Abstract
Throughout southern Africa, millions of people, especially children and youth, are affected by drought. Though young people are usually the most affected, they are rarely given the opportunity to voice their concerns and experiences with drought disasters. This study explores the vulnerabilities of children and youth during drought in Botswana, which is highly susceptible to drought disasters. Using face-to-face interviews and participatory rural appraisal (picture drawing and storytelling) the researcher collected data from adult caregivers and 30 young people (ages 10-18). The study demonstrates that the needs of children and youth during drought go well beyond physical survival. Children also experience emotional distress during times of disaster, which emerges from fears of being separated from family, the loss of educational opportunities, mounting tensions and pressures within the household, a lack of emotional support at the family level, and increased workloads. Gender, age, family structure, and roles within the household all affect children’s vulnerability and the ways that they cope with drought disaster as well as other stresses related to poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Keywords: Botswana, drought, children, vulnerability, coping
Introduction
Over the last 30 years, natural disasters have been on the increase and have affected more than 255 million people worldwide (Guha-Sapir, Hargitt and Philippe 2004). In many cases, children make up the largest segment of populations affected by disasters (Anderson 2000; Ariyabandu 2000; De Waal, Taffesse and Carruth 2003; Enarson 2000; Fothergill 1996; Gordon, Carl and Norman 1999; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2003; Jabry 2005; Koger 2006; Morrow and Phillips 1999; UNICEF 2006). When disaster strikes, children are often faced with devastating impacts such as limited access to food, shelter, social support, and health care. As a result, their vulnerability is increased (UNICEF 2006).

Though children and youth are often the most affected by disasters, they are the least listened-to members of society (Jabry 2005). They are rarely given the opportunity to voice their concerns and experiences with disasters. The purpose of this study was to explore the vulnerabilities of children and youth during drought so as to give them a voice. The study was conducted in Botswana, one of the southern African countries susceptible to drought disasters. On average, one of every three years is a drought year in Botswana (Alverson 1999; Holm and Morgan 1985; Kruger 1999).

General Overview
Natural disasters such as drought and floods continue to affect the region of southern Africa (Ansah 1992; Collins 1993; Comins 2004; Eakin 1993; UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs and SADCC 1992; International Federation of the Red Cross 1993; McDonald 2000; OCHA 2007; UN 2007; Vogel 1994; Zavis 2004). Drought disasters are the most common, and often result in devastating social impacts (Ansah 1992; Eakin 1993; Holm and Morgan 1985; McDonald 2000; Wilhite 1992). During drought periods, millions of people in southern Africa are faced with critical levels of food insecurity and are usually in need of food aid (American National Red Cross 2003; IRIN 2007; Refugees International 2006; UNRIACSO 2004; 2005). In 2002, it was reported that nearly 13 million people in southern Africa were affected by severe food shortages (Carver 2002). In such a situation it is children who tend to suffer more as they are more susceptible to malnutrition, which can stunt development (Mason et al. 2005).

Between 1991 and 2000, about 75 million children under the age of 15 and living in developing countries had their lives severely disrupted by natural disasters (Jabry 2005). With disaster frequency and intensity increasing, especially in developing countries (Guha-Sapir, Hargitt and Philippe 2004), combined with poverty and HIV/AIDS, more children will be affected (Mason et al. 2005). This is of great concern, given that the highest levels of HIV/AIDS are found in southern Africa, where the prevalence rate among the adult population exceeds 30 percent (De Wagt and Connolly 2005). Based on the 2003 UNICEF humanitarian action report, about 4 million children in southern Africa have already been orphaned by HIV/AIDS, increasing the number of child-headed households. With the loss of primary caregivers and other safety nets, children are left without those whom they typically depend on for security, support and protection during disasters. Moreover,
children living in poverty lack protection from disasters as their caregivers do not have the capacity to take preventative measures to deal with disasters (Anderson 2000).

Given that young people are the most affected by disasters, it would be expected that their particular vulnerabilities would take priority. This has not always been the case. In fact, very little research has addressed children’s vulnerabilities and capacities during times of disaster in developing nations (Jabry 2005). Of the research that is available, the literature typically confines children to three areas of study. First, children are often subsumed within studies on women in disasters (e.g., Anderson 2000; Ariyabandu 2000). Second, children’s vulnerabilities are often discussed within the medicalized narratives of disaster (American Academy of Pediatrics 1995; Deering 2000; Ebata and Borden 1995). These studies are, understandably, focused on traumatic reactions and psychological distress. This vein of research tends to focus on how adults can help children “return to normal” but often ignores the need to listen to them so as to identify threats against their safety and vulnerabilities. Third, children are presented as icons of suffering and passive victims who need to be rescued by outsiders (Burman 1994; Jabry 2005) as they are attributed no agency themselves.

In southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, research addressing vulnerabilities of children and youth during disasters is very limited. Available literature (e.g., DeRose, Messer and Millman 1998; Fako and Molamu 1995; Jacques 1995; Schipper 2006; Skinner 2006; UNICEF 2003; UNICEF 2007a, 2007b; UN Integrated Regional Information Network 2007; UNRIACSO 2005; Wolff 2007) simply mentions children as a vulnerable group and is limited to issues of food security, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, and humanitarian response. There is limited research that goes beyond addressing children’s physical survival needs related to safe water, food, shelter, clothing and primary health care. More research is required to address other needs such as protection from abuse and harm, education, rest, leisure and the right to participate freely in matters that affect children’s lives, health, and well-being (Jabry 2005).

The opportunity for children to voice their experiences is very important if effective decisions to address their vulnerabilities are to be made. Young people need to be recognized in society as significant subjects whose opinion matters. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children and youth have the right to freedom of speech as well as the right to partake in decision-making processes that are relevant to their lives. This right needs to be fully exercised when addressing children’s vulnerability to disasters.

