinion of the Church regarding any issue. Any theological assumptions,

therefore, which lead the Christian away from the Biblical guideline might be interpreted as heresy. However, it is important to remember that modern society is very dynamic and that sound opinion from any direction has a tendency to be shunned, especially by the younger generation. Though this has to do with lack of sound catechesis at a tender age, we cannot in effect use this kind of reason or excuse to justify the prevalence of girl-child prostitution in any society. The principles referred to in the Bible are actually applicable in any society and they are always outstanding and characteristic of good morals whether they are being practised by Christians or non-Christians.

Jesus says, "Things that make people fall into sin are bound to happen, but how terrible for the one who makes them happen!" (Luke 17:1) The point to note here is that the dangers of prostitution notwithstanding, the Biblical teaching against it is not just one of the many moralist ideologies in the world. It is a sound piece of advice that puts into consideration not only the unpleasant repercussions like pregnancies, STDs, hatred and abortions among others, but one that appreciates the gullibility of man and gives reason why strength in personal will and character should be the rule and not the exception.

3.2 SOME OLD TESTAMENT VIEWS ON PROSTITUTION

Right from the beginning of time, in the book of Genesis, God cautions His people against disobedience. When Adam and Eve disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit, God passes judgement thus, "...because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse". (Genesis). Punishment always comes from disobedience. From the beginning, God shows His people that He will punish them any

time they go against His covenant. At any ordinary moments when their relationship is good, He blesses them. By indulging in prostitution and sexual perversion, man is disobeying God's law and evil results from this.

Moses' law states very categorically that anyone who prostitutes his or her body is inviting God's curse. Such people are actually excluded from God's fold:

“No Israelite, man or woman, is to become a temple prostitute. Also, no money earned in this way may be brought into the house of the Lord. The Lord hates temple prostitutes”. (Deuteronomy 23:17).

Moses actually outlines the various actions that might invite God's curse on a person or on a society (Deuteronomy 27:11-26). On top of it all, “God's curse on anyone who does not obey God's laws and teachings”, (Deut. 27:26). Sexual perversion, and in effect, prostitution is prime among the many occasions of disobedience that God does not entertain.

Likewise, obedience of God's law brings about blessing, God promises this to the people of Israel: “If you obey the Lord your God and keep all his commands that I give you today, he will make you greater than any other nation on earth”. (Deuteronomy 28:1). By abstaining from prostitution among other evils, it is implied here that God showers His blessing on everything that one indulges in.

In traditional Israelite society, prostitution was an abominable act and actually a disobedience of God's law. This is clearly demonstrated by the story of the Levite and his concubine, (Judges 19:1-30). The people of Israel are seen to react very shockingly to the abuse meted out against the Levite's concubine by the sexual perverts. “Everybody who saw it said, ‘We have never heard of such a thing. Nothing like this has ever happened since the Israelites left Egypt’. (Judges 19:30). The concubine who

is sexually abused dies out of the horrible experience. The Benjamites, the perpetrators of this abomination, invite an armed attack and a war ensues. The implication from the onset here is that sexual perversion invites evil. Actually, the extension could be that the aftermath of sin is death.

The prophet Hosea condemns his wife as an unfaithful prostitute. He passes very harsh judgement on her. Symbolically, the Lord will pass harsh judgement on Israel who are unfaithful to him. Prostitution is a grave sin which separates man from God. At any rate, it does not bring any positive benefit to the perpetrator, not to the person's relationship with God.

The story of Oholah and Oholibah given through prophet Ezekiel best demonstrates the ire of God against prostitutes. He describes the actions of these horrible prostitutes thus: "They have committed adultery and murder - adultery with idols and murder of the sons they bore me". (Ezekiel 23:37) God indicates here that the human being who indulges in prostitution does so according to the whims of the evil one.

This is what God proclaims on the kind of judgement to be passed against these prostitutes:

"I will put a stop to your lust and to the obscenities you have committed since you were in Egypt. You won't look at any more idols or think about Egypt any more". (Ezekiel 23:27)

God also gives warning to the whole society to be wary of prostitution:

"Throughout the land, I will put a stop to immorality, as a warning to every woman not to commit adultery as they (the two sisters) did....I will punish you for your immorality and your sin of worshipping idols"(Ezekiel 23:48-49). It is clear therefore

that the Lord abhors prostitution since the early times of the prophets. However, God blesses those who abhor evil. It is necessary therefore to obey and observe the commandments of the Lord and invite blessing on one's life. A lot of hope and promise is given to the righteous who chooses to follow the correct way. As will be seen later, the Old Testament books help to formulate or set down the laws to be followed. The New Testament further elaborates the Laws of God, while at the same time emphasising the mercy of God on those who choose to act righteously.

