

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### "Child" headed households in Rwanda: challenges of definition and livelihood needs

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**“Child” Headed Households in  
Rwanda:  
Challenges of Definition  
and Livelihood Needs**

**M E MACLELLAN**

**2010**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
University's  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY**



## Abstract

This study is centred on the phenomenon of the child headed household in Rwanda. Such households have become an increasingly common occurrence in Sub-Saharan Africa, as a result, in particular, of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This has caused millions of children to become orphaned, and has brought about new coping mechanisms. The case of Rwanda, however, differs from the majority of countries which have experienced the emergence of these households. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that its child headed households are a legacy of two major factors, that of genocide as well as HIV/AIDS. The genocide of 1994 resulted in the death of an estimated 800,000 people, and prompted mass displacement and estrangement of the majority of the population.

There has been considerable interest in Rwanda's progress following the genocide on the part of academics, NGOs and development practitioners. Whilst some of this has focused on children and the vulnerable, the long term perspective has not been sufficiently considered. This research set out to address this by undertaking a longitudinal study over four years examining the child headed household in Rwanda. A core group of 42 households formed the sample, taken from urban, peri-urban, and rural areas and from a refugee camp.

In the first place the study explores the definition of "child headed household" and offers a typology of the phenomenon. Second, it offers an analysis based on field work of the livelihood challenges to the children within these households, including the basic survival needs of land and property inheritance, income generation and education. Finally the psychosocial needs of the child headed households for acceptance and participation within communities were considered.

This work considers the challenges to livelihood survival and the non-material needs of those in child headed households in Rwanda within the realities of daily life. It concludes that child headed households need to be redefined in terms of age, composition, and their particular narratives, and their variable composition is

an integral characteristic. The livelihood needs of CHHs are particularly challenged by the lack of opportunities for income generation, access to land rights and changes in household life, including revisions in programmes and policies. Furthermore the non-material needs of the children in these households are often unacknowledged; their stories frequently portray a lack of family and community support, marginalisation and isolation, which contests widely held and historic understandings of family and community.

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Central to this work, however, was the cooperation of child headed households in Rwanda; I am filled with admiration for these young people who graciously welcomed me, and were prepared to open their homes and hearts to me for this research; I thank them wholeheartedly and am humbled by their lives.

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## List of Acronyms

ACORD:	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BERA:	British Educational Research Association
CHH:	Child Headed Household
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DAFI:	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
DFID:	Department for International Development (UK Government)
FARG:	<i>Fond d'Assistance aux Rescapés du Génocide:</i> Fund for the victims of the genocide
FAWE:	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FDLR:	<i>Forces Democratiques de Liberation du Rwanda:</i> Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW:	Human Rights Watch
IDASA:	Institute for Democracy in Africa
IDS:	Institute of Development Studies
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
MDG:	Millennium Development Goal
MINALOC:	Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Social Affairs (Rwanda)
MINEDUC:	Ministry of Education, (Rwanda)
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR:	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OVC:	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
SOWC:	State of the World's Children
UN:	United Nations
UNAIDS:	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHABITAT:	United Nations Human Settlements Programme



UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund  
(Now called the United Nations Children's Fund)  
WB: World Bank  
WHO: World Health Organisation  
YWAM: Youth With a Mission

## **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

This thesis concerns an emergent household model known as “child headed households” in the East African country of Rwanda. These households are created through circumstance and necessity resulting from the situations prevalent in Rwandan society. In the same way Rwandan society is shaped by the households within it. Both the effect of society in forming these households and their effect on society are significant. The impact of events and their consequences, whether human induced or natural, intentional or accidental, leads to a certain fluidity of society. Whilst these events may appear at the outset to have an insignificant influence, the ripples of their effect extend further afield, moulding the lives of more people, creating new spaces and structures within society. Two events in particular have driven household change in Africa – war and AIDS.

Conflict and war are followed by social change which affects the lives of all citizens, but impacts particularly and in a profound way the lives of children (Machel 1996: UNICEF 2008). These hostilities not only prevent children from growing up in a peaceful society but prevent them from experiencing childhood as expected within their communities. Moreover the nature of conflict is such that the very networks which are present in societies to help and protect children are often destroyed, leaving an absence of safety nets and requiring the development of new coping strategies at a time when physical and emotional strengths are low, and when children are sometimes in vulnerable situations which can be life threatening (UNICEF 2008).

Displacement, estrangement from family members and violence are three significant elements which afflict societies in conflict. The ensuing societal rupture prevents a straightforward reintegration and reconciliation into communities when the conflict is over. The legacy of such conflict is played out in the lives of thousands and sometimes millions of individuals as well as on the international stage, and is not merely a temporary event, but colours and shapes the personalities, lives and livelihoods of those individuals on a long term basis.

In a similar fashion the effects of the AIDS pandemic have extended across all aspects of society, with analyses of the origins of the disease, causes, and the identification of the vulnerable being prominent in academic and media debates at a global level (Iliffe 2006; Barnett and Whiteside 2002; WHO 2008). However the relatively recent emergence of a debate on the broader consequences of the AIDS pandemic reveals that its impact extends into many different areas of society, including the economy, politics, education, national and livelihood security and other areas (Barnett and Whiteside 2002, De Waal 2003). When this focus is narrowed down to the community, household or individual scale the same effects can be felt as in the aftermath of violence and conflict. Here the catalyst event will not be as sudden as in conflict situations but may have involved a longer drawn out period of hardship and suffering. For households and communities this will have necessitated a measure of nursing, leading to a loss of assets, sold to fund health care and medication. Such impoverishment is exacerbated as the individual with AIDS is unable to earn money, cultivate land, or physically take care of the family (Barnett and Whiteside 2002; Singhal and Howard eds. 2003).

The number of people dying from AIDS and, in the Rwandan context, from conflict together with AIDS has brought with it grave consequences for all aspects of society (or the notion of “social life” in the African context, given the heterogeneity of African societies - however for the purposes of this work termed “society”). An example of this is manifested in the problems faced by communities where normal coping strategies have broken down. The traditional safety net of relatives taking in children whose parents have died has fragmented and ceased to provide the support that was previously available. Whilst extended family support networks which had traditionally been a part of African societies attempted to cope with higher than normal death rates of adults, the death rate was greatly exceeding the capacity of these communities to fulfil that role (Barnett and Whiteside 2002; Foster *et al.* 1997). As parents were dying, responsibility for their children would pass to grandparents in the first instance, and as often this generation too would pass away due to the epidemic, care would be handed over to aunts and uncles. However, in some areas the infection

has been so devastating that extended families can no longer cope. Families are obliged to foster or adopt more and more orphans as the infection rate increases, and could no longer cope, with little room and few resources to care for them in their homes. The provision of orphanages was an initial solution, but this system was not the first choice of most governments, where care in the community was the preferred option (Oleke, *et al.* 2007; Siaens *et al.* 2003; MINALOC 2003). One consequence of this disaster was that children (usually boys) would run away to live on the streets, another significant consequence was the establishment of the “Child Headed Household” (also referred to in this thesis as CHH), formed when some children made the decision to live with one another in a single unit, or were obliged to, for reasons of practicality, safety and security, without a competent adult present.

As this pattern of behaviour was establishing itself in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa such as Uganda, Zimbabwe and Zambia, countries with extremely high rates of AIDS infection, the same phenomenon was occurring in Rwanda. However there was a unique difference in the reasons for the formation of these households in Rwanda; the convergence of the phenomena of both war, including genocide, and AIDS resulted in family safety nets breaking down completely, with high numbers of orphans without family to support them. Consequently both catalysts have been important factors for the spatial and social reordering of the frameworks of society, including the emergence of large numbers of CHHs.

Within the context of these distinct disasters, then, the nature of society has seen a change. This dual attack on communities and society has provoked a number of transformations in Rwanda, a country which has been riven with ethnic conflict and tensions for many decades (Prunier 1995) challenging the views of the “singular” society here as earlier. Whilst the AIDS pandemic has caused the fragmenting of social support networks in other countries with high infection rates, such as Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa (Foster 2000; Luzze 2002; Chizororo 2007), the ethnic paradigm in the Rwandan case provides another dimension which can prevent “normal” social expectations from being fulfilled.

Although there had been a rise in the number of orphans in Rwanda in the early 1990s due mainly to AIDS, the genocide of 1994, which left 1 million people dead, half under 18 years, also bequeathed a bitter legacy to the structure and institution of the family, decimating and dislocating families (Prunier 1995; ACORD 2001). These massacres which took place over a period of three months meant that many children lost parents and other family members.<sup>1</sup> During the course of the genocide, attempts to flee the killing, and fear of the forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front resulted in a mass displacement of the population, and in the chaos which followed, estrangement of families. The exodus of Rwandans into refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire prompted the breakdown of contact and relationships, as well as exacerbating the traumas that had so recently affected the lives of all Rwandans. The impact of witnessing the brutal murder of a parent or sibling would have long lasting effects upon the lives of all. In the immediate post-genocide period, the reality of the vast number of orphaned children, displaced children, and those with no known relative motivated many agencies to set up support programmes in an attempt to reunite these children with surviving family members (ACORD 2001; Rakita *et al.* 2003).

Thus one of the significant problems to emerge out of the 1994 conflict was a change in the structure and composition of the family. Furthermore, many women, widowed and raped during the genocide, would be found to have contracted HIV/AIDS (Rakita *et al.* 2003). The extreme poverty and lack of resources, coupled with the huge task of rebuilding the nation, meant that there was no means of providing long-term healthcare for these women. As a result the double burden of conflict and AIDS wreaked havoc on the children of Rwanda, as their carers (often their one remaining parent) slowly died, leaving them to be absorbed by extended family, put in to orphanages or to remain as a unit – the creation of child headed households (CHH). The high rate of HIV infection among the adult population continues to contribute to growing numbers of children living in households without adult support.

This progression led to the emerging realisation that not only were there large and increasing numbers of children living in such units, but their ability to cope

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<sup>1</sup> Estimates of numbers killed have ranged from 800,000 to 2 million.

and survive, to gain livelihoods was constantly compromised. Access to basic livelihood needs such as shelter, education, food, health care, and income generating activities have all been recognised as major challenges within CHHs, and the work of NGOs and governments in recognising and providing support in this area has been documented (Luzze 2002).

Any close investigation of the CHHs of Rwanda necessitates a broader examination of the child headed household as a concept. A tension between the definitions offered by various agencies and their interpretation at local, national and international level is apparent. This is further complicated by the variations in understanding of each of the individual elements making up the “child headed household”. Differing usage by agencies, governments and academics exposes the need for a defining typology, both for clarity of understanding and also with a view to determining the scale of the problem to be addressed by policymakers and agency support programmes. These definitions will be considered in broad terms as well as in the light of the child headed household in Rwanda. Leaving aside the contrasting definitional limits (age and living parent status) on the concept of “orphan” imposed by international conventions, national government and agencies, the first question in this study is how the **child** is perceived and conceptualised. An examination of the theorisation of childhood, then, will offer a more insightful and appropriate landscape on which to base the concept of the child headed household. This leads to a focus on national and local notions of the child and childhood.

Therefore the first aim of the thesis will be to consider what constitutes a child headed households, and will explore the effectiveness of those definitions and their relevance to the concept today. In addition it will offer a more appropriate model and definition of the child headed household.

A review of the literature published is followed by an examination of these concepts and will establish a practical definition in the light of the findings of the research.

Secondly the thesis will examine the basic livelihood survival needs of child headed households in Rwanda. This comprises an assessment of the material

needs of children in these households, with a particular focus on access to education, income generation and land ownership and inheritance. This will include an analysis of the factors which enable the children to meet these needs and those which prevent them from doing so.

Thirdly the research looks at the non-material needs of those in the child headed household; these psychosocial needs are examined from the perspectives of safety and belonging in society. The study will explore the extent to which these needs are recognised by communities, NGOs and government.

Within these aims and with the benefit of a longitudinal perspective, the composition of the household and the effects of external impacts on the household are considered. The experiences and capabilities of the household to withstand changes and challenges and its resilience will be investigated. At the same time reference is made to the relevant aid programmes involved within the sample group. An assessment of inclusion and community relationships in post conflict Rwanda is also addressed, with an examination of the level of integration of child headed households into the community over time.

These aims are achieved by means of a longitudinal study covering four years. The methodology focuses on behavioural and ethnographic perspectives, with consideration of appropriate political and economic spaces. The challenges of engaging in research with children, in particular those who are performing adult roles are also addressed and examined in the Methodology chapter. The study employs primarily a qualitative approach, using semi structured interviews, unstructured interviews and participant observation as key tools.

The structure of the thesis is illustrated in Figure 1.1, indicating the introductory chapter which offers a brief overview of the background to the research and the academic space which the research fills. This leads on to a chapter which presents a narrative of the political, historical and social background to the establishment of the child headed household in Rwanda thus locating it within its historical and spatial setting. A discussion of the research methods employed follows this chapter, which includes ethical and ethnic challenges encountered in the realisation of the work.

The literature review chapter then presents an examination of current work in the field, academic and NGO reports, and places the research within the academic space. The chapter offers a contextual analysis of the child headed household, and presents a narrative of the child headed household in Rwanda through the lenses of genocide and AIDS.

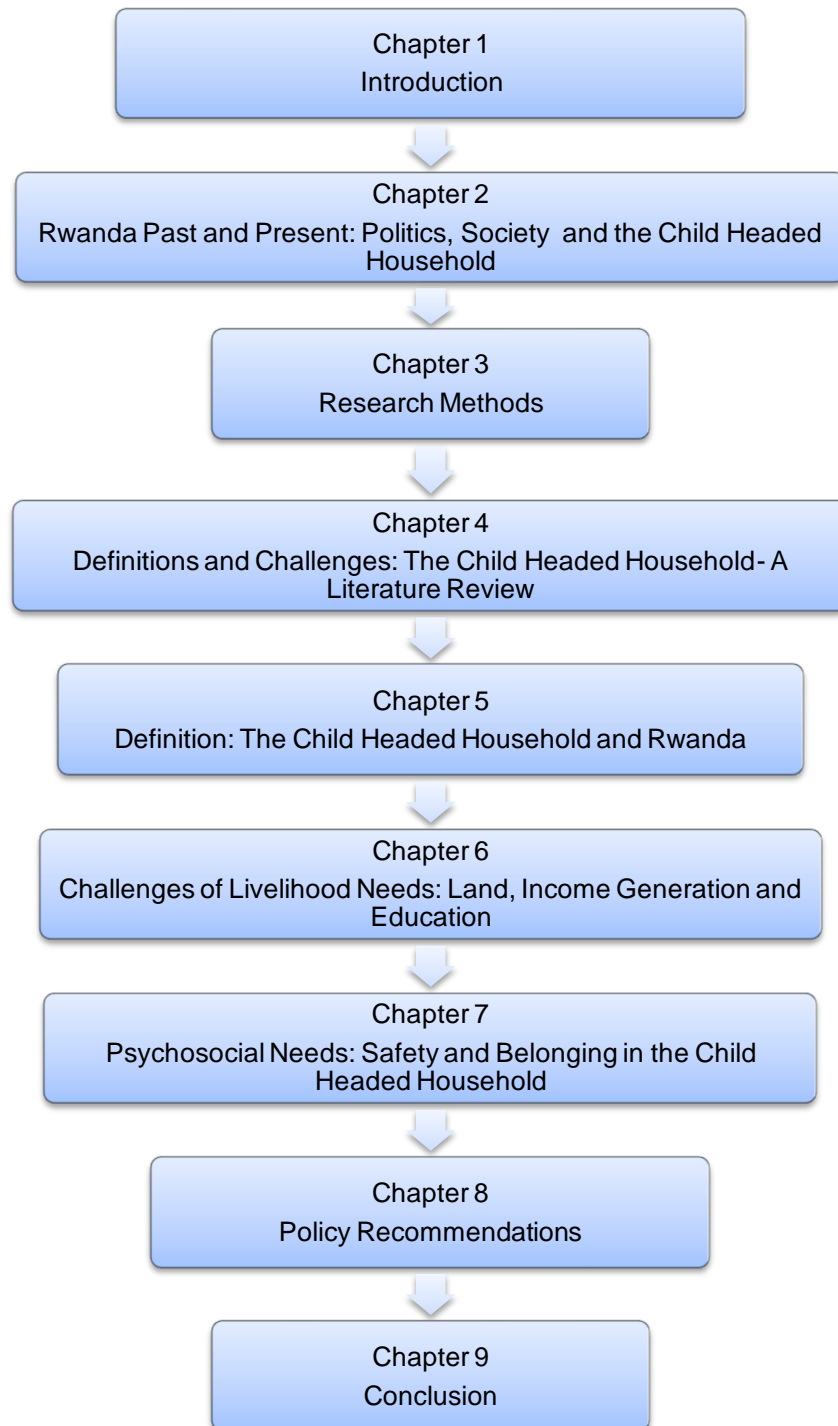
Closely linked to and following the literature review is a chapter which responds to the first aim of the thesis; an interrogation of the child headed household: a definition and a conceptual model. This examines the findings and answers the question “What is a child headed household?”

The following two chapters comprise the presentation of data and analysis of the two further foci of this research. The first (Chapter 6) offers an examination of the material livelihood needs of the CHH, in particular considering the issues of land inheritance and ownership, income generation, and education, assessing the realities of meeting livelihood needs, coping strategies, and the effects of changes in circumstances on the household.

Chapter 7 comprises an examination of the psychosocial perspectives and challenges faced by those in child headed households, which have particular resonance in the Rwandan context – safety and belonging, the place and role of these children in a post conflict society.

This is followed by a brief chapter which offers some perspective on recommendations emerging from the findings. This includes suggestions of initiatives which might contribute to a more accurate concept of the CHH, and lead to improved livelihood strategies and management, both material and non material. However there is an acknowledgment that socio-political and economic factors can impede strategies, and that vision, policy and implementation are not always realised.



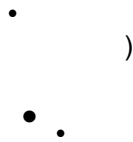


**Figure 1.1: Structure of thesis**

Finally the thesis concludes with a chapter which discusses the degree to which the aims of the study have been achieved, the challenges of the methods employed, and the results and any considerations to be made in the light of the

findings. Furthermore, it places the research within its specific space of learning, for consideration in relation to other studies and related material.

The child headed household in Rwanda is a distinct phenomenon borne out of conflict and HIV/AIDS and stands today as an important focus of study due to the problems of its definition, the livelihood challenges faced by its children, and the post-conflict society in which it exists. In addition it considers the legacy of ethnic tension which shapes the integration and position of these households in the Rwanda of today. This first close examination of Rwandan child headed households reveals the coping strategies, needs and abilities to adapt and survive both within the reality of the present and with a perspective over the period since their establishment, in some cases since the conflict of 1994.



**Figure 1.2: Rwanda with interview locations**  
**Source: about.com:geography 2008; author**

**Figure 1.3: Child headed households' locations: Kigali**  
**Source: Google map: travelpod: author**

## **Chapter 2: RWANDA PAST AND PRESENT: POLITICS, SOCIETY AND THE CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLD**

The child headed household in Rwanda first came to prominent attention in the years following the genocide of 1994 that marked the final and most violent stage of the civil war between the Hutu controlled government and the Tutsi rebels. Child headed households can be directly linked to the genocide, in particular the resulting loss of life and the consequences of the social disruption which followed in its wake. However the extreme ethnic violence was not the only primary cause of the emergence of these households. The devastating effect of the AIDS pandemic has also played a role in their creation in Rwanda. There is therefore a discourse to be undertaken on the duality of the origins of the CHH, chronology and catalysts, and a consideration of the CHH in Rwanda against a background of the CHH elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa. The Rwandan case serves as a contrast to this same phenomenon occurring in other countries of Sub Saharan Africa, where the main feature in their establishment is the single cause of AIDS. Thus the child headed household in Rwanda has to be considered through the lenses of genocide and AIDS.

Anecdotal evidence suggests small numbers of child headed households existing in urban areas of Rwanda in the years immediately before the genocide of 1994. These were the result of the deaths of parents and other family members from AIDS, and NGOs began to encounter such families in need of support, the Rwanda Orphans Project (Inkuru Nziza) being one. The high number of orphans, coupled with a lack of human and practical resources, meant that many children were not able to be cared for by family members. To avoid institutionalisation, Inkuru Nziza encouraged the children to remain together with support from the project. The years preceding the genocide were riven with conflict as the civil war gained pace leading up to the peace talks in 1993 in Arusha. This restricted movement within the country and intensified the challenges of poverty and insecurity which were befalling the population.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the changing shape of Rwandan society this chapter will examine Rwanda's history; the causes and source of the genocide and its consequences, as well as the impact of the AIDS pandemic. This will aim to contextualise the child headed household and in so doing locate it against the background of conflict and a fragmented nation.

## 2.1 Background

When accounts of Rwanda and its recent history are considered and discussed, the dominant perspective in the perceptions of readers and observers is that of ethnicity, and significantly, ethnic conflict. This however is a simplification of a complex history. The emergence and intensification of ethnic identity is a relatively recent construct in the Rwandan narrative. Furthermore its story is distinguished by changing and contrasting attitudes and policies, controlled by the leaders of the country at the time, their ideologies and intents.

In pre-colonial times the inhabitants of Rwanda comprised three groups of people who were primarily distinguished not by any difference in their customs and language but by their social roles in society - as herders, cultivators or hunters (Survivors Fund 2008). Some time later political dominance was achieved by Tutsis over central Rwanda and eventually it was understood that those who achieved a ruling class status were considered "Tutsi "and if they did not reach this, "Hutu". There was much movement between these groups but in fact both Tutsis and Hutus belonged to the main clan groupings. At this time the clan was the main social identification, as opposed to the ethnic group. There continued to be a sharing of language and culture between Hutu and Tutsi, and the practice of intermarriage, with any distinctions between the groups focused on class and politics rather than ethnicity. Developing patron-client relationships served to entrench these social frameworks, with payment for services given in the form of cattle. Both Tutsis and Hutus were therefore cattle owners, but the number of cattle denoted the status of the individual (Survivors Fund 2008).

When during the 19<sup>th</sup> century King Rwabuguri founded the unified state of what is now Rwanda, he selected primarily Tutsis as his leaders, which began to reinforce their positions as individuals with power within the country (Prunier 1995). Thus the labels of Tutsi and Hutu at this stage of Rwanda's history were indicative of politics (clan and interclan movements), their occupation - whether cattle keepers or earning cattle, and their blood line - that is being born into a family of cattle owners, or by marrying into one.

Prunier (1995) in his substantial work on the genocide, and in connection with land distribution disputes in pre-colonial times, emphasises this: -"What is vital for our purpose of understanding the reasons for the tragic split which led to the present Rwandese ultra-violence is the fact that at the time *it was a centre versus periphery affair and not one of Tutsi versus Hutu*" (my italics, Prunier 1995: 21).<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Tutsi elite which controlled the centre of Rwanda were keen to emphasize the significance of physical stature; their height and facial features were presented as evidence of superiority. Yet in spite of this, these attributes were not the determinants which granted an individual the right to enter into this elite grouping, but their material wealth. The advent of the colonial regime, however, was to herald a fossilizing of this existent social structure, which would result in severe and long lasting consequences for the region.

At the Berlin Conference of 1885, when European empires divided up Africa under their control, Rwanda was assigned to Germany. After the First World War, Germany's defeat led to Rwanda being handed over to Belgium in 1918. Both of these rulers governed the country through the existing Tutsi elite, finding it most useful to administer through this group which was compliant and keen to maximize material wealth and privilege. Their cooperation awarded them increasing powers over the Hutu population. The colonial powers attempted to validate this by promoting the theory that the Tutsi were more like Europeans,

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<sup>2</sup> These disputes were in relation to the increase of power given to the King, the gradual assimilation of areas within a single entity, closer in structure to the country today, and most importantly the granting of land within patron-client frameworks and the subsequent changes in relationships and land holding, landowning and working practices.

and exaggerated the physical differences between the Tutsi patron class, elegant and tall, and their Hutu clients who carried out the physical work for their patrons (Survivors Fund 2008).

The introduction by the Belgians of compulsory identity cards in 1933 served to cement these differences, creating fissures of ethnicity within society, and setting in motion new dynamics and alignments which would take root very rapidly within the population. These identity cards forced all Rwandans into one of the three ethnic groups, and categorized them according to physical characteristics, wealth and social status (Survivors Fund 2008). These ethnic ascriptions were permanent and unchangeable – no possibility existed any longer to move from one group to another through the ownership of cattle. External actors and governments promoted this idea that origin, physical features and class were the differences between Hutu and Tutsi even though they shared the same traditions, faith and language. The Tutsis were rewarded for their loyalty to the colonisers by being given powers over the majority Hutu and the Twa group, and in time all indigenous governances and structures were removed to be replaced by those imposed by the Belgians. This included the introduction of forced labour and the end of the mutually beneficial patron-client relationships of the past (Prunier 1996; Gendercide 2008). Thus was ethnicity and ethnic antagonism introduced into the country. It was this same antagonism that was to lead to the civil war and the genocide.

As independence movements arose across much of Africa in the late 1950s, political parties were established in Rwanda along ethnic lines, because these were the interest lines and main economic and social faultlines in the society. The Belgians began to realise that when Independence came, and with it elections, and an inevitable Hutu government representing the majority in the country that their own influence and interests would be limited. Hence they changed their allegiance to the Hutus. Thus when a Hutu uprising followed the death of the Tutsi monarch in 1959 they did little to protect the Tutsi population (Keane 1995).

This rebellion resulted in a genocide-like murder of thousands of Tutsi and heralded the beginning of an exodus of the Tutsi population into Uganda and other neighbouring countries to escape violence and discrimination. This migration was to number over 200,000 in Uganda alone, and those who were young children at the time of this exile in 1959 would constitute a major part of the rebellion led by the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front). This fighting force in the 1990s was trained by the experience of fighting alongside Yoweri Museveni during the Ugandan civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s (Dowden 2008: 233).

The first independent election of Rwanda was won by Grégoire Kayibanda's Parmehutu party in 1961 which led to Rwanda's independence in 1962. Having abolished the Tutsi monarchy, the governing powers proceeded to discriminate against Tutsis in public and political arenas, and sporadic violence led to many Tutsis being attacked and killed in the following years. When Kayibanda was removed from power by a coup led by Juvénal Habyarimana in 1973, declarations of sympathy with the Tutsi cause made by the new leader proved false as attacks continued, including the massacre of thousands of Tutsi students in 1973 (Prunier 1995).

The government employed ethnicity as a tool to maintain power at all costs, continuing to favour their supporters in the North (Habyarimana's homeland) without improving the lives of the peasants elsewhere, whom they encouraged to blame the Tutsis for their continuing poverty (Survivors Fund 2008). Economic problems, alongside the murmurings by donors and external agencies involved in Rwanda of the need for accountable democratic processes, served as a warning to the government and elite that the structures which maintained their power and wealthy lifestyles were in danger of being challenged.

When in 1990 the RPF invaded Rwanda, the President and his political party, the MRND (*Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement*) took advantage of the growing dissatisfaction in the country to speak of it in terms of an ethnic nature, and in forceful and inflammatory terms. The government, prefiguring the propaganda of the genocide, portrayed the Tutsi as a group to be



feared and hated, despite their lack of political power in the country. Keane (1995: 23) states that at this time there were very few Tutsis in key positions - two members of parliament, one town mayor and one ambassador across the whole country, and so the idea that Tutsis would still be considered a “privileged elite” within the country was a fallacy. However they did have significant control of economic sources such as employment. Concern within the international community led to several attempts at ceasefires and agreements which the government did not adhere to (Prunier 1995). As attacks within Rwanda on Tutsis continued, and with the RPF growing in strength, Habyarimana was forced into a position of agreeing to multi-party politics and eventually participation in peace talks, despite strong support for his regime on the part of the French government. These developments were to result in the Arusha Peace Accords of 1993. These agreements would include the establishment of a power sharing structure within government, a reduction in presidential powers and the integration of the RPF into the armed forces.

For the many Hutus nurtured by Habyarimana’s regime, this was an inauspicious prospect, as they saw power and privilege seeping away. On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1994, after signing the peace agreement in Dar es Salaam, President Habyarimana was returning to Kigali, when his plane was shot down on approach to landing, killing everyone on board. Blame has been put at several quarters for this act, with no firm admissions ever being made. At the time the account that the Hutu president had been killed by Tutsi rebels was widely believed, inflaming ethnic hatred and reinforcing prejudice that enabled those who had previously plotted a genocide of Tutsis to readily mobilise the population to carry out the massacre of an estimated 1 million people in 100 days (Prunier 1996; Keane 1995).

## 2.2 The Course of the Genocide

The killing of prominent Tutsis and moderate Hutus began immediately, facilitated by the use of lists and registers of names of key individuals, held by administrative officers. Road blocks were set up and the *interahamwe* militia and Presidential guards sought out and killed those who were considered enemies.

Many of the massacres were carried out using the “*panga*”, a machete like tool. UN forces which were present in the country to observe the Arusha Peace Accords were forbidden to intervene in the violence since their mandate was solely to monitor the situation. On April 21<sup>st</sup> ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed, and as a consequence the UN made the decision to reduce its peacekeeping force in the country from 2,500 to 200. During this time, the killings were continuing unabated, with little active response on the international stage. All Hutus were exhorted to take part in killing their Tutsi neighbours and relatives, and the use of the media, in particular the radio, to inform and incite murder has been well documented (Prunier, 1996; Li, 2004; Gourevitch, 2000). “The graves are only half empty; who will help us fill them?” was a reported comment by an announcer on RTLM (*Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines*) (Li, 2004:9); references to “work” as an euphemism for killing were frequent, for example, the question would be asked “have you started work today?”, and mentions of ‘cockroaches’ (*inyenzi*) were made, understood as the Tutsi (Li, 2004: 12).

At the end of April, the crisis was discussed by the United Nations Security Council, which refused to categorise it as “genocide”, thus avoiding the necessity of intervention (Rakita *et al.* 2003). The killings continued. In the middle of May, the UN opted to send a primarily African group of police and military personnel, numbering 6,800, as a defence force protecting the civilian population, although due to disagreements concerning practical issues such as the provision of equipment and the funding of the exercise their deployment was delayed. By this time there was an acknowledgement by the Security Council that acts of genocide may have occurred in Rwanda (Keane 1995).

RPF troops had steadily been moving towards Kigali since the killings began and on July 17<sup>th</sup> they reached the capital, signaling an end to the massacres.

The three months which had elapsed since the start of the genocide had been characterised by death and violence, dislocation and loss. As the killings continued, families fled their homes in one of the largest refugee movements of all time (Keane 1995). Lines of refugees making their way to camps in Zaire,

Tanzania, Burundi or to Uganda were seen daily in media images, and among these migrants were *interahamwe* and Hutu extremists, who found themselves among their Tutsi neighbours again in the camps, and continued their campaign of intimidation and murder. Finally it was the visible proof of the refugee crisis which moved the international community into action.<sup>3</sup>

The humanitarian crisis which ensued was to trigger long lasting practical, physical and emotional consequences throughout the whole of the region, and on an international, national, community and individual level. Numbers of refugees were said to have reached 2 million (Layika 1996), and attempts to encourage the safe return of the refugees were to take several years. At the same time, the RPF victory was the signal for refugees from the previous exodus in 1959 and the early 1970s to return to Rwanda. Whilst this was welcomed by the interim government, it was not without problems due to the scarcity of land and the problems of land inheritance and ownership structures (Berkeley 2001; HRW 2004).

As international agencies, NGOs and foreign governments contributed to the post-conflict need for humanitarian and longer term strategic assistance in Rwanda, it became clear that during the emergency many children had been separated from parents and other family members while others were sick or injured. Furthermore, and with more serious implications for long term need, was the finding that a significant number of children had been orphaned during the conflict.

As the refugees and displaced returned over the next two years to their homeland it became clear that the speed and magnitude of the genocide was changing the demographic composition of Rwandan society, which in turn could distort and break down traditional coping mechanisms and safety nets. Thus out of the

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of the genocide, see Prunier G "The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide", 1995, Hurst & Co.

political realm in Rwanda came the social disruption that would lead to the creation of new household structures to cope with the effects of the sudden loss of so many people. Against this backdrop of chaos, the plight of the vulnerable stands out in relief, and children caring for children became a solution to the changing social landscape.

### 2.3 Consequences and Demography

The momentum which led some children to take the decision to live together as siblings, friends or arbitrary groups of individuals was fuelled by many and various factors. However the historical and socio-cultural context of children without adult carers in Sub Saharan Africa is in itself considered an anathema by many. The customary roles and responsibilities of the extended family or kin within African societies incorporated an understanding and pattern of behaviour which accepted the care of the orphaned children of family members - as affirmed in the African saying “there is no word for orphan in Africa” (Roalkvam 2005; Foster 1997). The tradition of aunts or uncles caring for these children functioned as a safety net for the community. However in the case of high mortality levels, whether human made or natural, the safety net is pushed to its limits. In times of conflict or with high death rates due to illness, society arrives at a “tipping point” of capacity, where it is no longer able to carry out the functions and responsibilities historically expected of it.

In the case of Rwanda, these catalysts typically resulted in a loss of those individuals who would naturally be the economically active and caregivers within societies, normally aged between 15 and 49 years of age. Total figures for numbers of deaths are disputed, but it has generally been confirmed that between 800,000 and 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the 100 days of the genocide from April 6<sup>th</sup> to July 16<sup>th</sup> 1994 (UN 2006; Rwanda Government).<sup>4</sup> The high number of deaths, combined with the numbers of refugees and the displaced contributed to a loss of 33.24 per cent of the

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<sup>4</sup> There is a discrepancy between the numbers of those killed as the UN estimates the number at 800,000 while the Rwandan government’s total is 1,071,000

population in 1994 (IMF 2009; Indexmundi 2009). A recent report by the Student Genocide Survivors organisation (AERG) has suggested that the UN and the Rwandan government's assessments of the number of deaths are underestimated, with the new figure of 1,952,078 being proposed, following research which was carried out in 340 genocide memorial sites and various cemeteries in Rwanda. Even so, this new total does not include those bodies which were thrown into rivers and lakes, or which were burnt (Musoni 2008). This suggests that the number of people killed in the genocide might be far higher than that which was originally believed. Rakita *et al.* (2003) attest that by the end of April half of the Tutsi population of Rwanda had been killed. Verwimp has suggested that overall, 75 per cent of the ethnic Tutsi population was killed (2004: 233).

The targeting strategy for the killings was a considered objective by government forces and the *interahamwe* (literally “those who attack/stand together”, the unofficial militia group) to attack Tutsi men as the primary focus of the killings in the first weeks, with some commanders forbidding their soldiers to kill women and children. However as the genocide continued into May, women and children began to be attacked, and Rakita *et al.* (2003). suggests this was part of a coordinated national plan, since the attacks took place concurrently in various parts of the country. El-Bushra (2000) found that at the turn of the millennium 70 per cent of Rwanda's population was female. This corroborates the findings that males were targeted before females during the genocide. More recent statistics reveal that there are ten times as many widows as widowers in the country (Rwandan Census 2008).

The landscape of demographics for Rwanda today shows a differential in the male to female ratio overall but in the 35 year to 65 year age group there are over 400,000 more females (Hirondelle 2008). Differentials in the sex ratio of 91 males to 100 females have been recorded, due to the genocide (pre-genocide figures were at 96 to 100) ((Rwanda Government 2003). The movement of returnees to the country after the genocide will have mitigated the effects

somewhat, but since both males and females returned, its impact will have been minimal.

El-Bushra explores this demographic imbalance through its effect on marriages. A large number of widows and younger women in Rwanda face limited potential for marriage and her research found that polygamy although not legal was increasingly an option considered (El-Bushra 2000: 74).

Lentin (1997) adds another aspect to the dimension of gender within the context of the genocide in Rwanda, contending that the depiction of women within this catastrophe as the victims denies the evidence that some women were also the perpetrators. In attesting that the primary target of the genocide was Tutsi men, there is evidence presented by Leggat-Smith (1995) which discloses the role played by women of both ethnicities. Women of every social class took part in the killings, and there is evidence that Tutsi women engaged in the retaliatory killing of Hutus. The absence of such information from the public and international debate on the genocide, Lentin claims, is related to the interpretation of women as the victims of the genocide (Lentin 1997). Leggat-Smith, (1995), found that many of the female perpetrators had not been charged with genocide crimes and were living within their own communities or outside Rwanda.

Survivors of the genocide are numbered at 309, 368 (2008 estimates, Census Rwanda 2008)<sup>5</sup>. 66 per cent of survivors are between 14 and 35 years of age; with 93,855 less than 20 years old. There are ten times more widows among the survivors than widowers (Hirondelle 2008). According to the census, of the total numbers of survivors, more than half are single, 30 per cent married and 12 per cent widowed. IBUKA, an umbrella body of survivors' organisations, has estimated the number to be nearly 400,000 (Survivors Fund 2008).

The use of rape as a weapon of war was extensive during the genocide, with estimates of more than 67 per cent of women raped nationwide (Amnesty

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<sup>5</sup> A "survivor" is defined as an individual who was targeted during the genocide because of his or her ethnic or political situation.

International 2004). Other sources claim that between 100,000 and 250,000 women were raped during the three months of the duration of the genocide (UN 2006). Further research reveals that in certain regions almost all adult and adolescent women who were not killed were raped. In Kigali it is thought that this affected most of the women between 13 and 50 years of age (Layika 1996). One of the many consequences of rape is its influence on the ethnic structure of the following generation, constituting a deliberate attempt to alter the proportion of one ethnic group within a society.

## 2.4 The Impact of AIDS

For all the horrors of the war that left so many child headed households there was in addition yet another tragic cause. Though on a smaller scale, the AIDS pandemic had begun. AIDS had been recognised at an early stage in Rwanda, and was identified amongst the population in the 1980s in Kigali (Iliffe, 2006; Barnett & Whiteside, 2002) and its impact on families was beginning to be acknowledged. An examination of the pathways to the high infection rates of HIV/ AIDS in the country revealed that the widespread practice of men frequenting prostitutes in the capital in particular, had been a key factor in the high rates of AIDS infection in the 1980s. As unrest and conflict spread in the late 1980s and early 1990s, infection continued. At the time of the genocide, when rape was used as a weapon of war by the *interahamwe* against Tutsi women and girls, a sudden increase in the numbers of those infected occurred. This sexual violence was a double death; rape and the slow death from AIDS.

In 1987 an HIV infection rate of 29 per cent was recorded in Kigali, following data taken from pregnant women attending antenatal clinics. The infection rate in rural areas was lower than in urban centres, at 20 per cent, with a significant rise in infection rates in those women who received blood transfusions between 1980 and 1985 (45 per cent HIV rate) (Allen *et al.* 1991). Levels of HIV had risen from the time of previous data collections, in 1986, when infection rates at a point in rural areas were found to be at merely 1 per cent, and urban centres 18 per cent, although even at this stage, the rate for those within the 26 to 40 year age group stood at 30 per cent (Allen *et al.* 1991).

Taylor (1990) noted reluctance on the part of men and women to use condoms as a means to prevent HIV infection, which he attributes to cultural and traditional attitudes towards sexual intercourse. Within his sample group, both males and females recognised that AIDS was a sexually transmitted disease, but none were using condoms during intercourse. They claimed to be avoiding casual partners and contact with prostitutes, or practising fidelity and abstinence.

Before the genocide an estimated 300,000 of Rwanda's population of 7.5 million were infected with HIV. Of that number, 130,000 were women and 20,000 children. Estimations of numbers of AIDS related orphans in 1993 stood at 62,000, and this was expected at the time to rise to 150,000 by 1997 (Descombes 1993). Such projections at that stage were based on a continued pattern of infection with some acknowledgement of the unstable nature of the country at that point. Descombes noted, however, that even with these numbers of orphans, there was a reticence on the part of extended family members to accept these children into their homes. This is attributed to the ongoing conflict (low level at the time), poor economic circumstances and the fear and stigma of caring for a child whose parents had died of AIDS due to the possibility of infection. The capacity of extended family and community networks to cope with the increasing number of orphans was debated at this stage, with Allen *et al.* warning that such safety nets would be overwhelmed by the need (Descombes 1993: 705).

## 2.5 The Child Headed Household

The number of orphans in Rwanda is 1.2 million (2004) - this is a statistic which underlines the dual pathways of orphanhood. Within this number are those who have been orphaned by AIDS, others by the conflict and finally those orphaned by both. This is considered the highest percentage of orphans per population in the world (Morris 2003). 43 per cent of the orphans in Rwanda estimated by the "Orphans of Rwanda" organisation in 2003 were said to have been orphaned by AIDS; however previous estimates have confirmed that a majority of the 1 million



orphans left after the genocide were orphaned due to the conflict itself (UNICEF 2006), with those orphaned subsequently by AIDS.

The contrast between Rwanda and other countries which have reported high numbers of child headed households lies within the causes for the breakdown of the customary safety net. The difference in Rwanda's case lies in the speed and the scale of the deaths - whilst in those other countries death may be on a large scale but is a slower and more drawn out process. So it is appropriate to consider whether the Rwandan example shows that there are proportionately higher numbers of child headed households than in other countries. Such information is not easily accessible, however, due to the differing methods of measurement used and the challenges of defining a child headed household.<sup>6</sup> Thus whilst the statistics available offer a broad representation of the number of child headed households in a country, the inconsistent terms of reference need to be taken into account when examining the data.

Numbers of child headed households in other regions or countries have been estimated as the following;-

COUNTRY	% CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLDS	YEAR OF DATA
UGANDA	2%	2001
ZIMBABWE	0.4%	1997
TANZANIA	0.03%	1997
SOUTH AFRICA	0.67%	2008

**Table 2.1: Child headed households as percentage of total households**  
**Source: Luzze, 2002; Foster *et al.*, 1997; Urassa *et al.*, 1997; Mentjes *et al.*, (2008)**

<sup>6</sup> The questions of measurement, definition and statistics are examined in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Swaziland has 15,000 child headed households but it is unclear what proportion of all households this forms (World Vision 2008).

3 per cent of households in the Rakai district of Uganda have been recorded as child headed (Nalugoda *et al.* 1997).

In Rwanda there have been variations in the estimations of the number of child headed households given by different organisations, agencies and government. However the numbers themselves are significant – Rakita *et al.* (2003) states that 13 per cent of all households were headed by children; the Rwandan government estimated the number to be 45,000, and ACORD (2001) proposed 227,000.

Despite these variations it seems evident that proportionally there has been a higher incidence of these households in Rwanda. The causes of the creation of these households is significant with regards to extent of their development, and a “tipping event” such as the genocide is sufficient to hasten that process by putting pressure on the extended family safety net which is a major cause of their formation. AIDS may direct the creation of the child headed household in most countries, but a sudden high mortality rate due to a human or natural catalyst event elevates the process to a critical level.

So it can be seen that the child headed household in Rwanda has developed out of an alternative model to that of other countries in Sub Saharan Africa. The convergence of genocide and AIDS with disastrous effects on families and households has resulted in this new household structure, which has been estimated as comprising 13 per cent of all households, the highest proportion that has been recorded in any country (Rakita *et al.* 2003).

## 2.6 Rwandan Government: Policy and Vision Post Genocide

The spectre of the genocide has continued to haunt the nation of Rwanda since 1994 and this has shaped the vision and policies of President Kagame and his government. Waugh (2004) suggests that three major challenges confronting the

transition government were that of economics, security and reconciliation. The determination to ensure security within the country has led to a series of forays into neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo in order to control and seek out the remains of the *interahamwe*, *génocidaires* and their families in the unstable border areas where they fled at the end of the genocide. One of these constituted a substantial invasion lasting several years and which drew in military groups from several of the surrounding countries, leading to a violent conflict and estimates of over 3 million deaths in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Shah 2008).<sup>7</sup>

Paul Kagame's stated priorities for the country at the end of the genocide were that Rwandan refugees should return from the camps to which they had fled, that justice should be done, and that those guilty of perpetrating the genocide should be disarmed whether they were inside Rwanda or elsewhere (Waugh 2004: 164). The government was determined that the *génocidaires* be brought to justice in Rwanda. Accusations abound that the ongoing conflict in DRC was prolonged by Rwanda's support of the Tutsi groups fighting within the country, although in the past year an alliance has been agreed by the Rwandan government and that of the DRC to subdue the Hutu rebel forces in return for the capture of the Tutsi rebel leaders by Rwandan forces, in order to bring some prospect of peace to the east of the country.

These objectives imposed pressure on the legislative framework of Rwanda in particular in the years immediately after 1994, when over 100,000 citizens accused of genocide crimes were in Rwandan jails mainly waiting for their trials. The creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha by the UN in November 1994, set up to try those of accused of genocide crimes has been slow in its procedures, and is due to complete all trials and sentencing by 2010. The Rwandan judiciary was not going to be able to process the trials of the many thousands of prisoners languishing in jail, and so the government instigated a return of the traditional *gacaca* system of local justice and sentencing by the

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<sup>7</sup> Global Issues has estimated that if the deaths of those in the "2<sup>nd</sup> Congo War", up to 2008, are included, the total number reaches 5.4 million.

community, training thousands of people to take part in these trials (Amnesty International 2002). This has proved efficient to a certain extent, although there have been suggestions that an atmosphere of false accusations and retaliatory testimonies have skewed the initial aims of the process. These courts were limited to crimes committed by December 1994, and consequently preclude any retaliatory crimes which were carried out after those dates, and so it has been suggested that this imposes an ethnic dimension to the hearings, as attacks on Hutus in retaliation after those dates cannot be heard (Corey and Joireman 2004). The introduction of *gacaca* courts was intended to last until 2009 and in fact ended in June 2009, with over 1.5 million cases having been heard (Musoni 2008).

The objective of reconciliation is managed by the government in its policies on ethnicity with a vision directed towards the inclusion of all ethnic groups. However ethnicity silently stalks the policies of the government. It has been suggested that a major characteristic of the Kagame government is its fear of democracy within a nation where there is a Hutu majority (Rakita *et al.* 2003: 4). The ethnic policy is a major focus of the government's direction: the removal of ethnic discrimination and attempts to underline the unity within the country has been a key theme- the identifying factor that "all are Rwandans" and the discouragement of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as a means of identification has been a prime directive in their agenda.

In the quest to achieve these aims, however, the President and his government have been accused of authoritarianism, and of using the challenges of ethnicity as a means of limiting opposition within the country. Waldorf (2007: 404) argues that the imposition of this authoritarian regime acts as a safeguard against genocide, although it effectively replicates the pre-genocide government in its suppression of opposition voices.

Internal policies relating to the emphasis of ethnic difference have been introduced, and within this the notion of "divisionism" has been at the heart of government ideology; proscribing ethnicity, offering "re-education" camps for

some individuals and introducing legislation against “divisionism”. This is a word which has proved difficult to define, and has encompassed a broad spectrum of activities and situations. UNHCR has defined it thus:-

The use of any speech, written statement, or action that divides people, that is likely to spark conflicts among people, or that causes an uprising which might degenerate into strife among people based on discrimination  
(UNHCR 2006)

This is considered a serious offence by the government and it has had particular impact on the media, which had been a gateway for incitement to violence during the genocide. To prevent its recurrence, the divisionist law imposes strict limitations on the freedom of the press:

Any person who makes public any speech, writing, pictures or images or any symbols or radio airwaves, television, in a meeting or public place, with the aim of discriminating (against) people or sowing sectarianism (divisionism) among them is sentenced to between one year and five years of imprisonment and fined between five hundred thousand (500,000) (US \$1000) and two million (2,000,000) (US \$ 4,0000) Rwandan francs or only one of these two sanctions.  
(IDRC n.d.)

The challenges of defining the term "divisionism", vague in itself, has given rise to multiple interpretations which can be employed by politicians and the public for their own purposes. Accusations targeted at the government concern the use of these laws to restrict opposition parties - in presidential and governmental elections held since the genocide the President and his party (RPF) have consistently won with a landslide majority, amid accusations of some level of discrimination against other political parties and unfair methods. The charge of divisionism is the tool employed to quash such opposition. Some new political parties have been banned - the foremost one being that of Pasteur Bizimungu, the former Hutu president of the transition government (1994-2000), who left the RPF to start a new party, was arrested, put on a show trial and sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment for inciting rebellion (Waldorf 2007; USDS 2005 as cited in

Waldorf 2007). Other new parties have been co-opted under the umbrella of the RPF government. In the presidential elections of 2003, President Kagame won 95 per cent of the votes, with his RPF party gaining 75 per cent of votes in the governmental elections, amid international accusations of fraud, intimidation and a lack of transparency. The EU Election Observation Mission found a lack of pluralism in the country with allegations of divisionism used to limit the freedom of speech of political opponents (EU EOM 2003: 10). The more recent elections of 2008 were found to be an improvement by the EU, although with the RPF and its coalition parties achieving 78 per cent of the votes, the other parties which stood were supporters of the Kagame government (EU EOM 2008). In effect, then, no opposition voice participated in the elections.

Voices in opposition have been considered unwelcome within the country, as the fear or accusations of divisionism takes hold- over forty key actors have either fled into exile, been imprisoned, disappeared or been killed since 1995 (Rakita *et al.* 2003). This has not only had an impact in the political space, but also on opposition in the media, civil society and other groups. As the government attempts to prevent the media being used again for inciting hatred, it suppresses journalists and any media group which questions policies. Accusations of "divisionism" are made, or they are co-opted onto the government side. New legislation means that journalists are obliged to reveal their sources and these moves combine to suggest that there is less press freedom now than before the genocide (Waldorf 2007).

A commission set up by the Rwandan government to investigate genocide ideology in 2002 led to many accusations being leveled at all types of organisations - national and international media, non-governmental organisations and Human Rights groups were targeted. CARE, Voice of America, the BBC and others have been denounced for promoting divisionism, and some nongovernmental organisations left the country, at one point leaving no independent human rights representation within Rwanda (Waldorf 2007).

For Rwanda, then, the post- genocide years have not been uneventful. The presence of opposition militia in neighbouring countries, *génocidaires* in exile across the world, and the task of rebuilding a nation have weighed heavily on the governments and the people. In an attempt to avoid the catastrophe of genocide in the future, the government has felt obliged to instigate strict laws to rid of the country of the genocide ideology that stalked it. However in so doing, it has also quelled freedoms, repressing opposition and open debate which might have offered a healthier and more reconciliatory path to the rebirth of the nation. Identity is the core of individuals, and ethnicity is an intrinsic part of this identity. The challenges of restoring wholeness to the people while acknowledging this, and at the same time avoiding a repetition of the tragedies resulting from the overemphasis of differences in the past face the government of Rwanda today.

Rwanda's political space and socio economic context have created the conditions which have allowed child headed households to form as an alternative to institutional care or to care in the homes of foster families. The high infection rate of HIV/AIDS in the early 1990s, coupled with the devastating impact of a swift and sudden genocide, and the resulting loss of 1 million inhabitants comprising 10 per cent of the population, decimated safety net structures, and the child headed household has emerged out of that weakness.

## **Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODS**

This research into child headed households in Rwanda focuses on three key areas of study: an investigation of the definition of child headed households, the livelihood challenges faced by such households, and finally the psychosocial (emotional and social) needs of these households. This is realised within the framework of a longitudinal study, covering four years. An intrinsic part in fulfilling the aims of the research is negotiating the landscape of the ethics of working with children who are without responsible adults to care for and protect them, in emotionally and socially sensitive situations, and in a different culture. Therefore the methodology employed has to be appropriate to the nature of the study, and must comply with the moral and ethical issues associated with undertaking research of this nature.

### **3.1 Theoretical Perspectives**

The philosophical precepts that the work stems from are based on an interpretivist and behavioural paradigm, the epistemological base of understanding the world and society through the eyes of the participants in the study (Bryman 2004: 266). The challenges of working from this perspective include an understanding of the multiple truths that a post modernist and humanist theory then offers - as Graham states “knowledge is multiple and positional” (2005: 28). There is a danger in that this may be too relativist an approach, that in accepting all truths one ends up with no absolute truth. Such tolerance, it has been said, offers little to epistemological realities (Graham 2005: 28). However the richness of multiple voices and the range of “truths” present new realities and perspectives on the society and spaces of the now, which shape and deepen our knowledge and theories. They play in intrinsic part in the understanding and conceptualisation of ideas, and in themselves can shape policy and thinking.



These theoretical perspectives contribute to the fundamental thesis of this research into the child headed household in Rwanda, and were selected because the approach they offered was most appropriate to the objectives of the study of children's lives in fairly unique circumstances. The idea of understanding the world through the eyes of these young people and the challenges they confront seemed to relate to the purpose of the epistemological study to be undertaken, with its multiplicity of experiences, voices and perspectives. Such contributions would benefit the research by presenting a genuine picture of the realities of the child headed household. The characteristics of the behavioural paradigm are compatible with a qualitative methodological approach. This methodology is characterised by holistic methods of inquiry, with a facility for questions emerging as the investigation is proceeding (Mayoux 2006). The desire on the part of the researcher is to go beyond facts, processes and practices aligns with qualitative approaches- to "explore the feelings, understanding and knowledge of others through interviews, discussion or participant observation" (Limb & Dwyer 2001: 1).

### 3.2 Qualitative Research

Firstly the researcher is keen to be exposed to people's understandings of the world and their experiences, and secondly to explore how people do things (Smith 2001: 23). Qualitative tools, then involve insightful methods and interpretation in context (Limb & Dwyer 2001). Bryman states that the emphasis in qualitative research is on words and not on quantification, but acknowledges that one weakness in this type of research is that so many orientations dwell within the umbrella term "qualitative". He contends that some of those are conflicting in nature. Qualitative research methods in themselves instigate theoretical frameworks, as opposed to quantitative methods where the research sets out to prove or disprove existing theory (Bryman 2004; Limb & Dwyer 2001). In other words they are inductive, building up theory by attempting to understand the world through interaction, empathy and interpretation with individuals (Bryman & Burgess 1999). These methods offer a flexibility which is not possible

in quantitative measurements, and reflect a passion for the views and experiences of respondents (Bryman 2004: 319).

Employing qualitative methods is an acknowledgement that the world is fluid - it is undergoing change through economic, political cultural and social journeys, and qualitative methods allow us to see experiences and life, the social realities, intensely and in depth, reflecting "particular understandings of social life and meaning" (Limb & Dwyer 2001: 7). Smith (2001) contends that choosing to use qualitative tools is a political choice, in an awareness at the outset of the ontological position that the world is fluid and does not impact on every individual in the same way; there are competing and diverse actions and realities, and so every individual has different experiences and versions of the world. Qualitative methods recognise the diversity of human life, that people are not always neatly packaged into uniform groups. The study of the child headed household in Rwanda, then, is one which lends itself to this methodological perspective - giving understanding to interpretations attributed to people's actions, choices, outlook and values relevant to their society.

Whilst qualitative research is often more time intensive in relation to the gathering of research and its analysis, it provides richer data, and is able to be more discrete and precise. With qualitative behavioural methods, data from smaller core groups can be obtained, information can be more thoroughly scrutinized, and differences and characteristics become more evident. However there is an onus on the researcher to skilfully explore, understand and convey the information and conclusions gathered (Hoepfl 1997). If the aim of qualitative research is to "recover and centralise marginalised voices" then the way this is represented can become a concern, not merely in the way single views or findings may be conflated to a generalised interpretation when they are not really representative of the reality for all- but also the very nature of the myriad voices of qualitative research can cause the researcher to be "drowning in voices" (Bennett 2001: 255). Yet it is those voices which bring to qualitative research richness and depth.

Before considering the tools that can be used in qualitative research, it is important to examine the criticisms levelled at this approach to research. Firstly the multiplicity of voices can result in a lack of focus to the research, with the added challenges to objectivity and subjectivity in analysing the data (Mayoux 2006: 123). Whilst historically the concept of quantitative research has been considered objective, based as it is upon statistical evidence, qualitative research with its focus on interpretation and values is thought of as subjective (Hoepfl 1997). The implication can be that such partisan perceptions can blur and distort results. However Hoepfl draws attention to authors such as Eisner (1991) who suggest that even research based on statistical data can be subjective and question whether complete objectivity is ever achievable (Eisner 1991, cited in Hoepfl 1997). Patton defuses the argument by aiming for the compromise of “empathetic neutrality” (1990: 50), and calls attention to the benefits of the personal experiences of the researcher, and of the closeness that can develop between the researcher and the subject

Often there are accusations that the qualitative research project is small scale, biased, the findings are difficult to prove and are skewed by the impact of the context of data gathering, for example the presence of other people during interviews (Mayoux 2006: 121). Furthermore, critics claim that the information gathered is too unique to incorporate into generalisations, and the problem of subjectivity is also intrinsic to that (Bryman 2004, Mayoux 2006). An additional criticism is whether the researcher, having engaged in participatory methods, either by observation or interview, is an authority in the subject or he or she has engaged in.

Such critiques of the qualitative approach in general are directed towards some of the pitfalls associated with this type of research. These traits are all too evident to the researcher and care should be taken when engaging in qualitative research methods to compensate for these potential dangers. The challenges which are primarily encountered are those of positionality, ethics, methods of sampling, and representation. In the case of this research the methods are further complicated by contextual frameworks: the research takes place in a post-

conflict developing country, is children-centred, many of whom are orphans, and in situations where a majority of the data collection requires an interpreter.

### 3.3 Research with Children

The subject matter and the target group in this study involved children, which raised a number of challenges, ethical, methodological, practical, interpretive and representational.

The challenges of working with children in development are much debated, and a significant barrier to effective research in children's geographies generally is the universal understanding of the concept of childhood, which is in reality principally western in its roots and understanding (Van Blerk 2006). This is cultivated by emotional and nostalgic notions of the ideal in childhoods, which are at variance with the experiences of childhood of the majority world. Engaging in research with children presents the researcher with many responsibilities which are allied to features of all types of research - objectivity, positionality, ethics, and representation. In addition, the responsibility of working with children convinces the researcher that it is her or his duty to tailor the methodological tools used to facilitate effective research. As both Kesby and Thompson attest, the preconceived notions of how research with children should be different from that with adults subconsciously frames our choice of methodological tools even at the preparation stage (Kesby 2007, Thomson 2007). Children, then, are conceptualised in a separate category from adults, as if both groups are homogenous whole entities. This does not allow for any blurring of the sets, and assumes that children are merely adults in the making, not complete and "finished" in themselves. The implication of this is that adults, by contrast, are fully rounded beings, capable of making an effective contribution to research, and assumes that "capacities, resources and experiences of all people are contingent", despite biological age (Kesby 2007: 194). The model of the normative individual, "an adult", informs our methodological design, but it is exposed as a myth (Kesby *et al.* 2009). It is therefore restrictive and erroneous to plan research methods based on definitions of childhood which have their

foundation in legal, biological, social and cultural paradigms (Horton & Kraftl 2005). Tools which are appropriate for one individual may not be appropriate for another even when those individuals are the same age, and of any age. Methodologies need to be matched to those people with whom researchers are working and should be “respondent appropriate” (Kesby *et al.* 2009: 219). Whilst researchers must be vigilant in assuring the homogeneity of the information sought, the manner in which it is acquired should vary depending upon the capacities and experiences of the participants.