Study Area
Formerly the British colony of Bechuanaland, Botswana adopted its new name upon independence in 1966. Botswana is a land-locked country with an estimated population of 1,680,863 people (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning 1997). It is situated in the Kalahari basin of the Southern Africa Plateau that is located in the center of southern Africa. It shares borders with Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Zambia.
This study was conducted in one of Botswana’s rural settlements known as Matsheng village. Matsheng is located in the Kgalagadi district (southwestern Botswana), about 500 kilometers to the west of Gaborone (Botswana’s capital city). The name Matsheng means “pans,” several of which dominate the area. Most livestock owners rely on these pans as a source of water for their animals. During the rainy seasons, pans are the only source of surface water. Matsheng is surrounded by wildlife management areas, which have been set aside by the government for conservation purposes (Chanda and Otlogetswe 2001). Matsheng, like all other rural areas in the west of Botswana, has clearly lagged behind in national growth. Western Botswana is an area with limited development potential. It is far from markets, has limited agricultural potential, limited water resources, scarcity of human resources, and barely developed local economies (Chanda and Otlogetswe 2001).

Based on the most recent national population and housing census held in 2001, the population of Matsheng is 7,688 (Central Statistics Office 2001). The population engages in typical rural livelihood activities. These include various traditional rangeland-based activities (e.g., livestock rearing, hunting and gathering). In recent years the traditional livelihoods have had to compete with various formal and informal livelihood sources that have emerged (Chanda and Otlogetswe 2001), such as purchase of food, cash or in-kind payment for labor, selling of assets, remittances, and reliance on government relief programs for assistance.

The Basarwa, non-Bantu hunter-gathers also known as the “Bushmen,” were the first inhabitants of the Kgalagadi. The first Bantu agro-pastoralists came in the nineteenth century. The area is now dominated by the Bangologa, who are semi-nomadic and hunter-gatherers (Chanda 2000). The population of Matsheng is the most socio-economically disadvantaged group in Botswana. The government, however, has been trying to alleviate poverty by improving the livelihoods of the population (Chanda 2000).

Methods
The study aimed at exploring vulnerabilities of children and youth during drought disasters. The key research questions were:

1. What does drought mean to the children and youth of Botswana?
2. How does drought affect children and youth in Botswana?
3. What experiences have the children and youth had with drought?
4. How do the children and youth cope with drought?
5. What difficulties do the children and youth face during drought periods?
6. What can be done to address their vulnerabilities to drought?

Sample Population
The study population consisted of 30 young people between the ages of 10 and 18. The sample consisted of 12 boys and 18 girls (see Table 1). A total of 150 households with children over the age of 10 were identified. From these households, 30 households were randomly selected to take part in the study.
Parents or guardians were informed about the selection and told in detail about the study, and permission was requested for their children to take part. Once permission was granted, a consent form that provided detailed information about the study was given to the parent or guardian to sign. Parents and guardians were willing to sign the consent forms and partake in the study on the condition that they remained anonymous and that no photographs identifying them or their children were taken. Once the researcher agreed to their conditions, the parents and guardians of participants were very cooperative.

Once the parents had consented, the boys and girls were told in detail about the study and asked if they wished to take part. The participants were also selected using random sampling: in households with more than one child over the age of 10, names of the children were written on pieces of paper and placed in a container from which one name was drawn at random. That child was then given a consent form to sign if he or she wished to take part in the study. The selected children and youth (30) were all excited to partake in the study. All participants were given the opportunity to ask questions related to the study for further clarification. A translator was made available for anyone who could not understand or read English. A third person also accompanied the researcher at all times so as to conform to research ethics.

**Table 1. Age and sex of child sample population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 – 12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – 15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half of the young participants (15) lived in single-parent households, all of which were headed by a female. Three of the children in the sample lived with both parents, and the remaining 12 were orphans with no mother and father. Of the 12 orphans, seven lived with either grandparents or other relatives while five lived in child-headed-households (see Table 2). Of the five children in child-headed households, three were headed by girls aged 16, 17 and 18 years old. The other two lived in households headed by boys who were 18 years of age (see Table 2).
Table 2. Living arrangements of child sample population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver</th>
<th>Frequency Male</th>
<th>Frequency Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent (female-headed)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Adult Caregiver (child-headed)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 30 young people interviewed, 16 attended school and the rest (14) did not (see Table 3).

Table 3. School attendance of child sample population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School attendance</th>
<th>Frequency Male</th>
<th>Frequency Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending school</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not attending school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

Both primary and secondary data collection methods were employed in this study. Secondary data was obtained from a review of existing published and non-published literature relevant to the study. The use of secondary data provided a variety of background information, which was used to construct a baseline context for the study. The secondary data was also used to complement primary data.

Primary data was obtained through face-to-face interviews and participatory rural appraisal. Participatory rural appraisal is a qualitative research method (see Chambers 1992). The methodology is designed to allow local involvement in the collection and analysis of information by outside researchers. In this case, picture drawing and story telling were used to collect data from the young participants.

**Picture Drawing**

Malchiodi (2001) indicates that drawing is a natural method of communication that children usually enjoy. The method offers the means to express one’s feelings and thoughts in a way that is less threatening than strictly verbal means. Drawing further helps children to quickly communicate concerns and problems that they would not normally speak out loud (Malchiodi 2001).

The young people taking part in the study were given the option of using picture drawings to communicate their thoughts and experiences with drought disasters.
The majority of both boys and girls welcomed the idea. Drawing was introduced to each child as a way of talking using pictures instead of words. Each child was also made aware that the purpose of the exercise was to express their thoughts and experiences with drought. Each child that wanted to use picture drawing was given crayons, a pencil, markers and a drawing pad. Open-ended questions (e.g., “What do you do when there is a drought?”) were used as themes for drawing. After the drawing exercise, there was a follow-up discussion of the drawings. Open-ended questions (e.g., “What is happening in your drawing?”) were used to lead the discussion.