3.3 THE NEW TESTAMENT VIEW ON PROSTITUTION

Perhaps the most profound passage on prostitution given by Jesus in the Gospels is the teaching about divorce in Matthew 19. Jesus says, "No human being must separate then, what God has joined together". (Matthew 19:6). He insists that the union between man and woman, initiated by Adam and Eve, cannot be compromised by divorce, nor by adultery.

When the Pharisees ask Jesus why there is a law by Moses that allows divorce, he says: "Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives because you are so hard to teach...I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife for any cause other than her unfaithfulness, commits adultery if he marries some other woman" (Matthew 19:8-9). This clearly outlaws any sexual relationship between unmarried people, as well as between a divorced partner and another person. Actually, prostitution, as a union between people who are not united in love, is adultery.

Paul, the Apostle, in his letter to the Romans, condemns the Roman society in its lax morals. The moral decadence was then so grave that incest and bestiality were not seen as evil. They had lost their guilty conscience, "their feet quick to shed

innocent blood, wherever they go there is havoc and ruin". (Romans). He warns Timothy about sexual sins that would be among the acts that would manifest the extent of humanity alienation from God in the last days. (Timothy 3: 1-6). It can be noted that his viewpoint is quite negatively categorical on sexual perversion.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns that immorality, adultery, sexual perversion will not be entertained in God's kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9). He further says that the body is sacred, since it is unlikely that one should want to desecrate the body of Christ. He says, "Shall I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of the body of a prostitute?" (1 Cor. 6:15). Prostitution completely segregates one from God, since by its practice one is evidently going fully against the purpose for which he or she is meant.

The New Testament, however, does not only condemn evil and spit venom on those who may practise prostitution. As Jesus points out, there is always hope for those who seek the mercy of God, which is boundless. Jesus teaches against harsh judgement and counsels forgiveness. To the woman caught red-handed practising adultery, Jesus says:

"Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?... Well, then, I do not condemn you either, go, but do not sin again". (John 8:10-11).

Paul also offers hope by saying that if all human beings obey God's law, then everyone could be put right and could have life. (Gal. 3:21). He further advises that if one is guided by the Holy Spirit, it is very hard to give in to the desires of the flesh. "For what our human nature wants is opposed to what the spirit wants, and what the spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants. These two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you want to do". (Gal. 5:17). There is always the

guiding power of the Holy Spirit which enables us to follow the right path. By acting contrary to the wishes of God, then man is allowing his earthly desires to control him.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the salvation of mankind is dependent on two major things: firstly, the will of God to have all men saved from sin and by extension, from destruction; secondly, it is based on the will of all men freely and without any form of coercion to act according to the wants of the Spirit, which always seeks good and not evil. Whatever the justification therefore for prostitution by lay, Jesus offers a way out by first stating the wrongness of any sin and especially sexual perversion. Secondly, it is noted in the New Testament teaching that hope is only seen in not giving in to the whims of our human nature, but allowing God to guide us

3.4 THE CATHOLIC TEACHING ON PROSTITUTION

The Church continues to remind its faithful of their obligation to form their consciences based on the will of Christ, the teacher of truth. The Church goes wholly against any activities that deviate or tend to mislead its faithful away from the truth propounded by Christ, the true teacher. Prostitution is a social evil that the Church calls her faithful not to embrace.

Prostitution is seen as completely immoral and is in no circumstances justifiable.¹⁵ It can be noted here that the teaching of the Bible notwithstanding, prostituting one's body for material gain goes against natural law (see - The Theory of Natural Law by St Thomas Aquinas-unacknowledged here in this research - which has absolute moral norms to govern our moral conduct). Prostitution is not self-liberating since it does not flow from the depth of a person's being. Being an evil, it does not beget one self-assurance; neither does it enhance full development of a person's

capacity for growth and self-expression. Indeed, prostitution is only viewed as a form of sexual expression which is self-enslaving.

The Church teaches love between all human persons. It also emphasises love between married couples. Sexual union is only therefore valid in marriage and where it is centred on love and procreation. Prostitution is primarily a sexual act that is centred on material gain and one-sided pleasure. It does not therefore fulfil the demand of love and procreation made on men and women who are married.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the issue of prostitution is still treated as a disease or epidemic that envelops humanity. “¹⁶Prostitution does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure”. If sex is to be geared towards the attainment of material gain, one-sided gratification of selfish desires, then it defeats the whole purpose of the differentiation between men and women, which is only geared towards procreation and the attainment of love.