There is a requirement, then, for researchers to have at their disposal a range of tools which are tailored to suit the individual in the sample group. This should not preclude the used of tools previously considered “childish” when engaging in research with “adults” (Kesby *et al* 2009, Horton & Kraftl 2007).

In this specific research project it is essential to engage in an appropriate discourse as the participants who are recognised as children in legal or social terms may have been undertaking parental roles for many years. If we consider the child as a competent agent, but at the same time as an individual in transition or transformation, we can see that adults too are in stages of transformation, both physiologically and socially (emotionally etc.). The ability to maintain “identity” as a constant outward presentation to others may be achieved more easily by adults who are more experienced in this, but all identity is seen in relation to spaces and society (Kesby *et al.* 2009:220-221).

### 3.4 Sampling

Methods of sampling within research frameworks are important in shaping the perspective of the study; techniques include purposive or contingent sampling, encounters which occur through the use of key informants as gatekeepers, snowballing methods where one interviewee suggests another whose contribution would be valuable, and random encounters.

The choice of interviewees is fundamental to the integrity of the research, and for semi-structured interviews within this qualitative framework participants are

recruited based on their experience of the research topic, that is those who are relevant to the subject focus (Longhurst 2003, Bryman 2004). This type of sampling is known as purposive sampling. Therefore in this work the principal sample set would comprise members of child headed households, in addition to interviews carried out with key informants. Rice (2003: 232) underlines the importance of accommodating spatial and temporal variabilities in order to include a representative sample, but warns against too broad a sample base. This may offer too many variables which may be tangential to the focus, and also will spread resources too thinly. The sample, then, needs to be illustrative in order to provide an appropriate landscape for the research.

The use of gatekeepers as a source of research contacts can result in an unrepresentative sample, since gatekeepers are able to offer access to the people they would like the researcher to meet and conversely avoid introducing those they would prefer not to be included. This can mean that the very core of the study is skewed. Furthermore, the respondents may be in a relationship with the gatekeepers that leads them to feel obliged to take part in the research. In this case they need to be made aware of the option of withdrawing from the study (Willis 2006). Bushin has emphasised the need for consent not just from the parent or adult responsible for the child, or in the case of children in this study, the gatekeepers, but from the children themselves (Bushin 2009 :214) The relationship between the participant and the gatekeeper may also affect the responses that are given (Willis 2006).

Thus purposive sampling methods were used to identify households for inclusion in the core group. The importance of incorporating households in different community settings for a realistic assessment of specific livelihood challenges and experiences led to the selection of households in urban areas, peri-urban areas and a rural community. The addition of a number of households located in a refugee camp enriched the data gathered and allowed a broader perspective on the circumstances and lives of those in CHHs located in different spaces. Additionally, to fulfil the remit for a representative sample, the cohort comprised both “independent” households, that is, those not assisted by an organisation, and ones which were benefitting from NGO programmes. It was important to

offer an element of comparison into livelihood survival, challenges and resiliences of the households in both situations.

When selecting households for inclusion in the research, no specification was made as to the gender of the household head and there was no promise of recompense.

Terms of reference with regard to the definition of a child headed household were initially devised in order to assure an appropriate sample group, however variations in definition became apparent during the first field visit, which served to reshape the limitations on definition for the sample group, and offered an opportunity for a vibrant conceptual debate of the definitional challenge itself.

The process of selection in the first instance focused on the main collaborating nongovernmental organisation, Inkuru Nziza (Rwanda Orphans Project) serving as gatekeeper for a number of the households involved in their programmes, and thereafter using their networks to put the researcher in contact with key informants in other nongovernmental organisations which were also implementing programmes with child headed households. This facilitated introductions to households on the Compassion and Youth with a Mission programmes. These primary gatekeepers were also able to introduce households which were on a waiting list for programmes but which were considered independent at the time. Further households were added to the sample group during a subsequent visit: The researcher had discussions with these representatives before meeting the children when the criteria for inclusion were set out. The NGO had then arranged the initial meetings and key workers were present for the first interview. For those households not included on programmes, contact was made either through local church leaders or community leaders, who were able to suggest households and accompany the researcher to each home. These leaders were known to the households, introduced and were present for at least the first interview. In other instances snowballing occurred, where some of the participants mentioned other child headed households known to them amongst their friends and neighbours who might be prepared to take part in the research. They consequently accompanied

the researcher to these homes for introductions. Thus the children themselves acted as facilitators, explaining the circumstances and purposes of the research and inviting the others to take part, which they agreed to do. Documentation explaining the aims and objectives of the research, the processes and time span was provided and translated when required and consent gained.

During this second data collection visit new households were introduced by the original gatekeepers, others through contacts made by the researcher with different nongovernmental organisations (for example AEGIS trust), through introductions by local church leaders who were able to facilitate meetings and interviews, and through approaches made to UNHCR to gain access to CHHs in Gihembe Refugee Camp.

### 3.5 The Sample Group

To arrive at a working definition which would offer some criteria for inclusion into the sample group, terms of reference which were not age focused needed to be employed. In fact all households referred to by agency contacts or community leaders as “child headed households” were included (See Table 3.1).

Organisation	Numbers of households
Inkuru Nziza	10
Youth with a Mission	8
AEGIS	1
Refugee Camp (UNHCR)	5
Compassion	5
“Independent”	12
Transition households (waiting for inclusion on programme then incorporated) <sup>8</sup>	1 to the AEGIS programme 1 to the Inkuru Nziza programme
TOTAL	43

<sup>8</sup> This indicates households which were waiting to be found sponsors and to be included on a programme at the time of the initial visit, but which had joined the project specified before the subsequent meeting. Each organisation has its own specific programmes and objectives.



**Table 3.1: Research sample of CHHS, by affiliation to NGOs or independent Source: Author's fieldwork**

The selection of participants was based on the definition of a child headed household conceptualised at the outset of the research, the criteria being a group of children living together under the age of 18. The first households introduced by the gatekeepers as “child headed” however immediately presented an indication of the dilemma rooted in the definitional challenge of the child headed household regarding the internationally accepted definition of childhood being under 18 years. It was clear that although some NGOs would only consider households with heads of 18 years or under as child headed, many of the households did in fact have heads over 18 years of age. This required a redrawing of the terms of reference for households to be included within the sample, and also necessitated the reflection on definitional issues. In all fifteen CHHs were included in the research in the first visit in 2004.

Visits	Visit 1:2004	Visit 2: 2006	Visit 3: 2008
New Households	20	35	
Repeat		15	32
Dropouts/not fitting criteria	5	8	10 (not found)
CHHs to be included in the research	15	42	
Total household interviews	20	50	32

**Table3.2: CHHs involved in research over the 4 years longitudinal study**

**Source: Author**

The second visit included a total of 50 CHHs, of which 15 were repeat interviews and 35 were with new households. However 8 of the new households did not fit the criteria. Therefore a total number of CHHs interviewed at this stage and incorporated into the group was 42. The reduction in the number of households interviewed in the final field visit was due to 10 CHHs moving away from their previous homes, and although attempts were made to find their new location, these were unsuccessful.

To assist in the debate around age and childhood it was necessary to collate the ages of the heads of the households. The ages of household heads at the time of the final data collection in 2008 are shown in Table 3.3:

Ages of household heads	13	17	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	32
Numbers of households	1	1	2	2	1	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	1	1
Households with changes of head since visit 2 (2006)	1	1		2			1		1			1		

**Table 3.3: Ages of CHH heads in 2008; changes in household head**

**Source: Author's fieldwork, 2006 and 2008, Rwanda**

Length of existence of CHH at 1st interview (in years)	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2004 (Initial sample group)	2		1			1	1	1		2	5
2006 (Additional sample group)	1	4	2	2	2	1		3		2	9

**Table 3.4 Length of time since CHHs were formed.**  
**Source: Author**

Figure 3.4 illustrates how long the child headed households had been established at the time of the first interviews (2004 and 2006 respectively). The biggest single group from both sets had been in existence since the time of the genocide, 1994. The household may have been headed by different children during that time, as members of the household move away for work or school, marry or, as occurred in two households, become ill and die.

Some of the participants had been part of an NGO programme at the time of earlier research visits but were no longer supported by the NGOs on subsequent visits due to reaching the end of their education, training, or sponsorship. They continued to be included in the sample group, as this offered a unique and real perspective of their resilience and methods of coping after programmes, when support has stopped, which was of crucial importance within the longitudinal structure of the research model.

It is important to consider the numbers of children who are double or single orphans. Out of the 42 CHHs incorporated into the final sample group in this research, 40 consisted of children who were double orphans, that is, both parents were dead. The reasons for the deaths are significant as a key feature of the research into child headed household in Rwanda is the recognition of dual causality of conflict (violence, genocide) and AIDS. The numbers of child headed households due to conflict and AIDS are illustrated in Table 3.5:

Death of	Cause of death	Cause of death	Causes of death
	Genocide	AIDS	Other
1 parent	10 households	12 households	1 households
Both parents	15 households	3 households	1 household
Total	25 households	15 households	2 households

**Table 3.5: Numbers of and reasons for orphaned households**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

### 3.6 Research Structure

This study was conducted in urban and peri-urban areas of Kigali and its environs; a rural area, Cyabatanze, 25 kilometres east of the city; and at Gihembe Refugee Camp at Byumba, approximately 70 kilometres north of Kigali. The structure of the research consisted of a longitudinal study from 2004 to 2008, with data collection at fixed points within this time frame, comprising three visits over a 4 year period at intervals of 15 and 16 months respectively. Between these visits contact was maintained with some of the gatekeepers and some child headed households. The research comprised three phases, of which phase 1 included gathering baseline data from key informants and child headed households regarding the nature of the child headed household, responding to the first aim of the research, namely, what is a child headed household. This included data on household structure, histories, and roles. Phase 2 consisted of gathering information on the livelihood needs of the child headed households, with a particular emphasis on those of education, income generation and land ownership and inheritance, corresponding with the second aim of the study. Finally, phase 3 focused on the non- material needs of the child headed household, the psycho-social needs including those of security and belonging. Threats and challenges faced by the households were considered and an examination of the broader issues of acceptance and reconciliation within communities in Rwanda was realised. This was particularly apposite in Rwanda, a country attempting to forge unity between its ethnic groups following the

devastation of the 1994 genocide. The longitudinal perspective of the study offered the opportunity to observe and analyse changes, their impact, and the CHH responses over time. It also offered a thorough investigation of the validity of current definitions, and of the provisional redefinition of the child headed household.

Two parts to the research were undertaken on the first field visit. Firstly, semi structured interviews were carried out with ten key stakeholders, including NGO programme directors, and representatives from agencies such as UNICEF. Secondly, semi structured interviews were completed involving a total of 20 children from what were considered to be child headed households.

Households which were not part of a programme were also included in this first phase of interviews. At this stage the sample size incorporated into the research comprised approximately 15 households, see Table 3.6.

	Urban	Rural
NGO	12	0
Non NGO	3	0

**Table 3.6: Sample November 2004**  
**Source: Author**

The main objectives of this initial visit were to establish the household composition and identification of the household members, the reasons for its establishment, the narratives of the children as far as possible, and the functioning of the household (phase 1). In addition discussion of the children’s livelihood needs, in particular access to education, income generation, and health care and support networks was also carried out. Interviews with key informants served to outline the history of the development of child headed households in the urban area, the challenges which they faced and NGO programmes and their provision. Details of the topic guide for areas of discussion are found in

Appendices 2 and 3. Thus the initial data collection included both phase 1 and phase 2 areas of research (see Table 3.7)

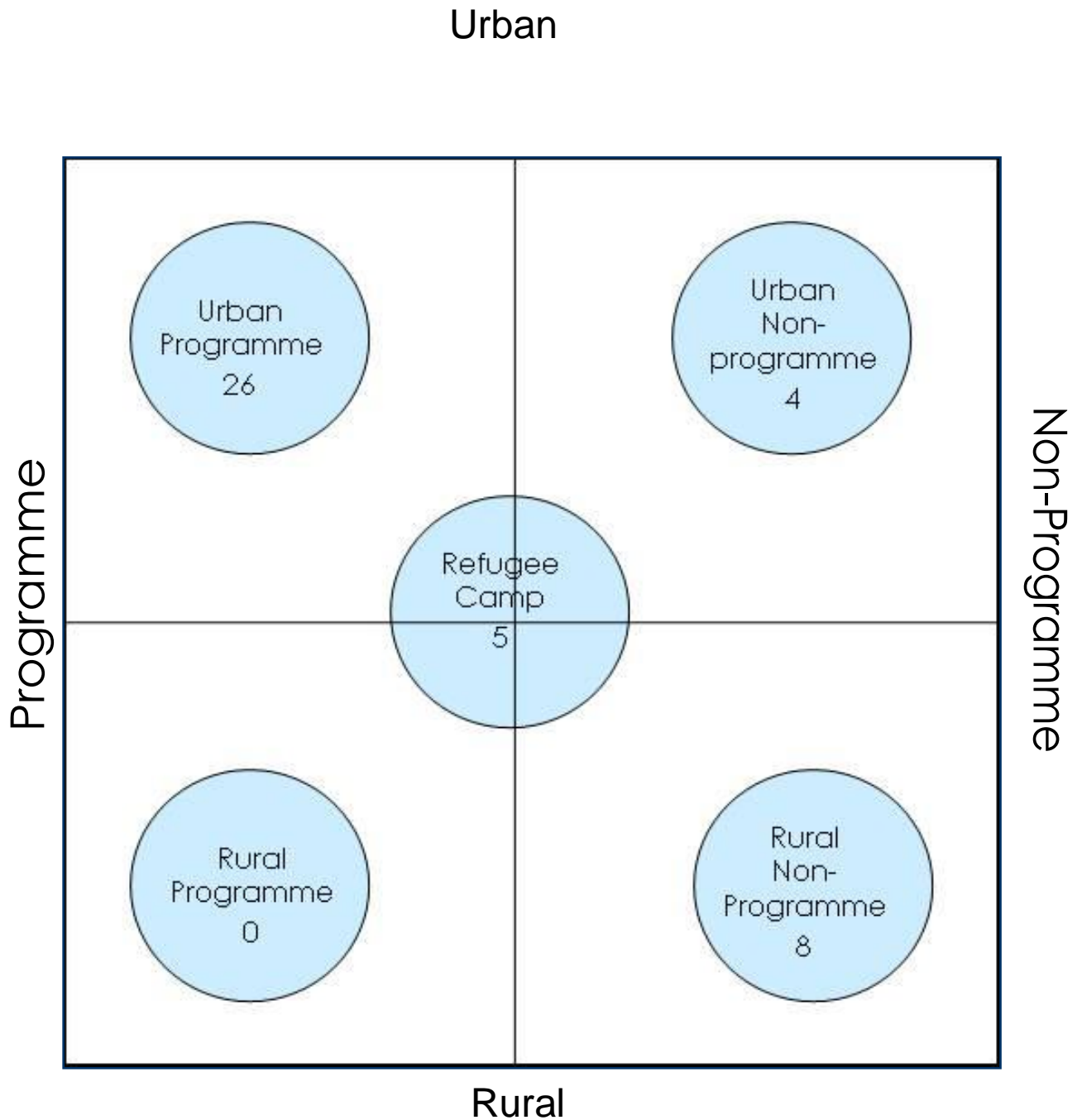
Phase	Date	Who	Number	Methods	Sample
1&2	November 2004	Key informants  Child headed households	10  20	Semi structured interviews, timeline, drawings	Recruited purposively through local gatekeepers
2&3  1,2 &3	February 2006	Child headed households, new and repeat interviews	50 of which 42 were accepted into the sample group (15 of the 42 were repeat interviews)	Semi structured interviews timeline, drawings, pictorial prompts,	Purposive recruitment, gatekeepers, snowballing
3	March 2008	Child headed households repeat interviews  Key informants	32  3	Semi structured interviews timeline, drawings, pictorial prompts,	Snowballing

**Table 3.7 Research structure**  
Source: Author

The second data collection (2006) saw the revisiting of the 15 households from 2004, and an augmentation in the sample group to include more than 50 child headed households in total. The new additions to this stratified sample included a group of households in the rural area of Cyabatanze who were also independent, that is not supported by an NGO programme. It incorporated further households in urban and peri-urban districts of Kigali, programme and non-programme, other households waiting to join programmes, and five child headed households living in Byumba Refugee Camp. The cooperation of Inkuru Nziza was crucial, both in allowing access to more of their programme households, but also in introducing households who were waiting to be included on their programme. Contacts were made with UNHCR in Kigali, which facilitated the field work in the refugee camp in Byumba, and also with Aegis Trust. This organisation has developed the genocide memorial centre in Gesozi, Kigali, and is also helping to house and support child headed households and widows affected by the genocide, in some cases in alliance with the government sponsored scheme, FARG (*Fonds National pour l'Assistance aux Rescapés du Génocide/Victims of Genocide Fund*). Figure 3.1 illustrates the expanded sample group, showing urban/rural, programme and non-programme households.

Figure 3.1: Sample classification

### Sample classification: Field Visit 2



Urban includes peri-urban areas

Refugee camp: situated in semi-rural area partially aided by UNHCR



The research on the second field trip was carried out, as the first, with the use of semi structured interviews, but at this point the themes for discussions covered a broader range of issues which had been identified from the first visit as significant.

Interviews also took place with community leaders in the rural area of Cyabatanze, and the peri-urban area of Iggehogwe, Kigali. These were discussions which, although initially directed by the researcher, allowed these key informants the freedom to lead the conversation into areas which concerned them, and also to present their perspectives of the child headed household and its place and situation within these particular spaces.

For the repeat interviews, information was sought concerning changes in the household, events and challenges which had taken place in the intervening time between the two visits, which were relevant to phases 1 and 2 of the research structure. The households which had been interviewed during the first visit were able to illustrate, with the use of timelines, any changes which had occurred in the intervening 16 months. This incorporated changes in household composition, roles, access to services such as education, and income generation opportunities. As a consequence of this the participants and the researcher were able to examine the causes of these changes. Phase 3 of the research framework was also introduced during these visits, with the incorporation of questions around security and support networks developing from earlier subjects of discussion.

In the case of households interviewed for the first time at this point, information relating to phases 1, 2 and 3 was sought during this initial visit - the history and composition of the household, (phase1), livelihood needs, in particular education, land ownership and income generation (phase 2), and finally the addition of the broader set of issues, those of security and support (phase 3), newly broached with the repeat interviewees.

Fifty households were interviewed in total (15 were re-interviews), and of these, forty two were eligible to constitute the final sample group. The widening of the focus of the research at this stage to include data about the vulnerability and

social problems of the groups was a natural progression from the findings of the first visit and from subsequent reading. Information was sought on areas such as security and sources of support, which are detailed in Appendix 4.

The third and final data collection took place in March 2008. By this stage the frequency of contact with the households meant that a positive relationship had built up between the researcher and the young people in the households. On many occasions the visits were like an informal reunion, with the ease of conversation that this can bring, even when using an interpreter. This rapport served to enhance the gathering of data, although with an awareness of the necessity to remain objective uppermost.

### 3.7 Methodological Tools: Theory and Practice

Many methodological devices are available in the reservoir of qualitative research tools for use in research, including interviews - informal, semi structured and formal, questionnaires, focus groups, participatory methods and ethnographic tools such as observation. These are all useful methods within the qualitative research tool box, and can be utilised in conjunction with one another or independently. In the case of this study, the prospect of gathering data about the composition and typology of child headed households and their material and non-material challenges was one that demanded a qualitative research approach, in that individual stories and experiences could be collected and examined. Triangulation of the data is also important in qualitative research methods, where corroboration and verification should be sought to ensure the authenticity of research.

The interview style itself can vary depending upon the person who is being interviewed and the topics to be covered- Willis states that with key informants and officials the interview will be more formal in style, than those carried out with others. Interview structures should take into account the topic, the interviewee and the context of the interview (Willis 2006). The level of informality within the interview framework can vary, with structured and unstructured interviews being

the extremes of the model, but within it there exists a range of styles (Bryman 2004). May, in examining this method of data collection, points out that the semi-structured interview introduces a deeper level of discussion with clarification and elaboration on the original questions posed, and enables a discussion of a broad and diverse range of subjects (2001:123). The unstructured interview technique allows the subject to expand on his or her own experience and thoughts, within their own understanding and terms of reference, offering a more vivid and accurate perspective of the reality of the interviewee. Equally the researcher is able to delve into areas of interest which may arise during the course of the discussion and seek clarification and explanation, which can shape and direct the information gained and present alternative paradigms.

Although interviews are not merely "chats" there is a need to be aware of the issues to be explored, a need to transcribe the data and to be ethically aware. Valentine (1997) contends that semi structured interviews are a form of social interaction and that there are no rules. What is necessary is that there exists a list of themes which the researcher wants to discuss, and this should begin with a comfortable question. The semi structured interview offers a shape with themes but the format allows for an elaboration of those themes. This can also be unstructured, in that the discussion can be led in any direction by the interviewee or interviewer. Therefore in the semi structured interview the focus of the research is covered but there is scope for discussing other points, and this can occur successfully even with officials and key informants (Willis 2006, Valentine 1997, Mayoux 2006). Questions can change and develop as the encounter progresses, to fill in "a jigsaw of differing accounts of reality" (Mayoux 2006: 118). These questions include "introducing", "follow up", and "probing" questions, specifying questions, direct and indirect questions and interpreting questions. Whilst this might give the impression that the interviewer is constantly presenting a barrage of questions to the participant, the practice of listening to the responses and dialogue is of significant importance (Bryman 2004: 326). In addition a researcher should be well prepared for the interview, sourcing the organisation's official data prior to the interview with key officials in order to target more incisively issues of function, effectiveness and underlying frameworks. The semi

structured interview offers a successful method of examining behaviours, opinions and emotions and presents a partial insight into what people say or think (Longhurst 2003).

This research employs the semi-structured and informal interview as a basic framework for the collection of primary source material. The concept of a fluid, conversational dialogue is most suited to the type of information sought, and in particular when the research is focusing on children, where an overformal interview format can be intimidating. The notion of a conversation with a purpose which permits a sensitive child focused approach allows a discussion around the focus of the research itself. In addition the benefits of such a fluid interview mean that the researcher can clarify and recheck information, and can engage in discussing subjects which crop up in the conversation and may adjust the perspective of the study (Valentine 2005). Since each interview is unique, Valentine adds that the data can only be strengthened by undertaking complementary interviews and studies (Valentine 2005: 111).

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews can also offer a sense of "process" giving an historical and emotional narrative based on the past, which in the case of this research is crucial to the context of the formation of child headed households. Since this research is based on a longitudinal study, its nature offers an enhancement of these histories and household landscapes. Consequently the research methods employed should maximise the distinctiveness of this framework, as debated by Saldana (2003) and Thomson *et al.* (2003). The structure offers a useful and unique perspective on the households as well as their livelihoods and circumstances over a period of time, an examination which has not been undertaken before in Rwanda. The longitudinal framework offers an insight into observing and analysing changes, their impact, and the CHH responses over time. In addition and at the same time it affords a "snapshot" view of some issues interrogated in this study- such as variation in household composition, coping strategies and emotional challenges.

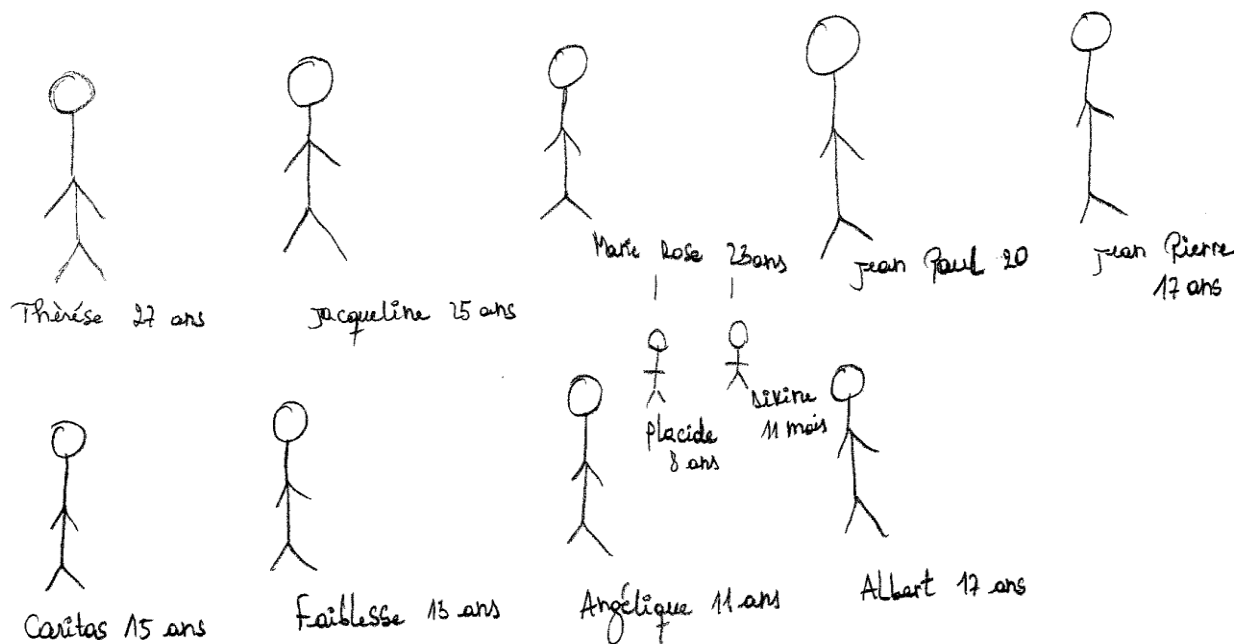
The choice of the semi structured interview as the primary tool for this research was determined due to the method's capability to amass large amounts of data,

its facility to broaden the focus to a wide number of themes and to enable a specification and confirmation of information to produce a richer, thicker collection of material (Smith 2001). It is also appropriate to the subjects of the study, namely children.

Within this research project taken as a whole there were variations in the level of informality within the interviews. Since the principal focus of the study involved children (the definition being all those identified by key actors as heading or part of a child headed households), this clearly informed the style of interview and data collection. Initial meetings with the young people were more formal than subsequent ones; however the overall aim of the nature of each interview was that it should be an informal conversation, directed and prompted on occasion by the researcher in order to discuss previously designed topic areas, but also with the freedom to be led by the interviewee into new and different subjects of discussion. Information gained from such tangents could then be considered for inclusion and further research if apposite.

Appropriate tools within the semi structured interview include the use of drawings, timelines and pictorial prompts, and Interviews with children were conducted with the use of comparative illustrations, the drawing of timelines to give the households' stories, and the use of pictures to depict roles of family members. In addition children were encouraged to draw their hopes for the future. The use of drawing as a research tool is generally effective in studies with children; Merriman (2007) lists its advantages as being child-centred, active, language-free, fun and it allows children to "talk about" difficult things. Importantly for this particular research, it does not require high levels of literacy. DiCarlo *et al.* (2000), and Merriman and Guerin (2006) in their work with street children in Honduras and Kolkata respectively also advocate the use of drawings which can reveal perspectives and dynamics not easily expressed orally. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 are examples of the work carried out by children using this method: Figure 3.2 is a family tree, showing household members, relationships and ages as drawn by Carine; Figure 3.3 consists of three drawings out of six shown to the children by the researcher in order for them to identify who carries out these

specific roles in their home, and who attends school. Further examples of tools utilised in the course of the data collection are reproduced in Appendix 5 (research tools (ii), (iv) and (v)).



**Figure 3.2: Carine's drawing: household composition**  
Source: Author's fieldwork, 2004



**Figure 3.3: Household roles: researcher's pictorial prompts**

**Source: Author's fieldwork, 2004**

Translation: *akazi*: cultivation

*Imirimo yo murugo*: housework

*Kwiga*: school

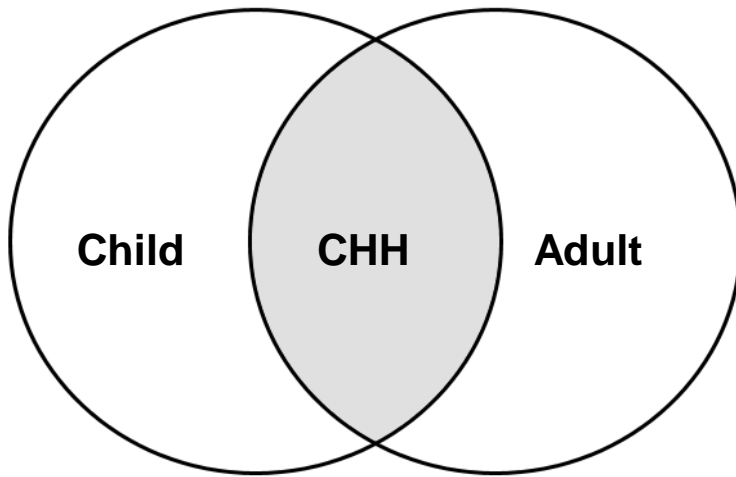
As has been debated earlier, the toolbox of methods at the disposal of the researcher should be such that an array of methods is available to be used as

appropriate with each participant. The challenge in interviewing the “child” head of a CHH in this research was intertwined with the nature of the definition of child and the role that the child had been undertaking in caring for siblings and others. These may be “children” from a biological, legal, social, and cultural paradigm, but they have adult responsibilities and skills, having been parentilised in the sense that they are *de facto* parents for their siblings or others in their care. Chant and Jones (2005:196) write of the “rough interface” between work and education for young people in West Africa, and this phrase describes also this merging of space between childhood and adulthood). Therefore it is imperative that in the process of data gathering, they are not patronised but are treated with dignity, respecting their experiences. . Thus the process of data collection within this semi-structured interview format included general discussion and conversation as would be carried out with the adult informants, but with the style tailored to the individual participant.

These children are imbued with adult roles and responsibilities at the same time as being children biologically, socially, culturally and legally. The challenge is to develop methods to compensate for this child/ adult paradox. So experientially, socially, “age” wise, they are adults. Therefore methods must be appropriate, as well as taking into account context including gender and education. All this is to enable these children to be treated with dignity and respect, to use methods which are not patronising but appropriately measured for individuals. These are young people who inhabit both the child and adult world and function in networks which involve these milieus, and therefore the toolbox of methods must be adequate to encompass this situation (see Figure 3.4).

Table 3.7, shown earlier also illustrates the structure of the research carried out, with methods used.





**Figure 3:4 The child/adult paradox**

**Source: Author**

During the second data collection, the use of the semi structured interview continued to form the basis for the information gathering, again with the use of timelines to illustrate the changes that had occurred over the past 2 years. The completion of phase 3 was accomplished at this stage, which involved discussions surrounding issues of participation and integration into the community, linked with the concept of “belonging”. This was accomplished with the aid of pictorial exercises and prompts: for example an exercise was included to indicate the level of integration within the community. Here the young people are asked to place a model of their home into a simulated village picture to indicate where they feel they are positioned in the community. Another tool was utilised to gauge the level of contentment with life or happiness the children had felt around the time of the previous visit two years earlier, and how they felt on the day of the interview. The purpose of this was to give an indication of an improvement or deterioration in their quality of life over that period of time. For this the children were asked to identify with pictures of faces showing gradual stages of happiness (smiley faces) and choose which one(s) represented their emotions at those particular times (see Appendix 5(iii)). This offered scope for further discussion about the incidents which had shaped those decisions. Finally they were asked to imagine what their vision or hope was for their lives in two years’ time, and to express this through a drawing or words.

### 3.8 Challenges Encountered in using Methodological Tools

The participants were receptive to answering questions orally, and the semi- and unstructured conversation model was effective in gathering the information sought. There were certain tools utilised however which caused minor difficulties for a small number of the children and which necessitated that flexibility of approach and the availability of alternative methods to achieve the objectives of the visit, as discussed earlier.

Firstly some children had difficulty in interpreting the researcher's drawings of household roles, which provoked some humour when clarified. This in turn served to inject warmth into the interview, and relaxed the participants and the researcher. Low literacy levels in some children meant that they were unable to read the prompts in Kinyarwanda which had to be read to them (by the researcher - again leading to amusement).

One young person had difficulty with drawing a picture as a response, since she had never been to school and was embarrassed about her inability to carry out what had been asked. Immediately this was realised the question was rephrased to encourage an oral response and she was assured of its value and contribution.

The exercise requiring the placing of the household within the community sometimes needed clarifying as a small number of children would interpret it literally, placing the model where his or her home was located rather than understanding it as the more abstract concept of inclusion. In these cases it was necessary to offer more practical ideas by supplementary prompts such as the researcher asking whether he or she was invited to celebrations or to community meetings.

Whilst these were minor weaknesses in the methods used with certain participants, they were all able to be overcome by the researcher having a flexible approach, and an ability to adapt the tool immediately. Although the interviews with children also included times of discussion and questioning, the methods used for the adult key informants for most of the time differed from those used with the children in the child headed households: semi-structured interviews

were based around a conversation with relevant themes, but with the facility for more tangential discussions as led by the participants. However there were some instances where these “adults” were aware of the methods being utilised with children and felt that they would be effective means to elicit data in general. However the focus of the interviews with these key adult actors was accessing background information concerning the child headed household in Rwandan communities, and also detailing programmes and initiatives provided by their particular organisations, therefore more “direct” interviews were felt to be appropriate.

Yet the paradox of the child/adult as member of the child headed household in Rwanda is brought into relief within the context of methods: here the same methods were used during the encounters with 29 year old members of child headed households as with those much younger, of 15 years and below. The blurred edges of child/adulthood are evident, but also the “bipolar” nature means that it could have been a feasible option to utilise these even more of these “childish” methodologies with all ages of participant. It may be the case then that as researchers, the choices of methodological tool are framed to a great extent within our cultural perceptions and limited by our own experiences.

The primary objective in implementing any methodological tool is that respect is accorded to all participants, irrespective of age, position, or power and their dignity is retained. In addition, discernment is required on the part of the researcher as to the personality and capabilities of the participant as an individual so that appropriate tools are drawn on to ensure his or her readiness to engage in the research itself, and also his or her measure of ease with the methods. These may be tools which the researcher may have ignored due to biased perceptions of them, from a socio-cultural perspective, yet they may be the very tools which are most effective with some groups or individuals, or in specific research.

An ideal requirement for researchers, therefore, would involve the design of a diverse range of tools within a methodological framework, which would then be employed in a customised and individualised way dependent upon the

participants' capacity, experiences and personality. However researchers must ensure that in enlarging the reservoir of tools available, the methods chosen remain alternative ways to ask the same questions and do not induce a skewed set of responses.

### 3.9 Positionality and Ethics

Many features within the qualitative research approach and the semi structured interview style in particular require debate alongside the rationale behind the choice of methods used. These are significant dynamics in this study and include the notions of positionality, ethics and the challenges of gathering data from children. In addition the research is taking place in a post-conflict society, with the consequence of that conflict visible in the physical, social, economic and emotional spheres. Much has been written regarding positionality in research (see Howard 1995; Barrett and Young 2001; Visser n. d.; Gold, 2002; Sultana 2007) and qualitative research must acknowledge the place and position of the researcher and the politics inherent in carrying out specific research. Researchers should be mindful of these factors constantly, in particular when engaging in research in developing countries where inequities are all too evident (Brockington & Sullivan 2003: 72). As Barrett and Young (2001: 385) contend, the presence of a "white, foreign, English speaking female" can act as a barrier in terms of accessing the sample group, and furthermore, when engaging in research with young people in particular, the challenge of encouraging young people to speak freely to this same researcher about what are often very personal experiences, can be difficult. The need to build reassurance, develop a connection, and most importantly to provide a safe environment where the child feels comfortable should be the primary objectives for engagement in such research.

Qualitative research can by its nature be prone to subjectivity on the part of the researcher, but the relationship between researcher and participant is of key importance within the interview dynamic. Research which is qualitative requires

levels of interpretation which often necessitate the involvement of “the self” which makes the challenge of objectivity considerable. The inevitability of “the self” is a factor to consider when presenting research information and results (Ely *et al.* 1997: 353 as cited in Aubrey *et al.* 2000) – and the personal and the self conscious are both elements impacting upon the research. Valentine offers the view of humanist theorists and post-structuralists who claim that there is no objectivity in social science research, rather that the experiences and interpretation of the researcher shape the research (Valentine 1997: 112). The interviewer is so involved in the interview dynamic that findings can be overly shaped by the researcher, although O’Connell Davidson and Layder clarify this by stating that the interviewer does not lose objectivity but is “exploring the world view subjective values on those he or she is interviewing (O’Connell Davidson & Layder 1994:125 cited in Valentine 1997). The role of the researcher is to constantly present information and conclusions that are relevant and informative to the reader - but an awareness of the “ethnographic self” is important to consider (Coffey 1999:136).

Scheyvens *et al.* (2003:168) note that researchers should not view interviewees as people who are in need of our help, stating that the interview process should not be shrouded in pity (2003: 168). They go on to quote Wolf’s advice that “researchers... critically examine their positionality ...to understand ...their role in the global arena” (Wolf 1996: 35 cited in Scheyvens *et al.* 2003). For some researchers, the issue of positionality is not problematic in research; in fact the most important factor from the perspective of the participants is that the research community cares enough to bother to be there (Leslie 2003). The need for objectivity and a just representation of the data gathered, experiences, emotions requires the interviewer to seek confirmation from other observers in the process, what Bryman calls “inter-observer consistency” (Bryman 2004: 273). Lincoln and Guba (1985) focus on the need for trustworthiness and authenticity, and put forward the importance of the notions of credibility, transferability (whether the rich bank of information acquired in qualitative research is appropriate for other spaces), dependability and proof of objectivity. Skelton believes that since we are “amalgams of our experiences” we bring all of these facets of our lives to the

interview, and she underlines the importance of acknowledging differences, and select tools which can empower the researcher (Skelton 2001: 90). A level of self-awareness is required when considering the research processes experienced in this study, from the information gathering phase to the write-up and analysis stages to ensure that at best subjectivity and the self do not inhibit or shape findings - however we may not even be aware of our own self-positioning (Limb & Dwyer 2001). Coffey (1999: 7-8) debates to what extent ethnographers are affected by their experience of research, contending that this dynamic is crucial in fieldwork. She describes it as “the connection and location of peopled and vocal lives”, and goes further in stating that it “reconstructs and represents our selves and the selves of others”. This is fundamental in that the subjective personality is part of the research, and the strands of relationships which are built up, and the manner in which each link develops, influences the duality of the process, and in the case of this particular research, shapes response both immediate and long term.

The power relationship between the researcher and informants is also highlighted when discussing qualitative methods of research, particularly when this is carried out in developing countries, as is the case in this study. Imbalances are perceived physically, educationally, socially, and also psychologically, by feelings of inferiority on the part of the participants and of superiority on the part of the researcher (Scheyvens *et al.* 2003: 149). This power relationship cannot be escaped or ignored, existing as it does in all types of research. Thus there is a need for the researcher to recognise his or her own position (Smith 2003). Any feelings of powerlessness on the part of participants should not be exacerbated by the interviewer. Researchers should be constantly aware of the power balance within the relationship context. The realities of positionality within the context of this research will be examined later when considering the challenges of working with children in research.

### 3.10 Interview Dynamics

When engaging in group interviews with families, siblings and others, the dynamic of relationships at the time of the interview can be influenced by events which may have happened earlier, or any other emotions that the participant may be feeling towards others in the family, organisations or towards the subject of the study in general - for example anger, annoyance or frustration which researchers should be cognisant of and consider in discussion (Kesby 2007) Similarly Punch has suggested that in qualitative research, responses are “socio-spatially relational” in that they are dependent upon the reality of the setting, relationships and context (Punch 2007). This positionality is seen in particular with children whose responses are often dependent upon who is asking the questions and who is present, in particular, siblings, (Kesby 2007, Punch 2007), Thus an awareness of context, relationships, dynamics and even “mood” is important if researchers are to interpret words and behaviours in an accurate way (Kesby *et al.* 2009: 216).

#### 3.10.1 The Presence of Other Children

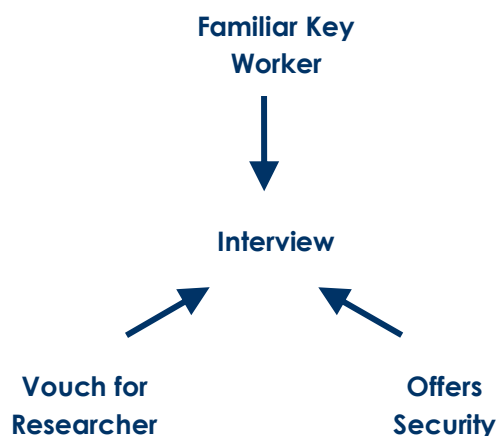
In the implementation of this research, interviews with child headed households were usually carried out in the children’s homes, where there were often other household members present. Denzin (1970) raises the importance of the location of the interview as this has an impact on the atmosphere of the interview experience. In all cases where the interviews took place in the home, the children were extremely welcoming and keen to show the researcher around their dwellings, (a natural response demonstrating deferment to visitors). These were often fairly dilapidated and sometimes extremely sparse in the eyes of the researcher.

All members of the household were encouraged to take part in the interview if they were present, since the terms of reference for the research permitted input from more than one household member. This afforded a broader range of experiences and perspectives. However in practice, on two occasions during the

interviews the presence of others seemed to inhibit the answers of other family members. It was noted at times that if an older member of the household arrived during the interview, the original speaker then would take a back seat and the older member would dominate the interview. This is in part cultural, a responsibility of and deferment to the household head, but discussion with all members of the household, in a situation where they felt able to speak freely, might have offered some different perceptions of the household situation and needs.

### 3.10.2 The presence of other adults

The potential challenges to authentic and truthful data have already been discussed in this chapter, and it is important to consider these issues in the contextual reality of the data collection experience with regards to the presence of others during the interview process, whether they are key informants (gatekeepers), interpreters or other family members. In the case of the first interviews of children involved in NGO programmes, the key worker (gatekeeper) was present at the interview, and in fact acted as interpreter at this first meeting. This offered a significant advantage as these were adults who were already active in the children's lives and known to them; they were able to offer reassurance, security and comfort to the children in the interview situation. Finally their introduction allowed the researcher a level of acceptance in the eyes of the children from the outset (see Figure 3.5).



**Figure 3.5: Interview dynamic**



When permission was granted by UNHCR for interviews to be conducted in the refugee camp at Byumba, it was stipulated that the camp coordinator had to be present. This was advantageous again as she was known to the young people and was a very popular figure in the camp; she was also very enthusiastic about the research and keen to assist in any way. Clearly her presence during the interviews might have compromised the freedom of the children to be honest when answering questions and describing challenges they had experienced and were still encountering. However she encouraged them to respond truthfully, and in her own interview, as a key actor in the lives of these refugee child headed households, presented a valuable insight into the circumstances in which they found themselves and in particular their emotional well-being. In addition her contributions aided in the triangulation of data and provided reference points to the unique circumstances of these members of the sample group

However it is understandable that the presence of a representative from the NGO can also have a negative effect upon the independence of the research and the accuracy of responses offered. The attendance of the person who offers support for a household in terms of the physical needs, that is shelter, education, food, and health, and emotionally in offering support and advice at the interview can exert an influence upon the attitude and responses of the child. The fact that the NGO representative might have introduced the researcher to the household could influence the answers given; the children might believe the research would have an impact upon the project they were involved with and therefore induce them to respond according to individual desires or requests they might have harboured. So the presence of the project coordinator or counsellor in some interviews, especially during the first field visit when two were also acting as interpreter, may have inhibited the respondents' real feeling and responses. In an attempt to counteract a biased set of responses, it was always stressed at the outset that the researcher had no connection or influence with the NGO or the government and thus no promises could be made as to provision of services or assistance. In addition assurances were given to the children that there would be no reporting of individual grievances to the NGO at this time. Some children did express dissatisfaction with some aspects of the NGOs provision during this first interview

and with the coordinator present (who was able to clarify individual situations later). However children did speak more freely of problems or concerns with the project on subsequent interviews, when the representatives were not present. Since most of the children included in the sample were Kinyarwanda speakers with only two or three able to speak an adequate level of English or French to ensure a successful conversation, it was necessary to use interpreters at most of the interviews with the households.. During the first field visit the representatives of the organisations involved acted as interpreter which limited the number of people present and therefore made the process less intimidating for the children. Interviews with other key stakeholders, for example NGO managers and representatives from communities, were carried out in French or English by the researcher. During the second and third visits, two interpreters were used who were themselves child heads and had been included in the sample group. Each worked with the researcher and the research assistant. Their linguistic competence had been revealed at the first encounters and the opportunity to assist in this way also provided them with some short term income. Both had been proposed by Inkuru Nziza as suitable and capable individuals to assist in this research, and were introduced to the methods and aims of the study. They were able to observe the techniques employed, and were made aware of the sensitive nature of the subject (since all three were child heads themselves).

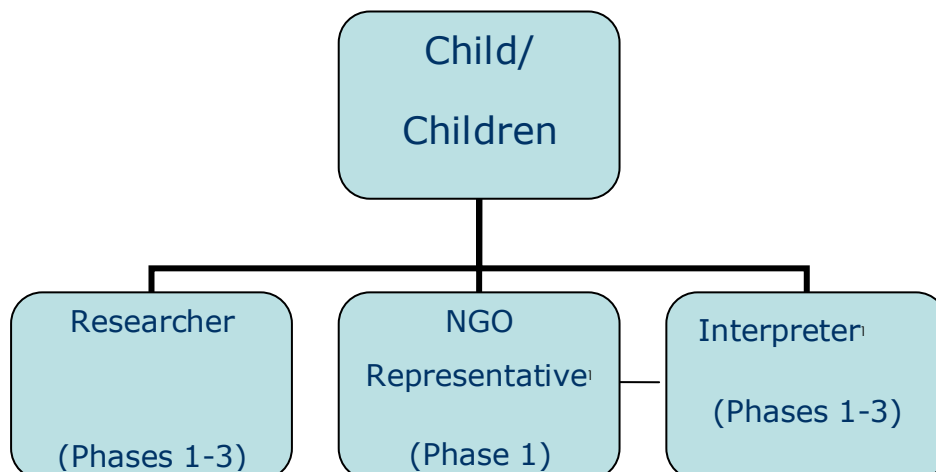
Their presence proved to have advantages and disadvantages. On a positive note since they were young (and considered “children”) - in their late teens and early twenties - the participants did not feel intimidated by their presence; some of the children were known to the interpreters since they lived in the same area or were included on the same NGO programme; the interpreters were able to interact easily with the children being interviewed, and they could identify with the situations described by the young people. This offered opportunities for triangulation and clarification, linguistically and practically, both during the interview itself and afterwards in discussion. Thus they brought a new perspective to the research which enriched the data collected.

The interpreter used in the majority of the interviews developed a keen intuition about the nature of the aims and objectives of the research, and in some

instances was able to casually direct conversations into areas which would enhance the information gathered from particular interviews. On three occasions when members from households were not available for interview during the time of the field visit, he was able to carry out the interviews at a later date and at their convenience.

One disadvantage of the interpreters used during the second and third field visits was that all three were male. When interviewing male children this could be an advantage but occasionally could present a more stilted and wary conversation with some of the female children.

Two research assistants also carried out interviews during the second and third visits. Full training was given and the assistants were able to observe interviews before undertaking them alone. The interpreter who was most experienced in the interviews was used with the research assistant who carried out some interviews during the third visit. This was important because he was already known to the young people in the sample group, and it gave more continuity to the relationships which had been built up thus far. In addition he was able to work in a complementary way having a keen understanding of the style of the interviews in which he had taken part on previous occasions.



**Figure 3.6: Possible Individuals present at interviews** <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> At times the NGO representative was also the interpreter; in most 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews there was no NGO representative present

Researchers should always demonstrate sensitivity and perception within the interview context, ensuring that all interviewees are treated with dignity and respect. Gaskell has emphasised the importance of listening to children, and assuring them that they are being listened to when conducting research. If they are in vulnerable situations, they and their needs may have been ignored in the past (Gaskell 2009: 163). However this needs to be tempered with a realisation that their expectation of change and the practical outcome of the research may not be achieved

### **3.10.3 Ethics**

Whilst the question of positionality within the research dynamic is a significant one, interwoven with it is the ethical perspective that is crucial to all research, whether qualitative or quantitative. When the researcher is engaging with children, ethical considerations are even more fundamental within the research process.

Ethical processes and principles must be included from the outset of the research in gaining the consent of participants and ensuring that confidentiality is guaranteed in the study (Van Blerk 2006, Bryden 2006, Scheyvens *et al.* 2003). At the centre of this is the understanding that ethical research must not be harmful, intrusive or embarrassing, but can work for good (Scheyvens *et al.* 2003, Matthews *et al.* 1998, Hay 2003). Bryman (2004) cites Diener and Crandall's checklist of ethical criteria – these include issues of harm done to, or deception of participants, or whether there is informed consent or an invasion of privacy, (Diener and Crandall 1978 cited in Bryman 2004). However the researcher must take responsibility and bear these criteria in mind. The researcher should remain non-judgemental and unbiased and give the participants an opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time (Longhurst 2003). This last issue is extremely important when carrying out research with children. Research may be more beneficial for the researcher than the participant in the first instance, but this does not mean it is unethical as changes may result from the research in the future (Scheyvens *et al.* 2003). May confronts these ethical challenges by citing

Barnes' view of ethics as a basic decision of what is "morally right or wrong" (May 2001, citing Barnes 1979: 16). In the case of research, the notion of justice and fairness is superior to the needs of the research itself, and linked with that are the value systems and experiences of the researcher.

Valentine has underlined the necessity to be culturally sensitive particularly when working in developing countries and Longhurst has stated that within the semi-structured interview framework, there exists a "web of ethical issues and power relations ...which need unpacking" (Valentine 1997; Longhurst; 2003: 127). This is discussed below with regard to this research.

#### **3.10.4 Ethics: Research with Children**

Research involving children is subject to ethical sensibilities and these considerations have been particularly relevant and uppermost when conducting this particular research, focused as it is on vulnerable children who are primarily without parents or guardians. All procedures were followed within Coventry University's Ethics Committee requirements. Written explanation of the research itself was presented, translated and read out by the interpreter for all informants. Care was taken to outline in detail to the children the aims of the research, and a responsible adult known to the household was present during the first meeting to ensure that the children were willing to participate in the research, thus providing consent. For households who were included in NGO programmes, a programme worker was present for the first interview. In subsequent interviews, contact was made via the same adult, but the young people were happy to meet without this person being present. For those households not involved in a programme, the adult who had introduced them to the researcher, for example the church or community leader, was present for the first interview and in some second interviews, depending on location.

At all times the young people being interviewed gave their consent to be included in this research, and most were more relaxed in their responses when the adults were not present. They were made aware at the beginning of each meeting that there would be no immediate benefits to them in participating, and all were keen

to be interviewed despite this, within no- one declining to take part in the research. No promise of recompense was given, but at the end of the interview a gift was given to each child. During the first interviews these gifts were usually pens, paper, or a football, but in later interviews they were monetary. The question as to whether the information gained is affected by recompense is a valid one; Van Blerk (2006) has suggested that a meal or party at the end of the research might be appropriate, but emphasises that if the research is involving children who are struggling for survival, then a cash gift might be the best alternative. .The decision to give money in this case was determined for that reason; many of these children were living in extreme poverty, and thus money was a response to immediate need.

The confidentiality of the research process was guaranteed; assurances of anonymity for the children were given; as can be seen, pseudonyms are used in the thesis. Whilst photographs were taken with the consent of the children during and at the end of the sessions, their purpose was to identify the households when analysing the data, and the children are not identified by name when included in any printed material. In addition, they will not be included in electronic documents available on the internet.

Finally the longitudinal nature of the study was a framework which facilitated a growing rapprochement with the households in the sample group. Relationships had developed over several visits during the four years, which in some cases has led to close friendships on both sides.

### **3.10.5 Representation**

The matter of just representation is also a crucial component in qualitative research methods. The self is intrinsic in research, both of the researcher and researched and therefore the question of representation cannot be divorced from what the participants bring with them to this process - claims of "truths " are only possible within a framework of recognition that there are limits of vision and knowledge, and that there exist at the same time multiple truths (Mohammed 2001: 113). All truths are not equal, and it is necessary to examine which or whose truth it is, and discern which is the most representative (Mohammed 2001;

Ley & Mountz 2001). The fact that knowledge is always "partial, situated and socially constructed and contested" must influence the research processes to reveal as true a representation as possible (Limb & Dwyer 2001: 8). This is an ethical challenge for the researcher as co-representative of the work (Smith 2001). Mohammed states that representing the "other" is a social and cultural privilege, but borne out of an unequal relation of power, and one where the researcher presents information to privileged audiences and is able to influence them (Mohammed 2001). In this research every effort has been made to interrogate the issues fully, to clarify when responses were vague and seemed contradictory, and to seek confirmation with other parties. There is also an element of self-questioning on the part of the researcher. At the moment of research design and when choosing the methods to be used, there is a requirement to objectively look at the aims of each area of questioning to assess whether the information is gathered and presented impartially. The semi-structured interview method used was conducive to this fluid conversation; it allowed for diversion into areas of discussion which contextualised the information gathered and shaped the research argument. The findings are presented in as pure a manner as possible, and as an objective representation. Again the act of confirming and triangulating the findings is necessary to ensure an honest portrayal of the realities.

### 3.11 Realities and Context

The contribution of the interviewee to the study and its interpretation by the researcher is inevitably of key importance to the effectiveness of research such as this. Here this has been brought into relief particularly in relation to the Rwandan historical and political context, in that some of the ethical principles which underpinned the research in fact inhibited and prevented some elaboration and historical clarity during the interviews. Difficulties presented themselves when information was sought regarding the establishment of households, for example: although children would reveal the causes of death of parents - genocide, war or illness - the reluctance on the part of the interviewer to press for

further, more detailed information stemmed from the ethical requirement to limit any distress or to remind them of difficult times. Sometimes they were keen to talk about the past, but often those who were young children at the time, and are now in their twenties, were not keen to reveal their whole story in particular regarding the genocide.

The other major barrier to the ideal “semi structured” interview, that is, free elaboration and discussion, in this study was the restriction on any discussion of ethnicity and ethnic issues during these conversations. This is effectively prohibited in Rwanda. As discussed in the background chapter the Rwandan government has been active in pursuing anyone who is deemed to be inciting ethnic differences and has even recently aggressively prosecuted those it believes have been instrumental in encouraging a genocide mentality (Hintjens 2008). For researchers, then, the implications of straying too far into discussions involving ethnicity are dangerous. Such information would have enhanced this work, in that understandings and conclusions may have been different according to the personal circumstances and the spatial histories within the country both in 1994 and today. For example it would have been useful to know why Jean-Pierre was left to care for his baby sister when he was only 7 years old in the aftermath of the genocide, when no neighbours ever offered support or assistance. Was that to do with ethnicity, his family’s history in the community, or for some other reason? Hence the ethnic dilemma is discussed in this work, but it must be considered in the light of the limitations of research at grass roots level.

### 3.12 Triangulation

The constant quest for the authentication of data and confirmation of the veracity of responses given is imperative in ethnographic and social science research, as advocated by Denzin, in particular with regards to the interpretivist perspective (1970, 1978 as cited in BERA 2008: 2). As has been noted in this research into child headed households, the motivation behind certain responses, the presence of others within the interview context, and the realities of the children’s circumstances all exert a significant influence upon the information gathered. Therefore it is necessary to verify and corroborate as far as possible the data obtained, as confirmed by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 320) and Hoepfl (1997). In



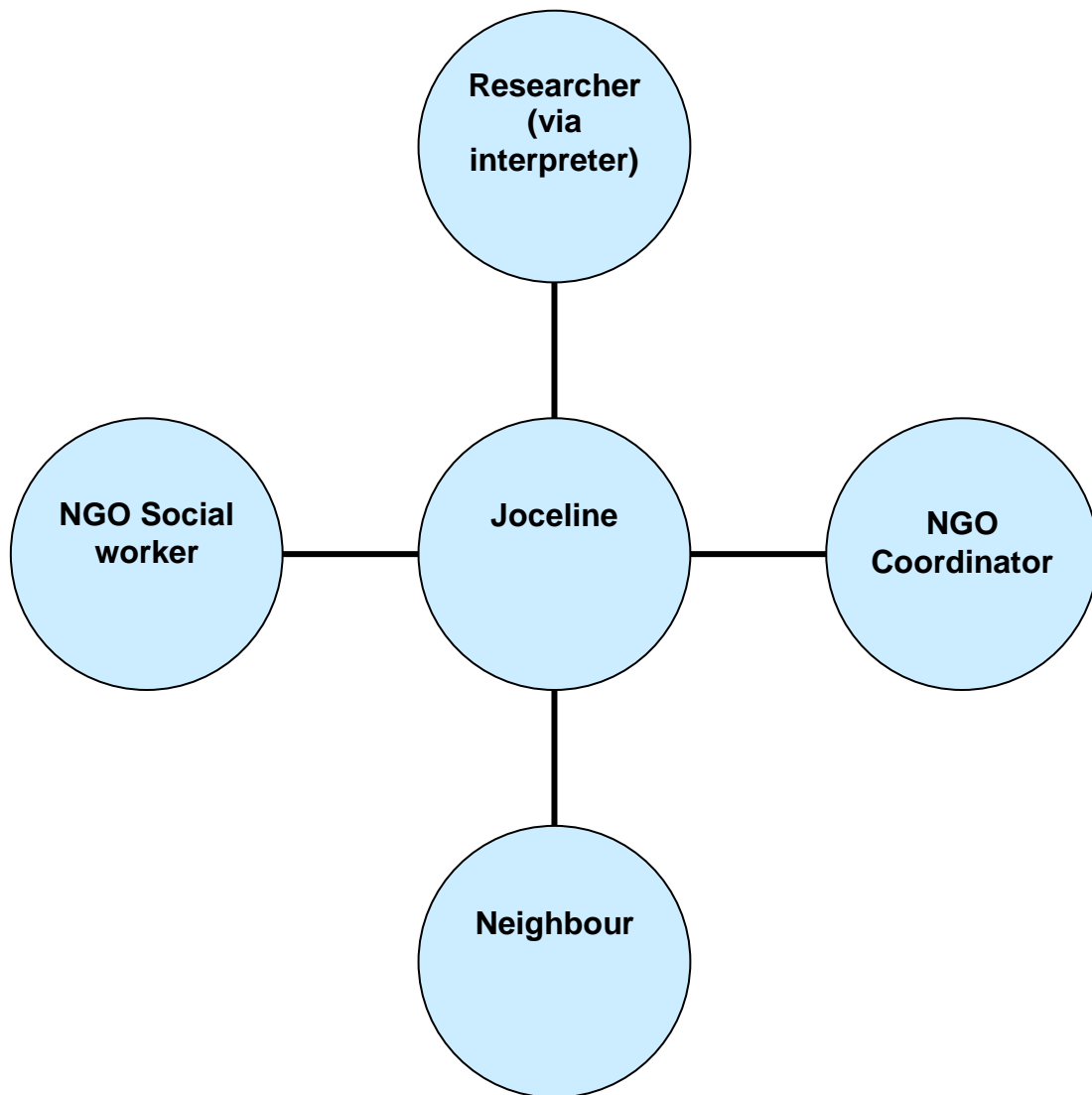
addition this third party clarification can lead to further pertinent data being offered which places into context that which has already been given, and enriches and shapes the subsequent analysis.