**Story Telling**

The story telling technique was developed by Gardner (1986) as a new way of understanding children’s lifestyles and goals. In this study, the story telling technique was used to understand children and youth’s vulnerability to drought disasters. They were asked to narrate stories about their experiences with drought. Open-ended questions (e.g., “What happens in your family when there is a drought?”) were used as themes to guide the story telling exercise. Based on various issues emerging from the stories, further questions were asked for clarification. Towards the end of the story telling exercise, the participants’ attention was shifted from their realities to their world of fantasy. This was done to allow them to talk more about themselves and to provide an understanding of the kind of environment they would like to be in. The young people were asked to envision how they would see their lives without drought disasters. This provided more information about their thoughts and worries.

**Interviews**

In addition to the research with the children and youth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with their parents or guardians. For each child that took part in the study, their parent or guardian was also interviewed. A total of 25 children had an adult caring for them, while five households had no adult member. The number of adults interviewed was therefore 25 as shown in Table 3. In the child-headed households, the older child (also guardian) was interviewed. As indicated in Table 2, three households were headed by girls (16, 17 and 18 years old) and two by boys (18 years old).

**Table 4. Number of adults interviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver in household</th>
<th>Frequency Female</th>
<th>Frequency Male</th>
<th>Total number of adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent (Mothers)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives (Female)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents (Female)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of adults</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 4, the majority of the adult participants were female. This is because most of the households sampled in the study were female-headed. In the three households with both parents, the mother indicated that it was more appropriate to interview the father who was the head of the household. Mothers also asserted that it would demonstrate more respect to speak with the head of the household. The interviews with adults offered additional insights into the ways that young people communicate their experiences with drought to significant adults in their lives. Information from parents or guardians was also used to complement or verify information obtained from the children and youth.

**Young People’s Understanding of Drought**

Each participant was first asked to explain his or her understanding of drought to determine whether the children and youth understood its meaning. Their perceptions and interpretations of drought were overall well-informed and largely grounded in scientific knowledge. For example, they were able to point out that drought is a normal, recurrent part of Botswana’s climate, which is confirmed by the National Drought Mitigation Center (2006). Drought disasters are worse in Matsheng as it is Botswana’s driest region, receiving an average rainfall of only about 250 mm annually. Drought is therefore not new to the young people in Matsheng.

The National Drought Mitigation Center (2006) further explains that drought features vary from region to region, making it difficult to specifically define. In general, however, it originates from a lack of precipitation over an extended period of time (National Drought Mitigation Center 2006; also see National Drought Policy Commission Report 2000; Vogel 1994). The children and youth in Matsheng similarly defined drought as a time of no rain. Their perceptions about drought were also visible in their drawings (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). They described drought as a time when plants and crops are dry, a time when livestock die and water becomes scarce. As noted above, Matsheng is an area dominated by pans which provide surface water during the rainy seasons. The children and youth noted that during drought periods, the pans are very dry and all they see is sand and cracked surfaces. The children and youth indicated that they developed their understanding of drought from school, their parents, or from friends.
Figure 1. Dry vegetation during drought

Figure 2. Dry vegetation during drought

Figure 3. Dry pan, due to drought
Impact of Drought on Children and Youth

The frequent droughts that strike Matsheng had tangible impacts on the lives of the children and youth interviewed for this study. They frequently discussed both the emotional effects and the impacts on play and leisure time, as indicated below.

Emotional Impact

The majority (20) of the boys and girls indicated that it was upsetting for them to see dead livestock during periods of drought. Six of the young boys below the age of 15 assist in herding livestock. They told stories of how herds of cattle walk long distances to graze and return to look for water. During drought periods, the pans on which livestock rely for water are dry, and therefore most cows, if not given water, die of thirst. The young boys witnessed the death of livestock and this was very emotional for them. A 13-year-old boy discusses how devastated he was after trying to save a cow from dying:

One day I sat by the borehole with some friends waiting for the cows to come back from eating. When there is a drought we have to find boreholes that have some water and then we fetch the water and give the cows. We don’t give water every day, only every other day. After waiting for a long time we saw the cows coming. We started to get water from the borehole and putting in the buckets. When the cows were getting near I saw one fall on the ground. I got some water and run to the cow. It was breathing and I put water on its mouth. It could not drink the water. It was very tired to drink. I sat next to the cow and tried to put in the mouth with my hands. It was not drinking. After some time it stopped breathing. I stood up and cried for a long time. I was very sad.

The sight of dead cattle seemed to be most disturbing for the young boys who herded cattle as part of their daily responsibilities. The older adolescents remarked that it is better to have the cows slaughtered for meat or to sell them for money than to leave them to die.

According to the interviews conducted with the parents and guardians, most of the livestock belongs to wealthy families who do not stay in the village. Poor families simply look after the cattle. Wealthy livestock owners are reluctant to sell livestock at any time, including drought years, as cattle ownership is considered to be an important measure of status and wealth. However, this means that children and youth are often subject to witnessing the death of cattle as a direct result of drought.

Impact on Play Time and Socialization

Reduced play time and socialization during drought periods was a concern for all the young people. While the younger boys and girls (below the age of 13) complaining about little time to play, the older boys and girls (over the age of 14) complained about not having time to socialize with friends.

The main issue that emerged from their stories was related to the increased workload during times of drought. While the boys care for the livestock, most (ten)
of the young girls spend a lot of time fetching water for household use. One of the 10-year-old girls described their typical situation:

We have to find the boreholes with water and when we find them, there are people lining up for water. We also have to join the line. Sometimes we take a long time in the line. When we get home we put the water in a big bucket and we go again. We can’t play nicely because we fetch water many times.

Play time for children is crucial for their development. It is through play that they develop socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. Play is also developmentally appropriate for reducing stress in children (Bjorklund and Brown 1998; Bodrova and Leong 1999; Landreth 1993; Strickland 2001). According to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is the right of every child to have time set aside for active free play. Nonetheless, the right for active play is not fully exercised during drought periods.

Although the children and youth did not indicate any other impacts themselves, shortage of water as a result of drought can have serious impacts on their safety, protection, and education. Save the Children (2006) points out that collecting water can be extremely dangerous for children. Children, especially girls, must travel long distances in search of water. In many cases, the journey is made alone and unprotected, putting the children at risk of attack or even rape (Save the Children 2006).