Though every person has a right to bodily integrity and dignity, the choice to do evil is not based on integral freedom. The person who indulges in prostitution degrades his or her bodily integrity and dignity. The church thus views prostitution as a social scandal which leads to stigmatisation, is disgraceful and dishonourable. When one indulges in prostitution, he or she needs purification from it, for it is a desecration of not just the body but the spirit.

In this light, the Church has its checks and balances in ensuring the survival of its faithful. Prostitution separates us from God or spoils our relationship with God. There is therefore a chance for the faithful of the Church to return to the fold and seek

¹⁵ Kelly George, A., Human Sexuality in our Time - What The Church Teaches, page 103.

a better relationship with God. Following Jesus's teaching of forgiveness for repentant people, the Church offers the sacraments and especially confession (penance) to all Christians. Prostitutes or former prostitutes always have a chance to go back to the fold since the door is always open. Christians are also encouraged not to shun prostitutes but to treat them so that they feel welcome to change their trends. Actually, the feeling should be as was propounded by Jesus in his advice to the adulterous woman, "...I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again". (John 8:10-11).

3.6 CONCLUSION

Both the perpetrators of child prostitution and the victims of prostitution are human beings. They are part of God's fold. At times, the perpetrators of this immoral act might be responsible church leaders or even priests and ministers. The Church realises then that it cannot isolate itself from the problems facing its flock.

Many non-governmental and church-based efforts have therefore been made in many situations to further assist the larger church in its spreading of the good word. It is important to acknowledge the work done by agencies like the Pandipieri Counselling Programme in Kisumu, whose activities I researched, and even participated in, for my fact-finding report. This programme is doing a lot in assisting practising and reformed prostitutes in the lakeside town. Such work cannot actually be left in the hands of the government or the church alone. In any case such huge organisations as the government or the church do need assistance at grassroots levels.

As has been observed in the preceding pages, prostitutes need understanding and care, not condemnation. The Bible itself promises hope, peace and joy to any sinner who repents and lives according to the laws of God. Most international and

¹⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, - 2355- page 543.

local-based non-governmental and church-based organisations are doing a lot in trying to hold and rehabilitate these people instead of condemning and appearing to patronise them.

It is such efforts that can be seen to be a true reflection of the vision of Jesus when he says “I do not condemn you..Go and sin no more”. Such organisations as Pandipieri and many others should be accorded all the support possible. Volunteer work, financial aid, offering food, housing, clothing and even other material wealth needs to be encouraged among all Christians of good will. They should make the prostitutes to feel not condemned but encouraged to reform and to sin no more, just as Jesus wishes.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 ORIENTATION FOR ACTION AND SUGGESTIONS

Throughout the course of this paper, the following details have stood out quite prominently:

- That the existence of prostitution in African countries and especially in urban areas is a reality. It has been observed that in the Nigerian and Kenyan societies the prevalence of girl-child prostitution has reached alarming proportions.

-Families within which these girls are brought up have been noted as latent grounds for the development of immoral practices. Family break-ups, divorces, physical fights and lack of proper and binding ties are but some of the causes of despair and dejection among young girls, who therefore prefer to take up prostitution in search of acceptance .

- Economic difficulties in developing countries have also been observed as an unrelenting pressure on youth, who revel in fantasy of better living conditions. Abject poverty, inflation and resultant high prices do indeed discourage young people who must work

tooth and nail in trying to make ends meet. Compounded by unemployment levels and corruption, these problems at times appear insurmountable thus driving young people to easy but unorthodox practises like prostitution.

- The media has also been seen to play a vital role in propounding a way of thinking in youth which tends to encourage prostitution and immoral/ irresponsible sex. Use of young adolescents as sex objects on TV, print media and even over the Internet has greatly impacted on the mentalities of young people. Barely pubescent girls are

portrayed being raped, sleeping with their fathers and looking quite sultry and post-coital in soap operas and magazine advertisements. Young people tend to imitate these apparently successful role models by mannerisms of dress and behaviour.

- The Church has also been seen as unknowingly abetting mentalities that seem to encourage sexual immorality. Practising prostitutes need to feel that they are encouraged to repent and reform. Instead, most of them feel condemned and tend to associate the Church with otherwise “good and infallible” people. It has been noted that the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments, offers hope and encouragement to repentant individuals. Their leaders tend to misinterpret Biblical messages by being too hard on prostitutes, condemning them to gloom and despair. This further encourages them to stay away from God’s People.