In this study, the body of informants and gatekeepers - NGO representatives and key workers, social workers linked to programmes, and local community leaders such as church pastors and *nyumakumi* (elected commune leaders) - was able to provide an insight into uncertainties and contradictions which surfaced during some interviews, and on occasion offered an alternative view which contextualised the discussion and outcomes.

Inevitably however there can be circumstances where several individuals offer differing and sometimes opposing accounts. This elicits a need for further examination, and a narration and confirmation of the story from more than one viewpoint. If one accepts that objective and unbiased truths do not always constitute what is presented during the data collection, then all attempts should be made to secure the most accurate representation possible. In the case of Joceline (18 years, female), (figure 3.7), the story she recounted regarding her home situation and income generation activities at the time of her third interview was contradicted by other key actors in her life who were observing events from different perspectives. In situations such as this, analysis can only be realised within a qualified framework of understanding, and with the most accurate portrayal possible incorporated into the body of research. Richardson and St Pierre (2005) contend that the term “triangulation” should be replaced by “crystallisation”, as within post modernist ethnography, the properties of the crystal lend themselves more accurately to comparison with the more fluid subtleties of such qualitative research methods than the two dimensional triangle:

“prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting of in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose – not triangulation but crystallisation.’ (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005: 963)”.

Figure 3.7 shows the individuals who assisted with the corroboration of Joceline’s narrative during the third field visit (2008).



**Figure 3.7: “Triangulation” of Joceline’s story**

**Source: Author’s fieldwork, 2008**

Joceline’s story is described in detail in Chapter 6, however in the context of the triangulation of data, it is appropriate to examine the role of those who informed this narrative. First of all, Joceline herself spoke of what had happened in her life since the previous visit 16 months before; the NGO coordinator gave an

alternative story (in private); the interpreter, who also knew her, gave his version of what had happened which differed slightly from that of the NGO coordinator; the social worker offered a more sympathetic version, the neighbour added some other details. This “gossiping” of data can be viewed on several levels; as a genuine desire to assist in the research itself and in the completion of Joceline’s story within the context of the longitudinal study, a concern about the circumstances in which Joceline was finding herself, or possibly a vicarious pleasure in speaking of others (and their misfortunes in this case). Nevertheless, the importance of clarification is crucial to the integrity of research, and therefore should be accepted as a key support in the interpretation of data and its conclusions.

### 3.13 Personality and Positionality

The presence of the self in research has already been discussed in this chapter, and Lofland and Lofland (1995) raise the issue of the emotional pressure which fieldwork can cause, the element of sympathy and the desire to help on the part of the researcher (Lofland and Lofland 1995 as cited in Coffey 1999). This was a pertinent challenge when dealing with child headed households. In this case the poverty of the situation was a catalyst for action: the extent of the need of the children within the households was so apparent that the researcher felt obliged to set in motion some support to ensure the survival of the household. This may be interpreted as a level of involvement which was too close to the subjects and might be seen to have risked compromising the “objective” nature of the academic research; however there was clearly a moral and ethical dilemma which was unfolding when confronted with children who were barely surviving. It did not seem an acceptable contract to ask these young people to assist in the research exercise and form part of the data sample, and as a research community not to be moved to contribute to the improvement in their standard of living and livelihood survival since many of these children were barely surviving.

The question, then, which demands debate is whether this study: a) offers an authentic research truth and can be considered a valid academic study or b) that

some consequences compromise the research, presenting an inconsistent and falsely manufactured snapshot of the reality. Moreover, the research might be considered in this case by some to err on the fabrication of circumstance, effectively becoming a “halfway house” of academic truth and humanitarian intervention; possibly a marriage of the academic and the charitable. The conclusion may be drawn that the researcher’s involvement is personalised, however the reality of certain areas of research in developing countries does at times reveal an immediate and sometimes fundamental need for help to survive, which would present a challenge for any person to deny, however independent they attempted to remain. Ultimately, the question which needs to be addressed is whether, in the quest for total objectivity in research and the optimum success of the research, the quality of life of the participant can be ignored. Furthermore, it is questionable whether such objectivity is ever achievable.

Is the primary priority the successful research project or the improvement in the lives of those subjects? Hopefully it will be both. The aim of this specific research is to offer a true and informative perspective on the child headed household in Rwanda, and as a consequence publish these findings to all actors in the arena: NGOs, agencies, and government. The nature of such a project however is that a response time of several years may have elapsed before action is taken after the research is disseminated. The immediate and urgent needs of the children in these households required a more prompt action.

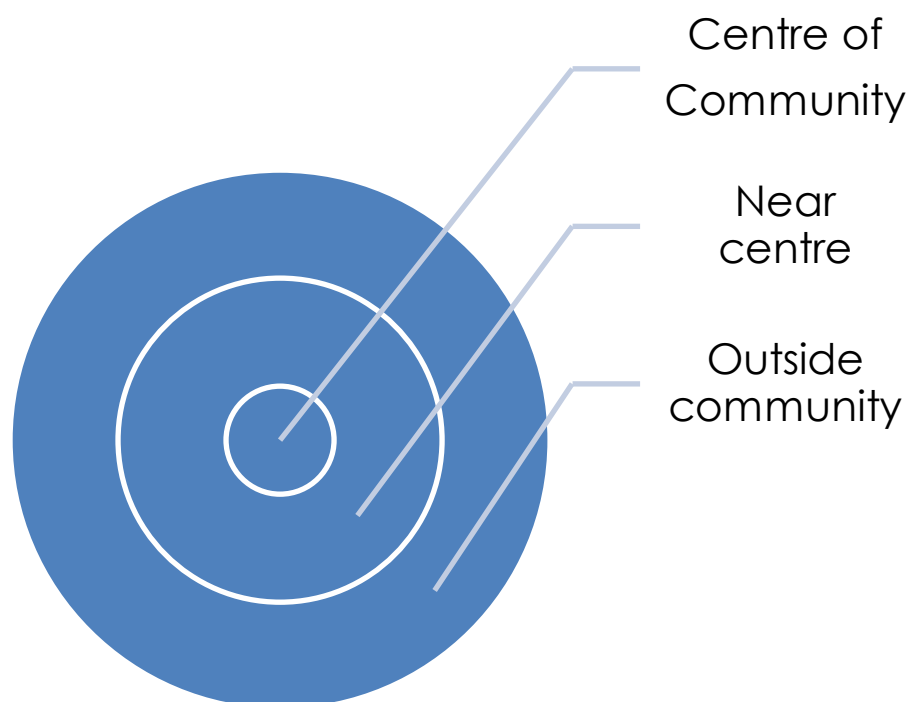
### 3.14 Limitations in the Research Methods

Some areas of questioning which would have enriched this research were unable to be visited, due to the politically sensitive nature of the subject matter. Assessments about community life in certain neighbourhoods would have been enhanced by more information from a historical and political perspective about the events in particular areas during the genocide. Similarly while the children’s histories tell us some of their stories, the unique circumstances of each family and relationships are not known. In fact none of the households divulged their

ethnicity at any point, nor did the other informants and gatekeepers. Whilst their stories can offer some clues to their ethnic group, to probe further would necessitate a line of questioning about ethnicity, and as discussed previously, in Rwanda's current political climate this could be considered divisive and lead to the research being terminated by the authorities.

Other shortcomings which emerge from this research are the unasked questions which are exposed when analysing the data. These may be missing either for reasons of ethics as discussed above, or because of the direction which the conversation took at the time. In addition, areas of interest raised by some participants were not able to be debated with others in the sample group at all times.

A more precise method would have clarified the questions regarding inclusivity within communities; for example if a labelled "doughnut diagram" had been used as a prompt during the interview itself to allow the children to place themselves in the community, as illustrated below (Figure 3.8) instead of an exercise requiring the positioning of the household within the picture of a community as was actually used, and is seen in the Appendix 5 (i). However this is still prone to misinterpretation and children might understand the concept again in a more literal way, that is, where their house is actually located.



**Figure 3.8: Doughnut diagram: community integration**

### 3.15 Summary of Research Method

This qualitative study is significant from the perspective of its focus on vulnerable children in a developing country, in that it poses challenges associated with ethics, positionality and representation which are particularly important when engaging in research with children. The behavioural approach taken has served to offer a perspective of the structures and livelihood needs of the CHH in Rwanda from the child-centred outlook which was employed. These theoretical frameworks have then formed the structure for this examination into the heart of the CHH, and its behaviours and challenges. The informal semi-structured interview technique as a tool for gathering this data was appropriate for the context in which the research took place; equally the longitudinal nature of the study ensured a familiarity and growing rapport with the children, which in turn built trust and security within the interview spaces, and allowed fuller and more

honest responses. This meant that the overriding tone of the majority of the interviews was that of a friendly informal discussion. The nature of the research was such that there was always a risk of some emotional concerns, but every effort was made to minimise distress for those who were gracious enough to participate in the research.

Finally the sampling methods and criteria employed offered the basis for a working definition which formed a platform on which the findings gathered in the course of the interviews could build into a more comprehensive and informative model for the child headed household concept in Rwanda. There was an acknowledgement of the unique position of the child in the CHH as child and adult. From these methodologies emerged a concept which defined the terms of references of the child headed household as households led by a young person, usually of the sibling generation, with no actively responsible adult present, recommended for inclusion by key informants or other children, supported by an NGO, government agency or surviving independently, in an urban, peri-urban or rural area.

## **Chapter 4: DEFINITIONS AND CHALLENGES: THE CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLD – A LITERATURE REVIEW**

The emergence of the child headed household in Sub-Saharan Africa particularly over the past decade has been a result of the high death rates of adults within the 15 to 49 age group in certain communities. Recent research and reports on the phenomenon of child headed households have confirmed that HIV/AIDS is a major contributory factor to their establishment, and these households have formed in regions where there is a high death rate due to AIDS (Foster 2000, Barnett and Whiteside 1992, Iliffe 2006). However whilst such compositions have always existed at some point in most cultures, these occurred primarily in times of hardship or conflict, and in general on a very minor scale. A child becoming the sole carer in a household is the last resort, and such households would be in very vulnerable circumstances. More recently, the existence of such groupings began to be recognised in countries such as Uganda, where high rates of HIV/AIDS infection led to a rapid increase in the number of single orphans and then progressively double orphans. A major consequence of this manifested itself in a rise in the numbers of foster families needed to cope with the high numbers of parentless children. Traditional coping strategies, which were originally adopted, comprised chiefly the care of orphans by extended family - grandparents, aunts and uncles. However such strategies broke down in many cases, and particularly in certain areas, as the sheer numbers of children needing homes outgrew the capacity for integration into the extended families, families which had already taken in several orphans, and for whom resources were already scarce. In addition, the health of the carers was frequently poor, and as the infection continued to spread through communities, it weakened and debilitated not only the carers themselves, but also the structures and mechanisms which had supported communities in the past, in times of difficulty.

This development of the child headed household has been noted and studied over the past decade, with a focus on the AIDS-driven CHHs, and on those countries with high infection rates. Defining the CHH is challenging due to the determining powers of culture and context in shaping those definitions. Constructs of childhood are multiple and varied, and differ between spaces and



cultures necessitating an exploration of the child and its environment. In addition, Eurocentric approaches are occasionally prone to offering a biased and culturally inappropriate framework.

This thesis attempts to provide a structure for definition of the CHH which is holistic in its perspective. The examination of livelihood needs from a long term approach allows an analysis of the impact of change on households, as opposed to the majority of previous research which has been focused on “snapshots” in time. This chapter will provide an overview of the “children in development” debate, with its relevance and application to the phenomenon of child headed households. This will include an interrogation of the causes of the increasing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly with regards to the AIDS epidemic and conflict. It will consider the issue of definitions of “child” (explored in detail in Chapter 5), “orphan” and “household” with reference to current research and policy models. Subsequently, the focus is on Rwanda, post-1994, and looks at the challenges of definition; livelihood needs (in particular those of land ownership, income generation and education); and finally on the question of the non-material needs of protection, community integration, participation and support. This longitudinal study was carried out in several communities in Rwanda over the period from 2004 to 2008.

#### 4.1 Definitions of Orphans

The rise in the numbers of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa – from less than 1 million to an estimated 12 million between 1990 and 2007 - has been documented by many academics and nongovernmental organisations over the past decade (UNAIDS/WHO 2008). The reasons for this rapid increase in numbers of orphans is the AIDS pandemic which by 2004 had led to the presence of 12 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS 2008). These orphans are defined by UNAIDS as children under 15 years who had lost at least one parent to the disease. This definition, adhered to by international bodies, governments and most nongovernmental agencies, confirms the definition of orphan as a child who has lost at least one parent to the disease, but

clarifies further that he or she may be a maternal orphan whose mother has died, a paternal orphan when the father has died or a double orphan, one who has lost both parents. Therefore UNAIDS states that “15 million children under age 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS. The vast majority - more than 12 million - are in sub-Saharan Africa, where the weight of numbers puts an enormous strain on the traditional family safety net” (UNAIDS 2004).

However the difficulties of assessing accurately the numbers of orphans are highlighted by Barnett and Whiteside (2002). They question the method of calculating the number of orphans by using the number of deaths. In order for this to be accurate there is clearly a need to ensure that the mortality data is up to date. The definition of orphanhood in itself has been contested, and it has been claimed by many academics, Barnett and Whiteside (2002) among them, that the actual classification of “orphans” in the way used by the UN, for example, has led to an underestimation in many cases of the numbers of orphans. Beyond this they state that the intrinsic problem in this case is the definition of the orphans. As they state, “the question of definition is important for action and for policy” (Barnett and Whiteside 2002:199).

They cite the case of Malawi, where the number of AIDS deaths was thought to have been underestimated by a factor of five due to the use of old data. Here the government had been identifying an orphan as a child with a mother or both parents missing. In other words they were neglecting to include paternal orphans. Including this category (where the father is dead or no longer present) served to increase the number of orphans and offered a more substantial estimation of the actual numbers of vulnerable children (Barnett and Whiteside 2002).

Monk (2000) has also highlighted the paradox of definition in general terms, with specific reference to the situation in Uganda. He comments that the view by statisticians is that paternal orphans are not included in the statistics since it is easier to quantify numbers of orphans living with the mother; also it is not always clear whether the father is dead or just not present. Yet as Monk argues, it does

not alter the fact that the child is vulnerable, whether the father is dead or living elsewhere and not contributing to his welfare. Barnett and Whiteside (2002) illustrate the same point with regards to Botswana, where in 1991, 47.1 per cent of the country's households were categorized as female headed, that is, not headed by a male (father). The death of the mother then, means that the children will be double orphaned due to the father's absence.

The custom in some societies of the father's family taking over the care of the children on the death of the father, despite the mother's presence is also considered in Monk's work (2000) as this raises the question of calling children "orphans" despite the fact that they have a mother, albeit one who is not living with them. Other reasons for care by paternal kin include abandonment of the children by the mother, the departure of the mother to look for work, and remarriage when the new husband refuses to accept the children of the first marriage. Finally, a woman might believe her children will have a better chance of survival living with other family members, rather than in a widow-headed household.

The challenges faced by paternal orphans then, Monk posits, are sufficiently numerous that to exclude this sub-group from the statistics offers a false representation of the reality of orphans today. He also draws attention to the significance of defining an orphan, and following work in Luweero district, Uganda, concludes that the concept of "orphan" is variable between cultures and spaces, and so prohibits a definitive classification (Monk 2000). This links in with the interpretation and understanding of the orphan within society in Sub-Saharan Africa, discussed below.

In general Barnett and Whiteside (2002) and Monk (2000) have discussed the definitional concepts of orphan through the lens of the global AIDS epidemic and its consequent creation of large numbers of orphans. Hunter and Williamson (2000) assert that out of 26 worst affected countries, 47.2 per cent of all maternal

and double orphans are so because of AIDS. Such data is significant for this research, since the causes of orphanhood in the Rwandan context are primarily conflict and AIDS, with many cases in the sample representing children who have lost one parent due to both of these reasons.

Monk (2000) extends his classification of orphans to include those children who are affected by the AIDS pandemic in the same way as orphans. For example, this includes those living with guardians despite the fact that their parents are alive, but who are incapable, due to illness, of caring for them. He categorises them as “*de facto*” orphans, since they experience the same challenges as orphans. Similarly, he asserts that orphans living with non-orphans (fostered or adopted) confer onto the non-orphans hardships (of fewer resources, less space), thus allowing Monk to suggest the overall phrase “AIDS affected children” to replace the term “orphan” (Monk 2000:16). The disadvantage of using this term is that not all cases will affect official “orphans”, and in categorising them all as one distinct group, this could magnify the perceived need, and sometimes cause a misdirection of resources. This shapes statistics further, and serves to blur the realities of the problem.

The use of the word “vulnerable “ as a descriptor and indeed as a criterion for the definition of the needy has been presented increasingly over the past decade in particular subsequent to the AIDS pandemic and its impacts. Grassly and Timaeus (2003: 1), looking into the question of orphans and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, have indeed stated that vulnerability is a “nebulous concept”. The reality of vulnerability does not only affect those children who are orphaned, but has a broader impact, they contend; children and adults can be rendered vulnerable due to indirect reasons. Equally the vulnerable are difficult to quantify, since they encompass a whole range of both the immediate and consequent impacts of AIDS. The government of Rwanda, in its National Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (MINALOC) includes orphans and vulnerable people as its designees. It considers as vulnerable those who are in “diverse difficult circumstances, which prevent them, from enjoying their full rights” (MINALOC 2003: 1), classing them into 15 groups:

- Children living in households headed by children
- Children in fostering care
- Street children
- Children living in centres
- Children in conflict with the law
- Children with disabilities
- Children affected by armed conflict
- Children who are sexually exploited and/or abused
- Working children,
- Children affected/infected by HIV/AIDS
- Infants with their mothers in prison
- Children in very poor households
- Refugee and internally displaced children
- Children of single mothers
- Girls who are married before their majority (MINALOC 2003:i)

All of these children are in need of support and assistance, and often definitional limitations prevent them from accessing help. The child headed household is included within the vulnerable, but its own definition continues to be nebulous.

## 4.2 Age as Definition

Concerns felt by the international community in relation to human rights have long been promoted by organisations such as the UN and enshrined in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, adopted in 1948. In 1989, the UN officially extended this in specific terms to provide protection for the most vulnerable in society, the children. The UN Declaration for the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 but ratified in 1990, immediately provides an age model for the child in Article 1, stating that: “A child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (UNCRC 1990). Consequently many institutions, governments and practitioners have been using this as a term of reference when devising and implementing programmes for orphans and vulnerable children for many years.

When this age-based definition is used in reference to the head of a household however, there are alternative and more fundamental elements which contribute

to the interpretation of the term “child”. This is addressed in Chapter 5, where a comprehensive analysis of the theories and literature surrounding the concept of the “child” and childhood as a construct, consolidated and enhanced with the findings of this research.

For the purposes of this research into the child headed household, the question of the age of “the child”, for example, is significant for reasons of resources and assistance. Kesby *et al.* (2006) argue that within Zimbabwean society, colonialism brought with it numerical age measure as a key delineator of childhood and adulthood. At 21 men were liable to pay taxes imposed by colonisers. The authors contend that colonialism in fact reformed identities. Within Shona society the defining moment was measured by activity not time. Thus the stepping point between girlhood and womanhood was leaving home, and a boy, leaving home and setting up on his own became a man. Their research found that unmarried youth are treated as “non-adults” and effectively are considered as “children” (Kesby *et al.* 2006: 190). Further divergence from the UN model for the definition of orphans is in the field of age parameters for the child and consequently the orphan. In Uganda, the government has defined an orphan as anyone under the age of 18 years who has lost one or both parents. Again, Monk asserts that for the UN, limiting the age of orphans to those under 15 years ignores all of those who still depend on guardians for support until they reach 18, and he goes on to argue that the idea of “dependency” may indeed be a better indicator of “the child” than other measures (Monk 2000).

This notion of dependency contributes to a further progression of the categorisation and definition of orphanhood, as Monk (2000) reveals from research in Uganda and India. He discovered that orphans often were dependent for longer. He gives as reasons for this, the impact of the loss of parents upon the children, manifested in practical (financial) challenges, emotional effects and often a disrupted education, citing the example of the presence of 20 year olds in primary classes in Uganda.

Foster *et al* (1997) offer an additional category of “non-adult headed household” in identifying “adolescent headed households”, where the authors confined their identified sample to young people between 18 and 24 years of age. Whilst this approach provides one solution to the dilemma of one age definition framework, it does not consider that there may be other age limits in play, and that the definition of “adolescent “ may also differ culturally and spatially. The age specific notion of the period of adolescence varies between sources; defined by the World Health Organisation as between 10 and 19 years of age, there is an acknowledgment that there is overlap between definitions of adolescents, youth (15-24 years) and young people (10-24 years). Other factors such as biological and socio-cultural also impact these measures of definition (WHO 2001). In addition, age may not be a factor in the circumstances and needs of the households themselves.

Thus the challenge of using numerical age based criteria in attempting to define the child headed household denies the contextual roles and responsibilities of those heading these households.

### 4.3 Household Definition

The term “household” also varies between societies and cultures, and therefore necessitates a definitional analysis, in order to allow an examination of its social construct and to put the “child headed household” into context.

Barnett and Whiteside (2002:186) describe the typical model of the development of a household as including the “stages of formation, when a couple joins to reproduce, proceed to have children, who grow up, leave home, the parents grow too old to work and then die”. They acknowledge cultural variations, where adult children may live in the same household with parents and the children or brothers or sisters forming a joint household with their families.

This traditional structure does not account for variations within the composition of the household or the reasons for its formation. Debate on the fluidity of the household in the case of sub-Saharan Africa and within the particular context of

child headed households has raised questions regarding the definition of a household. It is important to examine the criteria for the model; whether the household is composed of kin or family members, and if all members of this unit are present all the time. Ntozi and Zirimenya (1999: 198) define a household as a “group of persons who normally live and eat together” and state that “the “head “is the owner of the dwelling.” There is much to be said for this notion as the traditional household model would involve usually a male household head who “owns” the home, in that it is identified as the “family home”, and those who eat and stay there are part of the household, whether they are kin or not.

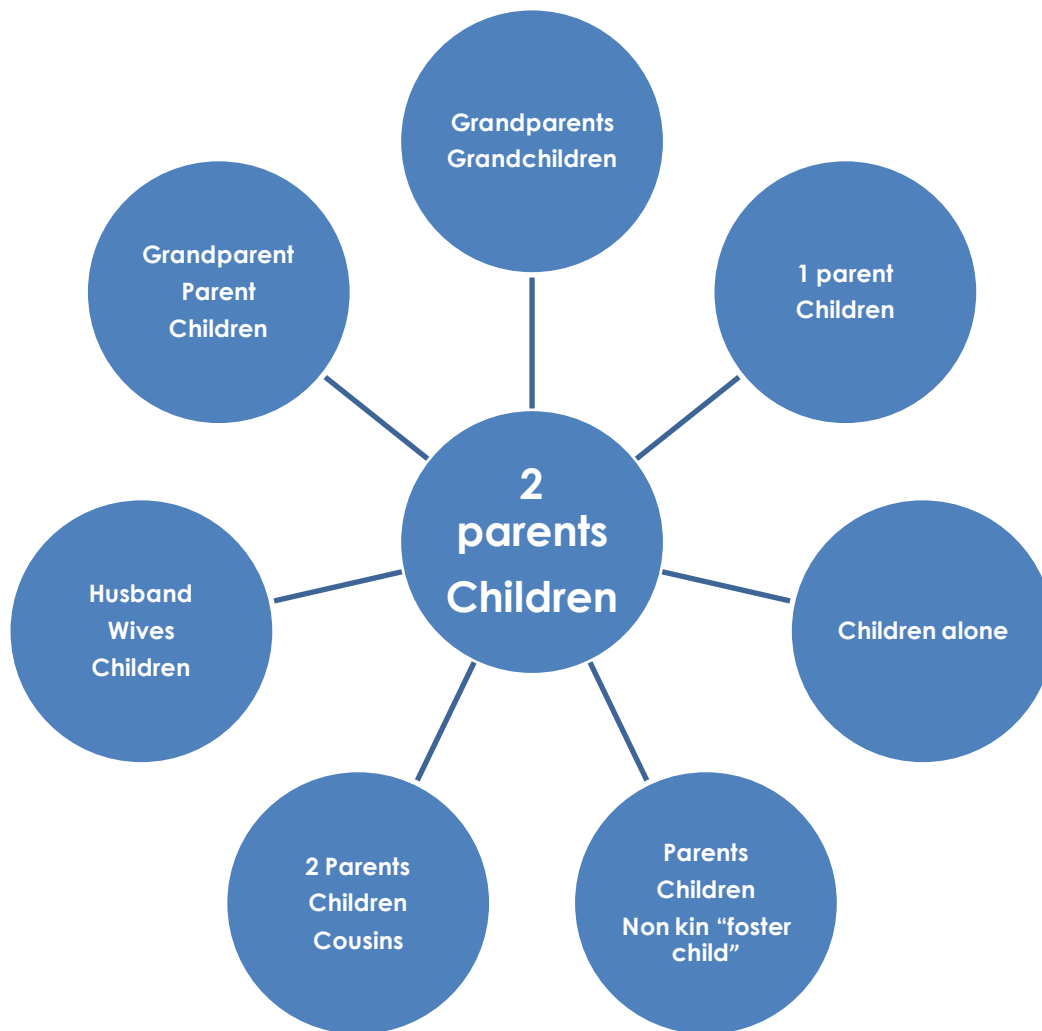
Similar interpretations for the household model include those who “share the same pot”, those who “sleep under the same roof” (personal communication 2005); Foster *et al.* (1997:158) include “one or more people who share cooking and eating arrangements”. Hosegood and Timaeus (2001: 4) consider the challenges in defining the household, and contend that the concept is subjective: it is one’s own sense of with whom one belongs.

Foster (1997) again considers the household head not as the owner of the dwelling, but as the one who takes care of the running of the household, the child care, income, and overall responsibility. The advantage of this is in the context of the loss of the male household head - whether through AIDS or conflict. This definition allows a female to be considered the household head, since even with a male adult present it is she who will in fact be taking responsibility for most of the criteria listed by Foster *et al.* (1997). This has a deeper impact when it comes to the legalities of household heads and ownership, which will be discussed below. Budlender (2003) explores the question of the household head, and advocates a broadening of the criteria used to identify household heads, and the consideration of the various frameworks of household and family models.

As variations to the model of household structure have occurred due to the effect of the AIDS pandemic, Iliffe (2006:112) speaks of “new misshapen households”, referring to those in which AIDS has effectively removed the parents from a household, leaving children with grandparents as their carers. Households which comprise non relatives, as children are orphaned and sometimes fostered or



cared for by other families, but not necessarily their own, are a further modification to those initial household definitions. The variations on the traditional pattern of household composition can be represented as in Figure 2.1:



**Figure 4.1: Household structures<sup>10</sup>**  
**Source: Author**

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<sup>10</sup> Foster child may be an euphemism for domestic help

Barnett and Whiteside (2002) add to this typology new forms of household, created, they believe, as a response to the impact of HIV/AIDS, and including “cluster foster care”, children cared for by neighbouring adults, “itinerant, displaced or homeless children”, and “neglected, displaced children in groups or gangs” (Hunter and Williamson 2000:195). The grave consequences of high numbers of deaths in communities which are unable to cope with remaining children has shaped through necessity these new groups, and as such, consideration of them as household units needs to be debated. Many of these groups share identifying characteristics with the concept of household as discussed earlier.

It can be seen, then, that the household model is changing in structure, redefining itself to function within the limits imposed by the catastrophic effects of disease, and also conflict. This research focuses on one type of household – the child headed.

#### 4.4 The Child Headed Household

The debate surrounding the typology of these households in particular with regard to identification by means of the age of household head is of considerable significance to the livelihoods of the children themselves. Luzze (2002: 32) states that when the head of household reaches the age of 18, then the household is usually no longer considered child headed, and in the case of programmes and assistance, is no longer eligible for inclusion for support. Some NGOs, World Vision in the case of Luzze’s research, were less strict regarding the legalistic framework by age, realising “that a CHH does not automatically cease to be vulnerable when its head legally turns into an adult” (Luzze 2002: 32). This concurs with Monk’s argument that orphanhood and associated dependency can delay the maturity of these young people, rendering them vulnerable for a longer time period than would be the case in non-orphans, as discussed in the section on Age Definition above.

It is clear that each of the elements within a child headed household can be examined and an appropriate typology can be constructed. However the defining structure may vary between situations, and more importantly, within the criteria set by agencies and stakeholders. The terms of reference for child headed households can vary, as is evident in Luzze's work. Plan Finland (2005: 2) suggests the following definition for CHH programmes:-

A household where the children are double orphans...and is headed by a child that is recognised as being;

- Independent
- Responsible for providing leadership and making major decisions in the running of the household;
- Responsible, along with other children, for feeding and maintaining the household;
- Caring for younger siblings and adopting de facto adult/parent roles

At times the child headed household may include an adult who is unable to take responsibility for the household. This is usually someone who is too sick or elderly, and who is in fact dependent on the younger members of the household. The presence of an adult in the households that are examined can obscure the intense vulnerability of the children in the household. There may be an adult present, but it may be on a temporary basis, occasional visitor etc.

The ability to identify a child headed household is also an important factor in any study of the subject and CARE has defined it as:

one or more individuals permanently residing in the same physical location (house, hut, shelter), where either all individuals are children or any adult individual permanently living in that same location is unable to effectively provide care and support to the children of the household due to disability, severe illness or old age (2005: 2).

Foster *et al.* label these as "accompanied child headed households" (1997: 58). For her part, Bray (2003:14) introduces a new category, which she entitles "sibling families", where the head is a sibling aged over 18 years.

All of these definitions carry some relevance to the typology of the child headed household; the composition can include adults who are unable to take responsibility for the rest of the group, and Bray (2003) intervenes in the argument regarding age as a criterion for definition by suggesting that some household heads are siblings over 18. Her new label is pertinent in its assertion that the household will include primarily siblings, of whom the head may well be over 18 years in age, at which, from other definitions already reviewed in this chapter, that person would usually be deemed an adult. However she has drawn a distinction in this case between the traditional household structure and a “young generation” format. For the purposes of this research however all of these structures are considered, and the “sibling family” notion offers a viable alternative to the child headed household. A key characteristic of this definition, however, is the assertion that all members of such a household will be related “biologically”, as siblings. This research will examine the veracity of that claim.

#### **4.4.1 Numbers of Child Headed Households**

UNICEF (2003) found that the numbers of CHHs in countries were very small - less than one per cent (2006: 16) and even Zimbabwe, which contains high numbers of such households was found to have only four child headed households per 100. The countries UNICEF considered for this study included those with high HIV rates - Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda. However evidence contradicts these assertions: higher numbers than these are reported by Luzze (2002) who refers to 2 per cent of orphans in Uganda living in CHHs by 1993 (Natukunda 1993 cited in Luzze 2002: 16), but compares it with the more numerous figures in Rwanda – 65,000 according to Netaid 2001, as cited in Luzze 2002: 16). ACORD’s report of 2001 disputes this with claims of over 227,000 children in child headed households in Rwanda (ACORD 2003: 6).

Country	Child headed households
Burundi	20,500 <sup>11</sup>
Rwanda	45,000
Swaziland	15,000
Tanzania	0.03% (1 CHH found in survey of 3353)
Uganda	2-3% living with sibling 18 years or younger
Zimbabwe	0.4% (4 per 1000)

**Table 4.1: Numbers of child headed households**

**Source: Foster (2004: 71, data adapted from World Bank, UNICEF, WORLD VISION, WHO and Foster *et al* 1997)**

The statistics presented in Table 4.1 are proposed by Foster (2004), but contradict those claimed by other organisations as can be seen above. There is a debate concerning accurate numbers of CHHs, and several sources have disputed the claims of high numbers of these households in some areas – Wittenberg and Collinson (2007: 132) dispute the inflated statistics regarding CHHs declared in the Agincourt Health and Demographic surveillance system (employed in rural South Africa) due to what they claim is data error, and conclude that CHHs are in reality rare, with no evidence of increases in their numbers or of collapse in the traditional household formation and functions. Madhavan and Schatz (2007: 91) concur with their analysis, citing small numbers of child headed households, and noting that when they do occur, they very often “dissolve quickly”, usually into the households of extended family. Hosegood *et al.* (2005) found the CHH served as a temporary arrangement when an adult died, with subsequent movements of adults into the household and children into

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<sup>11</sup> This is the number of unaccompanied children, 60 per cent are orphans: this broadens the concept of the child headed household somewhat as not all unaccompanied children will live in a CHH

the homes of other family members. Again, in 2007 Hosegood *et al.* found no evidence of CHHs in Malawi.

The methodological challenges of gathering the statistics are demonstrated by Ziehl (2002: 441-2), who believes that the media has presented a perspective on AIDS which is incorrect. Quoting statistics from articles in two South African newspapers, (the Sunday Times (2001) and the Mail and Guardian (2001-2)), she contends that the use of absolute numbers gave the impression that the relative percentage was large. She further states that raw data quoted in the research show that there were over 32,000 households headed by 0-4 year olds, which as she contests is not believable, calling into question the reliability of other statistics. She maintains that this is due to young children's data being entered as household heads and not members; the questionnaire does not distinguish between the two. She does not conclude that AIDS is not having an effect, but that research does not support that it is having an effect on households (Ziehl 2002: 442).

Yet Kelso (1994) reported widespread numbers of child headed households; Arnab and Serumaga-Zake (2006) found in their particular area of study, central Botswana, that 38 per cent of households were headed by children, and 4.2 per cent of orphans were household heads. In fact Lloyd (2008: 11) makes the bold statement that "every 14 seconds a child headed household is formed", a statistic which is unsubstantiated. Hosegood (2008) attributes these higher numbers of child headed households in part to the methodology used in the research. The aim of describing life in these households necessitates identification for sample selection, often by means of working with NGOs and similar groups which are focused on supporting the most vulnerable children. Budlender (2003) argues that the timing of the data collection is significant, as it may have occurred on a day when an adult is temporarily absent from the household, perhaps for a only a short period of time, leaving a child as acting head, which then offers a distorted view of the reality of the household structure.

Barnett and Whiteside (2002) consider the studies of households which have been previously carried out to have been limited. One reason for this is that they focus often on rural households, consider the household in isolation and also are usually the results of single visits which do not represent accuracy in assessments. .

Finally, Kesby *et al.* (2006: 197-198) reveal findings from Chizororo's earlier research which suggests that some nongovernmental organisations had difficulty in identifying child headed households. This was due to the important role of adults within the community in identifying orphans, for example grandparents, and for the need to be represented by an adult in order to obtain assistance such as government hand outs. Desmond and Richter (2008) warn that targeting CHHs and orphans ignores what they believe are sometimes more vulnerable groups; in the context of South Africa, the authors note that child headed households and orphans are able to access financial support whereas other groups such as households with single adults or young adults as the head are not eligible for such assistance

#### **4.4.2 Reasons for the Establishment of Child Headed Households**

The reasons for the establishment of child headed households have been considered by many organisations and academics. The phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa has been primarily due to the severe effects of HIV/AIDS, causing high numbers of deaths among adult populations. This has led to the weakening of the extended family due to the widespread infection and consequent high mortality rates (Barnett and Whiteside 2002).

Foster's research in Zimbabwe (1997) revealed that many of the reasons behind the formation of these households are linked to the extended family structure traditionally expounded in African societies but manifesting fissures within the current crises. The reasons include the dearth of relatives; the unwillingness of relatives to take in orphans; having relatives who were unwilling to move into the orphans' home; children who did not want to move away to relatives; children who showed a reluctance to have a relative living with them; the children wanting

to stay together, sometimes to protect their inheritance of the property or following the wishes of the parent that they stay together; and the presence of an older sibling who can care for them.

#### **4.4.3 Kin/Extended Family**

Family and the concept of kinship has long been seen as important in societies in sub-Saharan Africa, with shared roles in the upbringing of children and the sharing of responsibilities and roles clearly defined. Never has the part played by family been as important and crucial to the survival of societies and communities as at the present time in the region, when AIDS and conflict can exert a devastating effect on family and community structures. It is useful to explore concepts of kin and family and their responsibilities in order to further understand their current form, and to judge whether the concepts are changing, and what is shaping that change.

The important role played by the extended family in Zimbabwean society is described by Foster (1997) as a “traditional social security system” with its provision of protection care and the passing on values, however he states that many factors have served to weaken this framework in recent years, including the move to urban centres for work, the westernisation of society, the development of cash economies and infrequent visits to relatives. Growing independence and the personalising of property and goods has further diminished the influence of family and kin. This is confirmed by Ayieko (1997:15), who contests that urban lifestyles and the desire to copy the westernised family concept have contributed to the fracture of extended family support systems in Nyanza, Kenya. She gives as an example the cost of funeral expenses and rituals which are increasingly the responsibility for the individual household as opposed to the community, and states that child rearing is no longer seen as a collective responsibility within the community.

Nyambedha *et al.* (2003) examine the traditional patterns of kinship and orphan care in Western Kenya, commenting on the patrilineal-type society which required the brother of a deceased man to marry his widow, and the responsibility of the whole society to care for the children and the woman. Communities fed

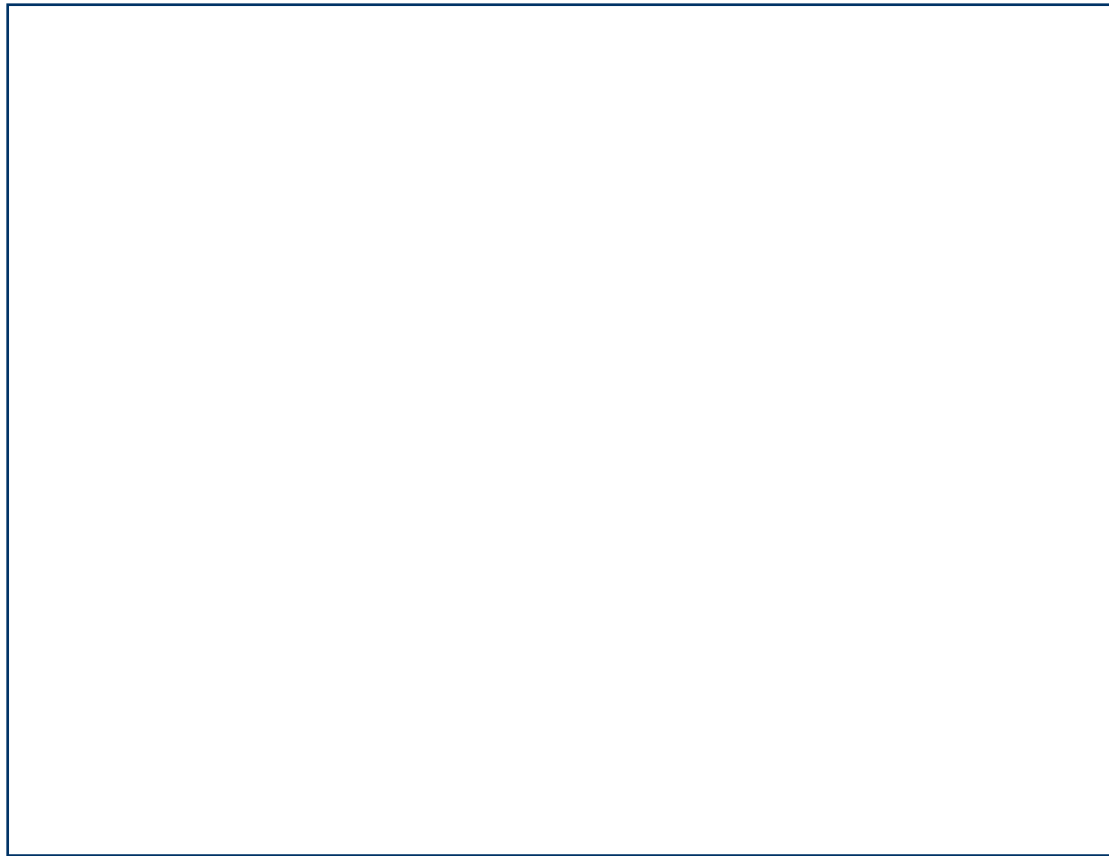


everyone, and it was noticed if children were not being cared for, and seen as shameful if these children felt obliged to go outside the community for help (Potash 1986 as cited in Nyambedha *et al.* 2003). Similarly Barnett and Whiteside (2002:197) have written that “orphans are part of all communities” and acknowledge the part played by the extended family in caring for these children. However it is clear that some research has begun to reveal some weaknesses in the kin based safety net concept during the past decade.

Ntozi and Zirimenya (1999) argue that the AIDS epidemic has affected the capacity of both the nuclear and extended family to assist with the needs of those with AIDS or affected by the disease. Foster (2000: 55) asserts that the potential for help for orphans from extended families within those communities affected by HIV/AIDS is being eroded. He continues by saying that “the extended family is not a social sponge with an infinite capacity to soak up orphans”. And so the fact that there is an assumption that this kin network will take over is erroneous.

In an earlier work, however, Foster (1997) questioned the assumption that the failure of traditional family support structures was leading to the creation of the child headed household since they were not the focus of studies in the past. In contrast, in more recent works (2000), he asserts that the child headed household demonstrates visible evidence of those children who are not being cared for by extended family networks.

Luzze (2002) finds that for those countries which have experienced long epidemics like Uganda, the usual care systems are fractured and, allied with the poverty and social breakdown which is associated with the disease, society is unable to absorb increasing numbers of orphans. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2 (Monk 2000) which illustrates the challenge to coping strategies in communities when faced with the disease, as the impact of the AIDS pandemic spreads and thus fractures the communities’ capacity for supporting others. In some cases, then, the family has no relatives living to help care for the children.



**Figure 4.2: Impact of HIV/AIDS on Coping Capacity for Orphans**  
**Source: Monk 2000:14**

The extended family may not have broken down because of AIDS, however - it can be dependent upon socio-spatial circumstances; estrangement or dislocation is another reason for the breakdown, often caused by conflict or migration for reason of work or other economic opportunities. Walker (2003) in her work with the child headed households in Zimbabwe's commercial farms reveals that the high mobility between places of work has fractured the extended family model for these children. The study found that farm workers were ethnically diverse, and had migrated from surrounding countries like Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi, with a possible 30 per cent of the workers having their origins in these countries. She states that "many farm workers are the second, third or even fourth generation immigrants and links with their families and places of origin are very tenuous" (Walker 2003: 5). This dislocation of kin means that actual contact between family members is often non-existent, thus rendering far more difficult the functional role of extended family in times of crisis and as coping strategies.

The actual care of AIDS sufferers is also a “test” of the kinship and extended family tradition, as Iliffe claims that the construct of the “family” in the case of those caring for relatives with AIDS diverged from the accepted definition (2006:112). In these cases, he says, it might be people who live together, blood relatives or those who provide for one another. This implies a broadening of the term family or kin, and challenges this structure and the perceptions of African societies and kinship that have been accepted and admired. This will be discussed further with regard to society’s response to child headed households below.

The reluctance of relatives to take in orphaned children is usually due to poverty. Foster (1997) suggests that caring for orphans would stretch the few resources available, thus reducing the standard of living of their own children. He explains that favouring their own children if resources were very low might cause the community to accuse them of showing preference towards their own, implying negligence of the orphans, and so they decide to refuse to take them in. However studies have shown that there are often households of orphans where relatives will call in and check that the children are coping. Aunts and uncles may sometimes be in a position to offer to take in one or two orphaned children from a family but are not able to take in the whole family, and so this is a cause for the children to remain together and form a child headed household. Staying together means that they will be in familiar surroundings and will not have to leave the household, school (if they can manage to afford it), and friends and neighbours (Audemard and Vignikin 2006).

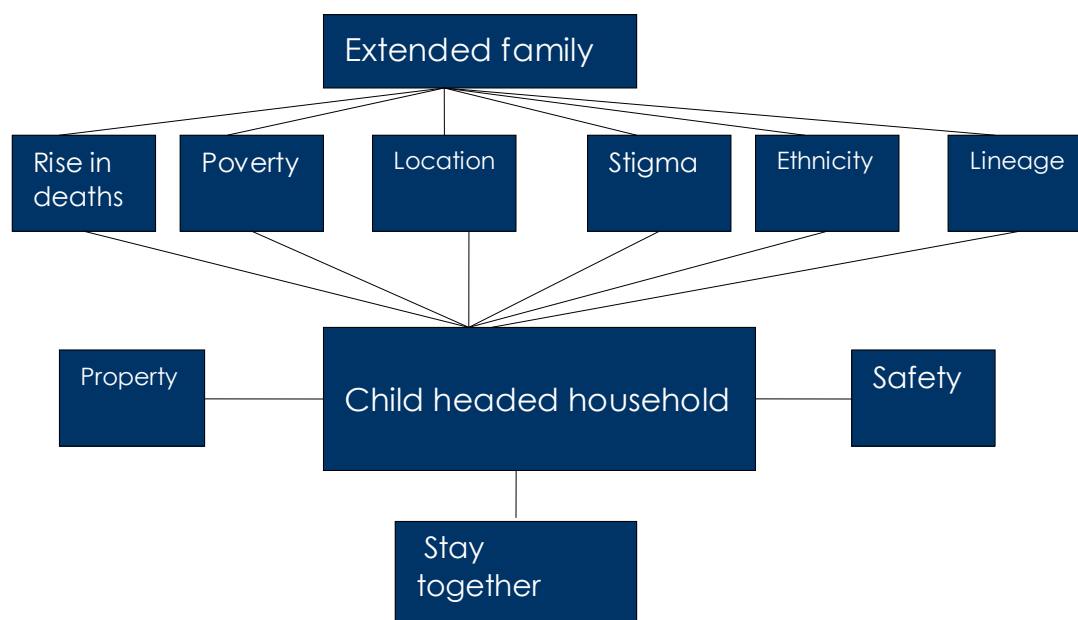
Audemard and Vignikin (2006) offer another cause for the refusal of relatives to take in orphans - they may not acknowledge the child as legitimate, if they are born outside of marriage or dowry is unpaid (Foster 2000), and therefore in this case they will have no obligation of care for the children.

The decision to remain as a family group within the household will often stem from a desire to retain the property which belongs to the family. Foster (2000) states that inheritance customs differ between societies, but concurs that the right to continue living in a residence is a significant factor in the decision to form a child headed household. Further discussion of the issues arising from the challenges of land inheritance is considered below.

Orphans prefer to stay together for security or safety reasons (Plan Finland 2005). Those living with other families stated that they were sometimes abused and neglected, were forced to work and were not permitted to attend school. Chizororo's research (2006) reported concerns by child heads of households that they had been or would be badly treated by relatives if they lived with them and so decided to live alone.

Foster (1997) also exposes the transient nature of some child headed households - he states that it is often a stop-gap measure until families have arranged other coping strategies; even when the child headed household is established there is often extended family nearby who cares by extension. (See Figure 4.3)

In Foster's more recent work however he strongly denies the collapse of safety nets and community structures due to HIV/AIDS, and considers it merely anecdotal, contesting that "political instability, war and urbanisation are more acute and potent factors causing the weakening of safety nets than HIV/AIDS" (2005: 51)



**Figure 4.3: Reasons for establishment of child headed households**

**Source: Author**

Arrangements for orphans discussed in a UNICEF-led African Regional Workshop on those children affected by AIDS (2002) concluded that the advantages of the child headed household model were that there was no separation of siblings, no need for the family to move, the possibility of community support and “cultural guidance” from the community, which would also offer an element of protection. The disadvantages, however, included the impact upon the older child (an assumption that the older child is the head of household) as he or she takes on the new role - with regards to development, opportunities for education, lack of guidance and protection and the “struggle for life”.

There is a recognition that the child headed household has some positive attributes in allowing siblings to remain together, and Bower (2005: 45) has drawn attention to the practice in some countries of ensuring their protection or support, for example South Africa. Other countries have acknowledged the need for assistance for vulnerable children due to AIDS in their policy frameworks, and included in these categories will be the case of the child headed household, Rwanda included (MINALOC 2003). However despite the existence of legislation or policy promises, assistance does not always transfer into practicalities, due to

lack of resources, financial and human or to political will. In fact the majority of countries in the world have been signatories of the Convention for the Rights of the Child, in whose statutes exist many resolutions for the protection of vulnerable children, amongst which are their right to protection and self determination, their right to receive social security, and their right to a “standard of living adequate for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (OHCHR 1990 Article 27). The translation of these promises into practice has not been universally achieved. Foster (2006:700), referring to the right to social security and its lack of implementation, takes Tanzania as an example, stating that 90 per cent of support for households affected by AIDS is provided by relatives and communities.

#### 4.5 AIDS

As one of the key catalysts in the creation of child headed households, HIV/ AIDS has had a cataclysmic effect globally and in particular on those areas which form the research base for this study, with particular reference to Rwanda. Many distinguished works have been published about the disease, its epidemiology, origins, and the impacts it is having upon individuals, communities and societies. Barnett and Blaikie (1992) offer an extensive analysis of the AIDS pandemic at a relatively early stage in the infection rate in sub-Saharan Africa, when they focused on the socio-economic impacts of the disease. As infection rates have risen over the past 20-30 years, Barnett has published a body of work which examines the disease and its impacts. In his 2002 work with Whiteside, he focuses on the social and economic impacts of AIDS and most pertinent to this study, on the phenomenon of orphans and dependents as well as diagnosis, treatment and initiatives to combat the effects of the disease (Barnett and Whiteside 2002).

Iliffe (2006) discusses extensively the origins of the disease and its spread, asserting that even before the end of the 1970s a relatively low level HIV infection existed, but the infectivity of the virus was boosted by rapid and extensive sexual partners, occurring within the homosexual community in San Francisco and

mirrored to a lesser extent among heterosexuals in the East African cities of Nairobi, Bujumbura and Kigali and rural areas in South West Uganda and Abidjan, West Africa. The most significant area in which this “low-level infection” transformed into the highly infectious disease of today was in Kinshasa in the 1970s, where there was rapid partner exchange within the urban sexual networks. Carael (1987) compares the infection pattern in Kinshasa with that of Kigali, where a deeply Roman Catholic population meant that sexual relationships out of marriage were usually with sex workers. Infection rates in this case were higher within the 25-35 age groups; as men would go on to infect their wives leading to an explosive rate of infection.

From these beginnings, the disease has increased in its spread, to current global estimates of 33.2 million people living with HIV in 2007. The UN notes a reduction in new infections in 2007 to 1.7 million in sub-Saharan Africa. However the highest number of people living with HIV is in sub-Saharan Africa, where 22.5 million people have the disease, with a concentration of almost 33 per cent of infection and deaths in just 8 countries in the region (UNAIDS 2008: 4). The countries of Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Namibia all have a national infection rate of above 15 per cent. With such a rapid infection rate and widespread pandemic, the effects are wide ranging on all aspects of society - in particular demographic, social, economic, education and politics, described by Iliffe thus:- “HIV/AIDS was not one epidemic but four: first the virus, then disease, next death and finally societal decomposition, each superimposed upon its predecessors” (2006:112).

He recognises that HIV/AIDS offers a model of a disease which affects families in particular, with young adults targeted and consequent orphaning on a large scale, necessitating a body of carers, often taken from the grandparent generation, labelling new household models as “misshapen”. This is of course a relative term used to describe new household units that can be formed from the effects on communities and society of disasters; the pejorative description however denies the increasing naturalisation of such household structures within sub-Saharan Africa.

## 4.6 Livelihood Needs

The thesis of human need has been much debated and for the purpose of this research the focus will be on the hierarchy of human needs as propounded by Maslow (1943), and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework advocated by the Department for International Development (UK Government) (DFID 2000). This will be expanded and discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this work.

The livelihood needs of young people in child headed households have been illustrated by many authors and are considered at length in grey material in particular. All agree on the basic survival challenges of the household; Luzze (2002) lists the needs as being nutrition, education, health, shelter, and includes within these the following more abstract needs - protection, parenting and psycho-social or spiritual needs. Foster (1997) observes that within his study group of child headed households in Zimbabwe (that is under 18 years) none were in the urban area although there were some adolescent headed households (of 18 to 24 years, see above for further discussion). He suggests that low numbers of these households within urban areas may be due to the higher living costs than in the rural area, where they can obtain food accommodation and education for less. Nonpayment of rent and exploitation of these vulnerable groups can lead to eviction.

Walker (2003) corroborates these livelihood challenges within the context of child headed households located on commercial farms in Zimbabwe, listing food security, education, household resources such as clothing, household goods (non-consumables), housing conditions and health care access as material needs. These needs are magnified, she believes, in the case of child headed households due to their lack of skills and “personal resources” to deal with the problems, and their unique location means estrangement from extended family or kin who may be able to help. Clearly the question of experience and to a certain level that of maturity is intrinsic to a managed survival; the problems in coping are often due to not having a support network of kin or non family members who can



help and advise. In addition the loss of opportunities for learning the skills for survival from family members raises further challenges. Therefore the question of capacity for self management is apposite.

The physical capabilities of an individual within a child headed household to care for him or herself and “cope” is clearly key to the survival of those within the household, however Barnett and Whiteside (2002) claim that even before the death of parents or guardians, those in AIDS affected households will have a high risk of being malnourished and growth may be stunted. Households affected by AIDS will have less disposable income and will be already in a more vulnerable position. They state that orphans “may have been deprived of proper nutrition while their parents were sick and dying” (Barnett and Whiteside 2002: 201). These children may also be HIV positive themselves, weakening them even more.

Needs are further expounded in the study by IDASA, based on child headed households in Kwazulu-Natal (IDASA 2004: 26). Children prioritized food as their most urgent needs, along with education and health. Some prioritized food and education as they stated “you can’t go to school on an empty stomach, so the two things go together”. These children saw the allocation of grants and welfare assistance as a priority - South Africa’s government provides support to vulnerable families although there is sometimes difficulty in accessing the assistance. This is discussed later in this work. Other urgent needs for the children were help with funeral costs, as well as utilities, transport, and safety (IDASA 2004). Hence the physical needs of these households are contextualized within the framework of the lack of parental care, and with limited if any family support. This study will focus on the specific livelihood needs of education, income generation, and land inheritance and ownership.

#### **4.6.1 Property and Land**

The question of property rights in sub-Saharan Africa has been much documented both within academic and grey literature. For centuries access to land has been a challenge for many Africans, both from the point of an unequal

distribution within the indigenous population and also because of the legacy of colonial distribution, which continues to impact land legislation within some countries. Conflict and displacement play a key role in undermining the division of land between inhabitants whether it is within a land ownership or tenured framework. The question of land ownership and tenure systems is a principal dynamic in the quest for the survival of the vulnerable in developing countries (Quan 1997; Oxfam 2008; Verma 2001). Populations with insecure tenure are vulnerable to eviction and feel unable to invest towards their future survival (DFID 2007: iii).

AIDS has ridden roughshod over the rights of those touched directly and indirectly by its impact, but in the field of land and property inheritance its impact has been particularly felt, due to restrictive legislative regulations and also to traditional and cultural practices. Barnett and Whiteside (2002: 233) describe property as being in “strong” or “weak” form, and the range of property ownership or guardianship stretches from direct ownership, exclusive use, to more temporary land tenure systems with seasonal rights. The death of the “cultivator” due to AIDS or conflict can very often lead to dire consequences for the remaining family. In particular the dilemma facing women and children is very severe - with property rights for women often barely legislated, and sometimes culturally rejected, these vulnerable groups are particularly affected. “Women and orphans may find themselves thrown off the family’s land, and on occasions, are forced to migrate to town to earn a living” (Barnett and Whiteside 2002: 233).

Indeed in much of the literature the position of orphans’ and vulnerable children’s land rights is almost always allied with those of women. For the female child or female adolescent who is orphaned, access to land or property is usually contested. In the case of child headed households, then, land inheritance and property ownership constitutes a major challenge, and has been identified by agencies and academics as a significant problem. A UNESCO report (2003: 24) examining the cultural causes of possible discrimination against those children affected by HIV/AIDS considers the cultural belief that “children should not inherit property”- and contest that when they do inherit property an adult who may be their guardian can often take the property for himself.

Rose (2005, 2007) has stated that researchers have often focused too much on needs such as social services, education and nutritional aspects rather than the property rights of children which she considers to be the “building block of a social protection framework” (2007:12). She has written extensively on the property and inheritance rights of children in the light of HIV/AIDS with particular focus on Southern and Eastern Africa. She argues that these rights are vital to allow orphans the means to a livelihood which instigates a chain of progress to achieving other rights- see Figure 4.4.

Rose makes the point that the child’s property rights are in fact future rights and are more vulnerable to land grabbing by relatives or neighbours, adding that children are not emotionally mature enough or physically strong enough to counter this misappropriation (Rose 2007). Requirements for legal claims to be made by adults penalise children without parents who may wish to contest the claims of others on land which belonged to their deceased parents. These processes offer major threats to land rights which are distinctive to children - including a lack of skills in utilising their land - when underused land is noticed, neighbours or relatives take it over, or elders may reallocate it to adults in the community, terminally ill parents may rent out or sell the land as income or to pay for treatment leaving the children with temporary or permanent loss of that land, and confiscation of the deceased parents’ land by relatives or guardians of the children, who they claim the proceeds of these transfers will be to benefit the orphans.

**Figure 4.4: The link between children’s property rights and other rights**  
**Source: Rose (2007:12 Table 1)**

Recommendations to allow for the protection of children’s rights with regard to land inheritance include a proposal to rethink the guardianship of the child- to grant him or her “active legal capacity” allowing access to lawmakers and courts, instituting legal frameworks to protect children’s property rights (Rose 2005: 914).

Luzze and Ssedyabule (2004: 76) promote the provision of skills and knowledge to local councils in Uganda to allow protection and respect of the rights of children in child headed households especially regarding land and property, and also emphasise the importance of agencies protecting the children from losing their land.

Land and property inheritance is one of the most challenging issues that the vulnerable can face. It has been seen that for child headed households it is a key to future survival, and is a right which is consistently flouted with land grabbing continuing to occur, even in urban settings. Rose’s perspective on land rights constituting the fundamental asset for improved livelihood survival is significant, although it is questionable whether access and ownership of land is enough to provide a cornerstone for improvement or even mere survival for those in child headed households.