**Drought Experiences of Children and Youth**

With the aid of picture drawing and story telling, the young participants were able to express their concerns and experiences with drought. They were able to provide information on their coping mechanisms and the challenges they faced during drought periods. At the time this study was being conducted (2005), Botswana was experiencing a drought, and 2005 was declared a “drought year” by the President of Botswana (Festus Mogae) (IRIN 2005). The boys and girls were aware of the drought and were in a position to share what they were experiencing at the time.

Listening to the boys and girls narrate stories and explain their drawings about their experiences provided great insight on various issues that make them vulnerable during drought periods. They expressed concerns about food security, pressure and tension in their household, being separated from family, loss of educational opportunities, and a lack of emotional support at the family level.

**Food Insecurity**

The older girls and boys (14 to 18 years old), who understood better the issues of food security, explained that even though food has always been expensive, it becomes more expensive during drought. They pointed out that during drought periods, their caregivers cannot afford food because they are poor and lack sufficient means to buy it. The inability to purchase food is recognized as a threat to food security and for this reason, they are grateful that they receive free food from the government.
However, the same group of girls and boys (14 to 18 years old) highlighted that their experiences during drought disasters were not significantly different from what they experience in non-drought years. In fact, they pointed out that during drought periods they are slightly better off as they get free food hand-outs from the government. The boys and girls across all ages made positive comments regarding food security in times of drought:

*I like it when there is a drought because we get free food at home* (boy, 10).

*My mother has less stress during drought because of free food. She does not worry about where our next meal will come from* (girl, 16).

*When there is drought my grandmother is happy because we will get free food* (girl, 11).

Apart from getting free food, some of the boys and girls revealed that their caregivers who have no formal employment also benefit from drought. The caregivers are provided with temporary employment through the labor-intensive relief program. For the children and youth, this is a good thing as their caregivers do not have to struggle looking for work as they do during non-drought periods. The caregivers can afford to buy them a few extra provisions. Some of the comments made include the following:

*I like it that my mother is working. She can now buy us bread and milk for our tea. Before she did not have a job. She used to go looking for day jobs everyday so she can buy us bread. Now she is okay because she will work for a longer time* (boy, 15).

*My mother is better when there is a drought because she can get work. She does not get paid much but it is better than when she has nothing. She can buy us bread* (girl, 18).

With such positive comments, the older girls and boys (14 to 18 years old) felt drought did not threaten their lives. They did not deny that drought affects them, but in terms of food security, they viewed the effects in a largely positive light. During non-drought years, they are faced with greater problems of food insecurity due to poverty and HIV/AIDS. Even though the focus of this study was on drought, the boys and girls felt that poverty and HIV/AIDS were of greater concern, and they wanted to express their thoughts about these issues and the enormous challenges that these “social disasters” bring to their village.

Because of the government subsidized food programs, children in Matsheng are fortunate not to suffer from starvation during drought disasters. While their vulnerability to food insecurity is greatly reduced, young people from neighboring countries in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa are not as fortunate. During drought disasters, children are constantly threatened by starvation, death, and chronic malnutrition due to decreased food security. During the 2005 drought, for example, 40 percent of the children in Swaziland suffered from chronic malnutrition.
In Malawi, more than 136,000 children were reported to be malnourished, with some facing the risk of starvation (Refugees International 2006). In Ethiopia during the 2002 – 2003 drought disaster, child mortality was high (De Waal, Taffesse and Carruth 2006). Botswana can therefore be commended for succeeding in preventing hunger among a portion of its children and youth.

**Pressure and Tension in the Household**

Most of the boys and girls (24) experienced pressure and tension within their households, which they largely attributed to the drought. They revealed that their caregivers seem stressed and are inattentive most of the time because they worry a lot. This happened during drought periods when their caregivers did not have the opportunity to participate in the labor-intensive relief program. In the interviews held with caregivers, adults revealed that they looked forward to the government employment during drought disasters. Some of the money they would earn would be saved and used during the times when they had no employment.

Not being able to take part in the labor-intensive relief program worried the caregivers. They worried about their children and how they would provide for them. During the discussions with the boys and girls, it was evident that they were able to pick up on the moods of their caregivers. Knowing that their caregivers were stressed was upsetting for the boys and girls, making them very sad and emotionally insecure. They felt they were a burden and blamed themselves for tension build up in the household. As a result, everyone in the household became stressed and felt anger towards each other. In Figures 4, 5 and 6, young participants shared their experiences in a household affected by pressure and tension as a result of stressed caregivers.

**Figure 4.** “When I feel sad I go to my room and cry. I cry because I don’t know what to do to make everything better” (girl, 11)
Figure 5. “Sometimes my mother shouts at me and my sisters for no reason [and] we all get sad” (boy, 10)

Figure 6. “When we are not talking to each other everyone sits quietly in different rooms in the house. In the bedroom, sitting room or kitchen. I always cry when we are not talking to each other” (girl, 10)
Some boys and girls explained that their parents or caregivers have borrowed money from other family members, and they failed to pay back the money. This usually results in arguments between the families, and family networks have been destroyed over these financial disputes. The young people expressed that it was very stressful for them as they could no longer approach those particular family members for help when they were faced with a problem. For example, one boy told the following story:

One afternoon while my uncle was visiting, my mother asked him for money. She told him she will pay it back when she gets some work to do. I asked my mother why she took money from uncle. She shouted at me. She did not get any work. She told my uncle that she can’t pay back the money. My uncle was angry and did not speak to my mother for a long time. Because he was angry with my mother I was scared of him (boy, 16).

The boys and girls from child-headed households also felt sad when their older siblings (also caregivers) experienced stress. For these boys and girls, it was evident in their expressions as they told their stories that they were deeply concerned about their older siblings, who had been cast into adult roles. The story that follows is narrated by a 13-year-old girl from a child-headed household:

I feel so sad that my sister left school to take care of us. Both our parents died. We are four children. I am not ashamed to say they died of AIDS. My sister is only 18 years old and she now has to be a mother to us. I am 13 years old, my brother is 11 years and the youngest is 8 years old. We try very hard to help each other but it is hard. The most difficult thing is getting food. We have to buy but we do not always have the money to buy it. My sister has to go out and do piece jobs in order to get money for our food. It is not very easy to get the jobs. Sometimes she does not get anything and we rely on friends and relatives to help us. But they can not help us all the time. It pains me to see my sister struggling for our sake. I wish she could go back to school. What will her future be like without school? She encourages us to go to school so we can have a better future but what about her? I want to be able to help my sister. I would like to get a job. I hope one day things will improve (girl, 13).