It needs to be noted that a society which fails to appreciate itself cannot be appreciated by its young. Phyllis, David York and Ted Watchel say that unruly children refuse to appreciate their parents because the parents do not appreciate themselves¹⁷. When society propounds “heroism” or “achievement” in immorality, then the children tend to be happy in disobeying parents, in misbehaving at every available opportunity. In other words, sexual perversion is partly caused by a mentality imbibed in society that those who practise it are somehow better and infallible. They tend to appear heroic by just practising sexual perversion.

The emphasis here is on the societal censure or encouragement of a way of behaviour in youth. A lot has been said and written about the impact of television on behaviour. However, it can be noted here that it is not necessarily what people

¹⁷ Phyllis, David and Ted Watchel (1982) Tough Love. Doubleday and Company: New York, (Page 47).

(especially youth)watch on television that has a negative impact on them and their behaviour.

Children watch television and gain entry into a confusing adult world that cannot help, but only shake, their confidence and trust in those elders who once seemed so omniscient, powerful and good¹⁸.

However, child experts agree that even frightening or sexual programmes do not deeply affect children who grow up in normal, reasonably happy families¹⁹. It is only when things go haywire that children tend to turn to TV as a role model, source of amusement and problem-solver. It is when parents quarrel, divorce or beat the children that negative impacts tend to appear, TV though, has admittedly changed long-established child-rearing patterns.

All in all, it may be mentioned that child prostitution, among other major problems facing children, occurs because children are not given freedom to grow up. Viewing children as adults is not possibly the answer. Indeed, even adults are fallible and it is important that children are made aware of this. It is important that the solutions be sought today for we are sitting on a time bomb.

In relation to this, a quotation from Gabriela Mistral, a Nobel Prize winning poet from Chile, will help us to reflect on the urgency of looking for solutions to this problem:

We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are

¹⁸ Marie Winn (1981) Children Without Childhood. Penguin Books: New York, (Page 44).

being developed. To him we cannot answer "Tomorrow". His name is "Today". (Gabriela Minstral)²⁰.

4.2 ACTION AND SUGGESTIONS

Research like the one engaged in here needs to be encouraged among scholars of sociology and other related fields. Absolute support of such efforts should be accorded to people who seek to look for solutions to the problem of girl-child prostitution. This paper cannot claim to be conclusive and all inclusive in attempting to solve the problem. However, the details that have emerged from it should not be ignored. Instead, they should be used by scholars and other people to facilitate further inquiry into the problem and the search for solutions.

4.3 NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Secondly, it is important not to encourage the role of NGOs and charitable organisations like the Pandipieri Centre in Kisumu in trying to solve this problem. In these hard times, the government has left responsibilities to the churches and charitable organisations claiming that they have the financial and other resources to eradicate problems. It should be noted that unless such funds are obtained from well-wishers or the government itself, NGOs like Pandipieri and others cannot sustain themselves for a long time. Whatever little support can be obtained, whether financial, professional or even moral, should be provided so that these organisations do not despair in the noble work that they have chosen to do.

Related to this, the government and the churches may not have sufficient funds to run fully-fledged programmes that seek to eradicate girl-child prostitution.

¹⁹ Ibid.

However, these two important agencies can help educate people on sexuality, AIDS and STDs at every available opportunity. Through workshops, seminars and even public rallies which are devoted solely to sex education, a co-operative effort of the church and the government can help a lot in altering the mentality of people towards prostitution, sexuality and AIDS.

4.4 SOCIETY: COMMUNITIES AND CHURCH

Though radical, the idea of a sex workers' day is an encouraging thought. In August, 2000, a seminar dubbed Regional Sex Workers' Workshop in sub-Saharan Africa was held in Mbagathi, Nairobi²¹. One of the salient issues raised at the workshop was that of legitimacy. Prostitution, considered taboo among African societies, was discussed on that day as if it was fish or the stock exchange. The participants attempted to answer the question of whether to legalise prostitution or not. They asked questions like, "is there a case for making sex for commercial purposes legal?"²² In the same workshop it was noted that since the law is a reflection of what society thinks and wants, the issue of protection of sex workers by the constitution is non-existent. "Running a brothel, the house of sin, is a crime... In our law, living off the earnings of prostitution is a crime. Thus the one who pays commits no crime"²³. This reflects the irony of a law which condemns the female prostitute while at the same time encouraging the male who pays for the whole deal.