#### 4.6.2 Education

“A child who knows how to read, write, do basic arithmetic, and develop life skills has a solid foundation for continued learning throughout life” (UNICEF 2003: 5). HIV/AIDS is having a significant impact upon all aspects of education, and attempts by international organisations and agencies to implement programmes and reach targets such as the Millennium Development Goals are being hampered by the effects of the disease. Several international global declarations have been made, pledging commitment to education for all in developing countries, for example the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, and for orphans affected by AIDS with an aim to ensure equal rights to education, as well as other rights and protection (UN 2001:10).

The increase in the number of orphans has an impact upon attendance and enrolment at school, with orphans being withdrawn from school due to lack of fees, to care for sick relatives, or siblings or to find work. Many researchers have documented the reasons for lower enrolment and attendance of orphans, for example Barnett and Whiteside (2002), Luzze (2002), Ntozi (1997), Foster (2004). Guarcello *et al.* (2004: 9) state that “HIV/AIDS affects the supply, demand and quality of education”. Those orphans “fostered” by other family members often are not treated equally with the carers’ children and so are the first to be withdrawn from school if funds are low or income is needed (Barnett and Whiteside 2002). The authors find that whilst there has been a variety of findings on education and orphans, the trends emerging show that orphans are usually enrolled at a different educational level than non-orphans of the same age, double orphans are most affected, and also that this difference is most evident in those areas where attendance is already low.

Research by Case *et al.* (2004) reveals that wealth is not the prime reason for enrolment variations between orphans and non-orphans but that it is the family tie with the caregiver which influences the level of commitment to education for orphans- orphans had lower enrolment rates than non-orphans living in the same household. They link this to Hamilton’s rule (1964), suggesting that the “closer

the biological tie, the greater the investment in the child”.<sup>12</sup> An orphan in a household cared for by a non relative has the least chance to be enrolled for school.

Conversely other research has shown that a more significant factor in school enrolment is not orphanhood but poverty; that is, between the poor and non-poor, including orphans (Ainsworth and Filmer, 2002). They find that low levels of enrolment are usually due to the same reasons irrespective of whether the children are orphans or not - it is poverty which is the factor.

Walker finds that in her research of child headed households in Zimbabwe, completion of primary level education was common, but of secondary more difficult. This was due to reasons such as the cost, a lack of NGO support at secondary level, and the practicalities of routine, such as when younger siblings are at school, older child heads are able to work. “If my mother was alive, maybe I would have finished my schooling” (Timothy aged 20 years, interviewed in Walker 2003:11). Barnett and Whiteside (2002) include as reasons for the reduction in schooling the fact that adults who are sick believe that the returns from the outlay in a child’s education will not be seen by them due to their terminal illness.

Schooling is of course costly, and despite the efforts of the Millennium Development Goals to ensure full primary education for all, not all governments have been able to implement this at a widespread level; equally additional fees for uniforms, equipment and lunches make schooling prohibitive for the child headed household unless assistance is available from government or NGO programmes.

The benefits of participating in projects and initiatives which offer educational support is clearly a key step in addressing the challenge of access to education for child headed households, which in turn can help provide more sustainable

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<sup>12</sup> Hamilton’s rule: the benefit of altruism decreases rapidly with declining relatedness (Hamilton 1964). While this may be considered to be based on a Western perspective, it is clear that in many homes orphans are not treated as well as birth children, which may be because of future value to the household.

livelihoods. However the need for affordable education is for all vulnerable children, who may still live with parents and family members.

HIV/AIDS wields an increasing influence on the lives of all those within education systems, orphans and non-orphans, in affected countries, as can be noted by the gradual weakening of educational provision and the lack of teachers due to sickness and death. Equally, as documented by UNICEF and other organisations, the MDGs' focus on universal primary education and consequent removal of direct school fees in many countries has precipitated another crisis within the education sector from the perspective of huge enrolment figures, consequent lack of resources, classrooms and staff to deal with them, in addition to the pressure put on to these systems by AIDS (UNICEF 2008, UN 2007, DFID 2008).

#### 4.7 Psychosocial Needs: Safety and Belonging

Reflection on the material needs of children in child headed households has directed this chapter thus far, but works focusing on non-material, psycho-social needs are now considered.

Luzze (2002), Barnett and Whiteside (2002), and Sengendo and Nambi (1997), along with NGOs such as World Vision, Save the Children, and ACORD have documented the psychosocial needs experienced by orphans and vulnerable children, in particular those living in child headed households. The trauma of caring for terminally ill relatives, watching them die, and then having to face the impact of being orphaned or fostered has a profound effect upon these children. Luzze (2002: 52) finds that within his study sample in Uganda, the primary psychosocial problem was the "failure to recover from the grief" of the loss of parents. Atwine *et al.* (2005) document the high levels of psychological distress experienced by AIDS orphans and have noted the need for non-material support for such children.

For child headed households, that trauma is magnified, since caring for themselves introduces all the pressures normally experienced by adults – for example, those of finding a home, caring for it, paying rent, earning money, going to school, seeking health care, and being responsible for younger household members.

These pressures are intensified by the need for protection and security, and the isolation that is felt by such households on the margins of society. These are not visible needs or challenges in most cases, but can sometimes be seen in the emotions of those being interviewed, as noted by Ruiz-Casares (2005). As Sengendo and Nambi attest (1997:114), “the loss of loved ones, particularly during childhood, brings with it depressive thoughts and feelings among which are sadness, anger and guilt”. Almost half of the orphaned children in the sample taken in Rakai, Uganda responded that they were angry about their parents’ deaths. Ruiz-Casares’ (2005) study conducted in Namibia showed the high incidence of suicidal feelings among children living in such households.

For the children who have lost parents because of conflict, the legacy of experiencing violence is revealed by Duncan and Arntson (2004) from a Harvard University study into the psychological effects of mass violence. This was accomplished by interviewing people in a Cambodian refugee camp during the Vietnam war- where the researcher found that it was “clear that the mental health effects of mass violence are invisible”, with a conclusion that while few people required acute psychiatric care, many suffered long-term “low grade” problems (Mollica 2000:46 as cited in Duncan and Arntson 2004:3). In addition they found that this can have a negative effect on the economic development of a country. Experiences such as this are comparable to that of Rwanda, when children witnessed and were victims of violence. Exploring the child headed household within these terms of references is crucial to an understanding of the challenges of psycho-social needs.



Donald and Clacherty (2005: 25) found that children in CHHs in South Africa experienced “disrupted and distressing lives” with emotions linked to experiences which were not expressed or resolved. They had unrealistic goals for the future, had little idea of self worth, and a “poor sense of an internal locus of control”, indicating developmental risk and which they link with resilience theory, suggesting a lack of capacity to recover from adversity (Rutter 1985; Donald and Clacherty 2005:27). This is also pointed out by Luzze (2002: 18) who refers to Lefcourt’s work on the locus of control (Lefcourt 1982), and Sengendo and Nambi (1997), who conceptualise this in the context of orphanhood, contending that the death of parents and the cumulative impacts of this attribute feelings of helplessness and loss of control to these external factors. Those who are “internals” will adapt and problem solve, whereas “externals” will have a more emotional reaction to coping (1997:107).<sup>13</sup> However elsewhere Luzze (2002: 20) acknowledges the resilience of orphans in child headed households and notes that they develop “coping strategies”, taking on the roles of adults – confirmed by Hunter (2000), observing their ability to act as household heads, in decision making, and caring for siblings.

Both Chizororo (2007) and Roalkvam (2005) have documented the psycho-social effects in their research on child headed households in Zimbabwe. The latter’s work focuses on a long term study of one household, and she challenges the accepted and long held view that the extended family and community networks support and care for the needy in society. She deconstructs the concept of community, questioning the model of supportive kinship and community, claiming that “one of the obvious characteristics of the child headed household is its isolation” (Roalkvam 2005: 211).

Roalkvam (2005) contends that from the perspective of the child headed household the extended family and community have vanished, and the community denies the existence of the households, as they are ashamed. She questions the strength of kin, and the expectation of NGOs and others within their understanding, stating that the preconceptions of kin confer upon them

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<sup>13</sup> “Internals”= internally oriented individuals; “externals”=externally oriented individuals

“extraordinary obligations” (2005: 214). Audrey, her case study, reveals that kin relations actively disempowered her and caused her more hardship. This leads us to question the concept of “kin” more broadly which is discussed later. Whilst the author acknowledged that this particular case study is unique, it confirms her belief that kinship “needs to be made” and worked on and in the case of these “children left to stand alone” they have to initiate these relationships anew (Roalkvam 2005: 215). The child head in this particular case study began this process by presenting the first harvest she grew to all of those people who had actively refused to help her or hindered her attempts at caring for the household, for example the uncle who she believed had stolen her first harvest and on whose land she worked for nothing, and Roalkvam states that her strategy in doing this reveals her understanding of how she could make these relationships work, “investing in her future and the future of her siblings” (2005: 213).

Luzze (2002) notes that over time neighbours who had originally been helpful to child headed households drew away from the child headed households (2002: 9). This seems to completely contravene those who assert that in Africa, a child is the responsibility of the community. (Luzze 2002: 21).

These controversial perspectives on kin and cultural understandings suggest a paradigm shift in reflections of family and responsibility which offer some solution to the difficulties which have been noted in the relationship between the child headed household within communities and society.

Foster (2006) argues that one of the impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been to hamper the attempts of governments to adhere to the obligations set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 6, which states the protection of children’s rights to develop to their full potential, is very difficult to attain in these conditions. Similarly with the loss of so many parents, children’s right to parental care is forfeited, and the challenges to physical livelihoods and psycho-social needs mean that those articles of the CRC relating to access to basic livelihood needs such as standard of living, health and education are compromised. Foster reminds us that Article 26 refers to the children’s “right to

benefit from state-provided social security” but notes that such government welfare is absent in sub-Saharan Africa for the most part (UNCRC 1990, Foster 2006). The lack of effective initiatives on the part of governments is noted, with few national policy structures addressing the impact of AIDS on children, whilst international bodies focus on orphans. However the bulk of the costs spent on HIV/AIDS is met largely by the outlay of the poor households affected.

#### 4.8 Rwanda and the Child Headed Household

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the case of Rwanda and the child headed household emphasises its unique circumstances within the phenomenon – whilst the massive impact of the AIDS epidemic was, and is, the most important factor leading to the increase in CHHs in most of the affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the set of circumstances in Rwanda has meant that it is conflict which has played a major part in their formation here. Prunier (1995) has documented the 1994 genocide in Rwanda by narrating the history and background to the set of circumstances which led to the devastating conflict of 1994 which left over one million people massacred in the space of 100 days in that small country in central Africa, and during which time over two million people from a population of eight million, fled the country. Many commentators within academia, politics, and international agencies have documented the conflict, in particular Gourevitch (2000) Melvern (2000), Dallaire (2005), Keane (1996), Dowden (2008), Pottier (2002) and others. The genocide weakened all structures within the country – political, judicial, educational, and healthcare (Tear Fund 2008) with a legacy of the trauma affecting the population who witnessed, suffered from or participated in the violence.

HIV/AIDS has been labelled the “second genocide” as it threatened to ravage the country in the same way. Siaens *et al.* (2003:1) confirm that due to the impact of the genocide, the orphan situation is more severe, since within this post conflict society, AIDS is also causing high numbers of deaths.

However, as referred to above, Iliffe’s recognition of high rates of AIDS within the urban centre of Kigali was noted early on in the initial diagnoses of epidemic

(Iliffe, 2006), and long before the genocide in 1994. Barnett and Whiteside (2002) note the visit of a team of American and European doctors to Kigali in 1983 who were able to confirm AIDS cases, the first instances from Sub-Saharan Africa reported internationally, although local doctors had been aware of this fatal illness affecting large numbers of people. An account of the AIDS pandemic in Rwanda has been discussed in Chapter 2.

#### 4.9 Definitions: The Rwandan Context

The conceptual framework which underpins the notion and definition of the “orphan”, the “child”, the “household” and finally the “child headed household” are not universal models within all societies and countries. This research will attempt to arrive at the Rwandan paradigm within these concepts; some qualitative and quantitative assessments have been carried out over the past 14 years which contribute in some part to a new conceptual framework.

Surveys of orphans have contradictory results due to the challenges of the definition of an orphan regarding age, and also in the definition of a child as discussed earlier. Equally they are but a snapshot of one moment in time, and thus the continual changeable picture is not made apparent.

UNICEF uses the figure of 1,200,000 Rwandan children who are single or double orphans from the 2002 Census of Population (Rwanda Government 2004), but admits that the number of vulnerable children may indeed be higher. Mutara (2006) writes in the New Times of Valerie Nyirahabineza, Minister of Gender and Family Promotion in the government announcing the number of 1.2 million orphans to a “shocked parliament”, adding that 7 per cent of these were orphaned due to AIDS.

Siaens *et al.* (2003: 3) cite the number of AIDS orphans aged 0-14 as 613,000, a figure quoted by UNAIDS, and suggests the doubling of that figure to include those children orphaned by the genocide. UNICEF quotes a figure of over 100,000 children living in child headed households (UNICEF 2005).

Clearly there are variations in the statistics - the quantitative analyses incorporate varying terms of definition, which can result in inaccurate and misleading statements, hence the importance of clear definitional parameters. Equally difficulties in gathering such data cannot be underestimated.

Government documentation had warned that the numbers of vulnerable children in the country was increasing (MINALOC 2003) and HIV infection rates indicated future dramatic increases in the number of vulnerable children. The high number of orphans in Rwanda has instigated a government initiative encouraging families to foster orphans – “*Un enfant, une famille*” - One child, one family (MINALOC, 2003), however whilst there has been some success, many families had already taken other children into their homes after the genocide. Limited resources are one reason which has prevented them from taking in more, as well as other reasons which have been debated earlier - for example distance and the nature of some family relationships.

The challenge of intervention to help those in child headed households is also in question – Ancille Kagabo, *sous-préfet* of Butare in 2001 has stated that these households are “one more burden that society cannot handle”, and continues to list further problems in dealing with them- “too spread out, too difficult to deal with” (Rakita *et al.* 2003: 48).

Defining the “child” is also a challenge in the context of Rwanda due to variations in Rwandan perspective on the age of child. For example, Rakita *et al.* recount an interview with Frederic, who at 30 years of age considered himself the child head of a household as he felt unable to marry and start family as long as he had the responsibility of raising his siblings (Rakita *et al.* 2003: 56). Since other agencies (UN as an example) define a child as less than 18 years, as previously noted, the question of what is a child in Rwanda needs further analysis, and is explored more fully in Chapter 5.

#### **4.9.1 Households: Rwanda**

Thus the catalysts for the creation of child headed households in Rwanda are conflict and AIDS, the phenomenon occurring after the events of the early 1990s.

ACORD's research (2001) finds that estimated numbers of child headed households in the whole of Rwanda would reach 227,500, whereas official figures had suggested numbers as low as 45,000 households. Within this definition of household is the understanding and assumption that the household would constitute siblings living together with a sibling carer.

The Horizons programme, along with other international agencies and Tulane University have carried out research on youth headed households for which they broadened the definitional age parameters of the "child" (that is, under 18 years) to 24 years (Horizons 2005). This additional group of the "non- adult" household gives a partial indication of the dilemma within Rwandan society of the difference between a child and an adult, the point when childhood ends, and is indicative of the cultural and societal perspectives which are not easily translated into bald definition and international frameworks. Further examination of this paradox is essential for the arrival at an agreed definition for such households, see Chapter 5.

The concept of a household including only siblings is no longer assumed, and within the context of displacement and conflict in Rwanda, household units are found to include more distant relatives, friends or acquaintances or in some cases. While the reasons for the formation of CHHs in Rwanda are fundamentally the same as in other countries, as has been considered earlier, the extended family safety net was suddenly and catastrophically weakened due to the loss of parents and relatives during the civil war and genocide as well as AIDS. Veale asserts that:

Family structures reconstituted as a result of the death of members, the absorption of orphans, and re-marriage resulted in complex changes in the capacity of the extended family system to deliver responsibilities and obligations (Veale 2000: 236)

The traditional coping mechanisms have disintegrated due to the effects of the conflict and genocide; poverty and the hatred resulting from the genocide have served to change models of solidarity within Rwandan society (ACORD 2001).

However the solution of “fostering” is not always best. The lives of children fostered or living with relatives or non family members are not necessarily better than those in child headed households - cases of discrimination against children by the foster parents, abuse and exploitation have all been recorded, and many children have fled these homes to live in child headed households as a more acceptable existence (Rakita *et al.* 2003: 42).

Circumstances such as these, combined with the unwillingness of some families to take in vulnerable children from their extended family, have provoked a debate on the notion of community itself. Veale (2001: 234-235) questions the assumptions by authors such as Boothby (1996) and Summerfield (1999) of “unitary community”, and proposes a more realistic model of the realities of these communities as they function. She notes from her research that whilst different groups found support within particular sections of communities, child headed households were most isolated and had no support networks, in particular those whose parents were imprisoned on genocide charges. She quotes a group of elders who believe that “there is no more fellowship between people” (Veale 2001: 236).

Rwanda’s government has considered vulnerable children like those in child headed households as community dependent, as suggested by Loudon (2002:19) and Veale (2001). The breakdown in community structures after the genocide in 1994 is significant in communities fulfilling this role, and therefore more analysis should be realised to assess the levels of support. An Asante proverb states that “the family is like a forest. If you are outside, it looks dense. If you are inside, you see that each tree has its own position” (Opokuwaa 2005: 138). Whether family and kin relationship are changing according to societal need, or whether historical perspectives are erroneous, fuelled by sentimentalism and emotion, it is imperative to explore the role of kin and community in today’s Rwanda, in the light of its reshaping by past events. In these societies, it has been observed that the social safety net once offered by the corporate clan to its members appears to be undergoing changes (Awusabo-Asare and Anafi 1999),

and Ogunjuyigbe *et al.* (2009), in writing of the nature of clan in Nigeria believe that it does not provide the individual with the protection and support it once gave.

#### 4.10 Livelihood Needs: Rwanda

“Each day presents us with difficulties...it is too big a burden for me “

Janine Umuhoza, 17, (Asiimwe 2004)

As discussed earlier, the physical needs of the child headed household are universal within developing countries, and the livelihood basics of shelter, food, income are always a challenge. ACORD's study of child headed households in Rwanda (2001) concluded that the material challenges were very severe: these included homelessness, inability to repair shelters, lack of education and health problems. The children gave their own priorities in the following order - food, clothing, health, shelter and schooling. The study found that in 51.9 per cent of the households in the sample, income per family was less than Rw Fr 1000 a month, at the time equivalent to £1.59. In this study 60 per cent of households were able to generate an income from agriculture either from their own land or working for others. Since this research took place approximately six years after the genocide, progress in improving the lives of the child headed households might have been minimal due to factors such as priorities laid down by government, resources, and the situation in the country being that of a post-conflict nation, still reeling from the events of 1994. Thus further examination of progress achieved in improving livelihoods needs to be analysed.

Agencies such as UNICEF have for many years implemented programmes of income generation activities with vocational training to enable child headed households to gain an income. The Rwandan Government's National Policy framework also pledges to ensure socio-economic support for child headed households (MINALOC 2003).



#### **4.10.1 Education**

The history of education in Rwanda mirrors the path of education in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The era of colonialism ushered in education for the few, and in an ethnically divided nation such as Ruanda-Urundi (today's Rwanda and Burundi) the Tutsi controlled government under Belgian rule (1917-1962) favoured the enrolment of Tutsi children. By 1920 there were 123 schools in Ruanda-Urundi educating 6000 students with an aim between the world wars to offer primary schooling to as many children as possible (Duarte 1995). These schools were in the main run by religious institutions, indeed the first institution for tertiary education in Rwanda was founded in 1936 as a Seminary for the Priesthood, and the schools were offered government funding provided they followed the state curriculum. At the time, secondary education was focussed on training for the civil service or priesthood (Duarte 1995). The Belgian colonisers promised improvements in the education system after World War 2, however these rarely materialised, with poor resourcing and limited accessibility. Less than 3 per cent of children had finished the full primary cycle of education by 1957. Since there was no institute of higher education in Ruanda - Urundi, by 1960 only 100 people had engaged in tertiary education abroad. Some basic adult education was offered at this time by religious institutions.

The end of colonialism in 1962 promised the opportunity of education for all and in the same year the National University of Rwanda was founded. Since then the government have striven to produce a skilled labour force through its educational policies; however by 1996 only 0.2 per cent of the population had received a university education (CIA 2000 as cited in Stateuniversity.com n.d.). Mazimpaka and Daniel (2000) state that approximately 12 institutions offering tertiary education in Rwanda now exist, five of which are funded by the government, five established by religious institutions and two secular based. 6000 students were enrolled, which represented about 0.001 per cent of the 18-24 age group in Rwanda. In 2001 President Kagame announced that 7000 students were engaged in tertiary education, an increase of 4000 from 1995, and stated that 124,000 children were enrolled in secondary education (Hodgkin 2008).

The nature of orphanhood and vulnerability in young people is that resources may not be available for any expenditure on costs for such things as education and healthcare. Siaens *et al.* (2003: 9) found that orphans were less likely to be enrolled attend school, even when living with a foster family. Therefore it can be assumed that the same trend would occur with child headed households. World Vision's assessment (1998: 6) was that the majority of child headed households in Rwanda interviewed within the sample did not see education as a priority, and those enrolled attended sporadically taking advantage of employment opportunities, which was preventing consistent progress in school. At that point, the assistance for genocide victims had not been fully implemented and therefore the costs of schooling were also prohibitive. The heads of these households often accept that they will not be able to continue with their education. Participants in the study suggested more flexible education structures to enable them to fit in some work and keep within the education system. Attending school for these children would help emotionally, giving more confidence and self esteem and allowing them to meet with friends (World Vision 1998).

Primary education in Rwanda is officially free in accordance with Article 28 of the CRC and provided without discrimination. The government is now providing catch up classes for those who have never attended school, or for those who have had to drop out. This is with the support of UNICEF, which found in 2003 that 400,000 primary school aged children were not in school. These catch up classes are designed to allow some time for work in the home or for earning money. A World Bank study of education in Rwanda (2004) has concluded that education in Rwanda has recovered very well after the genocide, with enrolments at higher levels in the primary sector than before. However over 30 per cent of children enrolled do not remain in the education system, high repetition rates occur and in general the quality of education is poor (African Development Fund 2006). Obura (2003) writes of the problem following the conflict when education institutions and teachers were targeted - many schools were destroyed, teachers killed, documentation lost. Her experience contrasts to a degree with the World Bank assessments, as she calculates that one in four primary age children is out

of school and so sees the challenge of “accessible, relevant education ...particularly for child headed households” (Obura 2003: 2).

#### **4.10.2 Land and Property**

The question of land and Rwanda is one of the key fundamental needs of all its inhabitants, including the vulnerable and child headed households. Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa with a high population growth rate. “Land is regarded as the most important asset for most Rwandans” (Republic of Rwanda 2001: 21). At the heart of the concept of land access and tenure lie many stumbling blocks, including ethnicity, gender and socio-spatial factors.

In Rwanda’s case, land availability has always been the source of many difficulties— one of the smallest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, its dense population has meant that it has suffered from a shortage of land for dwellings and cultivation for decades. Kairaba-Kyambadde (2005) contends that these specific problems within Rwanda date back to colonial times when control of the land was the key to economic success, and therefore was in the hands of elites. She continues further to claim that “the question of who controlled decisions pertaining land as the main resource of the country was the key issue underlying conflict leading up to the 1994 genocide”, highlighting the following five major land concerns within the country: the shortage of land, a growing population, environmental concerns, limited resources and no framework for compensation (2004: 28).

Liversage (2003) states that Rwanda’s circumstances have resulted in smaller farms and more rented land, with more pressure on that land. In addition, the distribution of land is now more unequal than previously.

Andre and Platteau (1995: 28) researching in the early 1990s, found that there were a high number of land disputes in their area of study in Rwanda (Northern Province) before the genocide, and that most disputes, including conjugal and others, had their basis in a disagreement about access or ownership of land. Indeed they argue that a pattern of increasingly unequal land distribution coupled with land dispossession reinforced the possibility of landlessness, which had a

detrimental effect upon communities, and were a significant factor in the conflict which was to follow.<sup>14</sup>

The shortage of land after 1994 due to a combination of the return of refugees, the decimation of some areas and environmental degradation compelled the government to take some action to alleviate the problem of land and homelessness. Its response was initially to take the emergency measure of “villagisation” which involved the dividing of plots between current owners and returning refugees to promote a resettlement programme (*Imidugudu*). This programme became operational in 1996, and has subsequently been turned into a policy for rural settlement, with some adaptations. The “villagisation” programme had the aim to move many Rwandans into these villages where land is provided. Whilst the main aim was to find homes for genocide survivors left homeless and for old returnees, it was also with the purpose of improving the system of land distribution and management. “*Imidugudu*” consist of a village-grouped settlement which aims to encourage the establishment of development centres in rural areas and break with traditional scattered housing. The supposed benefits of the programme include improved land utilisation and the provision of basic services (Palmer 1999). The government is firm in its belief that this is the only long-term solution for Rwanda, since farms and huts have been destroyed over the years of conflict by infractions (especially cross border), riots, and looting. In fact the government had stated that its goal is for “all Rwandans to live in *Imidugudu* in urban or rural settings” (Ngaboyisonga 2004)

Liversage (2003), in his examination of land policy and registration, found criticisms included obligatory villagisation, insufficient compensation for those whose land was divided up for resettlement purposes, failures in locating the land near to housing, and lack of infrastructure and the facilities to enable economic activities. Tiemessen (2005) states that people are being forced to farm on the steep slopes of the hills where erosion has occurred. She suggests a link between land scarcity and the genocide of 1994, and concludes that the

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<sup>14</sup> Andre and Platteau returned to find their original sample group after the genocide, and found that many of those who died had been resented due to the amount of land they had owned.

government's land policies, including villagisation, privileges survivors to the detriment of the landless due to their ethnicity.

However the threat of losing access and ownership of land without alternative land or compensation is a concern for all, including the most vulnerable such as child headed households. The government's acknowledgement of these difficulties has led to a new more decentralised and voluntary system of villagisation, although the challenge of compensation, according to Liversage, continues to be "a sensitive and unresolved issue" (2003: 5). Many people however are concerned about being forced to move as they will have no real option but to avail themselves of the government's schemes.

Marongwe and Palmer (2004: 13) again consider the Rwandan government's efforts to promote villagisation and urbanisation as a solution to the fragmentation of land which occurred in Rwanda due to small parcels being allocated to each household or owner. This system was no longer considered practical and so the prospects of urbanisation and villagisation are seen to be the way in which people's land use and ownership can be formalised and strengthened.

For the child headed household, land and property inheritance has been one of the biggest challenges to survival. Many orphans have found that their rights to their parents land or property have been removed by relatives or guardians (Rose 2005). In some areas, Byumba in particular, the continuing practice of polygamy has led to conflict within the extended family over property (MINALOC and UNICEF 2001:110). There may be conflict with neighbours over the assets of the family, and in some cases, CHHs that are being assisted by an agency, an NGO, or the government, have experienced hostility and jealousy by neighbours who do not qualify for such assistance and may themselves be struggling to survive in more vulnerable circumstances (Luzze 2002: 51).

For females, the situation was worse - until 2000 they were not allowed to inherit land. This became a significant problem post-genocide due to the large numbers of widows left unable to legally inherit their husbands' land, and who were subject to many instances of land grabbing.

In our culture we are part of the property. We women are owned by the families. And if you look at our judicial system, 99 per cent of cases are land and property disputes.

(Aloysie Inyumba, UNHABITAT 2002: 2).

For female child heads of household, the situation has been exacerbated since they are disadvantaged both by gender and by the vulnerability of age. However for male child headed households the situation is as critical. Rose (2005: 914) raises the difficulties encountered by orphans exercising rights to land; she states that the land rights of orphans have been irrelevant as they would only be effective in the future when they reach maturity. There is little respect or recognition on the part of the guardians of orphans (where they exist) of any of these rights. Indeed, the numbers of cases of infringements of rights is immense (Rose 2005: 931). Guardians of orphans do not protect their land rights and in fact abuse them; orphans are unable to defend them.

Rose's proposals to improve the land rights of those in child headed households include legislative powers to confer upon those under the legal age of adulthood "active legal capacity" which would allow them to defend their property in court without needing adult advocates.

Rose (2005) has identified the following four major issues with orphans and land. Firstly the limited land rights of orphans, in particular females are a concern; secondly, guardians are needed to represent those land rights, but relatives who would normally have become their guardians may have died in the genocide. Thirdly, relatives who became guardians wanted to gain the land for themselves since it was scarce; and finally, returning refugees were given land which had been previously owned by the families of orphans. Many concerns are raised by the author regarding new legislation, stating for example that the new law of succession discriminates against those orphans whose parents were not legally married (Rose 2005: 923). She documents many cases of neighbours taking land from them to use for cultivation, as repayment for debts, or to claim historic ownership. Obstacles to claiming land include a lack of ownership information, excessive delays prior to claiming the land, the inexperience of the children faced with bureaucratic processes, and prohibitive costs (Rose 2005: 929).

Although legislation passed in 2001 states that children should have legal assistance and a guardian who can speak for them in court, this is widely unknown and the reality is that children rarely feel able to take people to court for such abuses. Rose again states that orphans can find little support for land claims in court despite the provisions outlined by government (2005).

Thus Rose (2007) suggests that the right to inherit and own property is seen as the key to surviving other livelihood challenges within Rwandan society. She argues that when the property and inheritance rights of children are secure, then this acts as a foundation to encourage building of a livelihood, ensuring food security, which in turn reduces vulnerability and consequently contributes to physical and emotional well being.

It has been suggested (Rose 2005, Sloth-Neilsen 2004) that legal frameworks might be adapted to take into account child heads of households who have not reached the age of legal responsibility. In so doing, this could protect and favour claims of land by children who have no guardians (and those who have), and would allow children access to other benefits and services which they would not normally be able to benefit from. In the case of Sloth-Neilsen's work within the context of South Africa, it would enable child heads to have access to state benefits or assistance previously confined to those of adult age or guardians.

Rose raises many valid concerns about the problems of orphans and significantly for this study, child headed households in retaining and claiming ownership of land. Her proposals to alleviate the difficulties are valid, but the need to inform and empower young people in these vulnerable situations about their rights and procedures cannot be underestimated. This will be discussed in further detail in the light of the findings of this research in Chapter 6.

#### 4.11 Psychosocial Needs: Rwanda

The non-material needs of child headed households in Rwanda have been documented by many organisations; ACORD (2001) finds that the households are marginalised and forgotten, are vulnerable to exploitation, suffer from

insecurity; children have volatile home lives, low self esteem and are often excluded from community life. This is confirmed by Rwandan Government concerns that vulnerable children who are marginalised from the community framework and without family care show a decreased capacity to function in society (Veale *et al.* 2001: xi). World Vision (1998) confirms these needs, including the need for love and guidance; CARE (2005) includes within the challenges faced by such children the problems of trauma and grief. It must not be forgotten that over 84 per cent of children have experienced death in the family, 52 per cent have lost a mother, 62 per cent a father and 76 per cent have lost siblings. Furthermore, over 95 per cent are said to have directly witnessed violence, almost 70 per cent have witnessed someone being killed, and 31 per cent have witnessed rape and sexual violence. According to the UN, overall, 20 per cent of all children in Rwanda are severely traumatised, a figure which may be conservative (UN 2000).

UNICEF reports the hopelessness felt by children in child headed households, and suggests that they need love to help heal the emotional traumas they have experienced, needing guidance through childhood and adolescence, and it has implemented mentoring schemes within some communities to assist in this (UNICEF 2008). A mentorship programme is also implemented by the Horizons project which identified symptoms of depression in the youths interviewed, with admissions that they were still distressed by the deaths of their parents, and 4 per cent had attempted suicide in the 2 months preceding the survey. Reports of more severe psychological distress were also documented, with children showing regressive behaviour, or falling into disreputable ways. However, this research discovered that whilst households with younger heads had more physical hardships, they were able to count on more support – older heads felt that they were more isolated (Horizons 2005).

Government interventions immediately post-genocide as evaluated by Chauvin *et al.* (1995) revealed that minimal numbers were able to be treated – at that time the total number of children reached through the counseling offered by the National Trauma Center and NGO partners, only added up to 300 - 0.1 per cent of those in need. (This was relatively soon after the genocide.)



Veale *et al.* (2001) quote UN estimates that, as of 2001, there may have been up to 600,000 children who are traumatised to some degree and recommend community based support as the most effective method considering the numbers. The vulnerability of children, particularly girls, in these households is evident. ACORD's study reveals circumstances where men can enter homes and attack, or incidences where men wait at the water point to rape them. In addition girls will engage in survival sex to pay for food and school fees for their siblings (ACORD 2001).

#### 4.12 Locus of Research

It is clear that developing a model for the CHH is dependent upon varying definitional applications- the socio spatial divergences and the cultural and historical ideological paradigms offer a fluid framework of the concept. The definition of a child is emotive and real, but conceptually conceals the numerous models of childhood, experience and place.

Following the review of research undertaken and critique on child headed households it is evident that examining Rwanda as a context for study affords a space where the child headed household remains a significant and real concept. The unique position of a country with a large number of child headed households (estimates over 200,000) formed due to the dual causes of conflict and AIDS offers opportunity for an alternative paradigm to the challenges faced by these vulnerable children worldwide.

The literature review has identified four major factors within the research:

- (i) a dearth of appropriate academic literature on child headed households in Rwanda, even though the combination of genocide and AIDS has produced a particularly high incidence of CHHs in that country
- (ii) the definition of child headed households is contentious and is subject to many variations, and necessitates the deconstruction of the concept of the child and childhood

- (iii) basic livelihood and psychosocial needs constitute major challenges for child headed households
- (iv) no longitudinal studies of changes to child headed households and livelihood assets have been carried out

Therefore this thesis will aim to offer an analysis of the definition of the child headed household in Rwanda, and consider the material needs of land ownership, income generation and education, and non-material needs of safety and belonging. Furthermore the work will consider the changes experienced by the child headed household over time.

The following chapter examines the concept of the child in the context of the CHH, and the definitional aspects of CHHs in Rwanda in relation to the findings of the research. This will present a foundation on which the subsequent aims can be based.

## **Chapter 5: DEFINITION:**

### **THE CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLD AND RWANDA**

This study focuses upon the establishment of the child headed household in Rwanda, a country with the dual causation of an increased adult death rate. The country's genocide in 1994 and the civil war that preceded it led to a severe increase in the numbers of children left orphaned. Coupled with this is the scourge of HIV and its devastating damage to families, often to those who had already been left fatherless or motherless due to the conflict.

Veale (2000: 236) asserts that:

Family structures reconstituted as a result of the death of members, the absorption of orphans, and re-marriage resulted in complex changes in the capacity of the extended family system to deliver responsibilities and obligations.

Children left without adult carers are extremely vulnerable, usually with challenging livelihood needs. Their precarious circumstances mean that their rights are often ignored and opportunities for an improvement in their situation or an emergence from their impoverished lifestyle are rare. The magnitude of the problem is in many ways very difficult to estimate due to the complexities of data collection and also the conflicting terms of reference when dealing with the concept of the "child headed household". Thus there has been a need for a more analytical debate concerning the definition of these households. Equally there is always need to define meaning, to offer an accurate critical analysis which encompasses all aspects of the subject. Establishing parameters and building a foundation for study is in itself a valuable and necessary step. The merit of such an examination is, in the first place, its use in establishing the numbers of vulnerable families in a post conflict country which is in the process of reconstruction. Secondly the eligibility of these families for help by nongovernmental organisations and other support agencies is often based on narrow definitional criteria, which may preclude very needy families from participating in programmes due to the "snapshot" nature of the qualification for

entry - the initial interview or recommendation may take place when there is an older person in the household on that particular day, the children have some financial resources at the time, they have been to school, there is an adult present but maybe on a short term basis, or other similar situations.

This chapter will suggest a definition of the child headed household by examining each element which contributes to the understanding of this household unit. In the first instance it will offer a discourse on the interpretation of the terms “child” and “adult” and the understanding of these terms in the context of differing social environments. The tensions between the child and the adult as concepts are examined with a consideration of broader literature and research and in the context of the findings here. Related to this will be an examination of the question of legal “age”, as this has been the major methodology used in the classification of a group of individuals as a child headed household. The variations in the ages found in the sample group will contribute to a discussion of the limitations of this as a criterion, and will argue, with the aid of case studies, the need to widen the focus when categorising these children. Following this will be an analysis of the household, its definition and spatial interpretation. The child headed household will then be discussed, with an examination of its composition, the reasons for establishment, and its characteristics in Rwanda. These reflections will be substantiated by the findings of the research, and will allow the proposal of a model which illustrates the child headed household’s distinctive nature in Rwanda.

## 5.1 Age and the Child: Limitations

The discourse around the concepts of childhood and the transition from childhood to adulthood has been brought into focus in particular within the sub-discipline of Children’s Geographies in the past decade. In the context of the child headed household this is a central issue which needs to be debated in the light of local conceptualizations. To understand this it is necessary to examine the traditions of Rwandan society regarding age and responsibility, child and adult, and also to consider them through the lens of the recent history of the country, which has

helped to dictate the terms of reference peculiar to Rwanda, and which have caused a paradigm shift in the policies of some NGOs implementing programmes in the country.

The categorisation of young people who are over the age of 18, as “children”, can also occur due to the post conflict situation they find themselves in. The desperate plight of the vulnerable continues despite the time lapse of 14 years since the genocide. Those who were under the age of 18 at the time of the genocide may have been integrated into NGO programmes in the years following the conflict, and whilst there may be some official age limit to the assistance given, the presence of younger children may permit the family or household in question to remain in the programmes when the eldest is over 18. Some organisations offer assistance for example with school fees for those in child headed households, but if the eldest has completed school there may still be younger members of the household of school age, and so the organisation can transfer its support to that child. In this case the child headed household is still a part of the programme despite the head being too old – thus leaving the definition and title of “CHILD” headed household uncertain. Hence it is clear that the various and overlapping definitions of child in this context contribute in great part to confusion in their identification, and necessitate a realignment of the terms of reference when considering these households which are without a “legally” responsible adult.

## 5.2 Childhood: Concepts and Realities

The child within today’s society is seen as an important focus for study both as a conceptual construct but also from a relational perspective. Holt and Holloway contend that “the boundaries drawn around and the meaning invested in ‘child’ and ‘adult’ are fragile and open to critique, dislocation and ultimately transformation” (Holt and Holloway 2006:136). However this was not always so, and the seminal work by Ariès (1962) on childhood half a century ago served to reveal the changing place of the child within society. History recounts that from medieval times until the era of industrialisation, children were considered “small”

adults which were not distinguished as separate entities from the adult world (Ariès 1962). Perspectives of childhood can be sometimes wide-ranging, contradictory and simplistic: varying from the Dionysian view, of children as “naughty” and stemming from the Christian belief of original sin (a view shared by Puritan and Evangelical believers) to the Apollonian view emphasising order and education (Jenks 1996:166). Aitken discusses references to descriptions of children in terms of goodness and purity, and in need of protection (Aitken 2001:120).

The notion of childhood as being a time for play and education only began to emerge in the West at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the distinction between the child and the adult was discerned and childhood was recognised as a time for education and maturing, and identified by certain behaviours (Aitken 2001). This progressed in the West to equating children with a sense of innocence, unfettered with the responsibilities of the adult world and certainly, in most households, recognising them as individuals who were not expected to have to contribute to the household economy (Holloway and Valentine 2000). Children today, then, are seen in the West to be free from adult responsibilities, and function in societies where their lives are primarily prescribed by adults, and where age based restrictions inform many of their movements and actions (Valentine 2003).

Holloway and Valentine’s allusion, then, to the child as ‘less than adult’ in status, implies that childhood is a time when children are to be stretched and educated, prepared for their future adult roles (Holloway and Valentine 2000). However the concept of childhood and the consequent transition to adulthood requires deeper examination.

Whilst the concept of childhood has been analysed at a global level by those such as Robson (2004) and Aitken (2001), distinctions are evident between concepts of childhood at different levels and in a range of societies. If at a fundamental level children are assumed to “share a commonality” because of biological synergies, this in itself distinguishes them from adults (Valentine 2003: 37). The developmental stages of child, adolescent and adult are not an

“inevitable effect of the passing of time “(James *et al.* 1998: 63 cited in Aitken 2001:119). Social and cultural factors have a significant impact on these stages.

There is clearly a tension in theory and practice between what constitutes childhood for those in the West and what the majority world experiences as childhood and this is evidenced in this study. Constructs of childhood will be variable at different levels of society, from the international theory to national, regional, local and maybe down to micro-societies. Focusing on childhood as experienced in the West conceals the childhoods of those in developing countries (Kesby *et al.* 2006). Even so, the broad brushstrokes of childhoods are viewed globally as a dual landscape – that of those in the West and those in developing countries, but there is a need to focus more specifically on the local context (Kesby *et al.* 2006). In this, the space inhabited by the child headed household is crucial. So the global paradigm is important but the role of place and space itself is significant in constructing concepts of childhood (Holloway and Valentine 2000).

Bauman *et al* (2006) have underlined the role played by HIV/AIDS in redrawing the definitions of childhood; with increasing poverty, instability in their home lives, and intermittent periods of education children are often called upon to be parents and carers. Thus parentilisation can occur in two directions, the child as replacement parents to younger siblings, or the child as parent to their terminally ill parent, with all of the emotional pressure that it brings (Bauman *et al* 2006: 58). Thus Kesby *et al.* (2006) are able to use the debate around HIV and orphans to interrogate more fully the concept of childhood.

So the child headed household in Rwanda must be examined within the context of childhood.<sup>15</sup> This research joins the body of empirical work that serves to challenge the Western notions of childhood and to conceptualise childhood in other cultures and societies, focusing on more realistic experienced childhoods including work, care and responsibilities.

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<sup>15</sup> The child headed household has also been referred to as the “child only family” / “adultless household” or “single generation family”-this is discussed later in this chapter.

Childhood is experienced at a fundamental level differently in the global South with children participating in different ways within the household. However Kesby *et al.* state that viewing these childhoods as two extremes, a “bipolar” landscape, offers too stark and delineated a picture - children playing or children working (Kesby *et al.* 2006, Robson 2004: 236). Between and within these extremes lie many variants of the concept, which are based on values and socialisation, and these dynamics are constantly changing. Childhood as a concept is a social construction, and is temporally and geographically specific (Robson 2004:228). Young people’s lives are influenced by global processes and this in turn forms their broader life experiences (Robson 2004, Holt and Holloway 2006).

However these variations in childhood need to be constructed into more localised conceptualisations of childhood (Kesby *et al.* 2006). This is particularly apposite when looking at the child headed household, since the concept of childhood as understood for developing countries is extended and varies even more in these cases. For example when children are involved in caring for others in the home, both in the developing world and in the West, this is not considered as being “work”. In Africa Robson found that caring was considered a natural role within the extended family and even counted as chores (Robson 2004).

Diduck (1999) adds to the discourse by contending that the West’s view of the child in developing countries is often within the context of the “market producer”. That is, the child working to produce consumer goods shapes the view from the West of the child without a childhood; in addition the idea of children as economic actors skews the image of children as innocents (Diduck 1999 as cited in Aitken 2001:124). Involvement in household production and income generation is necessary to ensure the survival of the household, but the West’s concerns are shaped by notions of the rights of children based on ethnocentric definitions of childhood (Holloway and Valentine 2000). The need for education is considered necessary for the world of work. This contributes further to a blurring of the edges between the constructs of childhood and adulthood.

If the construction of childhood in the global South is characterised solely by children working (in the home, in cultivation or in casual labour), the child head in



the child headed household extends that model even further. As household head, he or she will be taking on parental responsibilities and roles, and thus is presenting a new experience of 'doing childhood'.

Thus there is a tension between the child and the adult in the context of the child headed household. Children in CHHs inhabit some area between that of the child and the adult and they can move between these roles according to circumstance and need. They do not conform to the parameters of indigenous childhoods but nor do they conform to concepts of adulthood *per se*. Kesby *et al.* (2006) found in Zimbabwe that this concept of child/adult as head of household (that is parentilised) did not sit comfortably within Zimbabwean society, and struggled to find a locus of understanding and acceptance. Historically, culturally and socially these households are an anathema within these societies. In addition, qualities which are admired in adults such as motivation and entrepreneurial skills can often be criticised when seen in young people such as street children, as it disturbs the "model" of childhood ingrained in the experiences of the West. This lack of conformity to the notion of "child" makes adults uncomfortable and leads to a desire to turn these young people "into children again" and these children are portrayed as "transgressing the social constructions of childhood" (Aitken 2001:125). In the Rwandan context, the "shock" of genocide, along with fractured and disrupted communities may have presented a rationale for their understanding, where society might accept and help integrate these households. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Kesby *et al.* (2006) acknowledge Robson and Aitken's (2004, 2001) analyses of childhood as lived in developing countries, but attempt to soften the stark realities the latter claim are characteristic of children living those lives - resiliencies and independence are necessary for survival, but Kesby *et al.* put forward as important those needs which still exist within the child, for nurture, love, play and rest (Kesby *et al.* 2006: 199; Robson 2004; Aitken 2001).

Is it important to identify the child headed household, and does it matter how it is conceptualised? There are distinct advantages in establishing a construct of the child headed household - Chizororo (2006) has noted that household heads

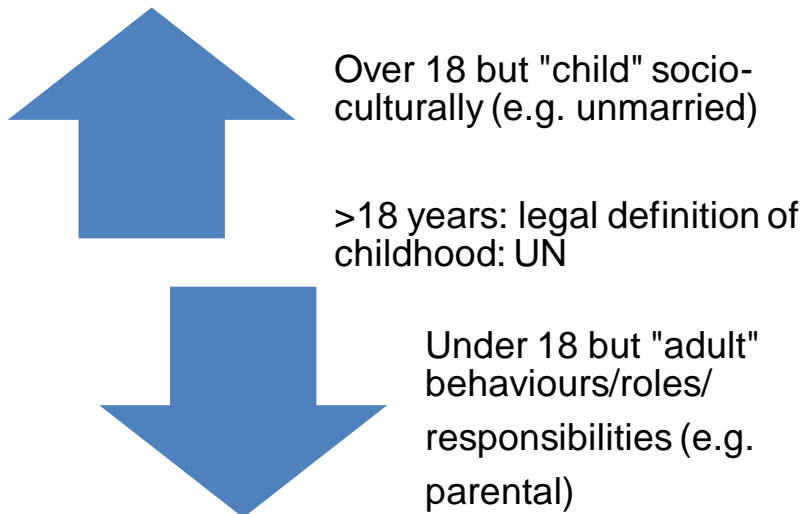
failed to access handouts in Zimbabwe since they were unaccompanied, having no adult representative. Even NGOs had difficulty in identifying the CHHs in their area. From this, Kesby *et al.* conclude that the local notions of childhood, expectations and cultural norms mean that people do not understand or accept the child as household head even when the household is experiencing great need (Kesby *et al.* 2006:198).

The imposition of age based criteria for childhood and adulthood is universally enforced in official arenas. However this notion of numerical age as a gateway to adulthood is not accepted at local levels, and on reaching those levels, whether it is classed as 16 or 18 years (varying between countries), young people are not suddenly treated as adults. This means that age limits are not useful when calculating assistance packages, as child heads or any other individuals are no more capable of suddenly earning an income when they reach 18 years than they are at 17- they may still be as vulnerable as before, or even worse off if an NGO programme or government initiative imposes age restrictions as a cut off point for assistance.

The transition to adulthood is not achieved at a set point in time. Chizororo (2006:13) noted that participants in her research stated that on hearing that their parents had died they had “grown up in one day”, and felt that they were expected to respond in an adult way to their deaths. These expectations of adult responses and behaviours did not extend, however, to being informed about the HIV status of parents; not only due to cultural customs in not speaking of personal sexual matters, but also for fear of upsetting them. So while caring for their sick parents, children are not permitted to know what the cause of their illness is. This also reveals a tension between the way in which parents view their children- with active and adult- like responsibilities when they are required to take on parental roles, but also without key knowledges. Thus childhood is a fluid stage within different cultures where the edges blur and shift according to events and phenomena.

Children, then, are identified in some circumstances as adults and as children in others. So child heads under the age of 18 are endowed with adult roles and

responsibilities at certain times but are considered children in other contexts. A two- way and seemingly contradictory model presents itself: see Figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1: Adult/child model in child headed household**  
**Source: Author**

Kesby *et al.* (2006) suggest that the child headed household should be theorised as a longitudinal process on the pathway into adulthood. This research attempts to conceptualise the child headed household in that it reveals the tension between adult and child behaviours and the changing roles that these individuals assume. Adult skills are learned and lived while the individual is still culturally a child (unmarried in the Rwandan case). These skills are be learned through necessity, by observing other families, or as other children in the household are obliged to take their turn as a new child head when others are away at school, finding work, or have left to marry, by copying their previous head. Furthermore the life paths of these children may have involved living in other households before being part of a child headed household. In these circumstances they may have been cared for; or cared for others themselves; or engaged in other types of work (Young and Ansell 2003:466)

Within the child headed household, childhood is being practiced in a different way- the experiences of childhood do not conform to Western paradigms, nor do they mirror the behavioural norms in communities in the global South (Chizororo 2006). In this way the experience and circumstances of the child headed household jar with the social constructs of childhood as encountered in the West.

The child headed household is providing a new course of childhood, both for those whose role is head within that unit, and for other children in the home. For the child headed household a tension exists as the dual conceptualisation of the child and its roles is revealed as too stark a delineation within the realities of today's societies. The data in the study has highlighted the child as parentilised in the child headed household and therefore this highlights challenges in identifying the households, and also in devising methodologies which are appropriate for these children/adults in order to realise the research.

### **5.2.1 Transition: child to adult**

Since the West's conceptualisation of childhood in the recent past has involved education, play and nurturing of the child, the transition to "adult" is relatively clear. However this is not always so, and even attempting to resolve the challenge by identifying the concept of "youth" serves to further obscure the boundary between the child and the adult. In the West, the journey between these "ages of man" has been prolonged, it is argued, for many young people by engaging in continuing education and training, by taking advantage of the opportunities to travel widely and by less strict social codes of behaviour regarding sexual relationships (Frønes 1994). Traditional gateways into adulthood had been concentrated around acquiring a job, and, due to limited sexual opportunities, leaving the family home to embark upon an early marriage. These milestones tended to occur at similar times which served to signpost the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood (Frønes 1994: 123). Between the ages of 16 and 24 years today, however young people might be at school, university, working, travelling or engaging in many different activities, with an extended dependency on parents (Valentine 2003:43). For children growing up in the West their "childhood" can be said to extend into longer phases of youth

which in itself then merges into adulthood – from times of relative independence and freedoms before those of “settling” and dependencies, that is, responsibilities, home-making, and starting a family.

The transition from child to adult can be considered a process in many societies, where no clear demarcation is in place between childhood and adulthood, but the transition is shaped by agency, maturity and opportunity. Qualities necessary for these progressions can be observed in people of any age and of all ages; the absence of these characteristics in an individual does not mean that the latter is a child; indeed adults themselves can be lacking these attributes. It is possible in these contexts to be an adult and a child at the same time thus highlighting the fluidity of transition between these states (Valentine 2003: 38). Whilst adults are theoretically in a better position to manage life challenges since they are able to draw on resources and experience, in practice this does not always happen.

Through discussions with local community leaders and NGO practitioners in the area of Kigali, it was evident that their understanding and customary belief were that an individual is considered a child until marriage, which was seen as the ritual which marks the entry into adulthood. The legal age of marriage in Rwanda is 21 years, although special dispensation can be given for a man or a woman to marry at a younger age. Adekunle (2007: 105) lists different marriages in Rwanda as traditional or customary, civil, religious or common-law. Civil marriage is the official marriage as legislated by the state. However within the different types of marriage, many are “traditional” involving an arrangement decided between two families, and which can occur at any age. Second is religious marriage where the ceremony is held in a place of worship. Finally there is cohabitation. These latter marriages are often considered as an accord between two individuals, or an “alliance between lineages” (Ntampaka, 1997:9). .

Jayaraman *et al.* (2007: 9) note that the increase worldwide in the median age for marriage has been mirrored in Rwanda from 19.3 years in 1992 to 20.1 years in 2005, but for specific reasons unique to the country. Historically the Tutsi population had married later than the Hutu, but after 1994 both groups married later. The change in the demographics of the country after the genocide meant

that there were fewer men compared to women of marriageable age. The death or displacement of family members during the conflict had an impact upon family dynamics and composition. It also led to a rise in marriage age. The population was of a constantly changing composition with long-term displacement, refugees returning from earlier exiles as well as from the genocide. All of these factors contributed to a rise in the marriage age in the country post-conflict.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the young people living in child headed households in the research sample were over the mean age of marriage as noted above. Of the 42 households interviewed on more than one occasion, three heads of household had married in the intervening time between field visits, and stated that they now felt they were adults. It appears that they had reached this point in their lives which was their qualification for adulthood, the process of being married which conferred the status of adult upon them. Age then had little impact upon the identification as an “adult”. This was despite the fact that they were in their mid to late twenties at the time of the marriage and some were already parents. (They had been caring for siblings or other family members as well as their own child.) Others had married but moved away from the home leaving another sibling to become head of the household.

It is clear that in the 14 intervening years since the genocide, its effect has prompted a re-evaluation of the “family” model and dynamic by society or Rwandans themselves and by academics, practitioners, and those directly affected. Whereas the groups of children involved would historically have entered into some type of marriage arrangement at this stage in their lives in other circumstances, the necessities of day-to-day survival, caring for siblings has taken priority, and the impact of the genocide and of the AIDS pandemic also has influenced this.

Chizororo (2006: 26) has found that whereas in the past, in the societies in which she carried out her research, marriage was seen as the watershed between

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<sup>16</sup> Jan de Smedt (1998) has written of his experiences in a Tanzanian refugee camp for Rwandans fleeing the genocide, where young girls, at ages 13 and 14 would marry slightly older boys- 14 or 15. The couple hardly knew each other in most cases and the marriages were often short-lived, but adults in the camp expressed their concern about the practice.

childhood and adulthood, AIDS related morbidity is now the catalyst heralding the onset of adulthood, propelling children into adult roles. Such traditional boundaries to adulthood such as marriage are restrictive in the broader sense in some societies, in particular in the West, as such milestones are not relevant to all groups in society, for example young people who are lesbian and gay (Valentine 2003: 49).

### **5.2.2 Definition: The Child Relative to the Adult**

Children are defined in relation to adults as ‘adults in the making’, but there are other differences which can affect these child-adult relativities; the question of time and place are also pertinent (Holloway and Valentine 2000). Identifying someone as a child makes a “representative statement” – in itself it frames potentials and places them within an identity from a subjective paradigm - it relationalises them (Holt and Holloway 2006).

Chizororo (2006) has identified that child heads of households are experiencing childhood in a different way but questions how they carry out these new parentilised roles- whether they are in the process of interrogating new relationship structures with their siblings or those they care for or whether they mimic “normal” families. Does gender inform whether they carry out roles which are maternal and paternal despite their gender? The manner in which they behave in relationships as adults also indicates how they may experience different adulthoods to others whose lives have not followed the same paths. Societies may have adapted to compensate for child headed households but how will the children who have lived in these households fit in and act within society when they have children of their own? At that point, these individuals may “conform” to previous models of family in society, functioning in communities as their elders did over many years. Society’s capacity to withstand shocks and fracture may be seen when structures are regenerated but also is dependent on how they reform. Therefore it is clear that in defining childhood and the child, legal (age based), social and cultural parameters exist which inform our construction of childhood.

### 5.3 The Rwandan Experience

For those experiencing these “alternative” childhoods in the child headed household in Rwanda, the strength of socio-cultural traditions is evident. Despite experiencing major distress in their lives, and being obliged to forge a new way of surviving, through atrocities, the fragmentation of society and emotional and physical traumas, many socio-cultural traditions were still preserved. On marrying, a girl leaves the family home to live with her husband, even if that means leaving younger siblings alone in the home. In this research, vulnerable children were left caring for younger siblings or other relatives, and running the home. When asked why this happened, the most frequent response was “it is the custom”. So are these socio-cultural traditions so embedded into the histories, cultures and psyches of the people that no diversion from these patterns of behaviour can be contemplated? Alternatively, it may be that the converse is true- that these traditions and behaviours are upheld throughout times of turbulence and catastrophe simply because they are constants in inconstant times.<sup>17</sup>

### 5.4 Numerical Age

It is possible that children being sponsored or supported by NGOs or other agencies are withdrawn from programmes when they reach a certain age, but often this assistance may transfer to another member of the household. All of the households involved in the research sample who were part of a programme had been affected by this transfer of assistance between family or household members. In this case of assistance transfer the household’s status does not

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<sup>17</sup> Although it is not within the scope of this study, the strength of socio-cultural traditions through societal disruption merits further examination, with particular focus on diaspora populations and the retention of socio-cultural traditional customs.



change. If the eldest person or child head began working or got married would the household still be considered child headed? It appears that despite the fact that some of the heads earned an income, this was rarely sufficient to support the whole family and was often intermittent. Therefore households in these cases remained or were included on programmes as a “child headed household”. The case study in Box 1 illustrates that despite the child head being permanently employed in a relatively high income post, his brother continued to be sponsored and included on the child headed household programme.

Philippe (27) is an articulate university graduate whose brother Daniel, (13), had just been included on a sponsorship programme through the Inkuru Nziza organisation. Philippe was at the time of the first interview (2006) unemployed and was caring for his two teenage sisters as well as his brother. In 2008 he was working for an international NGO on the border with Democratic Republic of Congo, returning home at weekends. He was receiving a good income, indeed enough to pay for a houseboy to work in his home. Both sisters had had babies in the intervening period, and Daniel continued to be sponsored.

### **Box1**

Other perspectives of this legal age based criteria suggest the interpretation that 20 years is the age when one becomes an adult (interviews with some stakeholders and practitioners). Introducing the category of “youth” may seem to inform further the child /adult transition, defined by the UN as within the age range of 15 to 24 years, although in Rwanda, the term “youth” has been employed for persons up to the age of 35 years (UN 2005, Rutagengwa 2006). This also can serve to obscure the needs of the younger child headed households, those with heads who are less than 18 years, as their views and concerns may be overlooked. Therefore the task of defining the child headed household, the household with no adult responsible carer or children living alone, becomes more confused and arbitrary. The difficulties for government and NGOs in planning support and continual development of these households is difficult, when the criteria for selection can be confused. Those families considered child

headed households after the genocide are in many cases still referred to as such, despite the genocide being 15 years ago.