What is evident from the children and youth’s stories is that they experience stress, frustration, fear and worry. They are emotionally and psychologically affected by the pressure and tension built up in their households. When asked if they ever shared these experiences with anyone, most (24) of them said no. They complained that no one ever bothered to ask them, so they did not think anyone would be interested in their problems. Some said because they are children, no one would have time to listen to them. This is a particular concern, as many of the young people do not seem to have well-developed coping mechanisms for dealing with these levels of stress related to tension in the household.

Based on the interviews with the caregivers of the boys and girls, it was apparent that the caregivers generally did not have time to speak to their children.
the caregivers believed that the boys and girls did not have any worries since they are fed, dressed and sheltered. They also stated that if the children had any problems, they would tell them. Overall, the caregivers seemed almost totally unaware that their children were troubled by the stresses and strains that accompany the drought and economic insecurity of the family.

**Separation Fears**

Separation fears were also prevalent among the youth. Those in child-headed households were particularly concerned about being separated from their siblings during times of drought. The girls in child-headed households shared their fears of being separated from their siblings:

*When there is a drought I am scared that we will be separated and taken to different homes. I want to always be with my brother and sister. We love each other and we want to stay together even if there is a drought* (girl, 14).

*I know about the drought which is on. I am scared that my relatives will come and take us way. If they take us I know they will separate us. They tried to do it when my mother died. We like being together and help each other. We are a family. We have already lost our mother. We can’t lose each other* (girl, 14).

*Now that there is a drought people have been asking my brother to take me to an orphanage. I will not go there. I never want to stay with anyone else. I am happy with my brother. When I think of not being with my brother I cry* (girl, 13).

It was obvious that family was very important to the children and youth. Those who had lost their parents or other members of their immediate family were especially aware of the importance of family unity, and often expressed the strongest fears of being separated from remaining family members.

One 16-year-old girl who participated in the study was separated from both her mother and her sister when their mother had to leave the village to find work in the city. She said:

*My sister is staying with my aunt and I am staying with my uncle. My mother has gone away to work. I am scared and I feel sad and alone when I am at my uncle’s house. They treat me different. I miss being with my mother and sister. I cry all the time* (girl, 16).

According to the girl’s uncle, her mother got temporary employment through the labor-intensive relief program. The work was based in the city and therefore the mother had to migrate. The girl’s uncle went on to explain that this happens in a number of female-headed households. He did not seem to be concerned about his niece, as he commented that she would “be fine” with him. He also stated that children adapt quickly to such situations. While this may be the case for some
children, his comments showed that he was unaware that the girl was suffering as a result of being separated from her family and living in an unfamiliar environment.

Judging from the girls’ stories, it is evident that they would prefer to stay in their own homes despite the difficulties they may face during times of drought. When asked why they feared separation from family, various issues emerged. For example, they felt that staying in other people’s homes took away the freedom of being themselves. The youth were aware that they would have to abide by the living conditions of that particular household, even if they were not comfortable with the people or the rules. Some of the girls admitted that they did not want to go to other people’s homes and be separated from family because they were afraid that they would be mistreated or abused. In general, the participants indicated that they simply would feel more secure in their own homes, where they were familiar with the surroundings and comfortable. Interestingly, boys did not report fears of being separated from family, which may indicate that girls are simply more verbal about these issues, or that girls are more likely to be mistreated when separated from their family members. More research is necessary to further explore the gendered dimensions of family separation and the impacts for girls and boys.

Loss of Educational Opportunities
Throughout southern Africa, boys and girls are taken out of school during drought periods. They leave school to support their parents or take charge of household chores when their caregiver must migrate to the city in search of employment. This was also found to be the case in Matsheng. One-third of the sample (ten boys and girls) reported that they had been taken out of school to help with household chores when their caregivers had to go to work. Eight of the participants who had been taken out of school were in female-headed households and two were living with relatives.

Girls accounted for the majority (seven) of the young people taken out of school. This was because the workload for girls is heavier than that of boys. Girls are expected to fetch water, help with household chores and look after their siblings. The boys are only expected to look after animals. When asked to talk about how they felt about being taken out of school, the children and youth had the following to say:

_I like going to school. I want to be a doctor one day. I want to be rich and have a good job. I feel sad when I have to stay at home and do work. I get tired of doing work. If I don't go to school I will not get a nice job. I don't want to be poor like mother. My mother never went to school. That is why she don't have a job. When I grow up and have my own children they have everything they want. So I must go to school. I wish my mother can let me go to school_ (girl, 11).

_I cry when I see my friends going to school. My mother wants me to stay home and look after my baby brother because she has to go to work. She got the drought job from the government. She is happy to have the job but I am_
not happy to miss school. I know if I don’t go school I will not have a nice job. I don’t want to be poor (girl, 13).

I see my brother getting ready for school and I feel sad. I also want to go to school. Why do I have to do all the work at home? My brother can also work. It is not fair. I do all the work in the house and my brother is at school. Sometimes I sit in a room and cry because I don’t know what to do. I want to help my mother but I also need to go to school. If I don’t go to school my future will be poor (girl, 14).

I was very angry when my mother asked me to stay home and help her look after my two small brothers. Four and three years old. She found a temporary job and had to go to work. I like to help my mother but only if I don’t have to get out of school. By the time I go back I will have missed a lot. Growing up in a poor family just makes me want to go to school. I want to get a good job one day and provide for my family. School means a bright future (boy, 17).