A sex worker's day should be established, not because we want to encourage prostitution, but so that people may come into the open about this kind of conditioning

²⁰ Wajibu, vol. 8 No. 1, 1993, page 9.

²¹ Njoki Karuoya and Peter Njenga "Sexual Dealing" Saturday" Magazine, Daily Nation, 5th August 2000, page 5

²² Ibid, page 6.

imposed on them by culture. On such days, communities and the societies and Church should come out fully to motivate willing reformers who want to quit prostitution. Plays poems, skits, songs and other modes of entertainment should be presented on such days with prevalent themes of positive sexuality, avoidance of AIDS, STDs and prostitution in general.

4.5 FAMILY

Practical strategies in eradicating poverty need to be sought by the government. The family should be viewed as an important tool towards the eradication of poverty. Economic stability, especially of women, should be the key issue. Support for agricultural activities, co-operatives and communal businesses at slum or village levels should be of prime concern for the government and its agents. The idea of a bank for women, propounded by some Kenyan women legislators, should be given serious thought. This bank could offer loans and credit at affordable interest rates and accord special support to grassroots projects of lower financial acumen. This will surely supplement the many efforts made by charitable organisations that attempt to help poor people and girl-child prostitutes in particular.

4.6 GOVERNMENT

It is important that government legislation be tightened to protect victims of sexual exploitation. In Kenya, for instance, the current constitutional reform should include review of those sections which protect the perpetrators of sexual exploitation. As has been observed, the male who pays for sexual services is not considered to be in

²³ Ibid.

the wrong by Kenyan law. Such should not be the case and among the laws of the land should be the outlawing of prostitution both for the man and the woman.

Role models like beauty contest winners, television actors and actresses, presenters, models used in advertisements and such others should be seen to be leading exemplary lives. It is important to note that young people like to emulate these models in ways of behaviour. They fantasise about them and would very much like to be beautiful, catchy and generally “the kid-on--the-block”. Miss Kenya, Miss Nigeria or whatever winner should espouse not only physical beauty but also be seen to work towards better living conditions. The media should encourage such winners to participate in charitable work, which should involve helping rehabilitate girl-child prostitutes. It should be clear from the onset that their beauty is not just a luring kind of physical attraction but a beauty of character and behaviour. This would greatly enhance the image they normally create among the youth.

It could help a great deal if data on AIDS and STDs could be made available freely to people. This would help to create a sexual awareness among people. Though strictly anecdotal, there have been reports that Uganda has managed to raise public awareness on sexuality and less people are seen indulging in pervasive sex. Campaigning vigorously through leaflets, posters and the media in general should be encouraged. AIDS and even anti-prostitution government agencies should be established to moderately discourage people from viewing prostitution as a practice.

More and more suggestions from the public, from scholars, from the prostitutes themselves, from the Church, the government and all sundry should be sought. It should be made known to the people that they have a problem at their hands for which they are asked to come up with solutions! An agency or authority looking into this

problem solely should then be commissioned to collect these views from the people, collate them into positive action and implement the report. Winning against this challenge of girl-child prostitution should be the work of every single person in society.

5.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION

Children are the hope for the future. Children are precious and have a potential. They turn out the way they are brought up. When one bears a girl, she brings joy and hope because she symbolises one who can welcome and propagate another life, thus ensuring the continuity of life given by God. Abusing the girl-child by way of sexual exploitation is one sure way of ensuring the repression of this precious gift from God.

Jesus says that for us to attain the kingdom of God, we must not only love him but also love our neighbour.(Mark 12:28-34). By abusing children through sexual exploitation, we do not propagate this love for our neighbour. Instead we go flat against this golden commandment which is all important in guiding our lives. God loves children. He loves their innocence and puts a curse on those who instead misuse children. Our appreciation of the love of God is seen in our propagation of those actions, thoughts and words which please him. Prostitution does not please God. It is an accused practice in his eyes. When an individual feels driven to the wall by worldly pressures, seeking God, not earthly solutions, should be the answer.

The world is an enlightened place in this era. Enlightenment in science, philosophy and technology should also encompass the search for solutions to a social dilemma which has plagued the world. Eradication of prostitution as a social evil is a communal responsibility. Assumptions made by society on girl-child prostitution as a

taboo issue should be seized by the horns by all. It is hoped that constant prayer for guidance from the Almighty will also help in the search for a more workable solution.

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