## 5.5 Experiences and Childhood

A major reason for this problematic identification is the experience of these young people over the past 15 years subsequent to the deaths of their parents or carers. The effects of the conflict, the violence and the genocide leave psychological scars as well as physical ones in some cases. It also leaves a legacy of fractured societies and weakened or nonexistent family structures. The psychological impacts of such experiences require strong frameworks of support and resources to restore people and communities, but these were not present in fragile, post genocide Rwanda.<sup>18</sup>

This layering of negative experiences, memories and emotions has inevitably left a mark upon all Rwandans, but in particular upon those who were children at the time. It has therefore been suggested that those who have suffered in this way may be emotionally underdeveloped as the traumas of the past have allowed them to remain as children unable to progress into the ‘normalisation’ of adulthood. The findings in the sample suggest that certainly many of the children’s experiences during the genocide were of violence, panic, displacement and loss of family members. Franck (personal communication) remembers the long journey on foot to the refugee camp in Goma, without his mother but with his three younger brothers, at the age of only 8 years. He rejects the idea of needing emotional support such as counselling as he believes “boys should not need that”. Clearly the gender implication in that statement is that girls were traumatised more than boys and thus need help in coming to terms with their experiences. Yet Franck shared his story only when he felt he was ready to; as he said “it is very difficult for me”.

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<sup>18</sup> Nor had such structures been present during the years of instability before the genocide.

Dédé (personal communication) spoke of how he felt the need to leave Butare, where the memories of the deaths of his parents were too upsetting, and the desire he had to start afresh somewhere new. He is still caring for his sister and her child, and has recently completed school but is 27 years of age. He is still supported by an NGO and still considered a child headed household. He believes that if the genocide had not happened he would have been married by now with a family of his own. The legacy of the genocide in these cases still dwells within these children. Their experiences and their responses can be seen to reveal a delay in emotional maturity at a certain level. The discourse surrounding the identification of childhood has focused primarily on the social and the economic perspectives of development. This research has demonstrated the need to incorporate a different paradigm – that of the impact of the emotions and their effect on the transition from childhood to adulthood. The events which have occurred in the lives of these children may have led to them being unable to progress emotionally beyond their experiences to grow into adulthood, to embrace the life attributed in “normal” times to all adults. Thus transition to adulthood can be impacted by emotional trauma which has longer term consequences. A later age of marriage for example might stem from emotional immaturity, or a reluctance to progress into an “adult” level of development whilst still processing inwardly the effects of genocide or caring for close relatives with terminal illness. Conversely early marriage can also be seen as a step taken to ensure survival for young people in challenging livelihood situations. It is a course of action taken which allows them to break away from a household which is struggling or in which responsibilities are thrust upon a young person.<sup>19</sup> (There is more specific discussion on marriages and this sample group in chapter 6.) Thus emotions play a significant role in the processes of maturity and personal development.

The emotional and psycho-social perspectives of the child headed household are looked at more fully in chapter 7; however within the context of the construct of the “child” and its development these have a significant impact. The need for families to love one another is a fundamental human instinct and the distress of

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<sup>19</sup> This may be a voluntary marriage or in cases of child headed household a marriage embarked upon with a relative as a condition of keeping land or property; this is discussed in chapter 6.

siblings when their older brothers or sisters leave to get married underlines the intensity of emotion which is a result of the close reliance on one another that these young people have, as a direct result of their past experiences. The question of accessing support from neighbours or extended family is still not a possibility for many, as the genocide's divisions and society's violent rupture of Hutu against Tutsi, household against household, husband against wife have created a fault line of mistrust of others. "We are all alone ... we do not look to our neighbour" (Franck, personal communication, 2006).

Thus the employment of a numerical age as the "upper limit" to enable characterisation of a child headed household is not an appropriate measure for use as a means of defining the concept in the experience of Rwanda. The need therefore to examine other factors implicit in the child headed household is imperative. The constructs of childhood previously identified (Robson 2006, Aitken 2001 and others) draw attention to their stark contrasts which are geographically ordered, with Kesby *et al.* (2006) contesting the duality of these constructs as previously discussed. They conclude that childhood constructions involve processes of development depending on what circumstances form the children's experiences. However whilst Aitken (2001) and Robson (2006) call for a less sentimental consideration of childhood from those engaged in research, Kesby *et al.* (2006: 199) remind us that all individuals, "children" and "adult", need to experience some time of play, relaxation and "emotional nurturing", as well as the need to be pro-active, economically and in their survival responsibilities. This is reiterated in the State of the World's Children report (2006: 43), which states that "childhood should be a separate space from adulthood, a time when children can grow and play, rest and learn".

## 5.6 Household: Definition and Reality

The dilemma in defining the child headed household entails a need for an examination of the household as a concept, in order to arrive at an understanding of the functioning and processes within these units in Rwanda. The review of literature has examined the understanding of the household and its role from

existing works; however the relative conceptualisation of the interpretation of “the household” across cultural expectations and in the Rwandan context is significant.

The notion of the household as a group of people who live under the same roof is a popular descriptor. In the African context this has been broadened to sometimes include all those who eat from the same pot, especially significant in societies where families live within a compound. A household also has a type of predefined hierarchy, which dictates the role of the head (historically the father) and also shapes the place of each of the members of the household. The understanding of the term “household” in the context of the sharing of meals or shared roles within a group can also be broadened to a group of people who spend their time together, sleeping under the same roof, sometimes for security reasons, eating together and maybe even earning money together. In these cases there may not be a physical shelter or dwelling where this takes place, it is a matter of a communal space (Young and Barrett 2001; UNICEF 2006: 49). This allows an examination of the model of groups such as street children, who, within their “gang”, function in the same way as a household; sharing meals, foraging for food, looking for work, and sleeping in the same space (Programme manager, Rwandan Orphans Project). Within the group of street children interviewed for this research (but considered as separate from the main sample body) there was a definite allocation of roles - as in a typical household, a hierarchical structure, with expectations and codes of behaviour. However the group of three street children who were interviewed were not all orphans, in fact two had mothers “at home” and did sometimes “go home” to sleep.

In Rwanda the household is part of a government administrative hierarchal system. Ten households make a commune, several of which form larger settlement groups which in turn join others to eventually create large centres such as cities. The model is of increasing administrative layers, which offer a closely ordered community system. This structure, with its groups, supervised by commune leaders, *Nyumbakumi*, has been identified as one of the reasons why the genocide occurred with such speed - the detailed administrative records offered a rapid identification of individuals’ ethnicity.

The understanding of the household in this study focuses on the often transitory nature of the established household. The characteristics of a society where poverty and need are paramount lead to a considerable amount of movement of individuals within the unit, who might leave to find work, study or marry. Therefore the household group may change according to these movements, and this longitudinal study has demonstrated that within child headed households there are frequent opportunities for newcomers to join and for others to leave. It is evident that this is a type of household which is a dynamic and evolving construct, and is examined below in more detail.

The notion of age as a priority in identifying child headed households has been seen to be contentious in the case of Rwanda. As much as agencies prefer to assist those households whose heads are under 18, the sheer need and vulnerability of those not adhering to that criteria mean that other measurements need to be employed to redraw the terms of reference. An example of this within the sample group is the Child Sponsorship Programme implemented by Inkuru Nziza (See **Box 2**).

Many households are included in the project in which the younger children are the recipients of the sponsorship. Yet all of the family benefits from the small amount of money given and from the food supplementation programme when it is running. Within the Inkuru Nziza programme, the end of official sponsorship does not lead to abandonment of the household or young people involved by the agency. Relationships are ongoing and it is clear that the young people feel able to meet with the social workers or others connected with the organisation for help and advice.

**Inkuru Nziza** is an organisation based in Kigali, funded mainly by Western donations. It has many different initiatives, but the Rwanda Orphans Project focuses on child headed households. This is based on a sponsorship system, whereby child headed households are identified and then sponsors pay approximately £20 per month which funds schooling, housing if needed and also a small amount per sponsored child a month, about Rwf10,000 (£10). Additional support in the form of a ration of beans and rice is sometimes distributed by the NGO to the families but is donated by another organisation.

Using the age criteria of 18 for the household head means that many of the families would not be eligible for inclusion; the programme has been running for approximately 12 years, with many of those heads now over 18. However the presence of a younger sibling means that she or he could become the focus of assistance, sometimes on the “departure” from the programme of the older one. In some households all of the children are sponsored, usually by different individuals.

In fact typically the young person’s sponsorship ends when their education or vocational training is completed. The programme offers support for primary education and secondary education if the child has been accepted into a state school, or provides vocational training in welding, tailoring or carpentry if the child has not passed the secondary entrance exam. Thereafter the support for that particular individual stops. If the student has met the requirements for university entrance, then this is usually funded by the government.

## Box 2

When considering the households for inclusion in this study, the sampling criteria used specified that the household would have no responsible adult present (such as parent, aunt or uncle or grandparent), that is, one acting as head and from an older generation. These young people will be *de facto* heads of household. If there are adults present, the relationship will be one of caring for adults, with the caring roles reversed – they become parents (carers, confidants) to their parents, as discussed earlier. During the selection of the sample group three households were introduced to the study as families of orphans but where an adult was present and able to care for the children. One young girl was living with her grandmother, after the death of both parents; another household included a girl whose aunt lived in her home looking after her. Finally a household was introduced where the grandmother was caring for ten grandchildren, some of whose parents had died of AIDS, and others whose parents were alive but disabled. The presence of actively caring adults precluded the addition of these

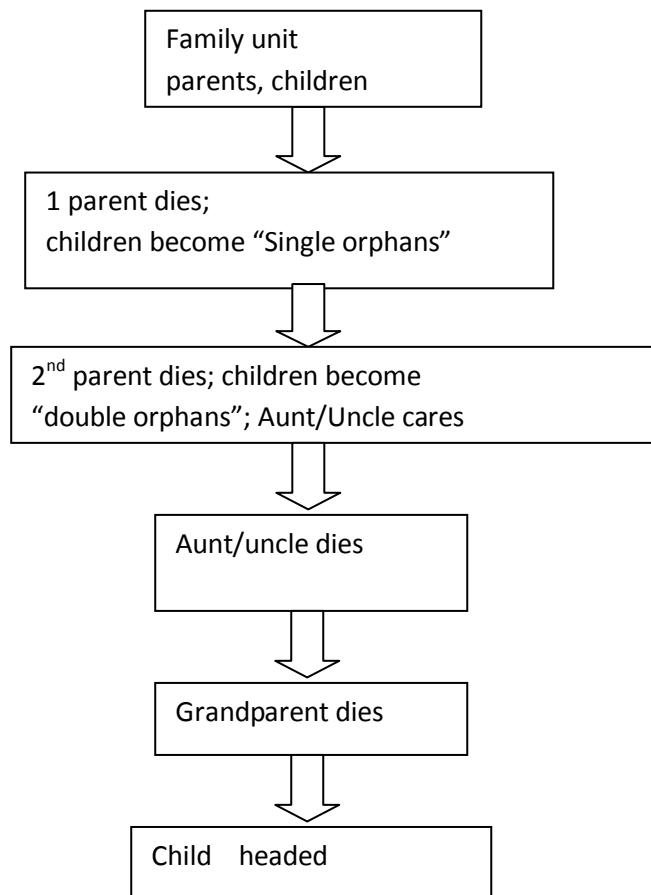
families to the sample group, although their contribution has been helpful in other foci of this study.

Furthermore, suggestions that the child headed household should comprise individuals from the same generation are refuted in this research, since some of the “child headed households” also include offspring of the “children” themselves. This is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but it illustrates why a generation based label for the households is neither accurate nor appropriate.

## 5.7 Processes of Formation

The model for child headed households, then, identifies the unit as being without parents or a responsible adult able to care for the children within the household. This is compatible with the phenomenon in many of the countries which are experiencing the establishment of child headed households due to AIDS, where a typical model of the child headed household in formation is that of the consecutive deaths of terminally ill parents leaving the children to care for themselves. There may be another pathway within this process where other adults from the family act as carers, for example aunts, uncles and grandparents. However it has been seen that in areas with a high HIV infection rate, these adults may in turn be infected, become ill and die, or are not able to take in any more children. This then serves as merely delaying the process towards the formation of the child headed household, as finally the children are left alone, (See Figure 5.2). Whilst it has been found that this model is useful within the single cause context of child headed households, in Rwanda there are variations, due to the nature of the causes for the establishment of this social unit, and also the consequences of the ethnic conflict.





**Figure 5.2: Child headed household formation model**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

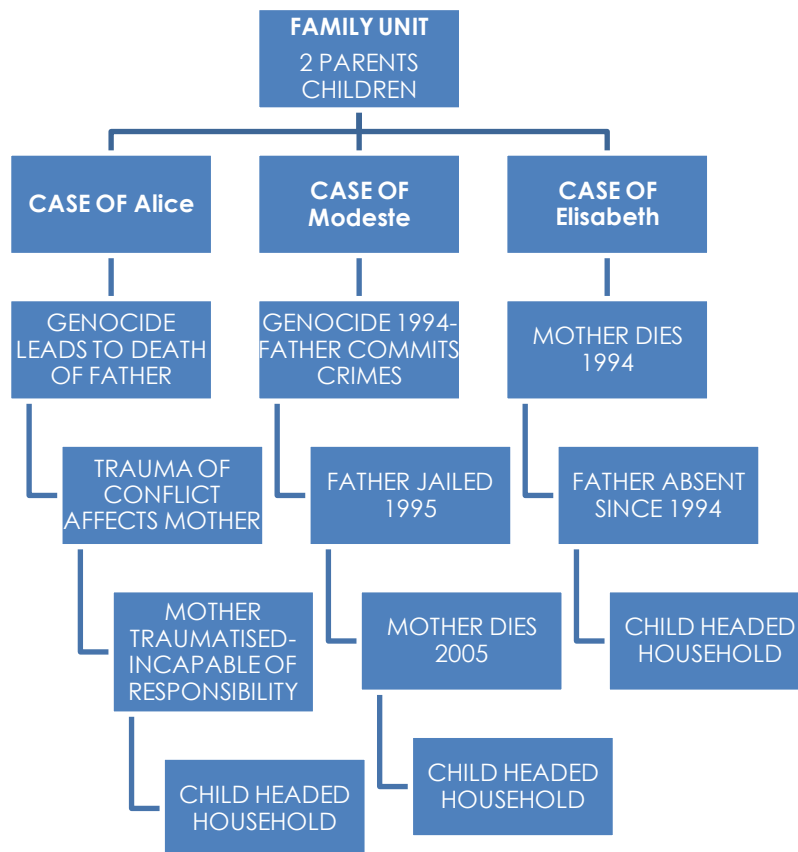
As discussed in the literature review chapter, the definition of orphanhood itself has been contested, and it has been claimed by many academics (Barnett and Whiteside 2002 for example) that the actual categorisation of the orphans in the way used by bodies such as the UN, has led to an underestimation in many cases of the numbers of orphans. Similarly the presence of an adult in the households that are examined in this study can obscure status and the intense vulnerability of the children in the household. There may be an adult present, but he or she might be there only temporarily, an occasional visitor, who may have come for a specific reason such as work. In Rwanda, the displacement of people during the conflict and genocide meant that families were unable to find one another when the fighting had stopped. Up until 2 years ago centres for unaccompanied children still existed in Rwanda. Estrangement within marriage was also a reason why the parents were not present, either since the genocide or

because of separation or the male taking another wife. In one case in the sample, the mother was living in the household with her children but she was severely mentally disturbed, and so could not function as the responsible parent. She is cared for by her daughters.

The mother's illness stems from her experiences during the genocide, which were not revealed to the researcher. However it was noted that she has a 14 year old child which may mean that this was the result of rape during the conflict. In another case, (Modeste), no parent is present - the children are single orphans as their mother died in 2005, but the father is absent as he is in prison for genocide crimes.

A third case involved a girl whose father was still alive, but had engaged in polygamous marriage and so was living with another wife, and had never looked after his daughter (Elisabeth). Another had been cared for after the death of his father by his grandmother who then herself died in 2003 (Félicien) (see Figure 5.3).

Examining the numbers of children who are double or single orphans, it was found that out of the 42 households included in the final sample group, 40 consist of children who are double orphans, i.e. both parents are dead.



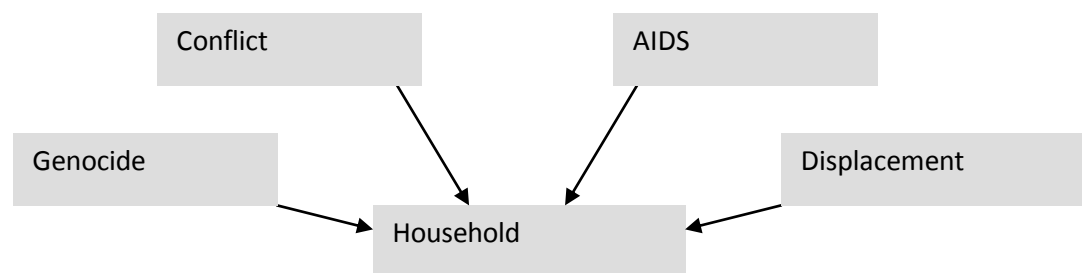
**Figure 5.3: Child headed household formation: parent alive but not household head**

**Source: Author's fieldwork**

## 5.8 Reasons for Formation

The two fundamental causes of the creation of child headed households in Rwanda as stated earlier are conflict and AIDS. However the rationale behind a group of young people taking the decision to live together incorporates many factors. When parents are deceased or are unable to care for the family, historically and traditionally children have been taken in by the extended family networks. This occurs in many societies, in particular those of sub-Saharan Africa. The extended family is celebrated, as responsibility is taken to raise children by many different relatives (Ntozi and Zirimenya 1999; UNICEF 2002;

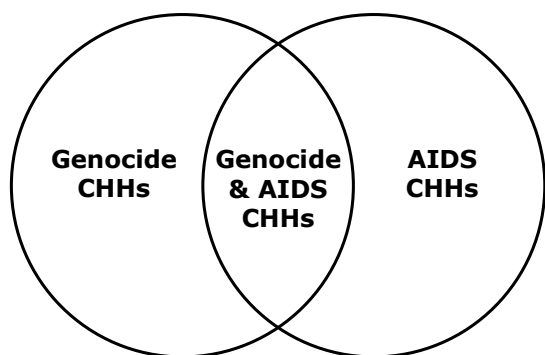
Foster *et al.* 1997: 226; Barnett and Whiteside 2002). In a great many families, there are periods when children are sent to live with grandparents or aunts and uncles for work reasons, for school reasons and others. However the devastating impact of a high number of deaths within the “parental” age group at any one time fractures the extended family model. In the case of Rwanda, the deaths of 1 million people over a period of 3 months in 1994 dealt a blow to this model. Furthermore there was an additional consequence which was not predicted. Whilst AIDS infection was already a cause for concern in Rwanda before the war, widespread rape and sexual assault during the conflict led to an increase in the numbers of infected women and children. Therefore the impact of the genocide was not merely the immediate death during the massacres; it was a slow terminal sentence which had an impact upon the children of the affected. This would ensure the continuous cycle of orphanhood and deprivation in many families.



**Figure 5.4: Catalysts of child headed household formation**

**Source: Author's fieldwork**

This then links the child headed households due to genocide with those child headed due to AIDS- in many cases they are one and the same.



**Figure 5.5: Child headed households- causes of formation**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

## 5.9 Failure of Coping Systems

The main age groups infected by AIDS and by the conflict comprised those who would traditionally have been carers of parentless children. The breakdown of traditional coping mechanisms is a direct legacy of this, having very grave impacts upon families, communities and society as a whole. So whereas previously orphaned children would have been cared for by extended family networks, including aunts, uncles, and grandparents etc., the genocide's wide ranging impact on communities often resulted in the loss of whole families, or left members of families struggling to survive, sometimes displaced from their homes, and without shelter or means to earn money. Whilst relatives might have been able to take one child from a family who had lost parents, the desire of the siblings to stay together can be so strong that they would prefer to look after themselves. Alternatively, families might already have taken in another child and so would have little room for more children. In some cases, grandparents may be alive, but are unable for some reason to care for the orphans in the family. This may be because of illness or lack of resources, although in the case of Destine and Marianne, sisters who live together in Kigali, their grandparents live in another part of the country and the girls are unwilling to move away from their

home area.<sup>20</sup> It has already been mentioned that Foster (1997) has identified the transient nature of some child headed households - he states that it is often a stop gap measure until families have arranged other coping strategies, and that even when the child headed household is established there is often an extended family nearby who care by extension. However while some families in this research made reference to an aunt or uncle who sometimes helped with advice, it was a very small proportion of the households who were able to claim such relatives.

Children were not being cared for by adults for multiple reasons. In many cases there were no living relatives left, and so the children were alone. This had occurred in many cases after the genocide, when even the older “children” were quite young. The dearth of males in certain communities after the genocide meant that the traditional patriarchal systems of responsibility for children being directed to the father’s family had broken down. No family members were available anywhere to care for them.

For those with relatives still living, there developed a range of situations. Many families were struggling to survive themselves and so felt unable to offer a home to the orphans. The Rwandan government began a campaign after the genocide encouraging fostering or adoption, called the One Child One Family programme, and it is estimated that over 30 per cent of families in Rwanda have one or more “foster” children living with them.<sup>21</sup> So many families did indeed take in children, but the need was so great that this extended family structure was collapsing. The cycle of poverty and deprivation continued.

Those who did take in children after the genocide were not always related to the children. Sometimes neighbours and friends were prepared to help. However for some children living with other families was not ideal, whether they were kin or not. Dédé and his brother and sister were separated after the war and lived with neighbours and friends in their home town, Butare. However they experienced problems in the families they stayed with, and were extremely unhappy, taking the decision as early as 1995, one year after the conflict had ended, to live as a

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<sup>20</sup> Interviews, Kigali 2004

<sup>21</sup> This may be an informal arrangement

family unit and move several hundred kilometres away to start afresh in a new city. Dédé could not cope with living in the community in which his parents had been killed by neighbours. Estelle lived with family who were not related to her for 9 years, from the end of the conflict until 2003, but left them when she realised that they were not going to allow her to continue with her education. She moved into a house with other people of her own age (22 years old in 2008), but stated that they treated her as if she were a house girl, making her do all the work to earn her food. Despite the fact that these individuals were of the same generation as Estelle, and were sharing a home with her due to similar circumstances, they allowed her to live with them, only to treat her as a servant. Bernadette spent the immediate post genocide period in the homes of relatives who did not treat her well. Having cousins who were also orphaned in the genocide gave her the opportunity to take the decision to live with them in a different area of the country and care for them, forming a child headed household.

Evidence has shown, and has been discussed in the literature review, that children fostered informally or formally within a relative's home or in that of a non-relative are usually treated less well than the natural children of the family. Opportunities for education are fewer, and children may often be taken in under the guise of a fostering arrangement, but in fact are used as domestic labour. There is also the realisation that an extra mouth to feed means less for the natural children, and there are fewer resources for everyone. In several cases the children were unhappy in their relative's house. An additional problem might be the inability or unwillingness of the family to take on several siblings together. Whilst it might be possible for an aunt or uncle to care for one or two children, caring for four or five would be impossible. People may be happy to take in one girl, but adolescent boys might prove more difficult, due to behavioural challenges. Jean-Pierre was 7 years of age and his sister 2 when their parents were killed in the genocide. He recounts: "I looked after my sister until she was 5 when my aunt took her to live with her because we had been ill. She did not take me". At the age of 10 Jean-Pierre was left to survive alone.

These examples illustrate that the lives of orphans taken in by kin or non-kin households are often marked by negligence and a lack of care. The decision

taken by siblings to live with one another, and not with extended family is often based on these experiences, either from a personal perspective, or from the accounts of other orphans known to them who may take the opportunity to recount their stories. Further examination of the role of the family and the community in relation to the child headed household is considered in Chapter 7.

The separation of siblings is another cause of difficulty. Many children were not happy to live in different homes and communities from their siblings, in particular having experienced such traumas as the genocide, or the slow dying of a parent with AIDS. The urge for the family to stay together is a reasonable and understandable instinct.

The ethnicity of the family also has an impact upon the decision whether or not to take in orphans. Restrictions which were encountered in Rwandan law meant that it was difficult to ascertain directly the ethnic grouping of each household. However it is evident that in families where intermarriage between Tutsi and Hutu had taken place there is sometimes a reticence to take in a child of mixed ethnicity, or of a different ethnicity from the family. Valentine, grandmother and carer of 10 children, stated that the government was not willing to help those in mixed marriages. Even now 15 years after the genocide, accusations and arrests continue to be made against some citizens concerning actions during the genocide. Similarly if a parent has been jailed for crimes of genocide in particular, this may also be a reason why close family would be unhappy to take in the children.

Because of the stigma associated with AIDS, adults may be reticent to accept into their homes children whose parents have died or were sick, or perhaps who themselves are infected with the virus. None of the sample families falls into this category, although at least one child is HIV positive.

If the extended family lives far away, distance is a barrier, as the cost of travelling across the country may be prohibitive. Some siblings may already live in different parts of the country as again is the case with Destine and Marianne, who comprise a child headed household, but whose older brother lives with friends in Gisenyi, about 187 kilometres away. For some, the uncertainty of beginning a



new life in another province after what might have been a period of estrangement from loved ones, and the emotional trauma of witnessing both sudden acts of violence or the terminal illness and slow death of family members would persuade children to remain as a unit, albeit one on the edge of survival, in an area which is known to them. In fact a real fear for those in child headed households is being forced to move to a new area by the government.<sup>22</sup>

Finally the need to protect land or dwellings, which were owned by the late parents, is paramount. There have been many incidents of unscrupulous relatives or neighbours claiming ownership of property and land, leading to children becoming dispossessed, and forced to live on the streets or in makeshift shelters. This will be examined in Chapter 6 within the debate on livelihood needs and land rights. Remaining in the home and on the land for as long as possible reinforces ownership and provides children with shelter and sometimes the possibility of cultivating crops.

It is clear, that the formation of these households takes place for many reasons. The dearth of family members who traditionally would have stepped in to take care of vulnerable children means that that the coping mechanism was tested to the limit. Furthermore the abject poverty of many of the families, coupled with the devastation of the whole country after the genocide meant that those relatives still alive might have great difficulty in managing themselves, let alone with extra mouths to feed.

The desire of the children to remain together is a compelling reason for the child headed household. For children who have endured violence, displacement, refugee camps and the loss of their parents and other family members, the additional pressure of being estranged from their closest kin would be extremely harmful. Additionally the desire to remain in the area best known to the children is a powerful reason to live with one another instead of moving to a distant area of the country in order to be with other members of the extended family. The question of conflict and relationships can also play a part in the establishment of the child headed household. Ethnic tensions within family and community can

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<sup>22</sup> This is in particular part of the government villagisation scheme

mean that there is an unwillingness to care for or help others even when they are vulnerable children. Jean-Pierre's experiences as a 7 year old boy, caring for his 2 year old sister were that no one in the community helped him or showed him what to do. It was only when his sister was sick that his aunt took her in. This raises the issues of community dependence and also calls into question the accepted perception of the extended family being the foundation stone of African society.

The true composition of the child headed household is of significance in the conceptualisation of the model. This includes numbers of children, the relationship between them and the variability of the constituents. It is significant because it can illustrate first of all the change in demographic shape of the members of the household- highlighting the dearth of one age group and a possible increase in another. It also underlines the fluid movement within that structure – often a continuing change in its configuration and by extension conferring upon the household a temporary and sometimes uncertain and unstable nature. As shown earlier it can also raise the question on community network and the support for such households within communities. This is particularly important in the case of Rwanda when considering the post conflict reconstruction of the society and its ethnic tensions and history.

In the data collected in this sample group the numbers within each household range from just one person up to 11. However it is important to note that this number is only a snapshot within the timeline of each of these households, and a significant element of each child headed household is the fluidity of its composition.

## 5.10 Household Size

In Table 5.1, it can be seen that at the time of the first interview the smallest household comprised one child, and the biggest, 11 “children”.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I am using the word child for all members of these households despite their ages – see above

Household size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Number of households	6	10	12	7	3	3	0	0	0	0	1

**Table 5.1: Household size: Visit 1<sup>24</sup>**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

This was the status of the households at the time of the first interviews, and included those considered part of the household by the interviewee at the time. If a sibling had moved elsewhere for work he or she was not considered as a member of the group. Some of the siblings or other members of the household would be away for a few days or a week when they had an opportunity to work, particularly those in rural areas; one was away for about three days at a time selling clothes for example, others would go to Kigali for a few days (it is likely that the two females who were reported as doing this were engaging in transactional sex in the urban area).

Between visits one and two there were a considerable number of changes in the makeup of the household group.

Variation in household size	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Number of households	2	3	28	6	3	2

**Table 5.2: Changes in household size between visits 1 and 2<sup>25</sup>**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

<sup>24</sup> Visit 1 for 14 households took place in 2004, for the remainder of the households, visit 1 was in 2006.

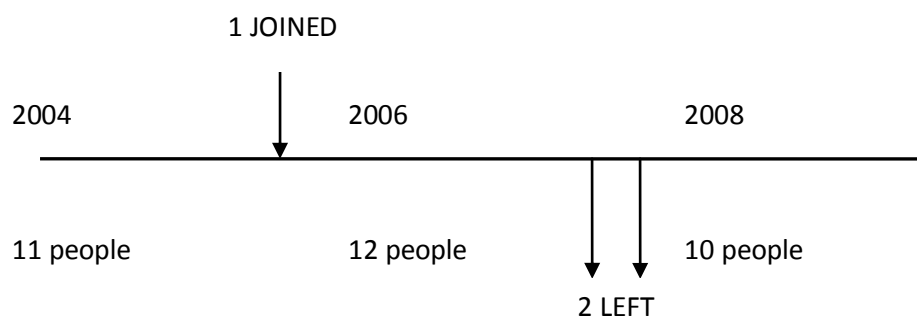
<sup>25</sup> For some households visit 2 took place in 2006, for others 2008

Household size	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Number of households		3	4	3	1	

**Table 5.3: Changes in household size between visits 2 and 3 (11 households)<sup>26</sup>**

**Source: Author's fieldwork**

An examination of Carine's household timeline illustrates the different configurations which occurred in this one household over 4 years.



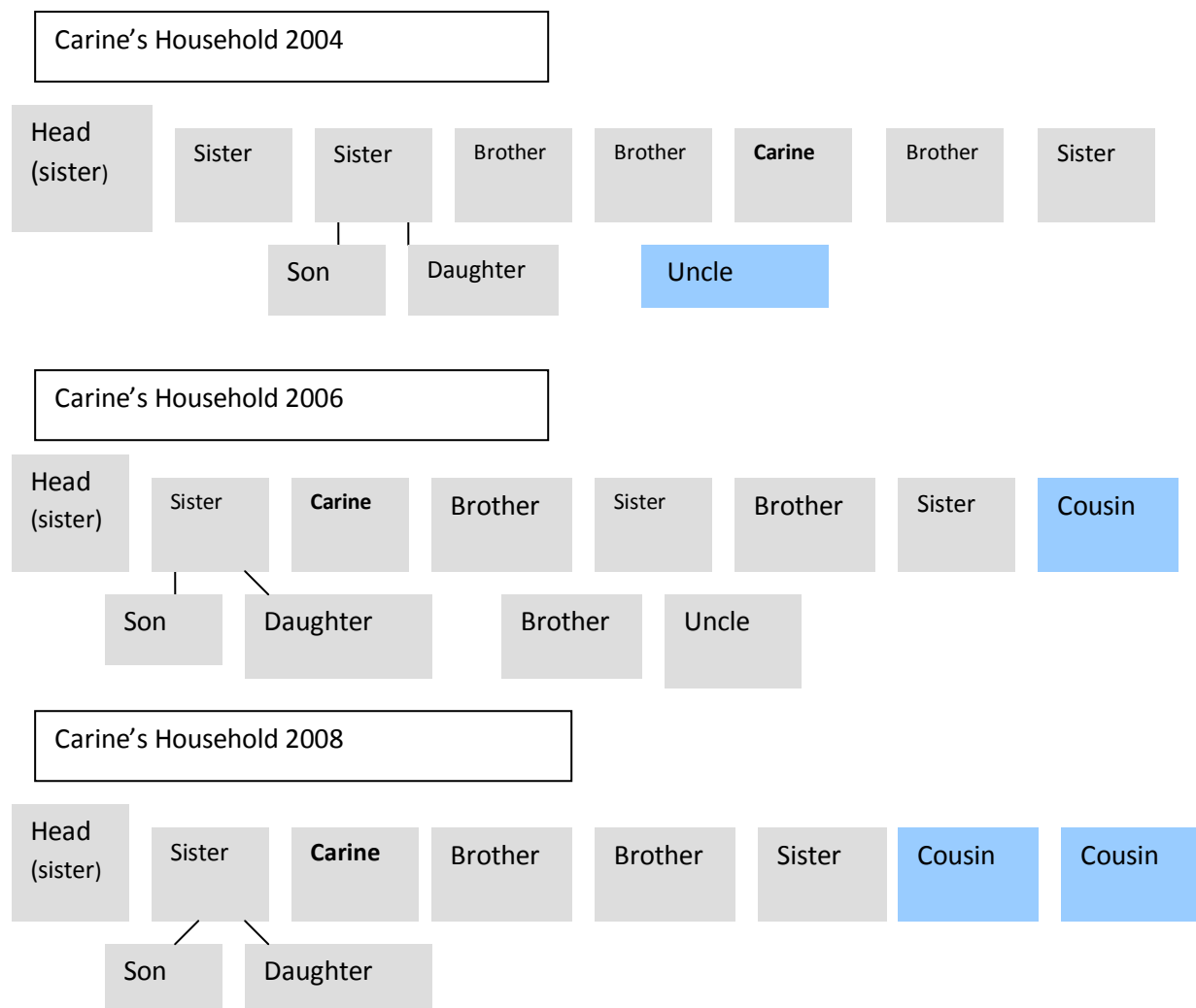
**Figure 5.6: Timeline of Carine's household**

**Source: Author's fieldwork**

In this semi-rural household numbers had grown from 10 to 12 at one point as two cousins moved in to the household on the death of their mother. Their father is in prison and so was unable to care for them (See Figure 5.7).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Eleven households were visited on three occasions

<sup>27</sup> This version was recounted to us at the 2<sup>nd</sup> interview. 2 years later Carine recounted that the father of these children had abandoned them.



**Figure 5.7: Carine's household over 3 visits (4 years)<sup>28</sup>**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

Carine's eldest sister is nominally the head of the household but when she is away working, Carine's brother then becomes head until her return. Members of households are sometimes away during term time if they are at secondary school (which is primarily residential in Rwanda), and so if this is the case for the household head, he or she will leave a younger child in charge of the household until the next school holiday. Conversely others may join the household for various reasons: their parents have died and they want to join with others in the

<sup>28</sup> The blue boxes signify the new additions at each stage to the family.

same position, they have lost their home, or a catalyst event has propelled them into a position where moving in with others is the only coping strategy remaining to them. This “fluidity” of composition can have a significant impact upon the remaining members of the household. The most obvious disadvantage is the increase in mouths to feed and therefore the corresponding need for more income generation activities. Whereas an older young person joining the household may be able to source work for income, younger children are totally dependent upon their carers. Similarly the growing household needs space and as most of the dwellings of child headed households are small and in a state of disrepair, the result is a crowded home where there is no personal space, no room for homework, and with many people sharing one sleeping area. Carine’s household demonstrates how the size of the household presents many challenges, of providing food and education, sourcing more income generation opportunities as well as having to spend time caring for more children, as well as the pressures of numerous individuals sharing what is usually an extremely small and inadequate dwelling.

However the daily search for work when one has few skills and with high levels of unemployment in the country means that income is not easily earned. Carine and some of the children were supported through school by the Compassion project. The uncle of the family (aged 17) did not work; one of the older brothers had left to join the army and so was intermittently present in the household. In 2004 the older female members of the household would go into Kigali to look for work which was most likely some type of informal prostitution. By 2008, only one member of the household was earning money by selling clothes.

## COMPASSION

Compassion is an international Christian NGO which has implemented programmes in various parts of Rwanda which offers help with school fees for children, enabling them to attend primary and secondary school. As well as providing educational opportunities, it offers health care, Christian instruction, and training in health, social and key life skills across the world. It uses child sponsorship to raise funds and encourages sponsors to visit the communities with which they are involved. It works through local churches who recruit staff and a project committee, which is comprised of representatives from the staff, the local church, community leaders, and parents.

### Box 3

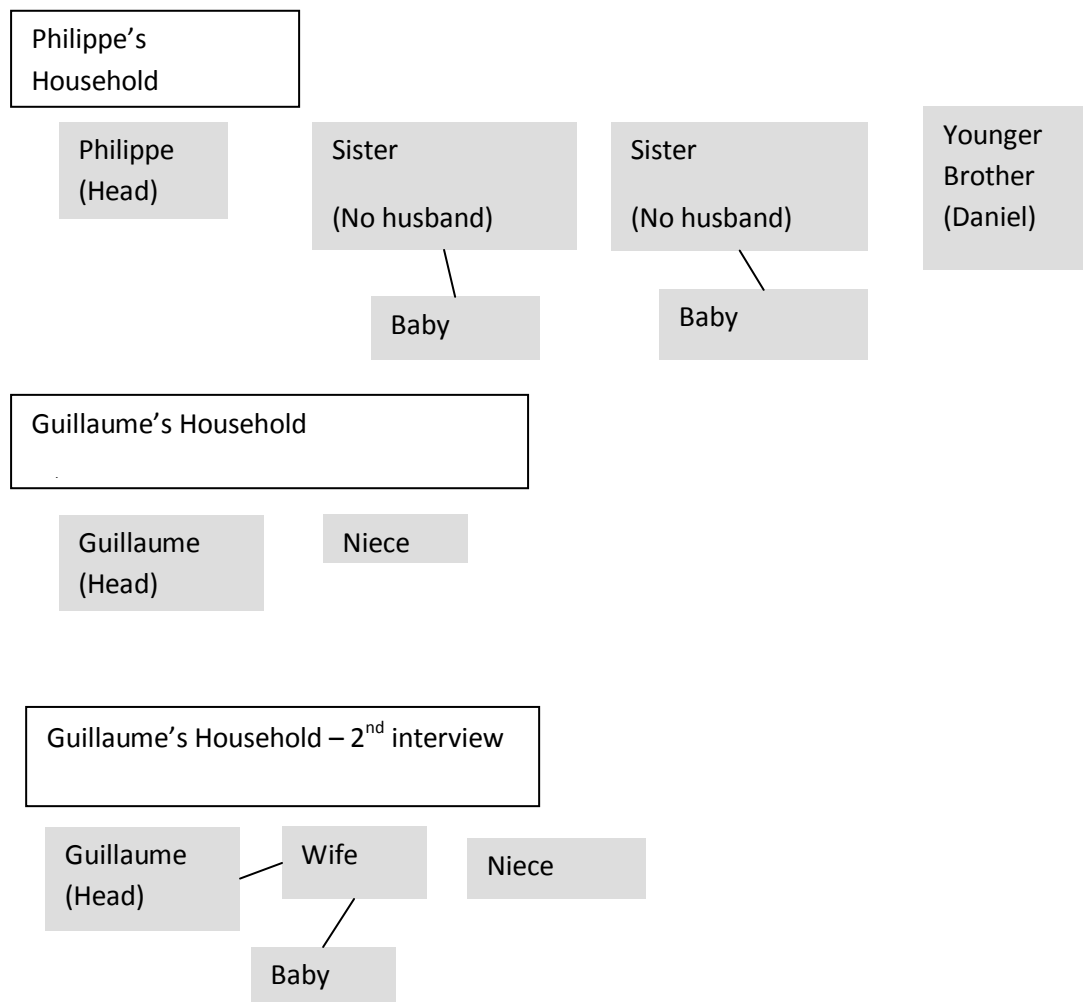
Several of the households consist of a cross-generational structure, where a member of the household, usually a female, has his or her own children within the “child headed family”. The case of Caritas is important as it shows this intergenerational paradigm of the household. During the past 4 years this household has consisted of:-

8 siblings, 1 uncle (17 years at the first interview) 2 children of one of the siblings

6 siblings, (2 or 3 at secondary school- boarding), 2 children of sibling, 1 cousin

6 siblings, 2 children of sibling, 2 cousins (1 in secondary school)

This also occurred in other households, as seen in Figure 5.8.



**Figure 5.8: Intergenerational households led by “children”**

**Source: Author's fieldwork**

Five households out of the whole sample include the offspring of one of the “children” of the household, only one of whom is the head. This is the household of Bernadette, who has lived with her son and her cousins since 1996. Her son was born in 1996 when she was 14 years old.

A significant problem with these changing configurations of household members is the psychological impact that it can have upon those left in the household. When members leave, in particular the head of the household, it can lead to loneliness and increasing vulnerability for the remaining children in the home. This was especially perceptible in those families where the household head was away attending secondary school, leaving younger siblings to care for



themselves and take over the headship temporarily during the school terms. The family of Eloise, long term residents in Gihembe Refugee Camp, had undergone a major change between the first and second interviews. The five members of the household were reduced to one person on the day of the visit; three of the brothers had left the household since the previous visit. One had left some time before to work in the east of the country, one to join the army and another had left a few weeks before the interview and was believed to have joined the rebel army in Congo as a child soldier. Eloise's older sister was in her first year of secondary school, leaving Eloise, aged 13, alone in the home. Although there was evidence of a relative living nearby who provided food for her, she was very lonely and frightened, particularly at night, when thefts and attacks take place regularly in the camp. The change in the household configuration in this case had a major impact upon Eloise's livelihood and her vulnerability.<sup>29</sup>

This increase in vulnerability is also witnessed when a female household head decides to marry. The tradition in Rwanda is that when females marry they leave the family to live with their husband in his home. The data collected showed very little departure from that practice, despite the need for a parent figure within the household. It was evident that even in households which are barely surviving, female heads would leave the children in the hands of a younger sibling or household member. This occurred even when it involved leaving a young girl or boy to live alone and unprotected in sometimes very isolated areas, with little opportunity for income generation or training.

The limited livelihood choices for young girls in this society mean that often marriage is seen as a solution to continuing impoverishment. The circumstances of the unmarried child head, who may often be in her late teens or twenties are those of a struggle for survival involving the eking out of meagre resources, seeking opportunities to earn some level of income either by engaging in casual work such as labour, selling goods in the market or on the street, or as a last resort engaging in transactional sex. This varies according to location- rural areas offer more limited opportunities for work, and so the attractions of migrating

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<sup>29</sup> The camp representative who was present at the interview became very concerned about the vulnerability of Eloise and noted her situation for extra assistance and protection.

to the city are evident. However even in these urban areas there is a lack of employment opportunity, both within the informal and formal economy. The gendered nature of society in Rwanda is also a factor which restricts females from being able to avail themselves of the same opportunities as males. Girls are often forced as a last resort to engage in sexual favours in exchange for money, food or clothes. In these cases marriage is a strategy to escape the problem of continuing poverty.

In addition, the status of child head is one that can weigh heavily upon young people. This role will have been passed to them on the death or departure of a parent, or handed down from an older sibling or other family member when he or she left the household. The responsibility of running the household, caring for younger children, feeding them, ensuring their education and often one's own, is a burden and a challenge in the impoverished communities in which they live. In addition they must look after assets that they may have such as a house and land, attempt to keep property in a satisfactory condition, and cultivate crops on land that they may possess. All of these are onerous for people in normal contexts, however in an environment where livelihoods are a struggle; these become much more significant challenges. In addition the distribution of work is gendered. Where there are both males and females in a household, it is the females who are expected to carry out the "caring roles" within the family, including the cooking and cleaning.

Marriage then can be a way to rid oneself of these responsibilities which may have been held by a young person for a long time. This was evident in Nathalie's experience. Ninette and Nathalie, 2 sisters, aged 20 and 16 years at the time of the first interview, 2006, lived together in a rural area along with Ninette's young son. They had been orphaned in 1994, and spent some time hiding out in the hills until the conflict had ended when they would have been 8 and 4 years of age respectively. 18 months later, at the time of the second visit, Nathalie was caring for her nephew. In obvious distress she recounted that her sister, Ninette, had left home to get married and live in another part of the valley. She never visited the household and they had had no contact with her. Nathalie said that Ninette's reasoning for leaving her son was "since she (Ninette) had spent a long time

looking after her sister (Nathalie) it was Nathalie's turn to look after someone else" (Paul, her 8 year old nephew).<sup>30</sup> Thus not only did she leave her sister alone, but also left her own son to be cared for by her sister.<sup>31</sup> Lifestyle choices such as this are borne out of the limited life possibilities available to child heads and in general to young people in these vulnerable situations. A chance to start anew, with a husband to care for her, and with the expectation that life will be easier, is a powerful incentive to leave the family and its challenges for survival.

The matter of ongoing assistance for the child head household by the ex-head reveals a varied pattern of support. In the case of Ninette and Nathalie, the break with the household has been clean, with no visits or help from Ninette. This is also the case with Jean-Noelle who left her younger brother to live alone when she married, but states that he receives no help, not even from neighbours. Jean-Noelle was not helping him either, since, when asked what she felt her situation was now, she stated: "My role now is looking after the baby and with my husband growing beans and potatoes to eat and if we need something to sell". In Destine's case, her married sister has helped with the cost of medicine for her and her sister, but is not able to help with the cost of food as she and her family are also struggling to survive.

For those living in child headed households, marriage offers the promise of a new start, better livelihood prospects, and a release from the burdens of responsibility held for long periods of time. It can also lead to more resources for those left in the household, although equally the loss of an economically active provider has been seen to bring more hardship to the household.

There is another key reason why young people might be anxious to accept marriage propositions, apart from the practical. This more abstract concept is related to local understandings of childhood and adulthood, and the transition between them. Marriage, from this perspective, allows them to make a statement about their status in society. As discussed earlier, local understandings of

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<sup>30</sup> The nephew had not been mentioned during the first interview and was not seen. However since he was 8 years old in 2008, it seems that Ninette would have been 12 years old when she gave birth to him, probably as a result of rape.

<sup>31</sup> Ninette may have found it easier to leave Paul with Nathalie if he was conceived as a result of rape.

childhood may differ from the national and international in their construct, and within this the role of marriage is crucial. The tradition of marriage as a gateway to adulthood is a socio-cultural norm in Rwandan society, and therefore when examined against a stage of changed social roles and the blurring of childhood and adulthood, this transition stage may no longer be valid. Yet for the child head, marriage offers a signalled departure from childhood to adulthood. Being recognised as a child with adult responsibilities distorts the model of childhood. One is a child, although having a parental role, caring for others, running a home, despite being older by sometimes many years than the legal adult age, because society and tradition have stipulated that it is marriage which marks out adulthood. Getting married, however, allows them to make a statement in their community about their status as adults. It gives them an opportunity to rejoin the “normal” community structures and to cease being considered a child. These young people may feel they have spent too long in the “no man’s land” of the child/adult, and have experienced events which have resulted in life changing consequences. Therefore they feel an urge for stability, and finally for the status of adult. This affords them acceptance in society as a “whole and rounded” adult. Bernadette and Guillaume believe that their marriages have allowed them to become adults. Conversely, remaining in the home and not marrying would sentence them to continuing their childhood. Thus there is an incentive to marry which is linked with identity and one’s place in the community.

Whilst this transition may be the customary path of development in such societies; acknowledgement of the paradox is real - Philippe has stated “my mind is an adult, my age a child”. Even so not all of the young people adhere to these beliefs about childhood; Estelle (24 years) feels that she is an adult, despite being unmarried and living alone, stating that she has no need of a man and wants to be independent. This may be informed by Western thought, transmitted by NGOs or media, or it may be that she has witnessed and experienced negative relationships with males.

The gap that is left when someone leaves, who has been effectively the carer and substitute parent, is as much emotional and psychological as practical. The rest of the group continues with their roles and absorbs the other needs of the

household. However there is clearly a sense of betrayal in some households. The perception of a lack of compassion on the part of the one to be married is difficult to deny, but there is a sense in which the head of household feels that he or she has fulfilled his or her role for some time in being head of household and in caring for others and the time has come for her to carry on with her life.

Juliette is 15 and lives in an isolated house in a rural area 30 kilometres from Kigali. Her mother died in 1995 and her father in 2003. Her elder brother died in 2001, and her sister married and left the home the month before the interview in 2006. Juliette occasionally arranged for a friend to come and stay overnight but most of the time is left alone to manage by herself. At the time of the second interview in 2008, she was unable to be located, but the local pastor stated that he believed that she had married and moved elsewhere to live.

#### Box 4

The research demonstrates that the model of marriage traditions is rarely adapted or abandoned according to the needs or the circumstances of the households in these communities. The cultural precedents and practices continued to be upheld, despite the household circumstances where they may be young children to care for, vulnerable girls, no opportunity for income generation, in households struggling to survive.

Some exceptions within the sample group included one where a male head of household married and left to find a house with his wife elsewhere, leaving five siblings in the child headed household, some of whom were in their 20s, and the youngest 13 years of age. He was the one who moved since the household could not have physically accommodated another person. In the second example, the child head Guillaume brought his wife to live in the household where he had been caring for his niece for many years.

Finally another exception to the model discussed above is that of Bernadette's household situation following her marriage. Since the first visit she has married and given birth to twin girls but she and her new husband have remained in the household – together they are “heads” of all the others although these are in their late teens or early twenties. Even when Bernadette considers moving out of the home to a bigger property in another community she intends to take all of

members of the household with her. In fact Bernadette says that now she is married, she is an adult- this is not a child headed household any more. (Even though she had a son aged 14, she had considered herself a “child head” as she was unmarried.)

Variability within the household, then, is a key contributory descriptor when attempting to arrive at a clear typology of the child headed household. At the structural level, this model reveals the weaknesses within the household- the fragility of its composition. For those households which participate in an education support programme for instance, the departure of household members for weeks at a time can have a negative impact upon the home.

The consequence of such a fluid model is that there may be changes in the household head either on a temporary basis or more permanently, which may be frequent. Ten households out of 32 had experienced changes in the headship between the final two field visits. However for those households interviewed on more than one occasion, the household head changed according to the situation within the household unit. For the ten households where the head changed between visits in 2006 and 2008 it was found that the most frequent reason was marriage, and next the departure to or return from secondary school (temporary headship relinquishment).

A final characteristic of the child headed household in Rwanda is that it is not necessarily biologically related. Contrary to the expectation that all members will be siblings, the “orphan family” model, there are examples where members of a household are not from the same family or even extended family. Such households are usually formed through desperation, as a response to increasing poverty and more importantly to a need for protection and shelter. Thus in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, when families were estranged and children often unaccompanied, groups of children in these difficult circumstances would join together, establishing a *de facto* “household” – in refugee camps or even under rudimentary shelters on roadsides. Some lived with a group of people who were in the same situation as themselves, but were not related. Félicien lived with his grandmother until her death in 2003. His uncle then evicted him from the

family home and so he went to live with an elderly neighbour whom he had to care for as she was ill. Other households include non-sibling family members such as Bernadette's household, which in 2006 comprised Bernadette (aged 24), her 10 year old son, and four non-sibling first cousins, who spent the three years after the genocide "trying to persuade other family members to take care of them" (Bernadette, 2006). Finally in 1997 they decided to live in one household as they felt it was better to be together, providing support for one another and helping. In 2008, there are three new members of the household, Bernadette's husband and twin baby daughters.

### 5.11 Household Roles

As in other societies, the household members each have a role to play within the structure. The head is usually the oldest member of the group, although there are exceptions to this. Gilles (18) and his brother Marcel (19) have lived as a child headed household since 1995. Their older brothers used to live with them, but had left the household by 2004. Gilles has taken on the role of head of the household since that time.

“Interviewer: Who is head of the household?”

Gilles: I am...Marcel helps with jobs. I make decisions”

Interviewer: But you are younger than Marcel. Why is he not head of the household?

Marcel and Gilles (together): Does not want the responsibility”

The households of Florence and Yvette also illustrate a different model of responsibility within the household. Both of these girls have older brothers who are living in the home, yet it is the girls who carry out the role of household heads. They both live in Gihembe refugee camp, which consists of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The UNHCR representative commented that the practice of allowing the eldest female to head the household was a cultural tradition in DRC.

So the household head is responsible for the home, and usually the decision maker although at least half of the interviewees stated that decisions were made together, particularly in households consisting of boys. Tasks around the home are often allocated on the basis of age, for example the youngest is usually the one who collects the water. However jobs are often allocated along gender lines with girls doing the laundry and cooking while the boys try and earn some money, by finding work which is long term, but more often by doing casual jobs for neighbours. In single sex households however the jobs must be carried out by all household members despite their gender. Thus in female-only households, girls are obliged to earn some income and therefore they, too, offer to help neighbours sometimes with digging land or helping to harvest crops. In the rural area, limited opportunities mean that this is the predominant means of earning money, but girls may be forced to engage in transactional sex to supplement any income they may earn. This is explored more fully in Chapter 6.

A number of interviewees stated that they shared the jobs in the house, and that there was no dispute about who was responsible for certain tasks. So it is clear that the household is a structure in which each member has a role to play. Whilst the household head has the authority to elect who carries out the work to be done so that the household continues to function, the research revealed that in general there was acquiescence on the part of the other members of the household. Conflicts may arise, but the construct of the household is based on its survival and formed out of adversity. This research found that in the majority of the households a unity existed between those sharing the home, with few disagreements admitted, and a determination and resilience to help one another survive.

Arriving at a conceptual framework for the child headed household, then, requires an examination of the nature and function of the group. The ever-changing margins of the grouping that is the child headed household offer a perspective of the model of such households in a weakened society. Rwanda, post conflict, and experiencing the devastation of AIDS, reveals a society which has reshaped some of its social structures to meet the needs of the present. The child headed household, a misnomer at one level, but a reality on cultural and emotional levels,



plays a vital role in the recovery and rebuilding of Rwandan society by becoming an acknowledged model in communities. For agencies and organisations preparing to support and assist these households the concept must be shown to transgress the boundaries of age and the expectations of traditional family structures which might preclude help or acceptance. This household is fluid, age unlimited, and is comprised of family and non-family members, who fulfill specific roles and responsibilities in the home.

Yet it is crucial that the definition in itself does not obscure the realities of the lives of the children in these households. Initiatives by NGOs and government must be able to reach those in need and the identification of such households as “child headed” may preclude them from accessing assistance. If the terminology of “child headed household” is too restrictive, then another term should be employed. The challenge is not to use a term that would preclude appropriate responses, as the need is for a fuller conceptualisation of “vulnerable household”. The identification of “child headed household” does not offer a realistic interpretation of the construct of this vulnerable household phenomenon as lived by these individuals - the term “child” is seen as inaccurate due to variations, local, national and global, in the interpretation of the concept of the “child” and the role which the child plays as the primary responsible in a household. Furthermore, the word has strong connotations of numerical age based criteria, and this, linked with the previous reason, then reinforces the inaccurate representation of the reality.

Alternative labels can be proposed in an attempt to offer a more precise terminology for these households, however with each of these there is a weakness in certain characteristics of its interpretation. The term “vulnerable family” is adept at the fundamental description of the “child headed household” - it allows the perspective of need to be understood, and has been utilised as an umbrella term worldwide. In particular the Rwandan government has identified “vulnerable families” and implemented policies designed to assist them, but has broken this all-encompassing term down, identifying the groups included within it, one of which is the “child headed household”. Thus, while the term is an advantage in that it does not discriminate between ages of the vulnerable, or

location (street children for example) it may be too inclusive, requiring further identifying characteristics to be indicators for assistance from NGOs or government. If the idea implicit in “family” is that all those within the household are related, then it is a label which ignores households which are comprised of non-kin children, formed out of necessity and circumstance. Within this research, some of the “vulnerable families” who were introduced to the researcher as potential members of the sample group but who were excluded because a responsible adult was present and active as household head, could nevertheless be considered as vulnerable as the child headed households included in the programme, and in some cases, they may have been more vulnerable. This is because NGO programmes and government initiatives in the area may have focused on those children living without an adult, because they have no children who can qualify for supported education or training, or purely because they live in an area where income generation opportunities are scarce, they are sick and unable to work, or there are no NGOs or government support in the area. Finally the community may not be supportive, or there may be ethnic reasons why help is not forthcoming - this is a point made by Valérie, an elderly lady, caring for ten grandchildren, and a disabled son. She believes that the government is not prepared to help families like hers who are from mixed ethnic backgrounds. This may be a false perception, as the government has affirmed its commitment to the ending of ethnic discrimination by instigating policies and laws to support this. However the grass roots understanding and experience may be different. It was certainly evident that the household in question was extremely vulnerable, but the purpose of the lady’s comments may have been to extract some assistance, gift or money, from the research or indeed to see it as an entry into an NGO programme which might offer some long term improvement in the household’s fortunes.

“Vulnerable family” may be an accurate term from the perspective of livelihood survival, but is not specific enough in drawing attention to the lack of responsible adult in the household, and to those households where the members are not related. This may impact eligibility and the assistance given, but it may not be relevant to the government or agency involved.

Further alternatives to the “child headed household” phrase might include the “parentless family”. This is accurate in that it allows for the concept of the lack of active responsible adult, however it ignores the small number of households in this study where an adult is present but not capable of or unable to carry out the role of head of the household, caring for the family and taking responsibility. Foster *et al.* (1997: 58) has labelled households such as these, “accompanied child headed households”. Those households with other actively responsible adults might also be eligible for inclusion in this group, who, although they may be as vulnerable, are not without a “parent figure”. This may be the most accurate description of this specific group of child headed households, but the dilemma of the concept of the “child” is still inherent in it.

The search for a more accurate and precise identification for these households might also involve consideration from the perspective of generation- possibly renaming the child headed household as a “single generation family”. The inference of the “child” heading a household is that he or she is taking care of siblings, that is, from the same generation. This may also raise ambiguities in understanding the concept, particularly in those countries with high HIV infection rates, since as discussed above, children in such homes may be caring for a terminally ill parent who is not functioning as responsible adult, or who is incapable of heading the household, as in the case of Alice’s mother, as described earlier. In addition within this sample group there are households with an uncle who has joined them from another family, but who may be of a similar age to the household head or even younger. Furthermore, and as occurred more frequently in this research group, there are members of the child headed household, “children” then, who have their own children but are unmarried. Therefore the child head is caring for nieces and nephews of his or her siblings, children then from a younger generation. Thus these households do not necessarily comprise a single generation.

The term “child headed household” has been used in this work in spite of its shortcomings. Other alternatives may be valid for certain types within the group, however no term will offer an accurate understanding which can encompass all of the different permutations that exist within the child headed household

phenomenon. The primary weakness is embedded in the concept of the “CHILD”. This may be a situation in which Horton and Kraftl’s practice of scoring through the word “~~child~~” in their work on children’s methodology is valid and reasonable.<sup>32</sup> The implication is that interpretations of the word ~~child~~ are bound by parameters such as legal age, biology and society, but scoring it implies that the child is not acting as a child in all circumstances - other parameters inform their behaviours which may be those of adults.