Even though they clearly understood the importance of helping out with family responsibilities, it was evident that the children and youth were unhappy about being taken out of school. Attending school was important for all of them, as they recognized the importance of getting a good education as they dreamed of having a good job one day. Moreover, growing up in poor homes was a strong motivator for them to want to go to school. They want a better life in the future, for themselves and their future children, and they believe this will only happen if they go to school.

After expressing their feelings, the participants were asked if the caregivers were aware of how they felt. They all said no. They stated that the reason they did not tell the caregivers about their unhappiness with being out of school is because they did not want to seem ungrateful and disobedient. For example, one girl said:

My mother has been through a lot with me and my brother. She will do anything for us. So when she needs my help I have to be there for her (girl, 16).

Some of the girls indicated that they told their friends about how they felt. They said it helped them feel better to talk to their friends. While the girls talked to their friends about their feelings, the boys did not tell anyone. In fact, some of the boys revealed that they talked about their emotions and feelings for the first time in this study.

**Lack of Emotional Support within the Family**
The participants were asked to discuss emotional support at the family level. The five boys and girls from child-headed households felt they got enough family support from their brothers and sisters. They found it easy to speak and interact with the older brother or sister upon whom they also depended for protection and guidance.
The rest of the sample (25) expressed that they lacked emotional support at the family level. They were of the opinion that their caregivers did not have time for them. Most of the young people felt that their caregivers already had enough problems to deal with and therefore did not think it would be fair to burden them. The boys and girls felt sorry for their caregivers most of the time, and to a certain extent, felt some guilt for their caregivers’ problems. One boy remarked:

*My mother is constantly thinking about us. She tries her best to provide for us. We can see things are not easy. Sometimes she daydreams and we wonder what she is thinking about. I think if we were not in her life things would be better for her because she will not worry about us. Can you imagine if I troubled her with my concerns?* (boy, 16)

In general, the boys and girls were also of the opinion that being young put them at a disadvantage because the adults in their lives were not interested in what they had to say. They believed that their views and experiences did not matter to the adults. From early stages of their childhood, they were only taught to obey and respect their elders. Their caregivers had never asked them how they felt about drought or about their experiences during this period. They therefore felt no need to tell their caregivers if they did not ask.

Emerging from the above findings is that boys and girls experience a number of problems of which their caregivers are simply not aware. Children are largely dependent on the ability of their caregivers to protect them. However, the lack of communication between the young people and their caregivers makes this more challenging. It is difficult for caregivers to know how to intervene and to help the young people cope if their concerns and experiences are not shared. Indeed, adults often seemed unaware of the various ways that children and youth are affected by drought.

**Coping Mechanisms of Children and Youth**

Drought is a regular part of the lives of people of Botswana. Given this, children and youth have developed a number of coping mechanisms to deal with the effects of disaster, as described below.

**Acceptance**

Even young people have come to understand that drought is a dominant feature of Botswana’s climate. They have accepted drought as part of their climate and their daily lives because there is nothing they can do about it. The participants in this study felt that the best way they can cope with drought is to learn to live with it.

Youth over the age of 15 once again raised issues of poverty and HIV/AIDS. They expressed that drought would not be difficult to cope with if issues of poverty and HIV/AIDS were addressed. Poverty and HIV/AIDS were a major concern for them, in part because they saw these issues affecting the community’s ability to cope with drought. The youth over 15 years old also asserted that poverty and HIV/AIDS caused more harm than drought. When asked to elaborate, one girl indicated the following:
Drought comes and goes but poverty and HIV/AIDS are here to stay. I live in poverty and my sister and I have no mother because HIV/AIDS took her life. What can be more disturbing than that? I saw my mother suffer and that will never leave my mind. With good strategies like our government has, we can cope and live with drought. So drought is not a very big concern (girl, 17).

The findings indicate that youth aged 15 to 18 years old are very concerned about issues of poverty and HIV/AIDS. The point they often stressed during the interviews was that drought is not a major concern for them compared to poverty and HIV/AIDS, although they were able and willing to talk about mechanisms for coping with drought.

The Spiritual Coping Strategy

The majority (23) of the young people pointed out that they were raised in spiritual families, and therefore they strongly believed in prayer. They indicated that they were told to pray whenever they faced difficulties. In the case of drought disasters, children and youth said that prayer helped them cope better. When they experienced any difficulties during drought, they prayed for things to get better. Prayer for these boys and girls was seen as an important coping mechanism given that they were not able to share their troubles with their caregivers. They felt that through prayer, they could tell God everything and He would listen.

Government Intervention

The young people reported that through government intervention, they were able to cope with food insecurity. The government hands out food during drought periods, and feeding programs are also available at schools and clinics. Those who attend school are provided with a daily meal. The feeding programs have contributed significantly to low rates of malnutrition among children of poor households in Botswana.

Drinking and Smoking

Five of the young people turned to alcohol and smoking as a way to cope. They asserted that drinking and smoking helped them forget about their problems. When asked where they got money to buy alcohol and cigarettes, they indicated that sometimes they begged for it, at times they did odd jobs, and occasionally they tricked people into giving them money. When asked if their caregivers knew about their drinking and smoking, they all said no. They were aware that if their caregivers found out, they would be in serious trouble. These young people were obviously aware that this kind of behavior was not socially acceptable in their village.

Work

Nine of the young people (ages 14 to 18) reported that occasionally they went to the capital city of Gaborone to look for jobs. The jobs the youth had held included domestic work, washing cars, waitressing, and cleaning in shops and restaurants. With the money they earned, they were able to buy things that neither the
government nor their parents or guardians could give them, such as clothes, shoes and favorite foods.

**Sexual Favors**

No questions about sexual practices were asked, but some of the girls in the study voluntarily revealed that they had engaged in sexual activities as a way to earn money. Specifically, there were three cases where girls between the ages of 15 and 18 admitted to doing sexual favors for men in exchange for money. They also revealed that there were other girls of the same age who were doing the same. These girls were all orphans, two staying with their grandmothers and one staying alone supporting three siblings. All these girls had to drop out of school due to lack of support and money. They also indicated that they had younger siblings who needed their support. The two girls who were living with their grandmothers said that there was too much pressure on their grandmothers to take care of them and the other children in the household. All three of the girls felt responsible for their siblings and said they would do whatever it took to help support them. The girls noted that getting jobs is very difficult and that they were willing to perform sexual acts in order to make “quick money” to help sustain their families.

During the interviews, the girls were very emotional as they talked about their experiences. They also showed a lot of fear because they were unsure of what the future would hold for them. Below are stories told by the three girls:

*My grandmother takes care of five children. We are all orphans. My brother and I came to stay with her in 2003, after my mother passed away. My mother suffered from AIDS. My father passed away when we were very young. I was only three years old. I am now 16 years. My grandmother does not work and she is really struggling to take care of us. We all rely on her pension which is very little. The most difficult thing is keeping up with the food demands. Even though we get food handouts we ration it. During drought periods food is very expensive. We get tired of eating maize meal and we want nice food every now and then. I can’t put my grandmother under pressure to buy different foods. I tried to look for a proper job but I had no luck. My friend told me there was an easier way to getting money quickly and this involved doing sexual favors for men. I am not happy with what I do but at least I help my grandmother. She thinks I have a job. She has no idea what I do. If she found out, I think it would kill her. So I hope she never gets to know. I hope all this will end soon. I will not give up on looking for a proper job but for now this will do.* (girl, 16).

*I live with my grandmother and eight other children. Two of the children are my siblings, two belong to me, and the remaining four belong to my aunt who passed away in 1998. My mother died in 1996. My grandmother is having a very hard time. Poverty and AIDS have really caused suffering in our family. I left school so I can help my grandmother in the house. I started looking for work. I got frustrated and started making money from prostitution. My grandmother does not know this. I told her I was doing piece jobs. I ended up with two children of my own. I want to stop prostituting*
myself but sometimes I get very desperate and I do it. I do not know how else to cope (girl, 18).

I look after my two young brothers. My mother passed away this year (2005) because of AIDS. My brothers and sister go to a nearby school and I encourage them not to give up with school. It’s the only way they will get a good life in future. I provide for them. I have sold a few things in the house. Now we really don’t have much. During drought the government gives us food but after the drought is over then what? I failed to get a job and that is how I ended up doing sexual favors for men. Sometimes I go to the city [Gaborone]; there is a lot of money there. My brothers and sister do not know I am doing this for them. They can never know. If it was not for the money I am getting now, then we would not cope (girl, 17).

The above stories demonstrate that some youth have been placed in extremely difficult situations as they have tried to cope with the three intersecting disasters of drought, HIV/AIDS, and poverty. The girls who admitted to performing sexual acts for payment did so without the knowledge of their caregivers, and with the intent of helping their entire families.

What Can Be Done to Help the Children and Youth?

After discussing their thoughts and fears, the young people were asked what could be done to help them deal with their experiences. The children and youth felt that being able to have open communication with caregivers would make a difference. They would like their caregivers to show an interest in their feelings and felt that through open communication they would get more family support. This kind of support was evident in child-headed households as they were able to share their experiences. Indeed, based on observations of interactions and the story telling sessions, it seemed that youth who lived in child-headed households were closer and supported each other more consistently. This is possibly because these children are the most marginalized and must constantly struggle to survive, thus bringing the members of the household closer together. The strong and supportive relationships may also be due to the fact there is typically very little age gap between siblings in child-headed households. The closeness in age and similar life experiences may lead to stronger understanding between one another. The strength and resiliency of child-headed households certainly warrants further investigation.

The young people also stated that they would appreciate being asked for their opinion before decisions were made. In this case, they were specifically referring to decisions caregivers made regarding removing them from school during drought periods. One teenage girl said:

My mother can just ask me to get out of school without asking me how I feel. Why can’t she tell me first and then we can talk about it before she decides what to do. I am sure if she knew that I liked school she would not take me out. She would make other arrangements (girl, 17).
It was clear that the children and youth would like to be consulted before decisions affecting their lives are made. They added that they would like to be involved in all decision-making processes, not just at the family level but at the community level as well. They want to feel needed in their families and communities. There are examples of young people being involved in decision-making roles on committees in Zimbabwe (see McIvor and Myllnenen 2005), which led to the community accepting the children as human beings who could make meaningful contributions. A similar model could perhaps work in the village in Botswana.

Conclusion
This study examined the vulnerability of children and youth during drought disasters. Through participatory data gathering techniques, boys and girls were given the opportunity to voice their thoughts, fears, and experiences regarding drought disasters. Listening to the young people narrate stories and explain their drawings provided important insights regarding what they think and do during times of drought in Botswana.

One important finding from this research is that the needs of children and youth during drought go beyond physical survival. They also experience emotional distress during times of disaster, emerging from fears of being separated from family, the loss of educational opportunities, tensions and pressures within the household, a lack of emotional support at the family level, and increased workloads. Although many of the children and youth experience various fears and emotional insecurities during times of drought, most of the adults in their lives are not aware of the young people’s struggles. This is somewhat due to the fact that they do not tell the adults in their lives about these struggles, as they do not want to burden them. The adults also do not often ask about their feelings or emotions, as they assumed that the children and youth are “fine” and would “adapt” to the difficult circumstances that accompany drought disasters.

This research also demonstrates that children’s vulnerability varies by age, gender, family structure, and the role the child plays in the family. Girls bear heavier workloads related to water gathering during times of drought, and are subsequently more likely to be removed from school to bear this burden. Thus, the loss of educational opportunities, for girls in particular, is a serious concern for the young people of Botswana. Boys are more likely to participate in cattle herding activities, and as a result, are more likely to witness the death of livestock as a result of the drought. This has led to high levels of emotional distress among the boys. Children in child-headed households experience more fear of being separated from family, and these children also report receiving higher levels of support within their household.

Food insecurity during drought periods is not a concern for the boys and girls interviewed for this study, as food is provided through government intervention during times of drought. In addition to food delivered to the household, feeding programs are also made available at schools and clinics. The young people in Botswana are therefore not threatened by starvation during drought disasters. This
shows a level of commitment on the government’s part to honor the children’s right to survival.