In practice this is confined of course to the written word. Thus the “child headed household” as a term may remain the best option available, in spite of weaknesses and shortcomings. The crucial matter is not necessarily finding an accurate term but in understanding the nature of a specific type of vulnerable household that includes mainly young people undertaking adult roles. Simplistic terms have led to an inconsistent conceptualisation which may have impacted the identification of the vulnerable, prevented recognition of the extent of the phenomenon, and limited strategies to support children in these households.

There is a tension at the heart of the child headed household construct, which is focused on the “child” as its determinant. This tension is between the socio-cultural interpretation of the child and the adultlike actuality of this individual in carrying out the roles of parent, carer, earner, provider, advisor, counsellor, instructor, and mentor. This has addressed the aim of defining the child headed household. The following chapter will consider the second aim, which is to interrogate the livelihood challenges facing the child headed household in Rwanda.

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<sup>32</sup> This is discussed and referenced in the Methods Chapter.

## **Chapter 6: CHALLENGES OF LIVELIHOOD NEEDS: LAND, INCOME GENERATION AND EDUCATION**

Whilst the need for a typology of the child headed household is important in allowing a clearer definition of the phenomenon, it is evident that for the households themselves the most significant challenge is that of survival.

Livelihood needs such as shelter, food, clothing, health care, education and income generation opportunities are much documented in general academic works (Barnett and Whiteside 2002, Monk 2000, Luzze 2002, Ntozi 1999 *et al.*) as well as in the research and interventions of other agencies, nongovernmental organisations and international institutions. The Convention on the Rights of the Child contains in its articles numerous pledges towards the gaining and maintaining of rights for the child, including those of physical necessities and the more abstract psychosocial and emotional rights. The following articles from the CRC are pertinent for all children but resonate in particular when considering the circumstances of the vulnerable.

Article 20: any child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

Article 24: States parties recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

Article 26: States parties recognise for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law

Article 27: States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development

Article 28: States Parties recognise the right of the child to education

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

(Source: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted and ratified 1989, entered into force 1990, UN 2008)

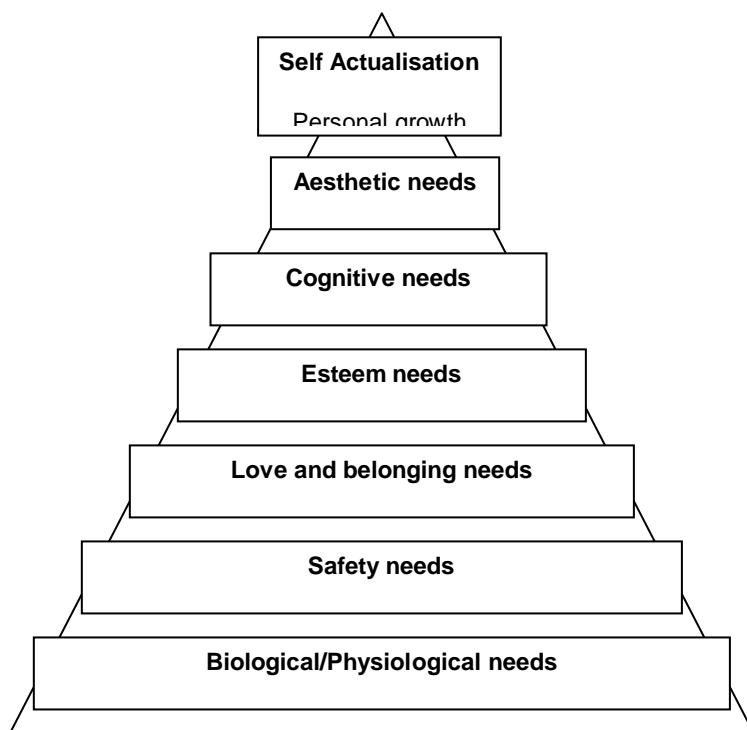
In this chapter the physical necessities of the child headed household will be considered with particular focus on land and property ownership, income generation and education. The level of resilience and coping strategies of the households are examined in the light of any changes which occurred between visits. These might involve different compositions within the household, new income generation initiatives, or more significantly variations in the levels of support offered by agencies and NGOs. How these households adapt to these changes and their impact on the individuals is explored in practical and psycho-social terms.

## 6.1 Needs and Livelihood

An emerging realisation for actors and stakeholders working with vulnerable children, is that not only are large and increasing numbers of children living in child headed households, but their ability to cope and survive, to gain livelihoods is constantly compromised. Access to basic livelihood needs such as shelter, education, food, health care and income generation activities have all been recognised as major challenges within CHHs, and the work of NGOs and governments to highlight and address these has been documented. As has been

discussed in the previous chapter, Luzze (2002) lists these needs as being nutrition, education, health, shelter, and includes within these the following more abstract needs- protection, parenting and psycho-social or spiritual needs. Foster's view as discussed in Chapter 2 reminds us that Article 26 of the CRC refers to the children's "right to benefit from state-provided social security" but notes that such government welfare is absent in Sub-Saharan Africa for the most part (Foster *et al.* 1997; OHCHR 1990 Article 27).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 5.1) illustrates the range of needs experienced by individuals, and, significantly for this study, indicates the fundamental building blocks of physiological needs at the base of the framework, followed by the more emotional and psychological needs of security, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Simply Psychology c.2008).



**Figure 6.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**  
**Source: Adapted from original by Author**

This provides a conceptual framework for the needs of all individuals, and specifically those of the children in child headed households in the case of this

research. Therefore the universal understanding of need in all its forms is pertinent to this study. A key aim is an evaluation of what these needs are for the child headed household from the perspective of the foundation band of need, the physiological needs. Specifically, the needs interrogated are those of land and property, income generation and education. Further to this is an evaluation of the impact that these needs can have on the prospects for future survival (Figure 5.2, DFID 1999).

**Figure 6.2: DFID's Sustainable livelihoods framework**  
**Source: DFID (2000) Livelihoods Guidance Sheets. DFID**

This approach focuses on the varied and fluid means that people utilise to safeguard their livelihoods, and emphasises the livelihood consequences associated with behaviours and actions. Within the framework there is an acknowledgement of assets and capital, of the role of actors such as government and NGOs, and the question of factors which shape the vulnerability of the individual. In the context of the child headed household this is further complicated by issues of age, responsibility, maturity, parental absence and place in society.



In considering these factors, the vulnerability of the child headed household is revealed, and from previous research and this study, it can be seen that this is linked with a scarcity of and challenges to livelihood assets; those of shelter, food, income and findings the means to survive. Consequently this suggests that social and legislative frameworks and programmes are crucial to the livelihood outcomes of these households, in strengthening coping mechanisms and support networks.

However there is a dearth of initiatives which target these needs within the child headed household. Whilst NGOs have been active in setting up both short and long term programmes in some areas, institutional government frameworks and legislation to assist and protect livelihoods are lacking in many areas of Sub Saharan Africa. This is the case in Rwanda. Against this background of government inaction (which may be due to lack of will or capability) and the realities of survival for child headed households, it is important to examine the underlying situation of children in Rwanda who live without a responsible adult to care for them, and to interrogate the ways in which these children are challenged by their livelihood needs on a day to day basis.

## 6.2 Land and Property

The child headed households included in this study had varying experiences of land and property ownership. For those whose parents died in the years after the genocide, and who subsequently became child headed households, the majority were living in homes which had been owned or rented by their parents for many years. This did not preclude them from facing challenges to their ownership of the property and land, however. Furthermore rental arrangements were based on fragile agreements and thus were vulnerable and often likely to cease. Those children who were orphaned during the genocide faced a higher number of challenges. Their homes may have been destroyed or were taken by others. The houses and land that Bernadette and Dédé's parents rented before the genocide were destroyed in the conflict, leaving them homeless as well as orphaned, and

obliging them to take the initial decision to live with extended family and friends in their home areas. This is examined more fully below.

Programmes which were able to include the provision of accommodation fulfilled one of their most significant livelihood needs, whether it was within a temporary arrangement or one which ensured a long term involvement.

A great majority of Rwanda's population experienced some measure of displacement during the period of instability and subsequent genocide in the early 1990s. Consequently this led to a high degree of return and reclamation of land. Ownership of land for many centuries was limited to males, and so after the genocide in 1994, when Tutsi males were the primary targets of the Hutu killers, in particular at the outset of the conflict, the consequent gender imbalance within the population complicated and exacerbated the situation of land and property ownership. Women whose husbands had been killed returned to their homes only to find their husband's relatives claiming the houses and land as their right. Thus the fact that only males were legally able to own land exacerbated these barriers to inheritance for female headed households, in particular, after the genocide. Fleur (a social worker in the Inkuru Nziza programme) tells of her experience of land inheritance laws:

My husband was killed in the genocide. When I returned to my home after the conflict his family claimed the house. They made me and my children leave. I went to the pastor and he helped me to take them to court. It took a lot of time in court. In the end they were given the house and I lost. (Fleur 2004)

The end of the conflict in 1994 also heralded the return to Rwanda of many Tutsis who had fled the country during earlier outbreaks of violence in the previous decades, some up to thirty years before. These returnees attempted to reclaim land which their families had owned in the past, but which had in the meantime been taken over by others. The principle of "family lands and property inheritance", as continuing to function through these patrilineal constructs, was seen to prevail over events which might have impeded this process. Customs were to be adhered to despite the disorder and turmoil in Rwandan society during

these years. These combined movements of returnees from both periods of exodus have led to thousands of disputes over property ownership, some of which have lasted for years.

Consequently the government has been obliged to take action to ensure that there is a more equitable distribution of land and, in order to achieve this, has instigated a national programme of villagisation. The general purpose of this is to encourage households to move into new communities where they will be allocated a small parcel of land for cultivation and where there will be clean water and facilities. This initiative has not been the wholehearted success anticipated by the government, however. The fear of being forced to move from an area in which one has settled to a new community which may be at some distance away, is evident in the anxieties of Destine and Marianne: "What if people force us to leave the city and go and live in villages? We do not want this".

Yet despite this initiative, land disputes remain prevalent, prompting the National Unity and Reconciliation council statement that land disputes are the "greatest factor hindering sustainable peace" (Huggins 2004, MINITERE 2001). New land laws implemented in 2004 strive to ensure security of tenure for Rwandans, but many cases of rural landowners selling to rich urban elites have been noted, resulting in continuing and increased landlessness (Kairaba-Kyambadde 2004:29).

Acknowledgment of the problem of inheritance has prompted a change in the law. In 2000 the Rwanda National Assembly passed an act allowing women to be considered as the legal head of the household, permitting women to inherit and own land and, in addition, recognising a girl's right to inherit her parents' property. The government also acknowledged at the time that this law would set a precedent for future legislation that is gender sensitive (Muganza 2000). However problems have been encountered in implementing this in practice, as a number of families are opposed to the change in tradition, preferring to abide by the previous traditions of male headship and ownership. As with many other issues, the reality of everyday life is such that women and girls are often unable

to avail themselves of such laws, in particular, if there is a need for financial resources for court cases. In addition, those marriages, which were not “legal” but traditional, are not included currently in this legislation. Marongwe and Palmer (2004:12) suggest that informing women of those rights at grass roots level is a significant challenge. While they acknowledge that there is some evidence of the awareness of the changes in the law filtering through to women, it has resulted in an increased number of legal cases as families fight against the legislation. This exposes the gender-based discrimination which serves to exacerbate the challenges to land rights in CHHs, since a large number of child heads of household are female.

The legislation allowing women to inherit land can also disadvantage the child headed household. Michel states, “This is our own house and land. When my parents died my grandmother tried to take it from us but she was not successful”. So other female relatives are able to use the law to their advantage, and to the detriment of the case of the child headed household. More recent land laws state that there should be joint registration of land, and that this land should not be disposed of without all family members agreeing (Musahara 2006: v, vi). This includes the need for the agreement of minors, a clause inserted to ensure the land rights of large numbers of orphans and child headed households. Rose’s work which discusses this has already been considered in a previous chapter and is examined in the light of this research below.

### 6.3 Land and Orphans

The issue of land inheritance has been particularly critical for orphans and children in child headed households, since the problem of claiming land that was their parents’ has been difficult. The work of Rose, (2005), analyses in detail several case studies where the challenges to property inheritance in Rwanda have served to emphasize the vulnerable situation of orphaned children left homeless due to land seizures. This is usually because relatives have taken over the land on the death of the parents. Additionally their vulnerability is increased through ignorance of their legal rights.

As seen in Chapter 4 of this thesis, Rose (2006, 2007) contends that the property rights of children constitute the “building block of a social protection framework” (2007: 12), arguing that the protection of those rights is crucial for the unlocking of other livelihood rights – see Chapter 4, Figure 4.4

Hence there is a requirement for legislative structures to support and protect these principal needs. However when legislation has been passed to support these rights, the success at grass roots level has to be examined. If children are still unable to pursue property claims for some reason then research must concentrate on the reasons why the legislation is not universally working.

When children returned to their homes after the genocide, sometimes having lost both parents, they often found themselves in conflict with other family members or neighbours with regard to the ownership of property and land. Many instances have been recounted where family members have seized land from widows and orphans. In some cases homes and land may have been appropriated by other families who were homeless.

In other cases, male members of the extended family have entered into marriages with girl heads of households in order to acquire land and assets. Sometimes girls feel that they have no option but to consent, in the hope that the prospect may be preferable to attempting to survive and cope with younger members of the family alone.<sup>33</sup> This form of exploitation is by no means rare and is but one example of the many forms of abuse that are suffered by those in CHHs.

The reasons for inaction by children and others include an ignorance of their rights, uncertainty about how to put forward a case, unwillingness to pursue the action and the perceived costs of the dispute. There was an evident reluctance to confront authority figures. This sometimes results from a reservation about divulging personal details to the authorities, even commune leaders. The genocide and the fractures of community and societal links have compounded the unwillingness of those who may be unused to engaging with officials. Those who are illiterate may feel ill qualified to speak with them and to reveal their

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<sup>33</sup> Usually traditional marriages, as the age for legal marriage is 21.

frailties and weaknesses. Consequently there is a feeling of powerlessness, where children in child headed households often feel that they have no choice but to accept the removal of their land by relatives. In three of the households this was the case.

A further reason why children do not avail themselves of the opportunity to fight a land dispute is the lack of information about the current legislation. Those children like Ninette and Nathalie in rural areas had no knowledge about the rights of children to land or of the recently passed legislation - and in their case land had been removed years before the changes in law. Ninette stated: "The government was no help to us, we gave up the fight". The dearth of NGOs and other agencies, including government, working in these areas to disseminate this information means that the rights of all of the citizens, and, in particular in this case, the vulnerable, are not met and are not acknowledged. Conversely in other areas of Rwanda, Kigali in particular, some NGOs are able to advocate for households or at least direct them to agencies who can then inform and advise them on taking cases to the authorities.

### **6.3.1 Land, Property and NGO Support**

Josèphe Natamba, programme director at Moucecoure, a local NGO based in Kigali, stated that children are fearful of making enemies of their remaining relatives, and so are sometimes reticent about fighting for their rights (Natamba, personal communication, Kigali 2004). The reluctance of children to further isolate themselves from family members plays a part in choosing inaction rather than proactive resistance. Children who are living alone may feel that they want to maintain a good relationship with their remaining relatives and so will comply with their wishes to keep that relationship alive. This NGO (Moucecoure) attempts to advocate for them in these cases, and hold discussions with the family members involved in the grab to attempt to resolve the problem. The lack of awareness of legal rights on the part of children has compelled Moucecoure, and other NGOs, to introduce programmes which aim to inform them of their rights, in particular regarding land, and train them to advocate for themselves in

legal matters. In turn, these children are encouraged to help others in similar situations, and coach them in the skill of advocacy. Partner organisations provide vocational training and financial assistance to members of CHHs to erect their own dwellings, and to help others with the construction of their homes.

Many organisations aim to provide homes for CHHs, often by building houses or buying land and property for a household, which gives the children somewhere to live and sometimes the wherewithal to grow crops for themselves or to sell as income on a small parcel of land. Other organisations sometimes provide the resources for the children to build small dwellings themselves. Homes which are provided are sometimes within a sheltered “compound” which might house several families, but with the security of an external wall for protection. Inkuru Nziza has included in this basic scheme a “traditional” family, with two parents, in order to provide CHHs with a model family from which they can learn and understand the dynamics of family life and how a family functions. For this generation of Rwandan children, such families are indeed few, and it is questionable whether the “orthodox” two parent and children model remains the normal household composition in Rwanda.

This research has shown that children who were involved in NGO or agency programmes were able to avail themselves of the support of the leaders in contesting land issues. In Inkuru Nziza there have been several cases where the project leader has been forced to go to court to protect the ownership of the land and dwellings for children and widows linked to the programme. Even when Inkuru Nziza has purchased a house for a family, challenges to ownership can still occur. Incidents have occurred where the organisation has built a home for a child headed family whose extended family then tried to claim that house for themselves, obliging the agency to put the house legally in the name of the eldest child as soon as possible. Anne and her siblings moved into a house provided by Inkuru Nziza and soon afterwards the extended family tried to take it. The dispute was so serious that the family took Anne and her siblings to court to try and claim the house, even though it had been purchased specifically for the children by the NGO. In the end the court ruled in favour of Inkuru Nziza and Anne, despite the case being held prior to the most recent legislation

acknowledging the rights of the children. Thus it is clear that family members will try and make the “rules” conform to cultural and historical precedents, taking land from minors to give to other family members. It may be that cultural beliefs and customs are powerful enough to be given precedence over immediate needs and humanitarian considerations. Conversely it may be greed which motivates these behaviours, and which cultural traditions are helpfully obscuring. Such determination to acquire land for themselves however is indicative of the levels of need and poverty amongst all Rwandans. The notion that a group of orphans, for example, might be given a home and some land when their relatives, adults and children, are struggling, might be a strong enough incentive for them to make the effort to take possession of the land and house, since they may be equally needy. For those households which do not meet the criteria for certain NGO or government support programmes, witnessing the provision of resources to neighbouring families who circumstances are comparable with their own is difficult. They are not eligible for help despite struggling to survive.

Other cases have shown that a letter from the head of the organisation to family members declaring the rights of the children to the house has often been successful in preventing further claims. Government schemes to remove homes in certain areas has also had an impact on child headed households, and the programme director of Inkuru Nziza was forced to write a letter to the authorities requesting that the homes of child headed households would be exempt from this, which was agreed. This has subsequently been made law as has been discussed above.

Individual cases may necessitate specific arrangements due to the circumstances of the family or relationships. In the case of Simone, a child head in the sample group, it was thought prudent to register the house in the name of the project, since if the house was registered in the family name, the risk of her older brother selling it to support his drug dependency was too high.

Thus the detail of agreements concerning the ownership of properties is an important aspect of land and property ownership. The necessity of keeping legal documentation and putting property agreements and deeds in the name or care



of appropriate guardians is paramount, and each case may have to be considered and responded to individually by NGOs concerned. In this way there will be fewer reasons and opportunities for other family members to consider engaging in property disputes. Primarily children should have an awareness of the legal rights, and understand the processes required to make their land and property ownership official and legal. Finally networks of assistance should be available to inform and advise, and which can empower them to set these processes in motion. Children should be encouraged to pursue their rights and not be anxious about engaging with officials and embarking on cases which can lead to court visits. The legal rights for children are important. For those children under the legal adult age of consent, institutional frameworks need to be inclusive of these children with adult responsibilities.

### **6.3.2 Land, Property and Government Intervention**

The villagisation programme embarked upon by the government has had mixed success. Attempts have been made to give consideration in the first instance to the more vulnerable groups in society, but the programme has been unpopular in some parts, as people are loath to leave their home areas. People living in these Imidugudu have expressed concerns that the fields are far from their homes and lack of infrastructure. Implementation has slowed down in the programme because of lack of financial resources by the government, since the international community withdrew some support for the provision of some of the infrastructure. The sale of small farmers' plots is also on the increase. In spite of the government's preference for any movement to be voluntary, it can be a source of concern for some CHHs, for whom the fear of being forcibly moved to a new area is a valid one in the absence of any real alternative, as was expressed by some households during the first visit.

The motivation for land registration is a key to economic well-being and stability, which reinforces Rose's illustration of it being the source of other livelihood survivals (2005).

A government scheme to support the victims of the genocide, the FARG, (*Fond d'Assistance aux Rescapés du Génocide*) aims to provide assistance for education, health and housing to the most needy genocide survivors including children, but a lack of awareness on the part of children about this help means that many have not availed themselves of such assistance. Only two households in the sample had been assisted by this scheme, those of Bernadette and Dédé. They have been provided with homes, one in a community purposely constructed for widows and orphans of the genocide (Kimironko, Kigali). This fund was implemented in 1998 and its purpose was to assist Tutsi survivors identified as being in need during a census taken in 1996 (MINALOC 2003). However a weakness in this criteria for assistance is that there were at the time and still are many more people in vulnerable situations due to the genocide; some people, children included, were still returning from refugee camps in neighbouring countries until the end of 1996 and beyond, some children were displaced from their families and were living in camps for unaccompanied minors, and moreover structures and institutions to account for the needs of the population were simply not in place at the time. Funding for this comes from government sources (5 per cent of budget) and from each adult Rwandan (over 18 years ) who is obliged to pay Rw Fr 100 a year, with the employed contributing 1 per cent of their salary.

The practicalities of implementation of the fund however reveal shortcomings in the administration of assistance, in particular with regards to education, which will be examined later. Accusations of corruption and mismanagement have also been raised, and the government has suspended several key managers and is heading an enquiry into the running of the fund. This research illustrated that many households, especially those in the rural areas had received no help from the fund and were unaware of the application process and eligibility for FARG assistance.

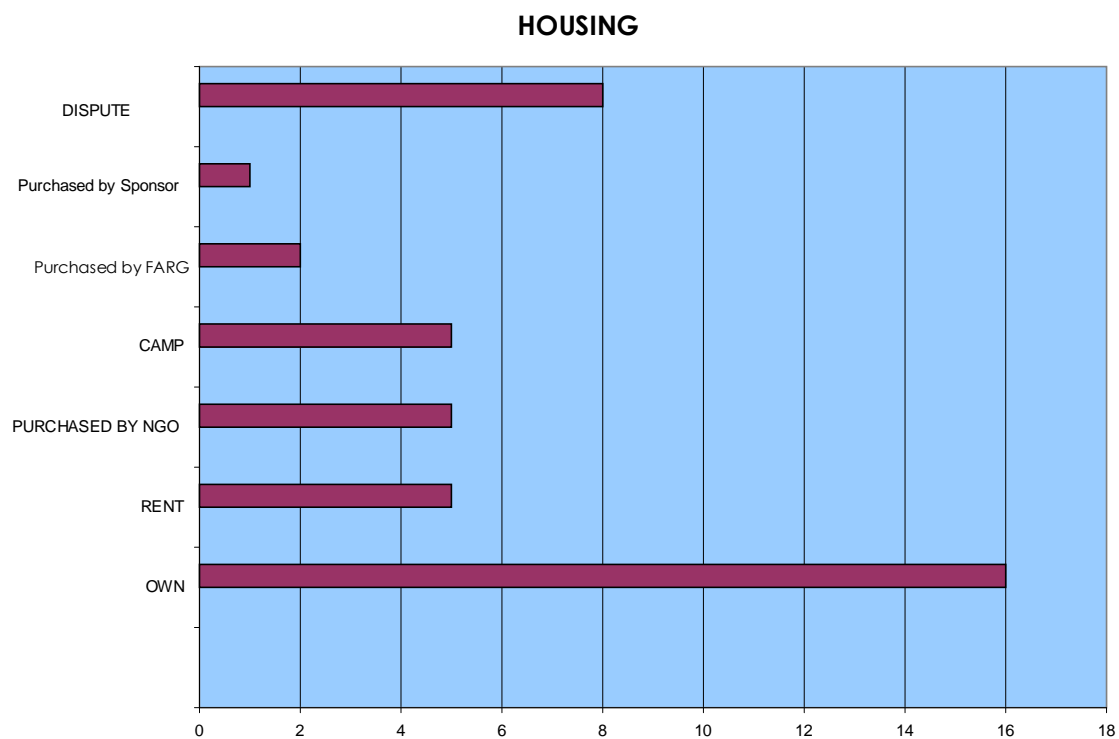
Modeste said “There is nothing from the government”. Ninette stated “There is no help from the government. We do not know the FARG”.

The question of ethnicity is also significant within the context of the FARG programme- the original criteria included a specification that the victims assisted

by the scheme should be Tutsi, which has been a criticism leveled at the government whose objective of reconciliation is undermined by this discriminatory clause (Coleman 2007). Valérie, (probably a Hutu), struggling to help bring up ten grandchildren, stated “The government is not interested in people from other ethnic groups or mixed marriages. The FARG is not for me”.

## 6.4 Housing Arrangements

A variety of housing arrangements was found within the sample group. In contrast to the immediate post war years when some children were obliged to live under temporary shelters and makeshift tents (MINALOC and UNICEF 2003, Luzze 2002), all had permanent dwellings, although the methods of acquiring the homes differed, (see Figure 6.3).



**Figure 6.3: Housing histories**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

A majority of the households own their own homes; some had belonged to the parents and so the children remained in the home following the death or departure of their parents (16 households). Others were purchased by NGOs for specific households, and consequently ownership was given to the children (5 households), two houses were purchased by the FARG government scheme, another purchased by a sponsor within an NGO programme, and five households were renting privately from a landlord. The final five households lived in UNHCR shelters within the Gihembe refugee camp. Within this sample group, however, eight households had been engaged in a dispute about land or property, which is discussed below.

#### **6.4.1 Access to Programmes**

A typical pattern of events leading to the inclusion of households into the Inkuru Nziza programme would involve introduction to the programme through personal acquaintance with a programme representative, social worker or community leader or pastor. This may have occurred soon after the return from camps after the genocide or when their circumstances changed in the aftermath of the conflict, or when terminal illness was involved. Destine and Marianne were able to live in the sheltered community of the Inkuru Nziza programme because the programme manager knew their parents. Having lost their father and their home in the genocide, they returned to Kigali in 1994 with their mother who was terminally ill with AIDS, but would have been homeless without the intervention of Inkuru Nziza. Franck returned with his siblings to his district of Kigali after spending time in the refugee camp in Goma to find his house had been destroyed. It was only through contact with the local church that he was able to access the support which has been provided for his household since that time and up to the present day, which has ensured his household's survival.

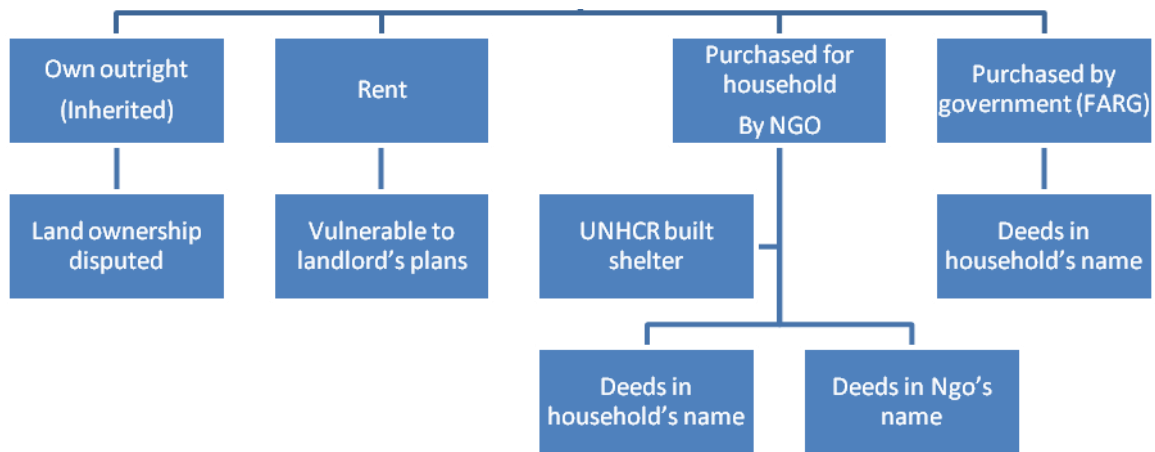
An excerpt from Jules' interview illustrates the problem of accessing programmes:

Researcher: "Why have you not been included on one of the NGO projects that are working in this area?"

Jules: I do not know how to join a programme... Compassion project took on some children but we were not included as we did not know and were too late”

Personal contact has a significant part to play in gaining access to programmes such as these. This might be through a direct introduction to or a relationship with key workers in programmes, or through “word of mouth” from others in similar positions. It has been seen that some individuals are unaware of how to access programme assistance, where to go, who is eligible and so on. This emphasises that in the case of some areas of Rwanda , help has sometimes been arbitrary and inconsistent, which has led to households being marginalised and left to survive without the assistance which could be crucial to their survival and to improvement in livelihood strategies. For others, merely being in the right place at the right time has been enough to secure their livelihoods, sometimes for many years. This suggests that a more visible model for accessing assistance would improve the chances of improved livelihood outcomes for a wider group of children.

Figure 6.4 illustrates the types of housing arrangement encountered within the sample group, and some of the consequences that ensue. For those who have inherited a dwelling often with some adjoining land, there is the risk of dispute over the ownership of that land on the death of the parents, which occurred in eight households as previously indicated. Those who are renting homes are often vulnerable to the landlord’s needs or wishes, and do not have secure tenancies, requiring them to find alternative accommodation at short notice on occasion. For those whose homes were purchased by an NGO the deeds can be in the name of the household and is considered then as the “family” home, or kept in the name of the NGO. The houses built or purchased by the FARG are subsequently owned by the household. Finally the children in Gihembe refugee camp live in UNHCR built shelters, but the majority still have homes and land back in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



**Figure 6.4: Types of housing arrangement**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2006)**

**Ninette and Nathalie's story**

These sisters live in a rural area of Kigali. When their parents died during the genocide, they fled to the hills, and on their return came back to the house and land they had inherited. However, as Ninette recounted: "We were left the house and land by my parents. Members of my family took the land, leaving us with the house and only a very small area to grow crops ". They were unable to claim this back, due to, they say, no help from the government and so gave up the fight. Consequently they can only grow a very small amount of crops for their own use on the remaining small parcel of land next to their house, and can sometimes earn money by helping neighbours to work their land.

**Box 5**

Within the Inkuru Nziza sponsorship programme, sponsors are able to offer assistance outside and in addition to the normal monthly financial agreement. For some households this can shape significantly the household coping strategies. One of the ways this can be used is in purchasing another house which can then be rented out to provide some additional income for the household. The sponsor of Aline bought some land and paid for the building of two houses on it, one for the household and another to provide rental income. The NGO has kept some of the income for their use when they are older. The sponsor also bought furniture

for the family's house. Thus high levels of gifting can be of significant advantage to the livelihood survival of households.

Child	Land dispute	Intervention	Result
Jules	Land grab attempted 2003	Told neighbours and local government leaders	Relatives obliged to withdraw action
Danielle	Land taken by relatives	Only left with house	Did not try to fight for the land
Michel <sup>34</sup>	Grandmother tried to take the house	Children objected	Grandmother was unsuccessful
Joelle	Former owner of house tried to reclaim it	NGO Inkuru Nziza and local authorities intervened	Claim was rejected
Félicien	Grandmother who owned the house and cared for him died	Uncle ejected him from house and claimed it for himself	Sent Félicien to live with an elderly neighbour

**Table 6.1: Land disputes and the sample group**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2006)**

Table 6.1 illustrates the situation experienced by five of the households in inheriting land and property; two of these households lost a house or land, and neither took their relatives to court or attempted any type of redress, due to

<sup>34</sup> This family also has a second dwelling on their land which they can rent out to earn an income, and when the tenants are able to pay.

ignorance of the law and to the conviction any opposition would be futile. Two of the successful households were assisted in their claims by local authorities and an NGO. Joelle stated in 2006 that “My parents bought this house. One of them died in 2002 and the next in 2003. Now the previous owner wants to reclaim it”.

Previous owners consider their claims to be convincing enough to pursue an attempt to regain control of this property; in this case, despite Joelle’s late parents having purchased the house before their deaths, the previous owner still believes he has these rights. The death of both parents will have influenced his decision to reclaim the house, since the family left to inherit were children and, from historical precedents, not able to inherit or own land, although the new legislation annulling this had already been passed at the time of this interview. Dissemination of information regarding these laws, as well as a reluctance to accept them, fuels such cases. The previous owner saw an opportunity to gain from the misfortune of these children, when historically he may have had more legal rights to regain the house. With the new legislation relatively recent, he may have been unaware of the law himself, or hoped that others were ignorant of it too.

For other children the death of a parent or carer led to their eviction from the home by other family members or landlords. Félicien’s case illustrates the priority taken by custom and tradition. On the death of his grandmother, his uncle, who had been living elsewhere, sent him to live with an elderly neighbour so he could claim the house for himself, not even consenting to take care of the boy. Similar incidents were experienced by others in the sample group. Josette recounted what happened to her—“After my parents died in 1994, we (Josette, her brother and sister) went to live with my aunt. When she died in 2000, her children sold the house and so we had to find somewhere else to live”. The story of Benjamin, aged 16, a boy living on the streets, tells of a similar experience:

I was six years old when my mother and father died in the war (1994). After they died my uncle sold the property so we had nowhere to go. After the house was sold each child went their own way. I do not know where my brothers and sisters are.



Situations such as these may offer a glimpse into the socio-cultural customs of inheritance and the role of the family, but within these models, notions of care for orphans and the vulnerable by the extended family as a safety net and a coping strategy seem to be absent. These challenges to the role of the family as carers and as an extended family safety net are discussed in Chapter 7.

Knowledge of the rights held by women and children, then, is lacking. The dissemination of information to adults and children regarding the rights of those in child headed households to inherit and own land is essential; in addition the processes and procedures to claim those rights must be made accessible and straightforward. Socio-cultural traditions can continue to dominate the concepts of inheritance, which impeded the ability of the vulnerable to own land and property. This is a challenge which cannot be overcome merely by legislation, but education and necessity both have a role in transforming the expectations and customs of all.

Unregistered births may have led to lack of proof of identity for some individuals, but even if such papers were in the possession of families, many were lost in the chaotic events of the conflict. The displacement and general disorder during the conflict and genocide also led to the destruction of documents and certificates, which also has an impact upon land inheritance and ownership. Claiming or reclaiming land or property without proof of ownership can result in prolonged disputes leading to costly court visits. The return of those exiles who had left during conflicts decades before, exacerbated this, as has already been discussed. Equally when parents suddenly die, they have usually not had an opportunity to leave instructions or important information for the children they have left behind. This happened in the case of Francine; she knows that her family has land somewhere but does not know where the land is, and so has been unable to claim it. Estelle is also aware that her parents had land in Kibuye, but the house has been destroyed and so she is unable to live there and make use of it.

Four of the five households interviewed in the refugee camp had land owned by their family in the Democratic Republic of Congo to which they were keen to

return. As they left the country and have been living in refugee camps since 1997, it is unclear what might have happened to that land in the meantime, since their home areas were at the heart of the conflict area. An additional obstacle to the inheritance of land in the case of two of these households is that the marriages of their parents were polygamous, and so whilst a house and land exist, it is the second wife and family who now live in it. This has proved a problem for some of the non-refugee families. Elisabeth wryly stated the following:

My father is alive and is looking for another wife. He has had many wives and still has four wives. We have had no help from him since 1994 (her mother's death). The other wives grew food but would not share it with us.

Returning to land once owned by the family to reclaim and live again on that property may not be straightforward, despite historical precedents, as has been found in Rwanda. When the refugees return to DRC, they may find that their land has been destroyed or taken over by others. Therefore a tension exists between an urgency to return to the family home and to continue with life, cultivate the land and so on, in the knowledge that the certainty of resuming a life as before is not guaranteed. Despite the shortcomings and oppressive context of Gihembe camp, this refugee existence may be superior to that which awaits them back in DRC.

#### **6.4.2 Changes in Circumstance: Housing Arrangements**

The vulnerability of the child headed household is clearly revealed when considering the question of shelter, property and land. Rose (2005) has found that land ownership is the cornerstone of the struggle to improve livelihoods, since it can be used to cultivate crops for the home or for sale, thus ensuring some income, which can be used for education or training. The ownership of a house can also be included in this model. From this assertion, fluctuations or changes in circumstances related to land and housing can have a significant impact upon livelihoods, either in positive or negative ways. They can act as a

catalyst for further impoverishment and can stretch coping systems to their maximum or can offer more security and opportunities to improve income and assets. For household heads such as Josette, who is disabled, earning enough to pay the monthly rent is a challenge, and she has been unable to pay the rent for 6 months due to the theft of her earnings.

Changes in the housing situation can precipitate a worsening of the fortunes of the household. This does not only include physical factors such as the state of the accommodation, sanitation, water, and local services, but also non-physical aspects - friendships and support networks, insecurity, and marginalisation. The longitudinal nature of this study has offered a perspective of the impacts of changes in the lives of these households, and in particular exposed the realities of surviving within these fragile and sometimes temporary housing arrangements. The coping strategies and resilience of the household are laid bare when children are faced with changes in support or incidents over which they have little control, whether they are humanly instigated or natural. Circumstances such as these also highlight the nature of the dependency of households upon programmes. If households have been housed, fed, educated and supported by projects within their community, coping when some of those initiatives are modified or withdrawn can lead to increased survival challenges for the individuals. New household formats may be necessary, with altered and more innovative coping strategies employed. Here resilience is crucial, and some households will fare better than others in managing their needs when support structures have changed. Children are aware that programmes can change and support might even cease – at his first interview in 2004, Franck said “We have no hold on anything, if the project stops there will be no security”.

At the time of the second visit three households supported by the Inkuru Nziza programme had been moved or were about to move out of the community in which they had been living for 10 years. These families had been living in the Lower Kimisagara sheltered community, and were relocated to new houses which the project bought for each family.<sup>35</sup> The sheltered community at the time

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<sup>35</sup> The sheltered community included approximately 9 homes within a secure wall, with a shared water source and electricity. Child headed households and widows caring for grandchildren lived in the majority of

of our first visit had included child headed households and grandmothers who had been caring for their orphaned grandchildren. The latter had grown up and moved out of the area leaving the grandmothers alone. The reasons given for the decision to move these CHHs and grandmothers out of the community were several.

Firstly, the community itself is situated at the bottom of a hillside, where a stream runs around the base wall surrounding the houses. There was a concern that the support structure of the wall was not sound and therefore dangerous for the residents. Secondly, at the time, the project had another sheltered community in Upper Kimisagara bordering a vocational training centre run by the project - an integral part of the project's aim to assist young people in becoming self-sufficient. To that end, the directors wanted to expand the range of vocational training they were able to offer, and thus it was necessary to make use of the buildings in the sheltered community. Those living in Upper Kimisagara were thus moved to the sheltered community in Lower Kimisagara.<sup>36</sup> A third reason given was that the older ladies had no longer any dependents living with them and therefore it would be beneficial for them to have houses purchased by the project which they would thereafter own. A final reason, and the most significant for this study, was that the children in the parentless households (CHHs) were now considered to be young adults who needed to become more independent and learn to live in the wider community.

Three child-headed households from the first data sample were involved in the move from Lower Kimisagara, two of which had already been moved out by the time of the second research visit in February 2006. Both of these households had been moved to the peri-urban area of Iggehogwe, approximately 7 kilometres from their former home in the centre of Kigali. There was a tangible feeling of resentment on the part of the two interviewees, Joceline and Franck, about the manner in which the move was made. The difficulties of living in a semi-rural area after being near the city manifested themselves in several ways. Major

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homes, with a "traditional family" of parents and children in one house, as a model for the child headed households.

<sup>36</sup> This was despite the fact that one of the reasons given for the necessity to relocate residents was a structural problem with the external wall in Lower Kimisagara

differences were that as opposed to living in a house within a sheltered community of 8 or 9 houses, they were living now in individual houses in a new community. Furthermore, the houses in the sheltered community had had electricity and water taps outside which were free. In the new houses there was neither electricity nor water; the latter had to be bought from neighbours, thus putting extra pressure on any income received. They perceived this as a lowering of their standard of living, and it was more costly to live in the Iggehogwe area. The rural location also meant that there was a lack of opportunities for income generation to offset those costs.

From the project's point of view, property further away from the city was cheaper, and therefore buying homes for these families in Iggehogwe allowed them to acquire a larger home than would be possible in the city, and also would enable the families to have some land around the house for the cultivation of crops. In addition, one of the project's social workers lived in the area, and she would be able to keep an eye on them as they settled in. It was clearly evident that land was more affordable in this rural area, as both houses included several rooms, with outside facilities and cooking area, and were situated within a sizeable garden. Much cultivation takes place in the area, which, as is normal in Rwanda, is very hilly, with terracing systems of cultivation. Crops grown include bananas, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, avocados, rice, and cassava. Therefore potentially these households would be able to become at least partially self-sufficient.<sup>37</sup> Not only could the children provide for themselves, but they might also produce enough to sell to others. However this might necessitate their transporting the crops to a local market or even into the centre of Kigali which could be a prohibitive factor for them. Equally, to be successful in their selling they would

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<sup>37</sup> There is probably a need for advice or training as to the suitability of the soil to particular plants. It has been found that child headed households are lacking in the basic knowledge that parents would historically have taught children about cultivation and plants. Since these are parentless children, it is necessary for them to acquire the knowledge elsewhere. This is an area where communities could assist, in that older adults might serve as advisers or teachers to help with the identification of suitable crops, irrigation, planting and harvesting times and techniques etc.

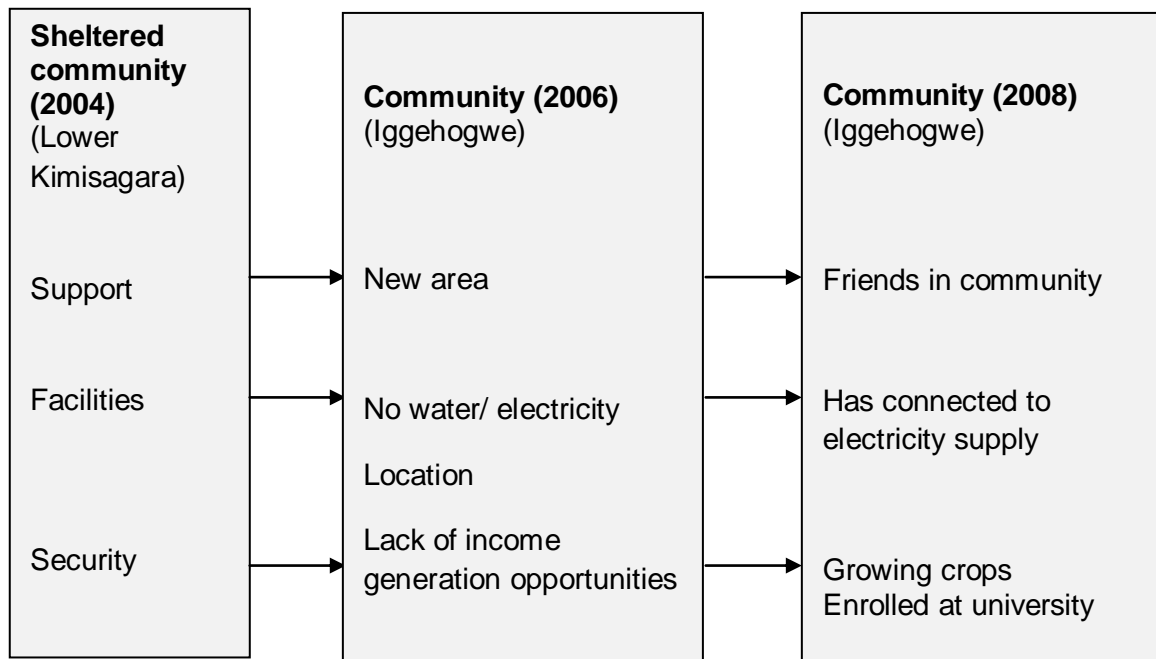
need to determine the best time to sell, what to charge, how to transport their goods and where they would be able to sell the most produce.

However it was evident that at this time and from an onlooker's perspective, the benefits of the new location were outweighed by the negatives, which were probably based on fear and insecurities more than anything. When the positive aspects of Iggehogwe were highlighted to them they agreed that the potential was good, but it did not take away their sadness at moving away from the sheltered community which had been their home for a substantial amount of time. Franck had said in 2004: "I am worried that when we leave the sheltered community things will get worse". For children who have suffered a great amount of hardship in their lives, any change can understandably be a challenge and can impede their development emotionally. They require stability and familiarity. The very nature of shelter and protection afforded by the community in Lower Kimisagara allowed the families a security that Joceline did not feel she had in Iggehogwe. She admitted that she had no friends in the new area - her older sister is out during the day and her brother sells clothes in rural areas. The other household consisted of four teenage boys, and they felt that there was no problem of lack of protection or insecurity. Girls in child headed households are more vulnerable to assault or harassment especially from males than boys, and therefore the move out of the sheltered community involved more than practical changes for them.

Inkuru Nziza had also decided that the families involved in moving from the sheltered community were of an age and stage in their lives where they should become more independent, having had the support of those in their community when they were younger. Now it was time for them to stand on their own two feet and lead their own lives without calling on the project for help. This intention was complicated from the perspective of the interviewees by the stage of education that some of the members of the households found themselves in at that time; for Joceline the move coincided with her leaving primary school, but since she had not passed the exams to enter secondary school the project was encouraging her to undergo tailoring training which she did not want to do. Thus for Joceline it was a period of change on several fronts. Whilst the idea of becoming more

independent is a sound one, the difference in environment meant that the process was seen as arduous. At the same time the project stopped giving the monthly ration of rice and beans to each household. This had been donated by the Catholic Relief Service, and had been given in addition to their RwFr. 10,000 a month, but the funding had come to an end. So henceforth, each sponsored child was given RwFr.10,000 per month, from which they were to buy food, fuel, oil for cooking and for those who have moved into the new homes in Iggehogwe, water and oil or batteries for lamps.

The changes experienced by these households due to relocation incorporated both negative and positive impacts; a lowering in the standard of facilities in the home such as electricity and water, fewer income generation opportunities since the houses are further from the city centre, leaving their friends and neighbours in the sheltered community who had helped and supported them. Advantages which were not appreciated by the children at the outset included bigger houses, and the benefit of a garden for growing crops. Figure 6.5 shows the changes which occurred in Franck's life between 2004 and 2008, in the context of his housing arrangements, and illustrates the mixture of positive and negative elements which were experienced as major changes in his life took place. From the end of 2006, Franck was also able to enrol at university thanks to a sponsor.



**Figure 6.5: Changes in household situation:  
The case of Franck: 2004-2006-2008**  
Source: Author's fieldwork

In the case of Inkuru Nziza, support for households in this vulnerable state is very important, and each child headed household is allocated a social worker living in the area and who is available to each household for advice and support.

The question of dependency on NGO programmes and support, and the stage at which the young people are able to behave independently, as discussed earlier, is influenced by their capabilities and abilities, as well as their determination to succeed. A danger for any programme implemented by an NGO or government agency is that children will be expectant for and reliant on help, and a considerable responsibility is laid on key workers to train and prepare children to be capable and independent.

The concerns of the two households who had recently relocated in 2006 were overwhelming to these individuals during the second interview, which took place soon after their move. Yet at the time of the third visit, in 2008, both households were more positive about their situations, with one household able to grow crops. They had also earned money to get electricity and had purchased a television. The second household had fared less well, as is discussed later (see Joceline's



story), but from the perspective of the housing conditions themselves, they were happy and were about to rent out another small room beside their house

### **6.4.3 Condition of Homes**

In general many of the houses in the sample group are in an extremely bad condition, in particular those in rural areas, and those which are not provided as part of an NGO programme. Whereas those children housed by an NGO are able to call on the organisation for assistance in the upkeep of the home, for those who inherited their own their homes, the need to fund and carry out repairs is a major source of concern. Jules' house is almost falling down, and he is only able to make minor temporary repairs: "The house needs repair, the roof leaks and many things are broken. I am very worried that the house will fall down". For Nathalie and Ninette in 2006, the state of their house caused them much anxiety. Ninette stated "I am afraid there will be a problem with the house as it needs to be repaired". In fact between the 2006 and 2008 visits the house did fall down, and members of their church helped to build a small hut for them where the old house had been. For Jean-Pierre, the story is the same- in 2004 he commented that "the roof leaks in the house but there is no one to help repair it". In 2006 he repeated that it was getting worse: "more leaking each time it rains".

For most households the resources for repairing their homes are scarce, and as the buildings become more and more dilapidated, the young people are fearful that severe weather might cause irreparable damage. This has been a concern expressed by many households who have to cope with living in a deteriorating home, which is adding to their livelihood challenges. If the house is in disrepair, it is usually less secure, which causes anxiety for the children about their safety and the theft of their belongings.

All of these factors contribute to a fragile livelihood asset – for those renting, the arrangement is often informal, with an unlegislated infrastructure which means that they have no real active rights to the house. Whilst notice may be given in

regards to the termination of lease-type understandings, those already vulnerable will be compromised when seeking new accommodation.

The current government re-housing programme (begun in 2008) involves the mass evictions of households in high density urban areas in order to build new housing on the land. These plans are met with suspicion by child headed households and the majority of poor families, as the cost of renting the new homes will be much higher than people in these circumstances are able to afford (Andrews and Mulindabigwe, personal communication, 2008).

This research has demonstrated that new legislation implemented by the government is a constructive contribution towards an equitable framework of land ownership and inheritance, in particular from the perspectives of gender and orphanhood. However at grass roots level there is little awareness of these new rights in particular in the rural areas. Even when there is an understanding of this, there is often a reluctance to pursue these cases due to lack of funds, lack of confidence or a reluctance to endanger already frail family relations. Thus it can be concluded that the new laws have not been particularly advantageous to the child headed households within this sample group.

Children in these households expressed a major concern about the programme of relocation, due to the prospect of moving to a new area, away from support networks. In theory an administrative structure as that which is in place in Rwanda should mitigate against this, when there are several hierarchical levels of leaders within smaller and larger communities. However in reality many households have not experienced much support from the commune leader. A great deal of assistance in these cases has been from church based networks.

Finally it appears that any change in circumstances exposes the fragility of the child headed household. At the time of the second visit to Joceline this fragility was very obvious, as she was visibly upset at the recent move. She was disappointed and concerned that she appeared to have less security and livelihood assets in her new home. She now had to pay for water and carry it from the tap, there was no electricity, she had few friends in the area and had to re-establish herself within a community. She missed the sheltered community

aspect of Lower Kimisagara where everybody knew one another, had grown up together and supported her when her eldest sister died in 2003. She did not know the area she had moved to, and it was much further away from the centre of Kigali, which also meant a longer journey if she wanted to try and earn some money. The move also coincided with the end of her education and the beginning of vocational training which she was reluctant to embark upon. Yet she had settled into the new community and was content to be there at the time of the final visit. She had initiated plans to rent out a room next to her house, which would furnish her with some income, and thus was demonstrating a strategy for coping which was at her disposal. Further examination of her resilience and the coping strategies she employed is discussed later.

Thus land and property ownership can be a significant asset to successful livelihood management for the child headed household. However this analysis questions Rose's assertion (Rose 2005) that land is the building block to sustainable livelihood security. The ownership of land and property can require the use of resources from a limited reservoir, which then prevents other livelihood needs being met. Repairs, fertiliser, seeds, and labour, are all inputs to land and the output may not equal it. Land may be unsuitable for crops or yield a small harvest. This might be seasonal, leaving the household without food for part of the year and needing to find it elsewhere. Adverse climactic conditions can spoil the crops resulting in no yield. Therefore whilst it is an asset, its contribution to the household as the key to a sustainable livelihood is not always assured. The next section on Income generation will enable a more detailed discussion on livelihood needs and assets, and will examine the issue of land and income generation in the context of Rose's theory.

## 6.5 Income Generation

The need to generate an income is inevitably one of the most urgent requirements for the child headed household in general, and whilst many are able to cultivate crops on a small scale to help with provision of food for the household, income generation is often on a casual basis of trading, odd jobs,

labouring, and so on, and in the case of female heads, this can include engaging in transactional sex. Girls heading households are especially vulnerable, with Human Rights Watch reporting many cases of girls trading sex for siblings' school fees (Rakita *et al.* 2003: 48). One study estimated that 80% of girl heads had been sexually abused. It is unsurprising that sex trade as a survival mechanism has been found in some areas to be an incorporated and accepted part of rural society. Girls feel that were they to complain, they would have no one to defend them, which would result in further ostracism in the community. These issues underline the gender discrimination that exists within livelihood rights for such vulnerable groups (World Vision/ UNICEF 2001). This exacerbates health risks, increases AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease infection rates, and causes high levels of stress amongst the children, factors which combine to reduce the household to even worse circumstances. The health of children in CHHs is frequently poor – the lack of affordable nutritious food coupled with an inaccessibility to healthcare when needed, results in poor health, lowering of immune systems and a continuous vulnerability to infection. As illness and weakness take hold the children are less productive, and so their ability to afford healthcare decreases. Often health problems can have a physical and emotional effect on the whole household. Nutrition and health were often the lens through which the children expressed the difficulties they encountered when faced with no opportunities for income generation. Alice, articulated it like this: “I am often hungry and tired, and the family is weak and that is a big problem”. Destine said “Food is no longer given by Inkuru Nziza...so we are hungry and cannot buy medicines when we are ill”. Nathalie and Ninette “We are both sick from hunger”. Philippe explained it as follows; “If we are hungry we hide it. If you are hungry you take your cover and you go and sleep until morning”. Despite some provision of food in the refugee camp, the children still suffer from hunger and have no means to supplement their income. Thérèse comments: “We all have bad health; at school they give us food at noon and when the bell goes we are all desperate”. The importance of income generation in enabling children in CHHs to have access to food, to improve their nutrition and for improved performance at school is evident for short term and long term benefits.

The International Labour Organisation has estimated that approximately 400,000 children are working in Rwanda, with those in child headed households or street children especially vulnerable (ILO 2008: 1). Work is usually in the informal sector, as Rwandan law states that the minimum age for employment is 16 years, although exceptions can be made for those between 14 and 16 dependent upon the circumstances. UNICEF estimates that there are roughly 1 million children who are vulnerable to being exploited, and estimates that 2,100 child prostitutes are active in the country (UNICEF 2004). Such commercial sexual exploitation of children is a significant problem, which also occurs with child domestic workers on a large scale. The latter are also often forced to work long hours for little pay, are badly treated and prevented from attending school. Whilst cultural and spatial practices in Africa recognise the work carried out by children in the community and within the family, UNICEF has drawn attention to the way in which HIV/AIDS and other disasters have "distorted traditional forms of child work into exploitative practices" (UNICEF 2001).

This is clearly in contravention of the Convention for the Rights of the Child, as indicated earlier in this chapter, and underlines the disparity between the act of being a signatory to and ratifying the Convention, and the challenges and the realities of implementation. Other conditions of the CRC are also unmet in Rwanda as in other developing countries. These conditions, whilst accepted and agreed by the countries which are signatories to them, can be interpreted as somewhat idealistic in their vision. Implementation is not always practicable at grass roots level. This can be due to unrealistic statements which do not meet with the construct of daily life as experienced in some societies. Governments are often hampered by resource limitations and require significant lengths of time to create conducive settings for their success.

Valerie Nyirahabineza, Minister of Gender and the Promotion of Family of Rwanda, in discussing the CRC and Rwanda, has stated that whilst the government had put in place legislation and policies to support children, resources were scarce. She highlighted as an example the problem of access to education, revealing that catch up classes and evening lessons enabled children who were obliged to work, to learn at different times of the day (Nyirahabineza

2004). Equally she acknowledged the problems of resources in offering counselling and assistance to those affected by the genocide (Human Rights Education Association 2004).

The CRC can be interpreted as offering recommendations for a childhood which is based on Western paradigms whilst remaining ignorant of the realities of the lives of children in developing countries. As discussed in a previous chapter, it also regards the child as a construct of legal age, and does not take into account the child as agent and actor in responsible and “adult” positions in communities.

This research reveals that the need to generate an income is important to the livelihoods of all, even for those who have access some food or money within an NGO programme. For this latter group, whilst they feel that what they receive is just enough to survive, with careful allotment; it precludes any supplementary goods which the children might need, such as medicines, toiletries and some clothing. Josette was very anxious about the limited amount of money she was able to earn, saying “I am sad at seeing my brother and sister without things; I can’t help them enough”. Françoise said: “it does not get an easier, at the moment it is difficult for clothes and findings things for school”.

Whereas many children in rural child headed households are able to engage in cultivation, the size of the land they work is often less than one hectare, and in one survey, 25 per cent of households targeted had no land at all, forcing them into working as labourers. Revenue from cultivation per family is low – often little more than RwFr 1000, which is just more than one pound a month (ACORD 2003: 2). Nathalie stated that she can sometimes earn Rw Fr 500 for labouring on her neighbour’s land.

Work is paid at a lower rate, as the children may be younger than the legal minimum age. There is a high risk of work being exploitative and working conditions poor. Child labour is a reality and there are not the resources to oppose the situation within the relevant government departments - there is an acknowledgement that child labour laws are not effectively enforced in the country and therefore in the case of child labour a wide inconsistency exists between the rights recognised by law and practice (Rakita *et al.* 2003, UNHCR

2007, Ndoli 2009). Government initiatives have been implemented to enable child heads to take part in some income-generating activities as well as attending school. Programmes by agencies and NGOs have provided vocational training for many child heads, and have assisted with credit schemes, loans and grants for the purchase of basic materials to enable them to start an income-generating activity.

### **6.5.1 Income generation in Programme Households**

NGO programmes differ in the assistance they offer to child headed households in this study. However the provision of training or education is seen as of paramount importance, as a means to the children accessing improved income generating opportunities to support the household. In addition it should be of long-term sustainable benefit to the household. The Inkuru Nziza and YWAM (Youth with a Mission) organisations that were involved in this research both offer training in carpentry and welding among other skills, and encourage and facilitate the manufacture and sale of banana bark cards, basket work, furniture and other goods.

Yet opportunities for income generation are limited for all of the households, and at the first interview all of the children stated that they found it difficult to earn money. Their neighbours were poor and they were not able to help even if they wanted to. Affording even the most basic provisions was a challenge, but for households included on certain NGO programmes there was more financial assistance or provision of basic goods. Inkuru Nziza's sponsorship programme for children in child headed households in 2004 provided shelter (housing), education, vocational training when appropriate, approximately Rw Fr 10,000 per child per month, a supply of rice and beans (provided by the Catholic Relief Service via Inkuru Nziza), utensils and some clothing. Children did engage in some informal work when available, but tried to manage with the rations given. The project helped them to eke out the rice and beans for the month, but each of the households interviewed said that it was not enough. However at the time of the second visit the project had stopped giving the monthly ration of rice and

beans to each household, and so the money given was to be used for food, fuel, oil for cooking and lighting. The removal, of food rations, then, had a detrimental effect on the household economy; changes in programme provision again impacting on the household.