The children and youth raised other important issues that were not explored in great detail as they were outside the scope of the study. Specifically, the young people were well aware of the devastating effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS, and they saw these as much greater threats than drought. They were able to see that the drought had at least some positive outcomes for their families (e.g., the government food programs, the possibility of work for adult caregivers), but they could see no positive outcomes of poverty or HIV/AIDS.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS will continue to heighten the vulnerability of children and youth in a number of countries around the world and especially in Africa. The consequences of the epidemic have been felt by some of the children and youth who participated in this study. The death of parents has left them with the heavy burden of managing households with limited or no resources. Given such conditions, they are missing the opportunity to go to school and experiencing additional burdens. Economic hardships are leading them to look for means of survival that increase their vulnerability, such as abuse of alcohol, sex work (which makes them vulnerable to HIV infection), and child labor.

**Recommendations**

This study represents a first attempt to learn from young people about their experiences during times of drought disaster in Botswana. More detailed research that ensures that children and youth’s voices are heard and respected is necessary to provide more specific descriptions of their vulnerabilities and capacities during times of crisis.

Various organizations such as USAID, UNICEF, Save the Children UK and the United Nations provide various recommendations that could be adopted to address vulnerabilities of children and youth resulting from disasters (see Jabry 2005; UNESCO 2000). Some of these recommendations can be applied here.

- Children and youth should be allowed to take part in decision making, especially on matters that affect them. This was well demonstrated in Zimbabwe with the formation of children’s feedback committees (see McIvor and Myllenen 2005). The same idea could be used in the Matsheng village in Botswana to address young people’s vulnerabilities resulting from drought disasters. Such committees allow children and youth the opportunity to voice their concerns and to participate more actively in community-level decision making processes.

- Public awareness about the specific vulnerabilities of children and youth is important. Communities cannot help them cope if they do not understand the stresses and insecurities that boys and girls experience. With greater awareness, adults will be in a better position to work with and empower young people to design activities aimed at helping them cope with drought and other social problems.
• Adult caregivers must encourage children and youth to speak about their thoughts and fears related to drought disasters and other challenges. More emotional support at the family level is also needed.

**Education**
• The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to basic education. Education is vital to the development of children and youth in a number of ways. It aids their psychosocial development, is vital for their future opportunities, and helps reduce their risks and vulnerabilities. Community members and parents need to be made aware of the importance and value of education. During drought disasters, some families do not see education as a priority, particularly for girls. When survival needs are deemed to be of higher priority, children and youth are taken out of school to attend to household duties. Awareness of the importance of education will motivate parents to encourage and keep children in school, even during times of extreme hardship.

**Children Affected by HIV/AIDS**
• With the emergence of HIV/AIDS there is an urgent need to strengthen the support that children and youth receive. Policies need to focus on the realities of young people who have been affected by HIV/AIDS to ensure that their caregivers have access to adequate resources to effectively cope and care for them.

• Children and youth from child-headed households did not seek external support due to fear of being separated. Staying together as family is very important for them. Orphaned brothers and sisters therefore need to remain together in their own communities under the care of an adult. Children and youth are better off with their families and in their communities of similar backgrounds. This helps them psychologically and provides them with a sense of security and belonging.

• Child-headed households also face a wide range of issues. The most pressing issues are related to survival needs and poverty. To help these children and youth cope more effectively, they will require the support of community volunteers and extended family members, as well as training in effective life skills.

• HIV/AIDS education needs to be strengthened in schools to make it easier for children and youth to understand what to expect when parents are infected with HIV/AIDS. Life skills training for the youth and children are also very important as it will help them cope with the realities in the household. Through HIV/AIDS education, children and youth should also be educated on how to support their peers who are affected by the disease. This will build a stronger support network and help alleviate stigma.
• One way to assist young people who are affected by HIV/AIDS to stay in school is by strengthening their economic status through the support of government and communities. With the needed support, children and youth will not need to drop out of school to earn income to support their families. Communities and extended family members can also assist with looking after younger siblings of child-headed households while the older children attend school. Efforts must be directed toward supporting education for child-headed households.

• Counseling and support should be provided for children and youth affected by HIV/AIDS. It was evident in the study that the young people had a very difficult time dealing with illness and death due to HIV/AIDS. This had an impact on their overall emotional well-being.

• Counseling should also be provided to parents infected with HIV/AIDS and other adult family members to prepare them for disclosure to the children and youth. This will help better prepare them for the imminent parental illness which will eventually lead to death. This would also enable the parents to start planning for their children’s future. The parents would have the opportunity to do the planning with their children, rather than leaving the children to cope in the aftermath of their death.

**Child Prostitution**

• In the study, three girls admitted to be involved in prostitution. This is not something new. Child prostitution is found in many developed and developing countries despite attempts to control the practice (see http://www.gvnet.com/childprostitution/index.html). Many young people end up in prostitution because of domestic problems or are forced into it by their families to earn money. Some young people become involved in this sort of exchange or trade at an opportunistic level. In the case of the girls in this study, they became involved in prostitution in order to survive. Community members and parents need to be educated and made aware of the issues facing youth, and of the ways that these issues may result in youth turning to prostitution out of desperation or hopelessness. This will encourage the community to build a strong support network for the children and youth to protect them from such activities.

• Campaigns are needed to educate the men who are exploiting young girls. They need to be educated about the rights of children and youth so as to protect them. These men need to understand that their actions are wrong and will have serious impacts (e.g., life-long emotional and physical problems, vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection) on the young people that they exploit. Men can make a difference by not taking part in child prostitution. In addition, law enforcement agencies must enforce strict no-tolerance policies with men who exploit girls.

• Communities, teachers, government and parents must all work together protect the children and youth. They need to be guided by the young
people’s best interests at all times, and should make every effort to reinforce their positive behavior and divert them from damaging behavior such as prostitution.

- Child-friendly programs need to be made available to provide the information, skills, counseling and services needed to protect children and youth from prostitution.

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