This change also coincided with the end of educational provision and the relocation to new housing for some of the participants which compounded the livelihood challenges they were facing, challenges to physically find enough to live on but also the more emotional challenges associated with growing up and becoming more independent in a new community. Joceline and Aline had completed primary education but had not been successful in qualifying to go to secondary school. They were to be incorporated onto the vocational training programmes which would ensure a continuation of their sponsorship. However neither was keen to enroll on the programmes offered and so their sponsorship also ended, leading to the end of the monthly income from the project.

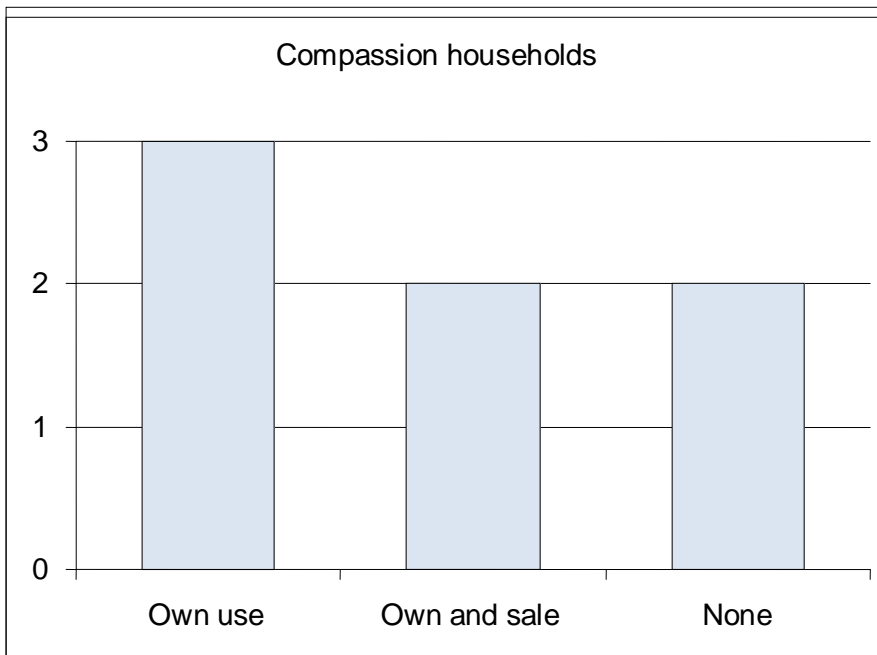
Thus there arose a vacuum in the provision of basic necessities for these individuals which obliged them to find other ways of earning money. When a programme is providing much of the resources for a household to survive, it is necessary to put in place coping strategies and skills which can enable the children to manage when assistance is withdrawn. The end of the rice and beans ration in 2006 was due to the lack of funds at the Catholic Relief Service. Terminating such assistance, even temporarily impacts vulnerable households to a great extent. When the children in these households were very young and newly orphaned, the need for a holistic support structure on the part of the NGO was imperative, but there is clearly a point in time when the household members will have to sustain livelihoods for themselves and not all children will have acquired the skills, both physical and psychosocial, to cope with that challenge (see Box 6).



Franck completed his secondary education at the end of 2004, but was unable to attend the state funded university as his grades were not high enough. He also is keen for the project to fund his attendance at a private university but this is not possible for Inkuru Nziza. Both he and the project are hoping that a sponsor will enable him to enroll at a private university in Kigali to study computers. He has therefore received no funding from the project since he left secondary school, and since his brothers are all at boarding schools during term time, he has to generate an income for himself for most of the year. This he has found difficult, as although he has attended secondary school, he has not undergone official vocational training. He has had some temporary office work, and has done some interpreting for the project, but has been unsuccessful in acquiring a full- time job. Unemployment levels are extremely high in Rwanda, although official figures are not available, and even those people leaving universities with a degree have a great deal of difficulty finding a job.

**Box 6**

Households living in rural or peri-urban areas were more likely to have access to land for cultivation. Those households registered on the Compassion Programme and included in the research group lived in the peri-urban area of Iggehogwe near Kigali. Some cultivated crops solely for their own use while some were able to grow enough for themselves and for sale (on a minor scale). Typical crops grown were cassava, bananas, avocados and corn.



**Figure 6.6: Compassion programme: Cultivation of crops**

**Source: Author's fieldwork (2006)**

By the time of the second visit, Carine's household (Compassion programme) had sold its land to an NGO which was in the process of building a secondary school in the area. Although no regret was expressed at this decision, the lack of land to provide food for the household was mentioned as a concern. The long term consequences of selling the land had not been considered in depth, and they had not acquired any more land by the time of the visit in 2008, so were still trying to earn an income to buy food. This household is one with numerous members, 10 in all, 4 of whom are under 15 and in school, (2 supported by the Compassion programme and 2 paid for by their mother, Renée, a sister to Carine). Renée is the only one who brings in money to the home, by selling clothes. The sale of the land was a short-term response to an immediate need, but soon afterwards the household was in a situation where it had no more opportunities for income generation than it had had prior to the sale, and it was left with fewer assets. For this household, owning land was not a priority at a time of urgent need and extreme vulnerability. Retaining the land would have ensured some level of long-term food provision, yet this was not the priority when faced with an immediate offer of money for the land. Since the land had not been able to completely fulfill the needs of this large household, its worth was seen as a supplement to the other income generation dynamics which were taking place in the household, and the offer price of more use in monetary terms. For this family, then, land was not regarded as their "building block towards sustainable livelihoods", even though it would have continued to provide food and an income for them.

<b>Income means</b>	<b>Number of children<sup>38</sup></b>
Building	1
Trading	3
Tailoring	2
Odd jobs	8
Begging	1
Crafts	5
Prostitution	1 / 2
Phone	1
Rent property	2
Cultivation	1

**Table 6.2: Source of income for work-active children  
Source: Author's fieldwork (2008)**

Only 1 household head was engaged in permanent formal employment, that of Philippe; in another household the eldest sibling had a temporary teaching post.

Table 6.3 and Figure 6.7 below indicate the number of individuals in the whole sample group who engaged in the income generation activities described in 2006.

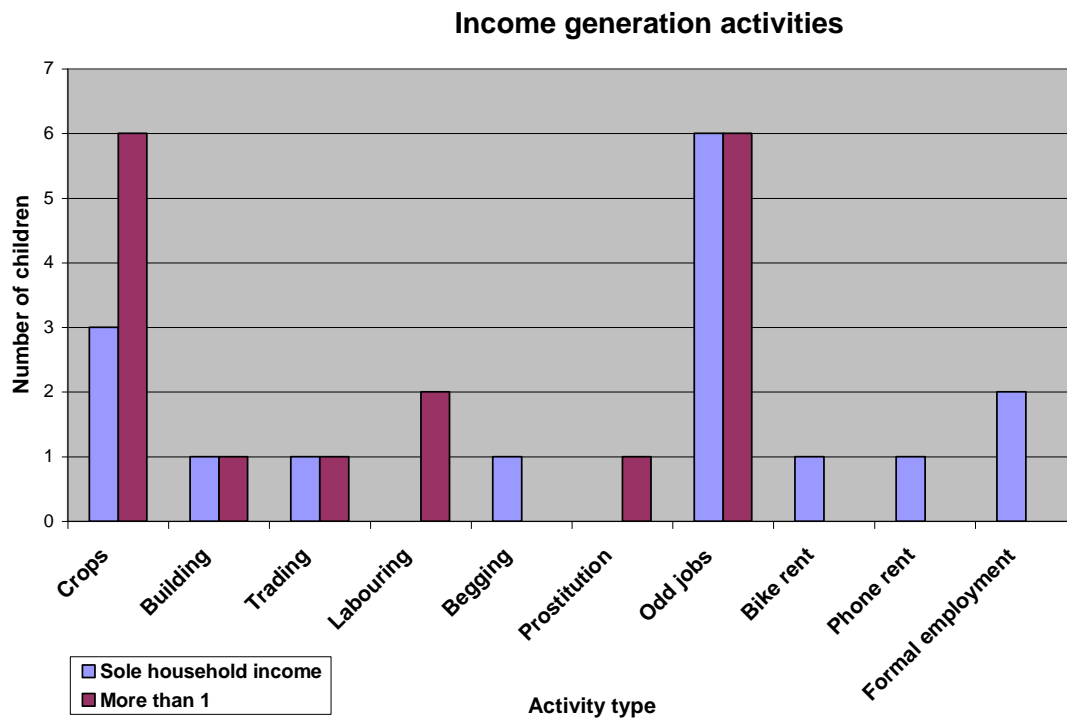
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<sup>38</sup> As elsewhere, "Children" is understood here as all of those in the child headed household, despite their chronological age

<b>2006 income generation activities</b>	<b>Sole household Income</b>	<b>More than 1 income generation activity</b>
<b>Crops</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Building</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Trading</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Labouring</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Begging</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Prostitution</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>Odd jobs</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Bike rent</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Phone rent</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Formal employment</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 6.3: Income generation activities**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2008)**

Prostitution as an income generating activity has been included in this data despite it being hinted at rather than openly admitted. The vagueness of the responses about the nature of the work the household member was doing in the city suggested that it was probably of a sexual nature and the girl either was unaware or too embarrassed to admit it.



**Figure 6.7: Income generation activities**

**Source: Author's fieldwork**

Many of the children engaged in more than one type of activity to earn money. In general this comprised of work which did not require specific skills or training - odd jobs, cultivation and labouring (digging etc.). Children are aware of the need to diversify in their attempts to earn an income, and thus are generally prepared to embark upon any and various activities to accomplish this.

Income generation within the refugee camp at Gihembe presented similar challenges to the children in CHHs. Whilst some food, fuel and cooking oil is provided by UNHCR on a regular basis, it is barely enough to last the month, and there was a reduction in the amount provided between 2006 and 2008. Children are very keen to earn an income, but most of those in the child headed households in this sample are at school and therefore the time available to work is limited. However even for those children in CHHs who have completed their education there is no work in the camp. A vocational training centre, providing training in skills such as tailoring and carpentry has been established on the site,

but with a maximum population of 27,000 inhabitants, opportunities to take part in such training are in short supply. Furthermore it results in too many qualified people for too little work, a flooded workforce, in a community which can barely afford to buy the goods provided. Opportunities for casual labour in the camp are few, in contrast to the huge number of people, adults and children who are prepared to work.

Many camp dwellers look for work outside the camp, in Byumba town itself or the surrounding area. However the local population is also striving to earn an income, and so the presence of thousands of refugees competing with them for work lessens their chances of earning enough money for their families, leading to deteriorating livelihoods for them. This has also been the source of conflict and tension in the area. Thérèse's brother is the only one who has a job from the CHHs in the sample group. He works as a cook in Byumba but returns at night to stay in the camp.

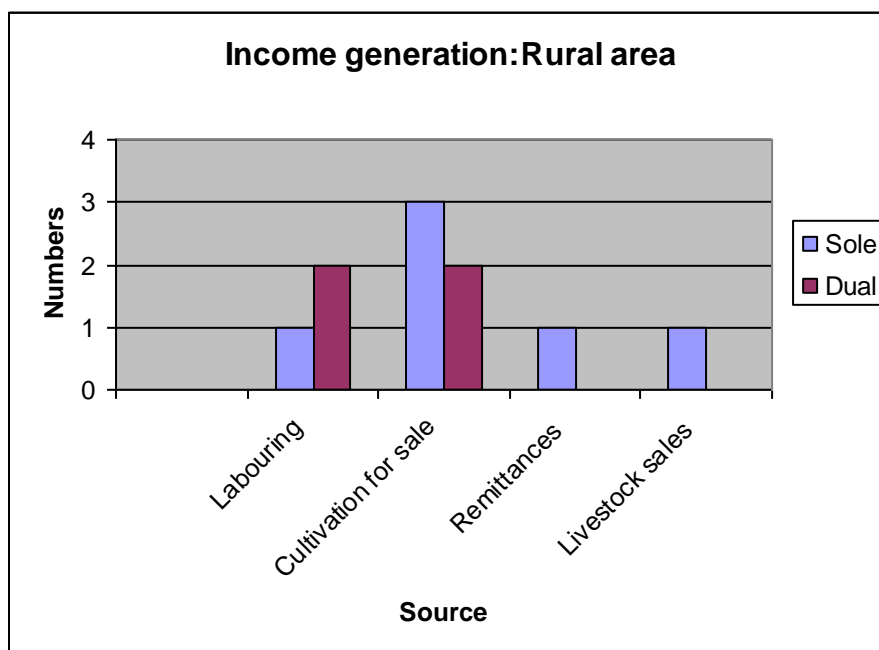
Earning a living as refugees in a camp is even more of a challenge for those in the child headed household. "We have no jobs and nothing to sell", Thérèse said. Opportunities for income generation are few, and so there are many cases of girls engaging in transactional "survival" sex, according to the camp representative (personal communication, 2006). Whilst the provision of training and opportunities for employment for all of those needing work would be too enormous a task to accomplish, this study has revealed a particular despondency in the lives of CHHs in refugee camps; limited training, limited income opportunities and limited potential to improve livelihoods.

### **6.5.2 Income Generation in Non Programme Households**

The prospects for income generation in the child headed households are limited for all of the children involved. However opportunities vary according to the location of the households as well as the skills that the household members can offer. Similarly the proximity of NGO programmes is an advantage in that the initiatives they implement are more likely to include training or small business income generation schemes. For households in the rural area of Cyabatanze,

where there are no NGOs working, opportunities for income generation are limited to agricultural based casual labour.

Child headed households here who do not own land, either because of land seizures or historic landlessness, encounter fewer opportunities to earn an income. The figure below (6.8) illustrates the income generation sources for the child headed households considered in this sample from the rural area of Cyabatanze.



**Figure 6.8: Income generation: rural area**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

All of the households except one were able to grow some crops for their own use, but only half had enough land to enable them to produce crops to sell to others. In fact those growing for their own use had often a very small parcel of land for crops, not enough to provide sufficient food for any length of time. The opportunity to work as labour on neighbours' land was possible for some households, and both boys and girls engaged in this work. For those selling crops or livestock, however, the local market, at Kaboga was a distance of at least 8 kilometres away across very hilly terrain. With no public transport in the

area, managing to take the goods to market is another challenge for these young people. Only one household received some money from siblings who worked in the town.

There were no NGO programmes being implemented in the area, although the local church was part of the Inkuru Nziza church network and the organisation which had helped repair the church building with some materials. Whilst there was a primary school in the area, it meant a long walk for some of the children. The government had initiated a rural participation exercise to assess the needs of the area, and had promised to build a school and a hospital at a cost of Rw Fr 500,000; no firm date had been given to the community leaders. (Further discussion on access to education in the area is presented in the last section of this chapter.)

The need for provision of and a diversification in income generation activities is evident. A local pastor has a photographic business in the next town to which he travels by bicycle, however there was no evidence of other initiatives ongoing in the area. Children mentioned their desire to acquire a skill – for example, learning to drive and carpentry- but these were not possible due to the children being unable to meet the costs of such training and also the need to travel some distance to the location. Training for tailoring however is taught at Kaboga which one girl had recently registered for. Thus location is a significant factor in income generation opportunities in this area, a fact which the young people are aware of, since most have siblings who work in Kigali or other urban areas. The draw of urban areas with more opportunity for income generation is evident. However money is required to go there in the first place. Serge, living in the peri-urban area of Kigali, and recently obliged to take in his sister and her two children stated:

“If I had money I would go somewhere else, to the town, or to other areas for work.”

Researcher: “What about this area?”

Serge: “There is no work here, no help or advice”



Two of the household heads in Cyabatanze mentioned that they would be prepared to leave their household if it meant they would earn some money - even Guillaume, who has a wife and baby as well as his niece to care for at home. But they would not choose to move to an urban area without the firm offer of a job. Guillaume is clear that marriage and having a baby has meant that he must be more diligent in finding work:

Life has changed since we are married. Adult life is difficult, now I have a wife, I am an adult and I must try lots of things to help those in my family and my niece.

His increased maturity and responsibility has brought into focus the need for money to provide for his family. When he has money he sends his son to nursery school “to prepare for his future”, and borrowed money so that his wife could give birth safely in hospital.

The urge for improved life choices for the family, then, is a dynamic which is supplementary to mere survival. It requires income generation opportunities which will ensure that the households not only survive but are able to invest in a more secure and sustainable livelihood. It is true that children express concern about land, education, and health care. However this research demonstrates that the *primary problem* is the lack of opportunity for earning an income. Statistics reveal that 100,000 people aged between 14 and 25 join the labour market each year but less than 1 per cent succeed in finding employment (Yes Rwanda, 2008). The population is primarily young which brings challenges in providing employment opportunities for all. Children without income struggle to survive. This research suggests that, contrary to Rose’s view (2005), it is income generation which constitutes the fundamental building block for the security of livelihoods for child headed households in Rwanda.

The lack of employment opportunity is not specific to any one sector of the population as it affects rural and urban, educated and uneducated people. It is certainly the case that Philippe, a child head who had graduated from university was unemployed for almost two years until he began working for an international

NGO.<sup>39</sup> He had managed to obtain some basic semi-formal work, but this was not work which required his level of qualification. As he was competing for work with less qualified people, it is evident that in such a competitive market there is less chance of him being as successful in gaining employment.

These young people are disadvantaged not only due to the dearth of employment opportunities, but are at a further disadvantage when looking for employment since nepotism is widespread in Rwanda. Many commented that having relatives or friends in an organisation is the primary method of gaining employment. For orphans and those in child headed households, many of whom have no relatives at all, or none in the area, they have no-one who can introduce them into an organisation or advocate for them. Even if they manage to learn about available jobs, or get as far as an interview, they will be competing with those who have the advantage of links with employees or employers.

## 6.6 Income Generation Changes Over Time

The longitudinal study has revealed increased livelihood challenges for child headed households when they are no longer included in a programme. As has been discussed earlier, dependency on an income or food from an agency can mean that when it ends, the children may not be resilient and may have little experience of resorting to coping strategies they can utilise.

At the time of the third visit, some households had clearly experienced deterioration in their quality of life in the intervening time (the households of Joceline, Ninette, and Joelle in particular). In some cases this coincided with the end of some provision by an NGO, such as education, training or food supplement. This occurred in the case of some on Inkuru Nziza's programmes, which also provided some income for each sponsored child as well as food and clothing at times. Thus there were occasion when several means of assistance terminated at the same time.

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<sup>39</sup> Philippe had qualified for government sponsorship to attend the state university.

During the period of this longitudinal study, several households completed their education and thus their inclusion in the project came to an end. Whilst they all stay in touch with the social workers employed by Inkuru Nziza who live and work in their community, they suffer from the removal of financial and food rations, in particular as they have not managed to find work. Josèphe says in 2008 “I feel we have gone back and not gone forward as we have no rice and beans given now and the money is not enough...we want to choose what will develop us as a family and get the jobs we can have to help us survive on our own”.

A third family due to leave the Lower Kimisagara community is also suffering from the limitations of lack of accessibility to educational opportunities. A new house has been purchased for Destine and Marianne in Upper Kimisagara, not far from their current home. They are benefiting from a less hurried move, and Destine believes they will move only when her sister has completed school this year. They are more content with the move than Joceline and Franck were since they are remaining in the same part of Kigali. Destine has just completed her secondary education, and at the time of interview in 2006 was awaiting her results. As her education is finished, she is no longer sponsored, and so loses the Rw.Fr 10,000 a month, as well as being affected by the cessation of the rice and beans supplement. While her sister, Marianne, is still in education, she will be entitled to the money each month when not in school, but their new home will be without electricity and water, just like those in Iggehogwe, and so their living costs will be increased. Destine intends to find a job, but is not confident about her success, as she has no real skills to offer. She does not believe that she will have passed with sufficiently high marks to attend the state university.

### **Box 7**

The story of Destine and Marianne in 2006 is told in Box 7, above. At the time of the interview in 2008, they had both completed secondary school but neither had the relevant qualifications to attend the state university. 2 years after leaving school they have still not found work. They continue to receive some money from Inkuru Nziza, due to a specific sponsor who is helping them. Destine’s hope is to become a market trader but she has not managed to achieve that. Although the amount of money they receive is not adequate for all their needs, as they say that they are often hungry, their dependence on the sponsor’s money may be preventing them from developing survival strategies which would enable them to become more independent.

The danger of over dependence exists with programme households. The NGO's provision may have supported these children through the times when they were young and unable to care for themselves, and preparation for a sustainable living may have been a part of the project's objective, in offering help with budgeting or provision of education or skills. However the young people often have expectations for continuous livelihood support. For some children, there is a lack of will or confidence to engage in independent living.

The household represented in Figure 6.9 below experienced difficulties when the young person interviewed, Joceline, had come to an end of her primary school career, but refused to carry out the vocational training offered by the project - constantly requesting that they pay for private secondary education (she had not passed for the state sector), which was not part of the project policy. Between the last 2 interviews (a period of 15 months), she had no work, apart from engaging in transactional sex (reported by third parties). Her lack of vocational skills limited her income generation opportunities, and left her with restricted options. Girls such as Joceline are not necessarily naive in their understanding of the area of transactional sex, and this was evident at the first interview with Joceline in 2004;

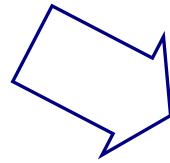
Researcher: "What are your fears or worries?"

Joceline: "That I will do bad things with boys"

Present at that interview was Joceline's key contact from the NGO, who was also part of her local church. Thus there may well have been a deliberate message to the worker in the response; however the latter was able to confirm later that sexual "play" between the girls and boys who lived near one another was common, but the NGO were strict in their criteria regarding sexual relationships- if a girl became pregnant she was no longer allowed to be part of the project, a considerable deterrent (Mulindabigwe, personal communication 2004). Yet Joceline's "fears" had been realised four years later.

**2004**

Joceline's Household  
Eldest Sister recently died  
Older Sister  
Brother lives elsewhere

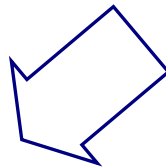


**2006**

New house bought for them  
Move to new community  
No running water or electricity  
Sister pregnant

**2008**

No training or school  
Sister left home with baby  
Brother occasionally away  
Different group friends



**Figure 6.9: Joceline's life changes: November 2004-March 2008**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2004-2008)**

The long term value of skills learned can also be contested. From interviews with children over several years it is clear that the end of training does not necessarily mean a ready income is subsequently earned. All the young people who had been on the card making programme at YWAM were no longer engaged in that business. The costs of starting a card making business are expensive as materials must be bought, and markets must be sourced. The programme does allow them to make cards at the centre, but it is unclear what arrangement there is. Benoit stated that he would like to be invited back to make cards by the manager. Céleste has no materials to make them, she has also undergone the tailoring training at the same centre but cannot afford to rent or buy a sewing

machine, so is using neither of her skills. (Alice has on a couple of occasions returned to the workshop to make cards, and Estelle earns money by tailoring). Benoit had also taken part in the building skills programme at YWAM but was unable to find work.<sup>40</sup> Therefore the effectiveness of the programme is not proven. The model for providing training needs to be sustainable within the economic context, both in market need and in set up costs.

These young people are obliged to resort to methods that others without skills engage in to earn money- selling crops, petty marketing, doing odd jobs for neighbours. So although they have gained a skill, they are not profiting from it as was foreseen at the outset of their programme. Similarly those finishing the Inkuru Nziza programmes may have gained educational qualifications and training, but the majority find it difficult to earn money. Some sell things in the market, others manage to do some sewing (with the use of a machine) but in general their principal focus and cause for concern in their lives is their lack of income generation opportunities.

Destine and Marianne, sisters living in a house purchased for them by the Inkuru Nziza programme, have both completed secondary school, but have no jobs- Destine would like to sell in the market and Marianne would like to attend university but has not qualified for a state university. Neither has a regular source of income.

### **Box 8**

Franck, a child head of 22 with three younger siblings, has somehow managed to pay for the connection of electricity and water to his home, has purchased a TV and a music player, and pays a local man to dig the garden and plant crops. (Franck states that he is unsure how to do this as he was too young when his parents died to have been taught.<sup>41</sup>) He says he earns from doing jobs like

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<sup>40</sup> Card making is now a separate enterprise from YWAM; the programme leader is involved in assisting small businesses for locals. Its location on the outskirts of Kigali means that it may be more difficult to find work although it is an important traffic hub, with a major bus station

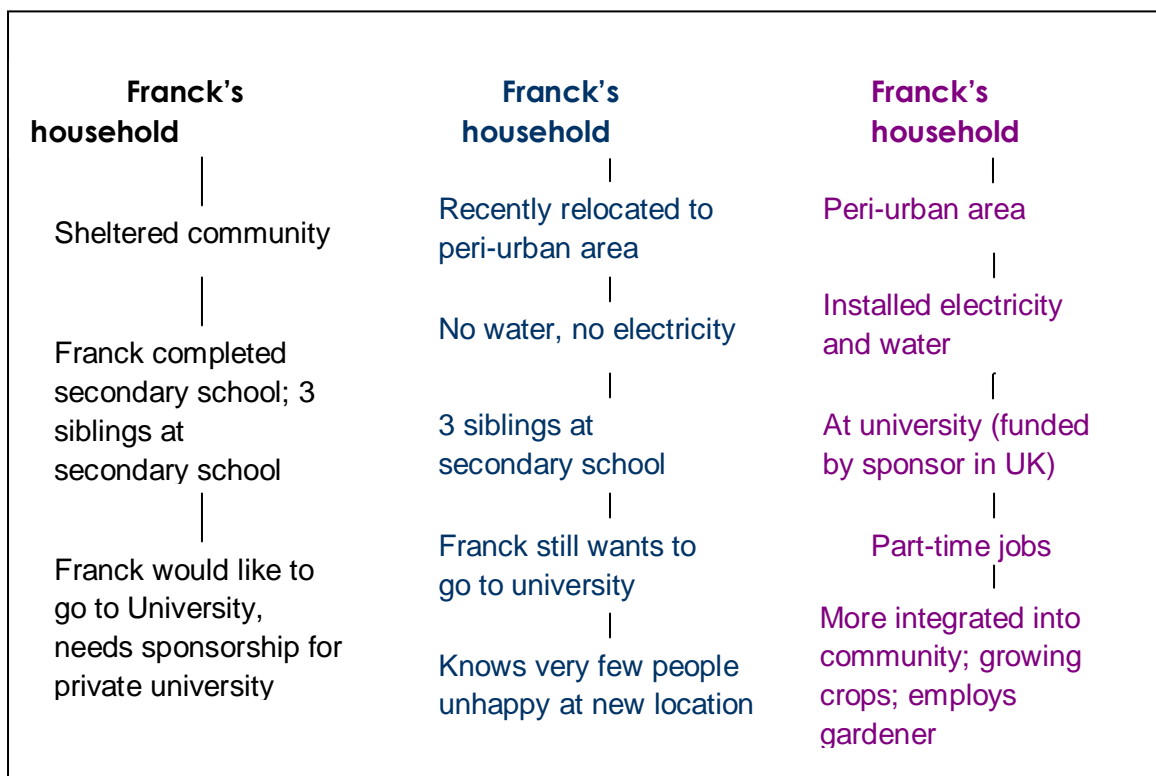
<sup>41</sup> Some NGOs are addressing this giving training in basic cultivation skills (personal communication Casa Reom, Mozambique).

accounts, translation, but has clearly saved a lot. He is at university in the evenings, so has time to work in the day.

How is Franck able to cope?

He is:-

- At university (funded by a sponsor in the UK)
- Determined
- Good at saving money- he says whatever he earns he puts away to save. He also ensures that the house is locked up when he is out and all is carefully hidden away.



**Figure 6.10: Changes in Franck's life**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2004-2008)**

Philippe (aged 28, now considering himself an adult) the only "child" head who has permanent formal employment, lives in another town during the week for his work with an international NGO, World Vision. He leaves at home his two sisters

and their babies and his younger brother, aged 14, who is sponsored by Inkuru Nziza. He has now been able to afford to employ a young man to help in his house.

For those less innovative and resilient, or with fewer skills, finding employment is more difficult. There remains the attempt to sell crops- easier for those with some land in rural or peri-urban neighbourhoods, but the risk of theft is high in some areas, and so the income is not always maximised. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Buying and selling goods in the market in informal settings is also a major source of income. However many people participate in this type of work. For some of the children, their aspirations go no further than to becoming an informal seller.

In addition, as Bernadette says, “We cannot sell without something to sell”. Child headed households who live on the edge of survival have few possessions to sell, and little money to buy other items to sell on. Therefore even selling is not an effective source of income.

The impact of NGO initiatives towards education and training can seem ineffective when subsequent opportunities are rare. This justifies a proposal for “career advice” for those in child headed households, although this might seem a luxury in a country with so much poverty, the benefits of future direction for those orphans and children who have not been able to have advice or support from parents or relatives could be life-changing.

The Rwandan government is becoming more reactive to the dearth of job opportunities in the country. There are many great visions for the future position of Rwanda within a global society, for example as a hub of Information Technology for East Africa. As yet, however, little has met the needs of the majority of people and, of particular concern to this research, the needs of child headed households. New initiatives being implemented have the provision of employment opportunities as their objective, but their success across all social groupings is unknown. At this stage, it is difficult to envisage what initiatives might help those child headed households in rural areas in the short term.



The provision of opportunities for relevant training and employment is a key requisite for the income generation possibilities within Rwanda. For those people in rural areas, where there are few opportunities for training and employment thereafter there is a need for an examination of the most effective way to help child headed households. Many would prefer to live in urban areas, to move to Kigali to maximize their opportunities for income generation, believing that the city will transform their lives, the age old premise. This can cause the households they have left to experience increased need. The risk of having to earn their living by engaging in illegal or dangerous activities is often worth taking, as they may believe the alternative is worse.

#### **6.6.1 Provision of Government Assistance**

The imperative for training programmes is that they should be focused and targeted towards market need. The government is constantly renewing its commitment to building up a more skilled workforce by tasking its Rwanda Workforce Development Authority (WDA) with this initiative (New Times, 2009).

Lack of legal recognition is both a physical and emotional hindrance to children in child headed households. As minors, they are often unable to claim or register for assistance, and the lack of an adult advocate is a major disadvantage. This role can be taken on by an adult representative of an NGO if the family is included in a programme, a social worker, or even community leader. Such a person might claim assistance, benefits, inclusion on programmes for example for children who otherwise would be exempt from such help. There is, however, a need for the government or agency involved to acknowledge the one responsible and accept his or her authority. Sloth-Nielsen (2004: 32) has extensively examined the situation in South Africa with regard to the rights of CHHs within the legal framework. There, legislation has been implemented to allow an adult or “mentor” to be an advocate or claimant for CHHs, but also to allow in some cases for the child head herself or himself to be considered legally responsible to claim for the purposes of benefits, grants and assistance. The result is that whilst for some it has been successful, there are many others who have not been able to

benefit from the change. In those areas where the child is not able to claim, there must be an adult willing to fulfill that role. In some cases there will be no-one that the children feel able to nominate - in Rwanda, when children were asked who they would go to if they had a problem, some had no-one to turn to, and so would be even further disadvantaged in attempting to receive some help. Finding an adult who can be trusted may be difficult due to hostility in the community, stigma over AIDS or continued ill feeling after the genocide.<sup>42</sup> The sheer numbers of such children make any legislation difficult to work countrywide. Whilst the government attempts to conform to the demands of the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child, which it has ratified, in effect the majority of children will not be affected by such edicts. Furthermore, frameworks for such welfare-type support do not exist within the current policy provision by the Rwandan government, apart from through the FARG programme. The government's Vision 2020 (Rwanda Government 2008) which includes as a major focus the creation of opportunities for employment, will need to address the lack of employment opportunities for the vulnerable.

Income generation is the most challenging aspect to survival for the children in this sample group. While Rose (2005) contends that land acquisition and ownership is the open door to strengthening other livelihood assets, the paucity of land, coupled with the limited crops for sale in the case of rural and peri -urban dwellers only, still forces these children to innovate. In Rwanda, among child headed households, land does not play the primary role in sustainable livelihoods. In many cases in this sample group, ownership of land (or property) was not enough to guarantee a successful management of the household's survival. Rose's model does not apply in this situation.

## 6.7 Education

Poverty, conflict and AIDS are three significant factors which have shaped and influenced the provision and effectiveness of education in Rwanda over many

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<sup>42</sup> Children whose parents are in jail for genocide crimes are frequently ostracised in the community

years. Education was not universally available or accessible due to political, social and economic limitations, which therefore led to a population where some children (and adults) had received no education or only intermittent periods of schooling. Whilst recurrent resurgent conflicts interrupted the provision of education, the matter of ethnicity was also a factor in accessing educational opportunity. With the genocide and AIDS having an impact upon the system of education it has also necessitated a more innovative educational approach. This will be considered below with regard to education and the vulnerable. However the government sees education for all a priority, and since 1994 a government programme to rebuild the educational infrastructure has been implemented in line with Millennium Development Target 2, that of Universal Primary Education.

The World Bank has praised the recovery of the education system since 1994 by emphasizing the growth in enrolments. Its 2004 report states that a mere five years after the genocide the number of children enrolled in primary school exceeded the expected numbers at normal expansion rate. In fact the 107 per cent gross enrolment ratio published in 2004 is more than that of average low income countries in Africa (World Bank 2004). Similar growth has occurred in the secondary sector, at an increase of 20 per cent a year since 1996, although enrolments remain below average for low income sub-Saharan Africa. Data concerning numbers enrolled in higher education is inconsistent: some stating 7000 student in 2001 (Rwanda News agency, 2001), and quotes of both 17,000 and 12,000 students by the World Bank (2004: 3, 141).

Primary school completion (six years) has proved a successful means of producing a permanent literate adult cohort, which the World Bank states is a firm foundation for economic and social development (World Bank 2004). Hence the universal completion of primary school education is a principal objective for Rwanda.

The Rwandan government spent 25 per cent of its budget on education in 2001, 5.5 per cent of its GDP (World Bank 2004:29) (Appendix Table A: 1)(For all secondary data and tables referenced here please see Appendix 1) A system is also being implemented which makes provision for the progression to post

primary education with the corresponding resources and capacity for appropriate employment (World Bank 2003: xv).

Primary school enrolment has increased to 1.5 million pupils in 2001, which in 1975 was at 0.4 million (World Bank, Education in Rwanda 2004: 32) (see Figure A: 1, Appendix 1).

World Bank statistics present a figure of 73 per cent of children reaching grade 6 of primary school but a barrier to improving these statistics is not just the need for continuous access to schooling for children, but also the constant requirement for grade repetition. 34 per cent of students resit the year and recommendations to minimise the requirement to retake the year if a student has failed have been included in recent government policies (World Bank 2004:44). Sometimes a large proportion of the pupils in a year are repeaters: - between 2000 and 2001, out of all those enrolled in primary school, almost one third was repeating a year. The ratio is far smaller in the secondary sector, with barely 10 per cent of students repeating over the same period of time (Ministry of Education school statistics 2000-2001, cited in World Bank 2004: 51) (see Table A:2 Appendix 1). Secondary school enrolments have shown an increase in the number of students enrolled from 80,000 in 1970 to 140, 000 in 2001. The percentage of secondary school pupils educated in the private sector has fallen to 44 per cent of the total, from over 50 per cent in the mid 1980s (World Bank 2004: 33) (see Figure A:2, Appendix 1).

Whilst the numbers of enrolments at primary and secondary levels are seen to be increasing, demonstrating a substantial effort to encourage children and young people to gain an education in the country, this research and that of the World Bank has indicated that the retention and completion of the education cycle is still not universal. Survival rates are increasing, but from 2000 to 2001 only 73 per cent of the cohort completed. This had been 44 per cent ten year earlier, so this is a significant improvement (World Bank 2004: 41) (see Table A: 3 Appendix 1). This requires further examination of the challenges to continuing education and the child headed household.

### **6.7.1 Education and the Vulnerable**

The effects of the genocide and AIDS in Rwanda have exerted a significant influence upon the shape and delivery of education, both from the perspective of the children and the teaching. The high number of orphans and vulnerable children who are without resources to invest in education necessitates a significant input from governments, international agencies, NGOs and local communities. The FARG has been set in place to support the education of victims of the genocide but is limited to assisting those in secondary school. As has been discussed earlier, difficulties in implementation and alleged corruption have marred the scheme's effectiveness.

Data gathered by the World Bank report reveals access to tertiary education is limited to children from the higher socio economic groups (World Bank 2004). Similarly the data shows a lower rate of primary school enrolment among orphans but with a contrasting higher rate of orphans enrolled at secondary school, probably due to the funding assistance offered by the FARG (World Bank 2004: 75). Since merely surviving is the focus of these vulnerable children, in many areas of Sub-Saharan Africa education has been seen as an extremely low priority, especially for the head of the household. Whilst child heads are keen for siblings to attend school, when they are able to afford it or when there is assistance from government or programmes by NGOs, the priority for the head of the household is to generate income, grow crops or to do work around the home, perhaps caring for younger children. The Rwandan government would like to believe that all children can achieve their full potential, as advocated in the Convention for the Rights of the Child, and to this end has made primary education free and compulsory from ages 7 to 12. With enrolment levels at primary school higher than pre-genocide levels (97 per cent), this may be interpreted as an encouraging success (Save the Children 2004: 22). However as with other education systems, the notion of "free" education cannot be equated with the definition of free education in the West. The supplementary costs of paying an amount to enrol in schools, for the purchase of uniforms, school supplies, food and for contributions towards the upkeep of the school and teachers' expenses give rise to high dropout rates. The need to work at home or

earn some income also encourages dropout (US Dept of Labor 2003). Reports that children were being kept at home because there was not enough food for them to take to school have resulted in the implementation of a programme by the Ministry of Education to provide children with one school meal a day to encourage them to attend (Nyirahabineza 2004).

Enrolment, then, whilst representative of a commitment to education, does not always indicate children's participation in school. Schools at both primary and secondary levels suffer the problems of large classes, few teachers, who themselves are often under-qualified, lack of resources or money from the government budget - as occurred in Rwanda in November 2004, when funding for education ran out before the end of the school year leading to a shortening of the term by a month. The government has admitted that overcrowding will continue, as there are no resources to build more schools. The FARG aims to provide assistance for education, health and housing to the neediest genocide survivors including children, but a lack of awareness on the part of children about this help and other assistance offered on NGO programmes has meant that they do not avail themselves of such assistance. Whilst many such organisations implement programmes to support education of vulnerable children, these often have a fixed age limit at which households can be helped, which might prevent their inclusion on the programme. It is clear that efforts are being made to address the problem of providing education for all, but there is a need to do more to prevent further increases in dropout rates. Yet the future for Rwanda will be built on weak foundations if its children are deprived of educational opportunities, as well as nutrition, health, and protection (Save the Children 2004).

### **6.7.2 Education and the Sample Group**

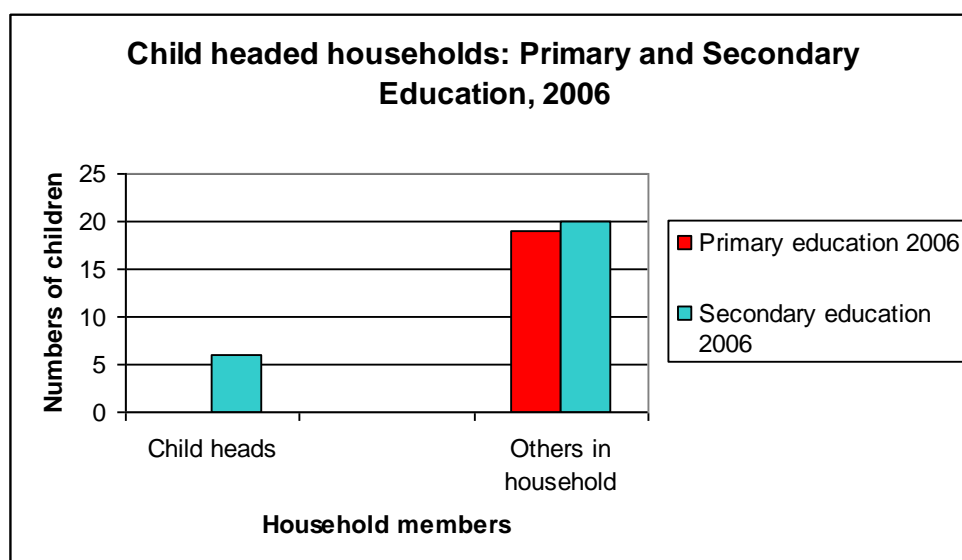
Education was a very important objective for those in every child headed household included in this sample group. It is considered as the ultimate goal for the young people interviewed, and whilst their hopes for the future often focused on improved income generation and housing, all of the children affirmed their

commitment to education and their desire to engage in further education or training.

When their education or training ends, either because there is no more money for fees, or programmes cease funding them, they enter into a job market which they know is unlikely to provide them with either the means to earn an income to take them above the basic survival level, or the opportunities to continue in any type of further professional development. Education is, for them, the key to new possibilities; when asked about their ambitions for the future at the time of the first visit, in 2004, some expressed desires to become judges, doctors, and journalists, often abroad. Their career hopes and plans may not be very different from those of children in the West, although their opportunities are severely limited. The four year gap between the first and last visits in this study offers a panoramic view of the life of young people in these households; the hopes and disappointments, the changes that their lives undergo, their use of coping strategies and the decisions they make and their consequences. The girl who wanted to be a journalist is engaging in transactional sex to earn an income; the one who wanted to be a judge is unemployed, at home, having completed secondary school, but with no prospects of attending university.

Over the period of this study some of the children's education ended; others were incorporated onto NGO programmes which enabled them to begin or continue a hitherto interrupted education. However at the time of the second visit (2006), 45 children were enrolled and attending either primary or secondary school, some heads of household were at secondary school and other household members at primary and secondary, as shown in Figure 6.11. A significant factor to note in these school attendances is that age is not a criterion used in placing restrictions on educational opportunity. In the sample group there are often children whose ages are far higher than Western norms: children in their late teens in primary school, those at the age of 20 years and above in secondary school. Simone completed primary school at the age of 18, having cared for her mother when she was terminally ill with AIDS; Serge left primary 5 at the age of 19; Joelle completed primary 6 when she was 18 years old. Similarly at secondary level, Dédé completed secondary school at 27 years of age; Arnaud was still in

secondary school aged 22, and Françoise finished her secondary education aged 23.

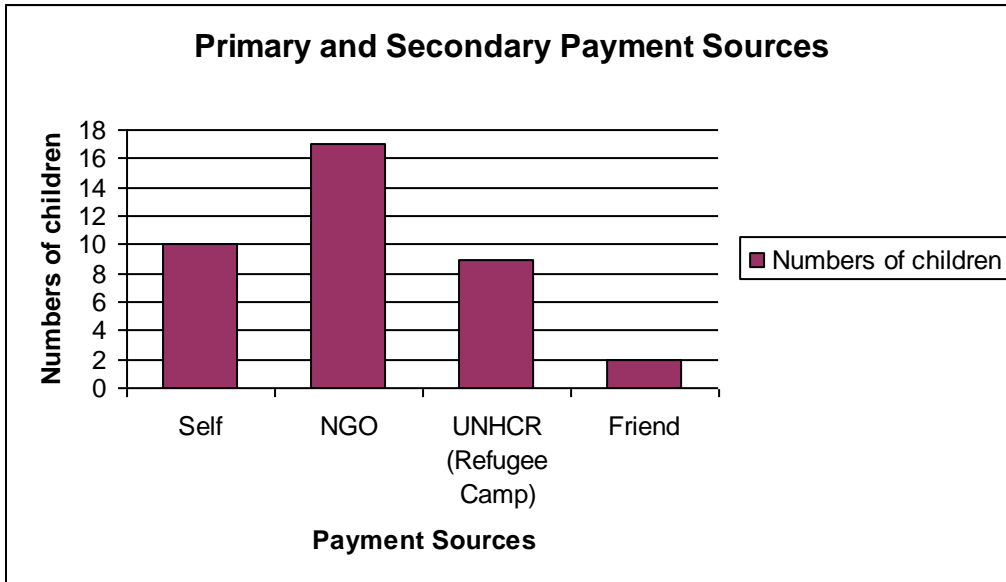


**Figure 6.11: Child headed households: children in Primary and Secondary Education, 2006**

**Source: Author's fieldwork (2006)**

Thirteen children in the households had left school because of being unable to pay the fees. For those children included on NGO programmes, some had their fees paid for them. Inkuru Nziza's sponsorship programme funds primary and secondary state education, the Compassion organisation funds education, the FARG (government programme) can fund secondary education for victims of the genocide, and the UNHCR camp at Gihembe has primary and some secondary school facilities. Thus many of the children were receiving education through these schemes, as is shown in Figure 6.12.





**Figure 6.12: Primary and Secondary Payment Sources**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2004-8)**

For others, either the household paid the school fees, or an acquaintance or friend supported them. This was the case for Jacques, 23 years, who was attending secondary school (boarding) thanks to some funding from someone who had once met him, who was described just as a “white man” but whose money had not arrived at the school at the time of our visit in 2006. The school had asked for the money, which was not available at the time; this appeared to be the end of this informal sponsorship arrangement. By the time of the next visit in 2008, the family had sold a small house they owned to pay for Jacques’ school fees. He was working as a temporary teacher at the time of this last visit, for which he was only being paid Rw Fr 500 a day, despite it being formal employment. This he was saving to pay for his and his siblings’ studies. Likewise, Julien, age 16, was being funded through primary school by a member of his local church.

For households in the rural area, pursuing an education is far more challenging than for those living in other areas. The lack of NGO programmes means that there is little opportunity for assistance with funding; only Jacques was receiving help from a stranger he once met; no one was being helped by the FARG (in fact few had even heard of this fund); and in addition to this, the distance required to

walk to school was sometimes prohibitive. (A local community leader stated that the most pressing need was for more primary schools in the area.) Therefore the majority of the households in Cyabatanze had to find the money for the school fees as well as for uniforms for the children (an additional problem for some of the households). This is a pressure on the income earned in the household, which was minimal, and yet education remained a priority. Children were withdrawn from school as a last resort, and efforts were made to re-enrol as soon as funds permitted.

Secondary education in the refugee camp is funded by UNHCR for the boys and FAWE for the girls (FAWE is the Forum for African Women Educationalists – a nongovernmental organisation promoting girls' and women's education in sub-Saharan Africa in line with Education for All).

With the Compassion programme in particular, but also in some of the households included on Inkuru Nziza's programme, only certain household members will be included on the programme or sponsored. This might be due to lack of sponsors, ineligibility due to age restrictions or the size of group that could be assisted at a specific stage of implementation of the programme. Therefore there are households in which the education of some of the children is paid for by an NGO, and that of others (siblings, cousins) in the same household is paid for by the household head. The NGO might be waiting for an opportunity or for funding to be able to include them on a programme, as happened in the case of Josette's younger sister; Josette's household was waiting for a sponsor to be available within the Inkuru Nziza programme as she struggled to pay for her sister's school fees, and had already had to withdraw her brother (Victor) from school for financial reasons. He was 15 years old at the time, and she felt he would be able to find some work, although at the time of the interviews he had not been successful.

Education has a high priority in the child headed households met in this research. Accessing education was a target and a model that all children desired, and children were only withdrawn from school at the last possible moment, always due to lack of fees and when the household finances could no longer sustain the

cost. Some child heads had left school because the need to earn an income for the rest of the family was paramount, but the majority tried to continue their education. Eight children had left school at the final stages of their parents' illnesses, when the latter were not able to provide the fees for school, and when the children were obliged to take on the role of household head, caring for their parents and others in the household and trying to earn some money. The confluence of losing parents and ending one's education reinforced for many the new shape their lives would take, and signalled an ending of "childhood", despite continuing to be "children" in society's eyes.

There was no evidence of a gender bias towards education for males in any of the households in this study. Withdrawing Victor from education to pay for her sister, Josette was merely considering his income generation capabilities. While there were incidences of girls caring for sick people in families, there were either no men to do it, or the males were trying to find work. Both girls and boys expressed the desire to continue with education, with the girls uninhibited by any gender stereotyping of roles – journalist, judge, doctor, all were mentioned as their hopes for the future.

All of the children interviewed constantly affirmed their belief that education would offer more opportunities in the long term (sadly unproven in the cases of some), and were keen that family members and they themselves had access to it, despite hardships encountered in paying for it: Philippe commented "I had to manage the hunger to get through university; today... I would be suffering but tomorrow there would be a better life".

In some instances head teachers had used their discretion in allowing children to attend school when they were unable to pay. Jean-Pierre had managed to attend primary school thanks to the kindness of the head teacher who allowed him to attend when there was no money for fees. He was then included on the Compassion programme with his secondary education thereafter funded. Others were beneficiaries of these kind gestures by some staff members too, but the speed with which the head teacher contacted Jacques' family when his fees were not paid is also typical. For those whose schooling is paid by the FARG

programme, Rakita *et al.* (2003: 53) report of difficulties with the dispersal of funds, confusion over who is eligible and some irregularities in the payments to the schools involved. Reports have stated that students have been sent home because their tuition was not paid, even though the government made requests to head teachers to keep the children at school, but the schools were not able to afford to feed them. Children have also been arbitrarily left off lists confirming their eligibility for free education, and so have been forced to leave school (Rakita *et al.* 2003). The FARG programme was only supporting two households in this sample group, despite the high proportion of households which could be considered as “victims of the genocide”.<sup>43</sup> Whilst the model of the FARG scheme is appropriate, the restrictive criteria for inclusion mean that children from certain ethnic groups, and those who are vulnerable for reasons other than as a direct result of the genocide, are precluded from this assistance. They are disadvantaged in their attempts to participate in education, preventing them from the opportunity to improve their livelihoods.

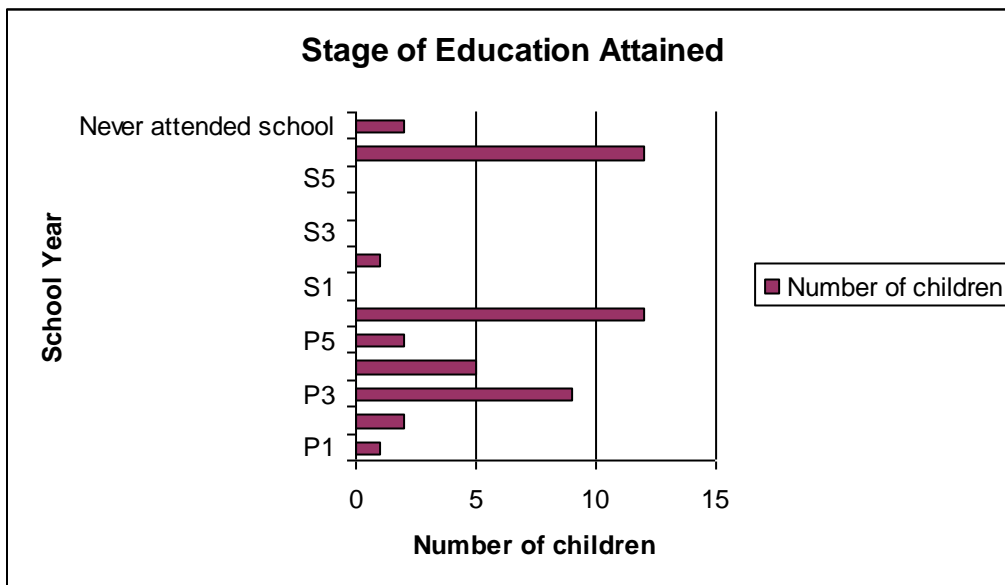
### **6.7.3 Education Levels Attained**

The study reveals that of those members of child headed households who were no longer in education, less than half had completed the whole of primary and secondary schooling. Requirements for retaking the year if the child is not successful at the end of year examinations means an extra year of fees to pay, and one person fewer to earn an income. Therefore the recent initiatives by the government which aim to reduce the number of those repeating will not only assist in the resourcing of education nationally but will also help household economies. That some of the children in this sample group had to repeat years impacted on their education and that of other household members, as well as other reasons such as lack of funds, conflict, displacement, or indeed no opportunity to attend school at all. The effect is on the whole of the household economy.

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<sup>43</sup> Some might say that indeed all of these child headed households are victims of the genocide.

The stages at which young people in the sample group ended their education are illustrated in Figure 6.13 below. The relatively high number of those who have completed secondary education is primarily due to the intervention of NGOs, in particular Inkuru Nziza.



**Figure 6.13: Stage of Education Attained (last level achieved)**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

The conflict and genocide of the early 1990s had a wide-ranging impact upon the education system in Rwanda as has been discussed earlier. The additional consequences of the AIDS pandemic have continued to undermine the traditional structures of education provision. As young people are required to remain at home to care for terminally ill parents and grandparents, or are themselves infected with HIV and AIDS, or are sick or seeking treatment, attendance at school is often interrupted or stops totally. This has compelled the government to implement more innovative means of education provision to open up access to all. Catch up classes allow those who have spent years caring for others to continue their education, and, as has been seen in this chapter already, has made it possible for young people in their late teens and twenties to attend

primary and secondary school (Nyirahabineza 2004). Simone's case is an example of this.

Simone attended primary school from the ages of 16 to 19 as she had spent much of her life as the sole carer for her mother who had AIDS and died when Simone was 16. Her younger sister (14) is also HIV positive, but attends primary school, and Simone cares for her when she is sick. (There is a high probability that Simone's mother was raped and infected with HIV during the genocide, giving birth to her sister who was also then infected.)

### **Box 9**

Dédé has also benefited from the flexible structure of education and completed his secondary schooling at the age of 27. As in many African countries, children only attend for part of the day at many schools. This is an advantage for those in child headed households as it leaves them the time to cook, wash clothes, tend crops and find some way of earning some money if possible.

The priority given to education by children in this sample group underlines their awareness of its role as an important tool to a sustainable livelihood. However when their education comes to an end, either because they have completed the grades in primary and secondary school or because of lack of funds or project provision, the children feel disappointment.

Policy changes by organisations can also have an impact on access to education, although arrangements are usually in place to mitigate against any problems. However it can be a matter of administrative error or a lack of information which causes a change to occur in the provision of the project. Joelle's two siblings had been attending secondary school in 2006, sponsored by Inkuru Nziza, but in 2008 she stated that the project were unable to pay the their school fees which had increased, and so they were now at home. A similar situation occurred in the household of Josèphe, whose sister's school fees were no longer being funded by the project and so she was forced to withdraw from school, despite all three of these children being sponsored.

Other young people involved with the same project in this particular community confirmed that there had been administrative shortcomings in that support, both practical, in funding but also emotional, from those project workers in the area, had been very limited. Concerns had been brought to the attention of the programme managers, and at the time of our visit, arrangements were being made to improve the provision in that community.

## 6.8 Secondary School: Impacts of the Boarding System

The secondary school system in Rwanda is predominantly based on a boarding school structure and therefore requires that children are away from the home during term-time but rejoin the household during the holidays. Costs for board and food are relatively expensive, and the conditions in which the boarders live are very poor. This variability in the constitution of the household has an influence upon the household economy, its structure, the roles and responsibilities of the children and its viability. Impacts can be positive and negative; fewer people in the household can mean more food for those left, however if a project provides food and/or money for each sponsored child then that child's share will not be available for the rest of the household when the child is away. A positive effect may be that there are more people to help earn some money during the holidays, but these children will also need to eat. If the household head is at secondary school, that role - head of household and decision maker- has to transfer to someone else, with the responsibility reverting back during the holidays. This can be challenging - disputes may arise over decisions that have been taken in the absence of the household head, or resentment that younger members of the household have to effectively hand over control to another during the holidays. However it is often something that they are happy to do. From a more positive perspective, the experience of running a household, needing to find money for food, clothes, fuel, caring for others and attending school oneself can result in the growth of confidence and self-empowerment. It can build resilience and necessitates the development of coping strategies.

This research revealed, however, a major weakness which is caused by the secondary school boarding system; when members of the household are away during term time it can mean that those left behind are left unprotected and without the security of having an older brother or sister present. In addition, they can be lonely, as key members of their household and support networks are no longer there. Thus emotional needs are often unmet when siblings are away during term time. These needs are discussed more fully in the following chapter. Jean-Pierre's sister (16 years old) is alone during term time and so occasionally the child of a neighbour comes and sleeps with her for security. A similar situation occurred in the refugee camp at Gihembe, when the composition of one household had changed so much over two years that there remained only two sisters, one of whom then started secondary school, leaving her 13 year old sibling alone in the hut where they lived. It was clear that Eloise, the remaining sister was traumatised at being left alone; she missed her sister who had recently left and was very distressed during the visit. The camp was not secure and instances where thieves would tear the sheeting covering the huts were frequent. Violent attacks were also commonplace. The vulnerability of a young girl alone in such circumstances was evident.<sup>44</sup>

## 6.9 University and the Sample Group

There is clearly a desire to attend university on the part of those who have successfully completed Secondary 6, and, in 2008, three young people from these child headed households were university students, two in Kigali Independent University and one in the Adventist University of Central Africa in Kigali. One child head had already graduated from university. For those in university, courses are also often taught in the evenings to allow students to

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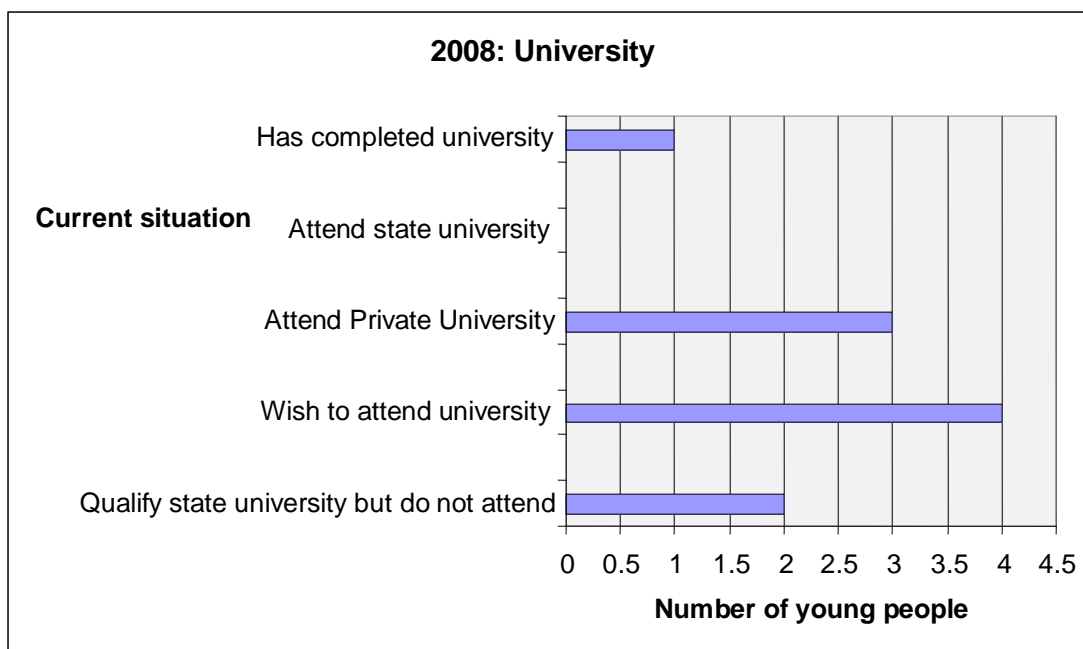
<sup>44</sup> This was a harrowing interview which hopefully resulted in some more security for EG due to the presence of a camp official- she had previously been unaware of Eloise's plight and felt that she should also be treated by counsellors as she was psychologically traumatised by the departures of her siblings as well as the other difficulties in her life.



engage in employment during the day. Often the same lecture will be given at different points of the week to accommodate the different needs of students.

Two children were being funded through university by the AEGIS Trust, and one by a sponsor. Many young people in the households who had completed Secondary 6 had not attained high enough scores to enrol at the state universities. State university requirements are higher than private universities, but the fees are less and there are government subsidies. The option of attending one of the private universities is costly, and projects such as Inkuru Nziza are unable to fund them. However there was a level of sympathy on the part of project managers when the student in question had only failed to qualify by a small margin. In at least one of these cases, that of Franck, who had not passed with high enough grades to attend the state university, Inkuru Nziza approached a private sponsor to pay for his university fees (Figure 6.14).

Even the state university requires some fees to be paid, which is prohibitive for those in vulnerable economic circumstances, as is borne out by the national statistics discussed above. Arnaud, living in Gihembe refugee camp, stated the following: “My dream is that in two years I will be studying construction at university”. He has qualified for this, but is unable to pay the fees. The DAFI scheme (see Box 11), which funds refugees’ university studies, supports only 15 people from the Gihembe camp to go to university. (There are approximately 27,000 people in the camp.) Marianne stated “I am pleased to finish school, but would like to go to university. But it will cost too much”. She had not reached the standards required for the state university and thus was unable to go.



**Figure 6.14: University and the Sample Group**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

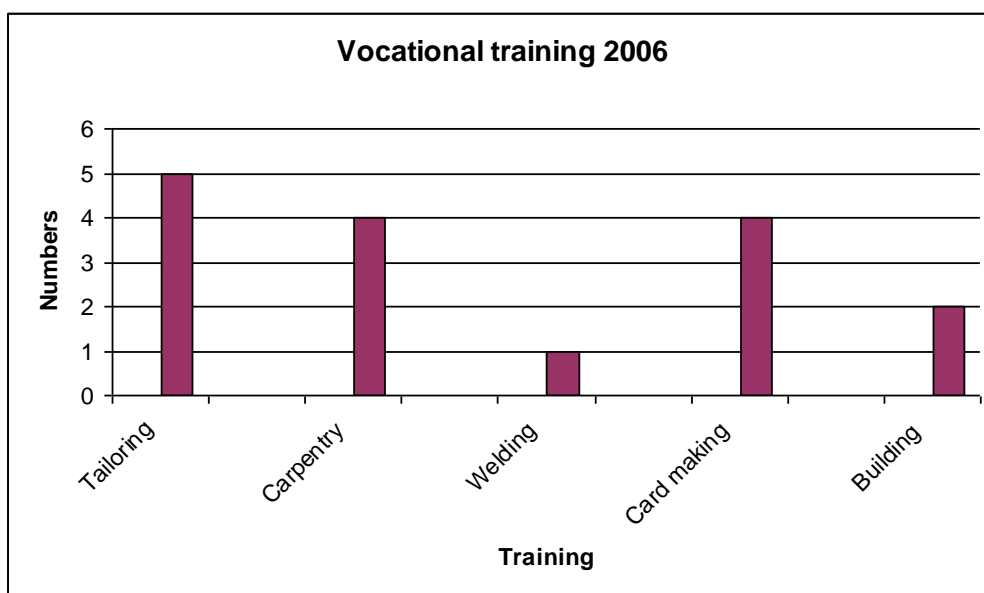
The DAFI Programme is a German funded initiative which aims to contribute to the self-reliance of refugees by providing them with a professional qualification for future employment. It grants scholarships for studying in the country of asylum. It currently supports 1,800 refugee students in 33 countries, and is the sole comprehensive scholarship programme for refugees. In 2008, Germany increased funding for this programme from US\$2 million to US\$5 million (Reuters, 2008).

**Box 10**

Yet the dearth of employment opportunities at a range of skill and experience levels has led to frustration that despite achieving a degree there is no guarantee of a job. For Philippe, the challenging task of trying to earn money and care for his siblings while studying at university (government sponsored) would be worth it for the benefits at the end. However he was unable to find employment for 2 years after his graduation in 2005. He comments: “There is a danger that Rwanda will have the highest number of unemployed graduates in the area (Sub-Saharan Africa)” (2006).

## 6.10 Vocational Training and the Sample Group

The initiatives by the state in encouraging and implementing vocational training have already been considered in this chapter. Within the sample group, vocational training is embarked upon by a significant number of the children; for those in the Inkuru Nziza programme it is offered as a continuous development programme at the end of primary education, whilst the YWAM project offers vocational training for a minimum amount of cost, providing the tools required at the end of the course. Figure 6.15 illustrates the numbers of children engaged in vocational training through the Inkuru Nziza and YWAM programmes at the time of the field visit in 2006.



**Figure 6.15: Children in Vocational Training, 2006**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

The subsequent visit in 2008 revealed that of those included in the data above who were revisited, only two (that is 12.5 per cent) were using the skills they had learned to earn an income - both have rented sewing machines and are tailoring. Those who had been engaged in card making stated that the cost of buying the necessary materials was too high. This contradicts the initial aim of the project to

provide the material needed for the individual to set up in business after training.

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Others who had undergone carpentry and tailoring training had not found any appropriate work, a possible result of the skill flooding in the area. The natural limits of market need for these skills may vary, but the inclination of training bodies, both government and NGO led, to direct youngsters into a traditional trade can cause overproduction of skilled workers relative to the needs of the moment, which, for those in child headed households, is, after all, the urgent and constant necessity to earn enough to just survive.

Latterly more variation in the disciplines offered was evident, with Inkuru Nziza developing a new training centre to provide courses for electricians and information technology, with training in hotel work (hospitality) planned.

Only six children in the child headed households were registered on vocational training programmes in 2008, one on each of the following courses; hotel work, cookery, tailoring, hair dressing, card making and electrical.

The value of attending school, acquiring qualifications or learning a skill can seem exaggerated when considering the apparent lack of opportunities to gain an income with or without these advantages. Young people in child headed households will have already struggled to gain these experiences from the outset, either in finding the money to pay for school or training, but also in the time spent at school or in the training institution when they might have engaged in casual odd job work to buy food for that day. The lack of suitable opportunities for income generation, then, even with vocational skills or educational qualifications can be a demotivating factor for those endeavouring to earn incomes and maintain sustainable livelihoods which are already fragile.

The problem of income generation opportunities was the challenge raised most frequently by young people and key informants in interviews during each of the field visits. However, despite the dearth in opportunities for earning money, all of

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<sup>45</sup> This may have been an internal management decision within the card making initiative, since by 2008 it had become an independent mini-enterprise apart from YWAM, and could not operate under the same system

the children were convinced that education and training would provide a way out of their poverty. They hungered for the chance to gain further qualifications and to improve their skills; they bemoaned the fact that their communities were so far from vocational training centres, and despaired of their lack of funds which might allow them to enrol in such programmes. For those who had completed secondary school education, attendance at university was the preferred goal, which they felt would allow them to achieve their dreams and improve their chances of gaining well paid employment. However as has been already discussed, such jobs are rare, and the disadvantages of not having family members or contacts who can recommend the young people for such posts should not be underestimated.

Thus the consideration of livelihoods and the child headed household through the lenses of land ownership, income generation and education reveal an often contradictory model of survival techniques and coping strategies. Whilst the theory suggests that land ownership and education or training provides a sustainable basis for future survival, the evidence has revealed that the pattern in Rwanda does not always follow that model. Rose (2005) contends that ownership of land is the basic prerequisite for a sustainable livelihood, and considers the challenges of traditional customs and legal difficulties with orphans and land ownership and inheritance as the barriers to that sustainable livelihood. However this research has illustrated that despite the majority of the households owning property and land, the major problem for all was the lack of opportunity for income generation. This offers an alternative framework for building sustainable livelihoods, and is one which requires a renewed and invigorating set of initiatives on the part of government and the business community, which should be effectively and carefully implemented so as to improve the prospects of the vulnerable in particular. This is a recognised challenge in all developing countries. This model acknowledges and upholds the significant part that land and property ownership plays in their survival strategies, but places equal importance on income generation opportunities as a basic prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods.



**Figure 6.16: Model for Sustainable Livelihoods**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

The notion that land and property ownership is the sole key foundation to livelihood security is exposed as inconsistent in the light of the experiences of those whose homes are dilapidated, and whose lands are inadequate for even basic subsistence needs. The marriage of land ownership and income generation opportunities allows the household to benefit in accessing education and training, making repairs to dwellings and improving the quality of land and crops, gaining access to facilities such as sanitation, water and electricity, health care, and progressing towards a level of “supra - income”, where income earned is in excess of that required for mere survival at its most fundamental level, and

which can offer the means to help other family members, or even employ others to help in the home or in an income generation enterprise. Figure 6.16 illustrates this concept.

An example of this is seen in the case of Franck, now employing a local man who is HIV+ to cultivate his garden. In his case, the chain of events has been precipitated by the interventions of the NGO which provided support, a home and education for the household over many years, and thereafter an external sponsor to fund university education.

This path to supra-income is not typical in Rwanda today. Securing the sustainable livelihoods of all, including the vulnerable, necessitates a rigorous effort, by government and the business community to harness and expand Rwanda's increasing prominence as a potential hub for technology and investment in the East African Economic community. At the same time, international and national NGOs must ensure that their interventions are focused, appropriate and effective in contributing to the building of sustainable livelihoods for all.

The livelihood circumstances and behaviours of children in child headed households in Rwanda are centred on an axis of need and opportunity. The material needs necessary for survival have been considered here, and it has been found that the involvement of NGOs improves the opportunities for education, adequate housing and some income, as basic provisions, according to the conceptual framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the DFID sustainable livelihoods framework. These significant interventions from agencies can make the difference between hunger and nourishment, between desperation and survival for children in these circumstances. For those unable to call upon such assistance, however, the challenges are much greater. Without regular food supplements, or injections of money, children struggle to survive, and depend on the sale of crops, if available and sufficient, and on casual odd jobs. The prospect in these cases of enrolling and furthermore remaining in school for any length of time is minimal.

Whilst there may be more opportunities for income generation in urban areas, even children living in such places experience the lack of opportunity to earn money.

The role of land ownership as a foothold for livelihood security has already been considered in this work, however the necessity for liquid assets in the form of ready income opportunity as opposed to riches in property is significant in the case of the child headed household in Rwanda. Owning land and a house may be valuable in the long term, but the need for some means to survive day by day requires purchasing power. Therefore the opportunity for income generation takes its place as a cornerstone alongside land ownership in the strengthening and sustainability of households. Land and property ownership in itself is not enough, and has led to some children liquidising those assets in order to afford basic necessities.

Education is given a high priority in the households considered in this research; those who are without the support of NGO programmes or government assistance withdraw siblings from school only as a last resort, and at desperate times. The challenging prospects for finding employment notwithstanding, children are convinced that education and training offers a path to survival and relative prosperity. This research has introduced the concept of “supra - income”, whereby income earned exceeds that required for survival and allows some elements of “luxury goods” and training, for more sustainable livelihood prospects.

The future for these children within the current situation in Rwanda is dependent upon the opportunities for self improvement and progress which the government is able to facilitate, both in its policy-making regarding legislation for the rights of vulnerable children and land and property ownership, but also in the implementation and the dissemination of the information of such developments. Whilst enrolment levels of children in primary education have substantially increased, the challenge of enabling pupils to continue in school when they cannot pay the contributions necessary or are needed to do work elsewhere should be considered and overcome. Furthermore recent initiatives to create



more employment opportunities for Rwandans need to be encouraged and developed, to include the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Equally the desires of young people to continue their education at secondary or tertiary level should not be naïve hankerings, but should be welcomed and facilitated by government.

This research has revealed substantial livelihood challenges for the child headed household, in particular income generation. The issue of land and property has been explored, with evidence underlining the positive role NGOs and other agencies can play in providing some of the fundamental building blocks to a sustainable livelihood. Dependency and expectation are factors which have been considered within the research, and the importance of fostering independence and resilience is highlighted. It is crucial to recognise the impact that a change of policy or circumstances can have on households, and prepare and respond accordingly. For the children, readiness to cope, resilience, and independence are characteristics to be nurtured and strengthened to face these adjustments.

## **Chapter 7: PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS: SAFETY AND BELONGING IN THE CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLD**

“Is our life like any other families’?” (Josette, 2006)

The relationship between the child headed household and the community has introduced a new dynamic to societal structures in all afflicted countries. In Rwanda, whilst evidence of the formation of child headed households due to AIDS and to civil strife was known before the genocide of 1994, this revealed only small numbers of such households (Andrews, personal communication, 2004). Post 1994, numbers increased rapidly due to the intense force of the genocide, and consequent displacement. Communities which had been well ordered, hierarchical, bureaucratic units, were for the years immediately following the genocide shattered, both physically in the destruction of houses and infrastructures, and psychologically, with relationships broken, neighbour pitted against neighbour, and with evidence of fractures within families. Thus for the vulnerable, whose need of support was paramount to survival, re-entry into a fragmented and hostile environment would always be a challenge. The psycho-social effects of the trauma experienced by the majority of Rwandan children, whether as a result of the genocide, or of witnessing the slow deaths of a parent or grandparent from AIDS, will also impact upon the emotional and psychological ability of the child to cope with everyday survival, rendering them even more vulnerable (Rakita *et al.* 2003).

In attempting to examine the “psycho-social” needs of child headed households, it is important to reach an understanding on what such a term and approach signifies. Psychosocial support is seen as an approach to meeting emotional, mental and spiritual needs, beyond the physical, with victims of disasters, conflicts and other major life changing events and aims to promote the development of individuals in holistic and positive manner (OVC Support, 2006). For the purposes of this study it can be related to the hierarchy of needs as presented by Maslow and discussed in the previous chapter. Maslow articulates the importance of the needs of security, protection on one level which then progresses to the need for belonging, integration and love (Maslow, 1943). This

section will discuss these non-material needs as experienced by the children in CHHs in Rwanda.

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, organisations such as ACORD (2001), World Vision (1998), CARE (2005) and UNICEF (2008) found that children in CHHs suffered from the emotional problems stemming from their experiences during the genocide, witnessing murder, violence and sexual assaults such as rape, as well as sometimes being the victim. Experiencing the death of parents, siblings and other relatives has a long-lasting traumatic effect on these children.

In addition these households are found to be isolated within their communities, are vulnerable to exploitation and are unprotected (ACORD 2001). Integration into society and into communities where the violence occurred is extremely difficult, and has such a traumatic effect on some, that they choose to move to a different area to start their lives afresh. Returning to the same community evokes memories and experiences which are too painful to relive constantly, and these same communities often include those who perpetrated the violence. Reconciliation has a major part to play in the reintegration even fourteen years on, of these children into Rwandan society.

The provision of treatment for those suffering from trauma is sporadic. The mental health of children at risk is of concern, but despite an acknowledgement that some children and adults are suffering psychologically from the events of a decade ago, there remain few opportunities for diagnosis and treatment. The government has cooperated with some NGOs, for example World Vision and the Lutheran World Federation, in establishing rehabilitation programmes for children who had suffered sexual violence during the genocide (Nyirahabineza, 2004). This is however on a very small scale - one trauma counsellor for each hospital does not begin to address the widespread sexual violence suffered in Rwanda). The dissemination of information about such services at grass roots level is also inadequate. One NGO director had never heard of counselling services provision by the government at all (Mulindabigwe, personal communication, 2004). Franck, a child head in Kigali indicated he knew where counselling took place for those

who had psychological problems after the genocide, but also stated that he felt it was really for girls, that males were more able to cope.

In Gihembe refugee camp, orphans and adults have been diagnosed with problems of trauma. Their experiences of the conflict in the 1990s in DRC, their subsequent migration to refugee camps and the fragility of their livelihoods in Gihembe have led to psychosocial distress. Claris stated that In CHHs in particular many trauma cases have been identified, and the children have exhibited physical and psychological symptoms.<sup>46</sup> She states that many young men have been hospitalised because they are so traumatised. The counsellor service in the camp is inadequate and there are no funds to employ any more workers (Claris, personal communication, 2008).

Non-material needs inhabit a significant space in the lives of children in child headed households. The relationship between society, the family and the child headed household is crucial in building a framework of interaction, integration and belonging. In this chapter there will be an examination of the question of kin, community and their contribution to the construction of society in Rwanda today in relation to the child headed household. For these children, the psycho-social needs which can be generalised as those of safety and belonging are often unmet, as is examined below.

## 7.1 Security and Protection

Security and protection are of significant importance for children in child headed households. Their very situation is one which is susceptible to opportunist activity from members of their community and beyond. From a material perspective they live in dwellings which are sometimes dilapidated and cannot be firmly secured. They are obliged to leave some household items outside - cooking utensils for example, and those able to grow crops for themselves or for selling have land which is usually unfenced, and so is open to access by others. Furthermore the absence of a parent or other responsible adult exacerbates their

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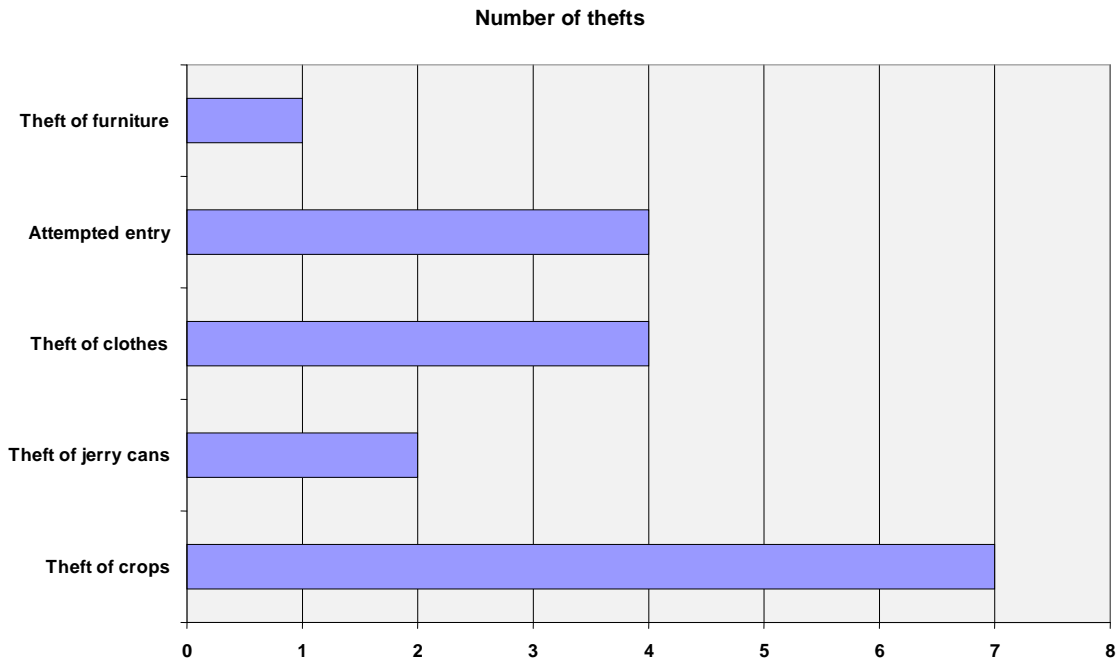
<sup>46</sup> Claris was a coordinator and counsellor for vulnerable children in the camp, originally working for UNHCR, but in 2008 with ARC, and is no longer given the time to monitor and assess the needs of CHHs in the camp.

vulnerability to outsiders, and this induces fear and insecurity, particularly at night. Household members are physically unable to prevent violent infringements on the property, or indeed assaults on the children themselves.

In particular, girls in the household are especially vulnerable to abuse and sexual assault by members of the community, and feel powerless to act against it. Cases have been reported where men wait by the water points until girls come to fetch water and then rape them (ACORD 2001: 3). Human Rights Watch reports of a lack of security and consequent violence, infringements of privacy and sexual abuse of those in child headed households (Rakita *et al.* 2003).

The location of the household is of little significance when considering the level of security and protection experienced by the young people. Those living in high density urban communities experienced problems as well as those in the peri-urban and rural areas. While not every house reported difficulties, it appears that the nature of the community itself was the main factor in fostering security. Those living in sheltered communities felt most secure since their compound was surrounded by a high wall and accessed by a gate. Other research carried out in the same area but focusing on the whole community also revealed concerns about security and protection, suggesting that while the vulnerable are at risk, others are also experiencing similar problems. For the adults their primary concern was that of insecurity due to drunkenness but the child headed households were primarily worried about thefts (Baker, 2006).

Many households stated that they had been victims of thieves. In the rural areas thefts included the taking of jerry cans from outside the home, or stealing crops. The children explained that there is no redress unless the thief is known or apprehended. In the peri-urban area, Joceline stated “I am afraid of thieves at night, as our clothes were stolen even at 4 pm. I cannot go to the commune leader unless I have the thief”. The local commune leader – the *nyumbakumi* – is prepared to help but is unable to do anything unless aware of the identity of the perpetrator (See Figure 7.1 –Numbers and types of thefts).



**Figure 7.1: Numbers and types of thefts**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2006, 2008)**

Clothes and shoes drying outside the house were also frequently stolen, and several children spoke of attempted entry to their houses- one of whom added that people were “desperate” (Philippe, 2006). Alice was very aware of thieves working in her neighbourhood and in particular feared that her baby would be stolen, as she had been warned by health workers about this. Franck, who had carried out improvements to his home, including connecting electricity, had experienced the theft of wires and of electricity. In the peri-urban area, the *nyumbakumi* has set up a rota of night patrols which offers some comfort to households who feel particularly vulnerable. The fact that often thieves are prepared to attempt to break in to homes when children are inside does cause concern to child headed households. Simone had experienced attempts by thieves to enter the house:

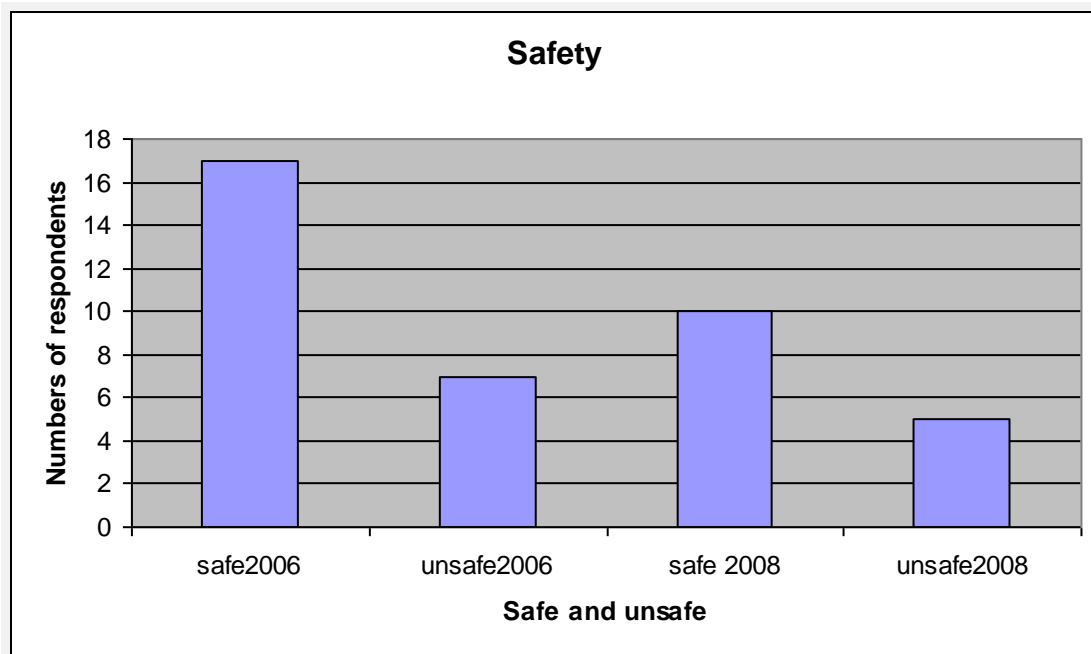
Researcher; “Have you had anything stolen from your house?”

Simone: Thieves have tried to break the iron bars on the windows at night. We shouted and the neighbours helped me and the thieves ran away”.

Estelle saw her lack of safety from another perspective: “I do not feel safe in the house, I feel threatened as I am a survivor and they (those she shares the house with) are not”.

Josette had suffered greatly from theft- both in the home and at her work – she rents a telephone which she then hires out on the streets of Kigali. At the time of the second interview the bag containing her earnings had been stolen from her, which had contained a significant amount of money. She had to save her earnings for several months to repay the money to the owner of the phone, and consequently was unable to pay her rent. At the same time a “friend” who was staying in her house stole all her furniture leaving her and her siblings with nothing. Inkuru Nziza provided her with a mattress and other basic furnishings. These events can have a serious impact long-term on the household, and requires levels of resilience and coping strategies that may be undeveloped in many children. Their personal circumstances and histories may preclude them from engaging in activities which might offer some assistance. Josette for example is physically disabled and is limited in her capabilities.

Joceline’s move in 2006 to her new home in the peri-urban area meant that she was alone at night in an area where she knew very few people, and in a house which was adjacent to a bar. She could hear the men drinking alcohol late at night, and was concerned that if she went to fetch water she would be putting herself at risk. By 2008, however she felt very safe in the area.



**Figure 7.2: Safety 2006-2008 (voluntary comments)**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2006- 2008)**

Figure 7.2 illustrates comments offered by the children regarding their feelings of safety. Whilst each interviewee's personal experiences in the home differed spatially and temporally, the presence of others was interpreted as a significant advantage from the safety perspective, especially for females alone. Several male interviewees mentioned that they would try not to leave their sisters in the house alone as they are concerned about their safety. Whilst these were primarily comments offered during the course of the "interview", and usually not as a result of a direct line of questioning, fewer mentioned that they felt unsafe in 2008 than 2006. This includes those who had recently moved to new neighbourhoods at the time of the data collection in 2006, and suggests that by 2008 they might have "settled in" to the community, feeling less insecure.

Others are vulnerable due to the composition of their households: Juliette, a 15 year old girl, had been left alone in an isolated dwelling since the marriage (and departure) of her sister a few months before the interview. She felt very insecure at night, and so persuaded a friend to stay with her as often as possible. The local pastor was concerned at her situation, and emphasised that she was in an



extremely vulnerable position. Others in the area would know of her status. Two years later, it was discovered that she had married, and although an interview was not possible at that time, it must be posited that the marriage may have been for security and protection.

For those children living in the refugee camp, security and protection are needs which are often unmet despite them being a major source of concern. In addition the temporary or semi-permanent nature of the camp means that protection measures, both from practical and supervision perspectives, are sometimes inefficient when they are in place at all. For example the UNHCR-built huts are often covered in plastic sheeting, which thieves are able to slash to gain entry; few of the huts are able to be securely locked, which adds to the vulnerable state of the homes, possessions and the children in them. Factors such as the size of the camp and the deprivation of the refugees, their despair at the dearth of opportunities, and the oppressive nature of camp life converge to shape fragile livelihoods and fractured existences. These in turn compromise the safety and protection of the most vulnerable. Eloise (whose case has already been mentioned in the previous Chapter) expressed these fears at the time of her interview since the changes in the composition of her household had rendered her very vulnerable- her three brothers had left the camp in the previous 15 months, two to join military groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and her sister was away in secondary school, leaving her alone. Although she had an aunt in the camp who helped her with food and who arranged for another distant relative to stay overnight with Eloise occasionally (whom Eloise hardly knew), she felt very isolated and unprotected. She described her fear of people entering the hut at night. The camp coordinator for vulnerable children, who was present at the time of the interview, had been unaware of this situation, but as a consequence was able to undertake to implement more protective measures in the area. Eloise's fear was compounded by her isolation, emphasised in her case by her sister's departure, as she missed her so much. The camp coordinator for children stated that the children in these households were marginalised –*“ils sont complètement marginalisés”* (Clariss, personal communication, 2008), ignored and even rejected.

The need for children to feel safe and protected in their communities and their homes has been evidenced in this work. The fragility of their livelihoods is compounded by the theft of belongings and the wherewithal to earn income, from food to tools. In addition the vulnerability of girls in the child headed household is an additional weakness in the building of resilient and flourishing households. Security measures, then, to assure, support and protect child headed households are an essential part of the needs “bundle” of these households, and can be linked to relationships and to the place and status accorded to them by society and their communities.

## 7.2 Belonging and Community

Expectation and history offer a perspective on the response to the crisis that the vulnerable might have hoped for. The roles of the family and society are dynamic elements impacting all aspects of need in the context of the child headed household, but in particular non-material or psycho-social needs. Different claims and theories are propounded when discussing the question of family and community in the African context. These include the widely lauded notion of the extended African family, the maxim that in Africa “no child is an orphan” (Foster 2000: 67), that they will be parented by others if not by the biological parent; the Shona expression “*mwane ndimambo*” – the child is the king (Roalkvam 2005: 214), which demonstrates the elevated position of the child in society; finally at a household level, views of the perception of CHHs in some societies as “community dependent families” (Loudon 1996, 2006:19; personal communication - Sloth-Neilsen 2005, Payne 2004). All of these understandings contribute to an expectation of support and acceptance, of integration and assimilation. In looking at family or kin-based support when considering the child headed household however, the realities in many societies have uncovered a conflicting construct in the reality of the extended family.

The increase in numbers of orphans has already been established as the cause of the establishment of child headed households. The creation of these households has been associated with the dearth of relatives and kin members able to foster or care for them, due to the high death rates from AIDS, and in the case of Rwanda from the genocide and AIDS. However the shortage in care response at kin and community level towards the high numbers of orphans has been revealed as not solely a product of the saturation point of safety nets. There may be some weaknesses in the cultural understandings and perceptions of the community and kin towards these families. This requires the consideration of responses to the child headed household which are not physical resource-based.

Roalkvam (2005: 211) questions the reality of kin response from studies in Zimbabwe, Her studies reveal that from the perspective of the CHH in Zimbabwe, the extended family and community have vanished, and communities deny the presence of these households, as they are ashamed of their existence. The expectations of support placed on kinship bonds by NGOs and other actors were significant, and often exacerbated already difficult situations. Roalkvam's conclusion, as evidenced by her study in Zimbabwe, is that in the case of child headed households, relationships with community and kin have to be initiated anew (a point examined in more detail in the literature review of this thesis).

Thus if the model of extended family networks as a safety net is no longer applicable in the case of child headed households in Zimbabwe, where the establishment of the CHH has been solely due to the AIDS pandemic, then the circumstances in Rwanda might reveal a similar framework of relationships. In particular this may be the case since here the phenomenon is further complicated by social breakdown and ethnic conflict. Kin and community, two important features in the needs of the individual according to Maslow, (1961), provide a lens through which the physical and emotional space of the child headed household in Rwandan society can be explored.

From experience and hearsay, many young people in the sample group felt that living with relatives was not always the ideal solution to caring for orphans.

Franck stated that in general relatives treat the orphans in their care badly- not even giving them RwF100. For the households of Bernadette and Dédé, living with relatives after the genocide was difficult, so forming child headed households was the alternative option, but a successful one in that although they faced difficulties, both groups were happier than with their extended families.

Veale (2000: 238) has noted that within Rwanda the community is considered in “binary terms”, that is, not a homogenous space, but one split into ethnic groups of Hutu and Tutsi. The quest and campaign to impose the concept of “nationhood” on the people by the Rwandan Government induces a national silence around ethnicity. This is borne out of the determination to dispense with tribalist loyalties and the fear of a recurrence of the events of 1994. Veale contends that this desire for common ground leaves the fears of division unvoiced and the danger is that these divisions can fester under the superficial veneer of nationhood, until a future wave of grievance is unleashed and erupts into another catastrophe.

Community as a metaphor for safety net support, described by Veale as consisting of “the warm glow of social interdependence and exchange” (Hoggett 1997:17) is subject to debate in the cases of these communities, with their consequent marginalisation of the vulnerable and the failure of safety nets to operate. The reasons why kin and community models of support have failed in Rwanda are many. The notion of “community dependent “children as discussed above (Loudon 1996, 2006:19, personal communications with Sloth-Neilsen 2005, Payne 2004) has neither been the case in Rwanda, nor, from Roalkvam’s experiences, in Zimbabwe.

### 7.3 The Rwandan Community

Ethnicity has played a particularly important role in shaping community in Rwanda for almost a century. From the time of the Belgian colonisers’ requirement for the ethnic status of Rwandans to be marked on identity cards, the

nation has been divided into the two main ethnic groups – Hutu and Tutsi.<sup>47</sup> The difficulties of making judgements about background situations within communities and households in this work has been exacerbated by the Rwandan government's edicts about ethnicity, and the introduction of laws which prohibit discussion about ethnic backgrounds. These methodological challenges have prevented a broader examination of ethnic tensions which still exist, although some people initiated discussions about the genocide and ethnicity. Comments about the government's refusal to help those groups from ethnically mixed marriages were made. There was a need to correlate the information given about the household history especially in the months and years following the genocide with the events in that particular community during the conflict, and a certain level of presumption and calculation was required with attempts made at triangulation of the responses. The case of Jean-Pierre and his community offered an example of this (see Box 11).

Jean-Pierre (aged 17 in 2004) lost both parents in the genocide, when he was 7 and his younger sister was 2. In 1997 an aunt took in the girl (then aged 5) because both Jean-Pierre and she had been very sick. She did not take him with her (he would have been 10 at the time). From the time of the genocide he looked after his sister, cooked and looked after the house. The neighbours did not offer help. He has only a small piece of land where he is able to grow some corn. He earns money by doing odd jobs for people in the area. The head of the local primary school allowed him to continue attending when he was unable to pay the fees. He then was incorporated onto the Compassion programme which funded his secondary education until 2007, now an uncle is helping him with the fees, while Compassion is paying for his sister's education at a local secondary school. His sister returned to live with him in 2007, aged 15, as her aunt did not want to care for her any more.

### **Box 11**

A local NGO worker reported that the church in Jean-Pierre's community had been the location of many killings during the genocide. If Jean-Pierre and his family were Hutus, then the ostracism of the household by the community could

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<sup>47</sup> A third group, the Twa, account for under 10% of the population

be explained as having an ethnic basis. The fact that neighbours would not help a seven year old child who was caring for a baby raises the same questions of community role and the ethnic paradigm in the context of community behaviour. In 2008 there was evidence of some community support. Jean-Pierre recounted that when he is away at school, the daughter of a neighbour stays with his sister for security reasons. Coupled with the assistance of the head teacher in allowing Jean-Pierre to continue with school, this permits a tentative assumption that over time, relationships within communities can improve. Thus the level of support from neighbours towards Jean-Pierre has grown. This is discussed more fully in the debate around participation below.

Jean-Noelle left her brother to live alone in the family home when she married, and recounts that none of the neighbours help him. When asked why, she responded “because he is an orphan” (Jean-Noelle, 2008).

Whilst many families did offer room in their homes for orphans, who were not necessarily related, the sheer numbers of needy children meant that such a coping mechanism was at saturation point. Efforts by the government to encourage families to take in orphans had some success- the President’s “One child one family” campaign aimed to offer incentives to families to take in orphans. However some children were fostered under this scheme to provide domestic help in the house, a danger with all agreements of this nature where families might take advantage of those who have no parents.

Furthermore, households are themselves often limited in resources and space, which restricts the number of children who can be taken in. Some of those in child headed households have commented that their relations were too poor to take them in or had no room for them.

It is also clear that the extreme poverty in these communities is one of the major reasons offered as to why neighbours are unable to help those in child headed households. When young people were asked why their neighbours might not give them food, for example, often their response was that the neighbours themselves had nothing. In a country with absolute poverty levels of RwF 250/adult /day, and extreme poverty levels at RwF 175 adult/day, the latest

household census has seen the percentage of those in poverty fall from 60 per cent to 57 per cent in the first five years of this decade, but the rise in birth rate has meant that in practice the number of people living in poverty has increased (Mackay and Greenwell 2007).<sup>48</sup> The *Nyumbakumi* (commune leader) of one area stated that NGOs were the most reliable source of assistance, there is no help from government or neighbours since “most people are poor and have lots to feed” (personal communication 2008). Hence a weakness is identified within this extended family and community model - a very real level of poverty which precludes families from having the wherewithal to care for one another.

For some child headed households displacement during the genocide and temporary housing arrangements has meant that they are living in communities which are new to them. The reasons why they have not returned to their home areas might be that they no longer have property there, or as in the case of Dédé and his siblings, there are too many memories of violence which took away his parents. Living in the community where his parents' attackers remain was too difficult. Therefore the situation arises which should correlate with Roalkvam's theory, that relationships need to be built up anew (Roalkvam 2005). However integration into new communities has been difficult for the child headed households in the study; Franck says “each looks to himself”, as revealed by the challenge for those in the sample who were relocated by their NGO out of the city of Kigali. Corinne felt part of the community even though she, her older sister and a four year old orphan they care for moved from a town 90 kilometres away; they are renting a room in the local Pastor's house. This arrangement offers them an automatic role and place within the neighbourhood; Corinne and the others will be seen and accepted as part of the household of the Pastor, which may give them an elevated status in the eyes of the rest of the community.

From the perspective of community acceptance, then, the notion of villagisation as discussed earlier would provide some advantage in that the majority of the community would be new to the areas, relationships could be initiated and communities established from the present day, without the shadow of past

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<sup>48</sup>Absolute poverty levels: RwF 90,000/adult/day, extreme poverty levels: RwF 63,500/adult/day. This recent census revealed that a significant portion of Rwandans were living in extreme poverty.

experiences intervening. Certainly the experience of Bernadette, living in a community purposely constructed for widows and orphans of the genocide, has been a positive one; everyone in her community has the same issues so they are able to empathise with one another and offer help and support. As of 2008, Bernadette is married and has given birth to twins, and so now wishes to move to a bigger house outside the community. The matter of integrating into the wider community did not pose a challenge for her; she felt that they would be assimilated into the local community naturally.

The role of community in offering help and advice is one which has been accepted and understood in all cultures. Philippe states his view: "Community is important - you cannot live alone, you need to live with others" (interview 2008).

He is able to broaden his view of community and roles by identifying the different communities he is part of - his church, family, and work, and emphasised the need to live in collaboration. However in terms of practical examples of community interaction he only mentioned chatting, sharing salt and helping in the event of a marriage. In fact, later he states "I am ignored as the community considers me as a person causing difficulty to others" (meaning talking to them about problems they see him as a burden).

Philippe is the one of the few young people interviewed in formal employment. His experience then is unique within this sample group. However for others the work community might involve the others who trade on the same streets as them or who are in the same school. These networks might not include those living in the exact same area.

## 7.4 Community Support

Whilst the extended family/kin structure is important in forming part of the coping strategies and safety net for the vulnerable in these societies, the role of the community might not be considered as relevant a support source in others. Here the principal support will only be that of the extended family. The concept of community can be problematic, as it implies a homogeneity that is not universal.



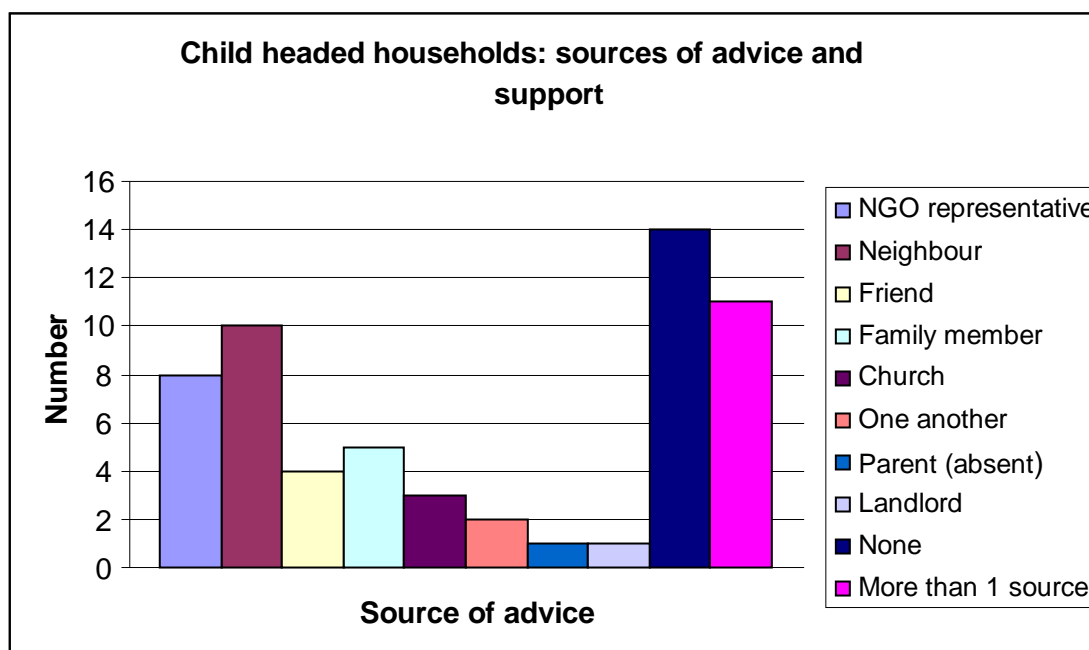
Often values, cultures, and human characteristics vary so much that generalisation is difficult. In Rwanda, despite its fault line of ethnicity running through social groupings, an expectation of community support was expressed by those interviewed, by children and key informants, which stemmed from customary practice, and may also resonate from the shared experiences of the genocide and conflict. In this the ethnic paradigm will shape that expectation, as historically the divisions of Hutu and Tutsi post-genocide will shape the source of support.

One fundamental need of those in child headed households is that of advice and emotional support, and the source of that support varies. Figure 6.3 illustrates the responses given when children were asked to identify their sources of support. Ten of the responses acknowledged neighbours as the source of advice and support. A range of other sources were revealed - which included family members, friends (who sometimes lived far away), church members and pastors, a parent (currently in jail), key workers from an NGO, a landlord; and two responded that they just turned to one another within the household. Some children had more than one support link. However, for 14 respondents, there was no-one they could turn to for advice and support in difficult times.

Eloise was asked: "Who do you go to when you are worried?" She replied: "I keep my worries inside my heart"

Location was not a dynamic in these results. Children from both urban and rural households said that there was no one they could turn to for advice and support. So neighbours did play a supporting role for some of the families, often those in similar positions to the household, but others were reliant on the church and NGO representatives. However the dearth of support networks for a significant number of households illustrates that for some, there is no access to help or advice.

Not one respondent indicated that they would go for advice or support to the *nyumbakumi*, part of whose role is to help the vulnerable in the community. Further examination reveals that some *nyumbakumi* call on the child headed households in their area, but this evidence has shown that they are not an obvious source of assistance for the households themselves.



**Figure 7.3: Child headed households: sources of advice and support**  
**Source: Author’s fieldwork (2004, 2006)**

Shared experiences and difficulties were a link which led some child headed households to become friends and act as mutual sources for support and advice. Franck had made friends with a young man in another child headed household nearby, and was aware of others in the area; Destine and Marianne had spent time with friends in their community who also were without parents. Franck stated in 2006 “we are new members in this community....the neighbours are good in conversation but will not give us anything”.

For some children the church was a major source of support; they felt that it constituted a major network of assistance, and for those included on some church based programmes such as Inkuru Nziza, it formed both their practical and emotional support structure. Whilst some may have felt an allegiance to the church because of the practical benefits it brought them, most were devout in their faith. Eric states “My only friend is the church; for advice I go to church and read the Bible...I have nothing apart from church but it is very good for me”. Guillaume also depends on his faith: “When we are ill God helps us to have

money for medicine. When I am sad I pray and God helps me to get out of it". Prayer was a fundamental tool in their strategies for coping - Aline was "praying for the future", and Josette asked "please pray for me and I will pray for you and your family". Knowing God was a valuable part of their lives, and their faith a spiritual asset in meeting their needs.

Roalkvam's descriptor of "children who stand alone" (Roalkvam 2005: 211) is clearly applicable in Rwandan communities. The desolation in the voices of Nathalie and Danielle, consumed by grief and loneliness in their isolated huts, and the tears of Eloise, alone at 13 in a violent and unpredictable refugee community, bear witness to the failings of their communities to offer support. Danielle said "We have no help from anyone including the neighbours. The community does not bother with us".

If the community were to be a more active source of support or assistance to these households, then the psycho-social challenges faced by them would be reduced. "Community dependent", as a phrase, suggests that the community would have to play a major role in facilitating the survival of those households. Community assisted or supported is a preferable term and indeed a more appropriate intervention, assuring help and advice, but not creating a dependency that will inhibit the development of resilience and survival skills on the part of the children.

## 7.5 Ethnicity

Franck and Serge, two child heads living in a peri-urban area of Kigali believe their community still consists of people with a genocide mentality. One calls his neighbours' mentality "rural", and qualifies this by commenting that they are polite but not overfriendly. Serge was content to live in the community at the beginning but now is keen to move – "some of the community still have the genocide mentality". This term is one used to describe an individual's way of thinking in relation to a certain group of people. It has been studied in particular by Lifton and Markusen (1992) who characterise this attitude with dissociation of feelings

between truth and action, revealing how the human mind can “split off from knowing what it is doing” (Lifton and Markusen 1992, cited in Charny 1999: 38). It has been much employed in the context of Rwanda and is a phrase which occurs in media accounts and in government material, due to the concern on the part of the government that this mentality continues to cause division within the country and instigates a barrier against reconciliation and unification. The government believes that the “genocide mentality” is present within some institutions, for example instigating policy in an attempt to rid some of the secondary schools of what it believes is systemic genocide mentality (New Times, 2008). This is discussed in section on background.

The ethnic paradigm continues to permeate these communities, despite initiatives by government and agencies to encourage a new untied national identity, and also in the light of reconciliation movements within the country. Some of this is evident in the responses of the children-

“Researcher: Would you help your neighbours if they needed it?

Stéphane: I might give them advice only...

Researcher: why not practical help?

Stéphane: It would depend on their attitudes”

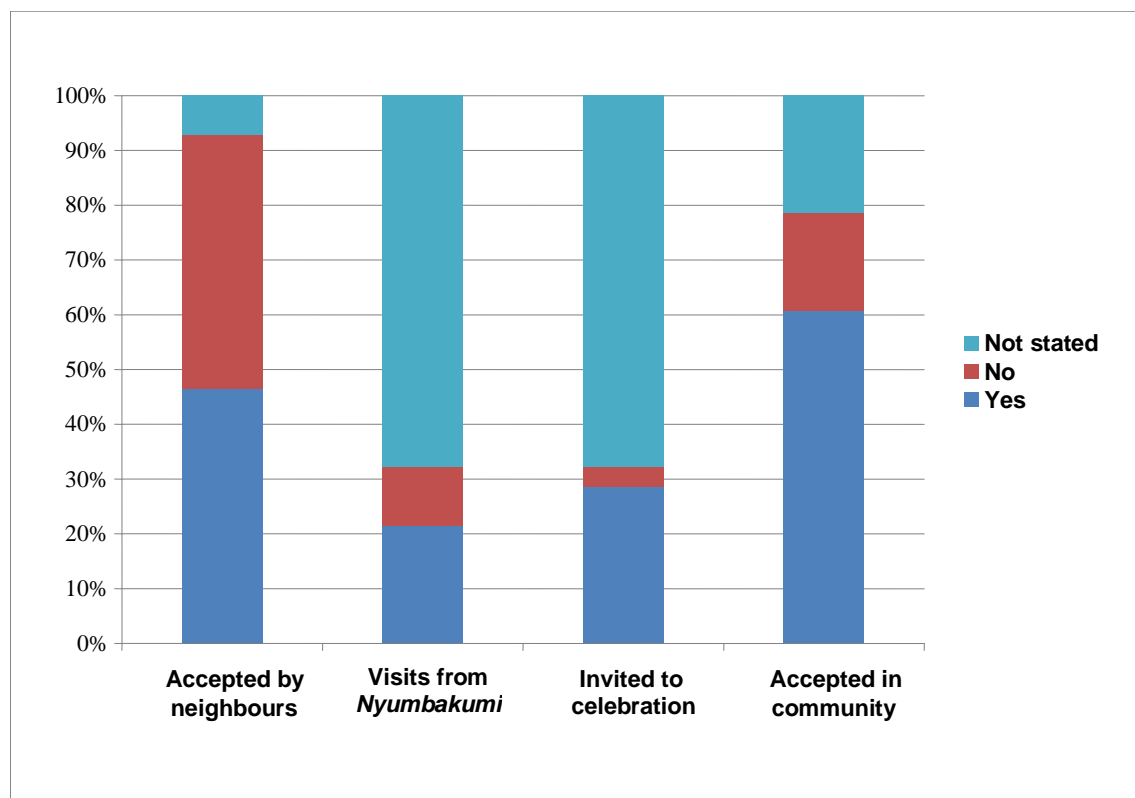
A potentially difficult situation arose in the case of Franck whose house (purchased for him by the NGO) was built on land bought from a neighbour whose husband was in jail for genocide crimes. On the latter’s release and on discovering what had happened to his land he forced his wife to leave home, but is polite to Franck when he meets him. Finally Dédé says “Others in the community are not affected by the genocide, they don’t understand how I feel”.

Ethnicity continues to permeate the construct of society and communities in Rwanda to varying degrees; the extent of this is difficult to ascertain due to the government legislation on ethnic debate. However in the experiences of some households, it has an impact on support structures.

## 7.6 Community: Marginalisation and Participation

Establishing the levels of participation in communities offers a perspective on the levels of inclusivity and the child headed household. Such participation might be in the form of attending local meetings, being encouraged to vote, or even being invited to attend celebrations such as weddings. As noted previously the Rwandan government has warned that marginalisation prevents child headed households from assuming a role within community frameworks and has proposed initiatives to mitigate against this happening in practice (MINALOC 2001). Many households feel that they are living out their lives on the sidelines of the community. Establishing an understanding of the concept of community participation presented challenges within the methodology utilised, but informal discussion about community life and events offered a perspective on the level of integration within the micro society.

As Figure 7.4 illustrates, variations within the levels of acceptance were noted; for example some felt that the neighbours were accepting of them but not the community as a whole. And the converse also occurred, where children felt a part of the community, and yet relationships with close neighbours were not positive. Sometimes poverty was given as a reason for this- the neighbours were unable to help with food or they were generally living in difficult circumstances. Estelle's view on the lack of acceptance by her neighbours was a resigned, "You know this country". Many did not respond to the prompt suggested as an example of an inclusive activity, of invitations to celebrations such as weddings. The practice of informal marriages and levels of poverty would indicate that such events are not common in these communities at the moment. Franck, who has lived for 2 years in his community, still feels that he is a newcomer, although he has contributed to the area in that he employs a neighbour to dig his garden and has met new friends in similar circumstances to himself.

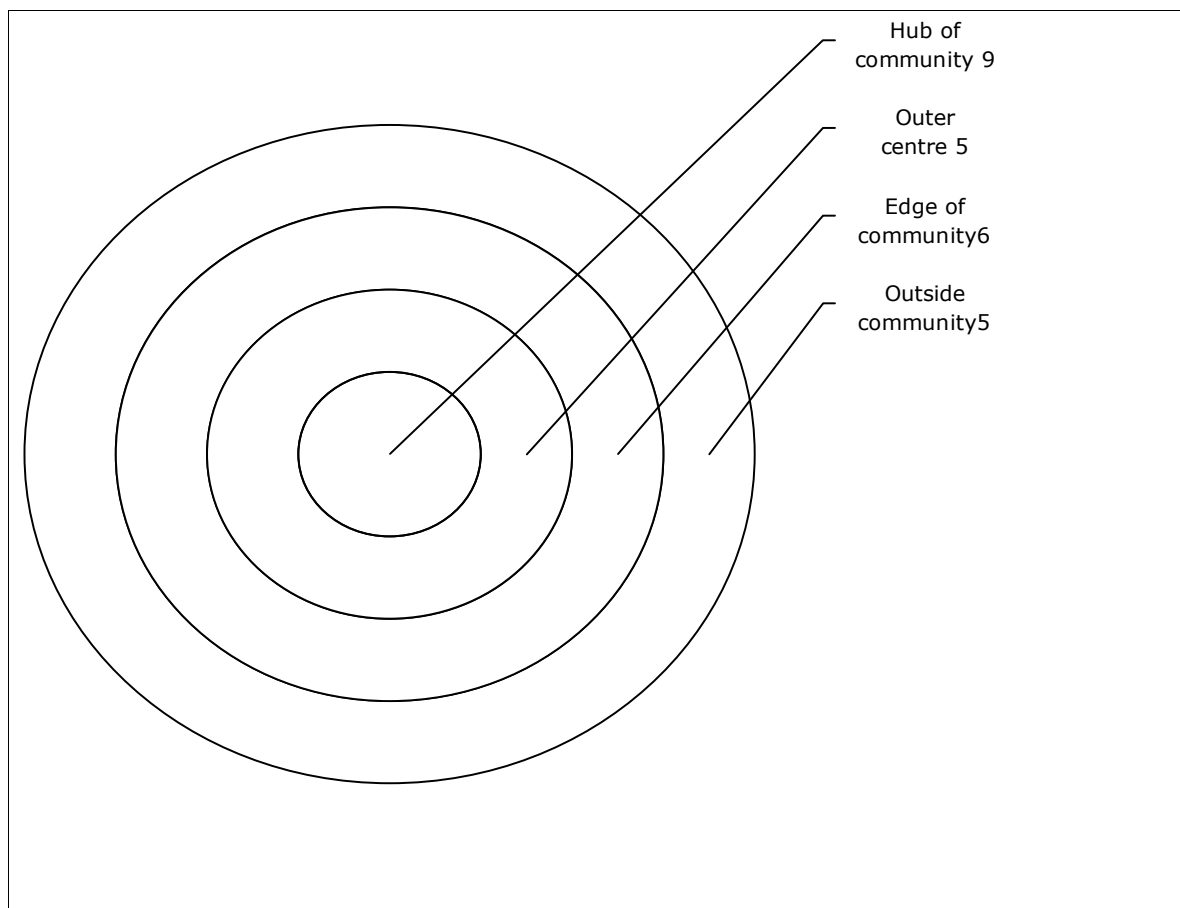


**Figure 7.4: Participation in the community: 2008**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2008)**

For some children, the level of inclusion in the community has improved over time, which substantiates Roalkvam's findings regarding the necessity for children in these households to establish themselves as a new entity, building up relationships as if from nothing. As child headed households in Rwanda begin this journey of independence, constructing their own relationship frameworks, vestiges of the past are inclined to filter through, hampering the processes of inclusion, and are often subjugated under the edicts of a government-enforced united identity which is non-ethnic in nature, but as Veale (2000) suggests, inadvertently and subconsciously reinforces differences.

From the psychosocial paradigm, the genocide of 1994 still shapes Rwanda and the lives of its people. New beginnings for all, especially for those in child headed households, prove difficult due to past experiences, loss, violence, guilt and grief. In its quest to prevent such a disaster from recurring, the Rwandan government is working to remove ethnic barriers and discrimination but at the

same time is still mired in military and legal initiatives stemming from the genocide. These include the indictment of *génocidaires* and the activities at the International Criminal Tribunal at Arusha, Tanzania, attempts to return the FDLR *interahamwe* from the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo to Rwanda to secure the country from the risk of a new offensive by the Hutu militias, annual genocide commemorations in April, poster campaigns promoting reconciliation and nationhood, and other similar initiatives. One perspective, then, is the desire for development and progress, to look ahead, but at the core, in many communities and within people's hearts, the converse is happening. Their lives are shaped by their past, which is difficult to escape.



**Figure 7.5: Young people's perceptions of their place in the community: 2008**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork (2008)**

A different exercise was used to elicit from the young people how they felt they were placed within the community. This could be at the centre or hub, on the outer edges or marginalised - outside the community. The responses are illustrated in Figure 7.5.

Not all of the young people responded to this prompt. Of those who did, some were confident in where they placed themselves, sure of their position within their locality. For others it was a more challenging process, some felt that their position changed according to relationships - Arnaud said that he was sometimes outside the community and sometimes inside, Franck was unable to decide where to put his marker, saying he felt he was still a newcomer so was not sure of his position, "sometimes I feel a part of the community but sometimes on the edge, it is hard to join in". Estelle placed herself just outside the village because her house is rented and she feels insecure, fearing her position in the community is too vulnerable to allow her to be integrated into the community.<sup>49</sup>

Those who saw themselves in the centre of the community were for the most part the oldest members of the sample group, and a third of them were from the rural area included in the research. For the latter, Jean-Noelle, Modeste and Danielle, the perception of their position can reveal notions of the processes of community integration. Jean-Noelle's situation has changed since the previous visit – a time when she lived alone with her younger brother, felt insecure at night and lived in fear of an older brother who had tried to take the house from them. She has recently married and had a baby, and receives advice from her mother-in-law and others, which appears to have increased her self-esteem and conferred upon her a position in the centre of the community. This then aligns with the concept of adulthood being equated with marriage. Jean-Noelle is now accepted as a *bona fide* adult, and takes her place in the community. Meanwhile others of her age, having more responsibilities, more children to care for, without a husband to bring in money, are adults in all senses but their lack of marriage status confines them to a never ending childhood and limits their roles and status in the community.

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<sup>49</sup> Estelle lives in a rented home in a compound. She worries the landlord will want it back leaving her with nowhere to live.



For Danielle's family, Jacques, her older brother placed them in the centre of the community because the immediate neighbours had been extremely supportive when they had been victims of theft. He felt that the village "loved him" because they were so helpful at that time. (Earlier in the interview, however, he said that in general the community was not supportive, which was the same sentiment as his sister had expressed in the interview 2 years earlier.)<sup>50</sup>

However Modeste's community position was the most unexpected since his father is in prison for genocide crimes, and yet he places himself in the centre of the village. Veale has contested that those child headed households where a parent was in jail were the most isolated and lacked support, but this case diverges from that model (2000: 235). Modeste and his family have not suffered the stigmatisation of children whose parents are in jail; his neighbours sometimes give him food and advice, and when there is community work to be carried out, the *nyumbakumi* offers it to him. Reasons for this might be the characteristics of the household members themselves – Modeste as head is very hard working, helps the neighbours and their land, looks after their livestock, and continued to work having suffered a serious injury to his hand working with the neighbour's cow. They became a child headed household in 2005 on the death of their mother, so in 2006 were less confident about their place in society. However their establishment within this micro society now seems firm, having built relationships anew from that point, following the pattern acknowledged by Roalkvam (2005). In this case information about the ethnic makeup of the community would have offered a more holistic history of the family's status and relationships within the construct of this community. His father may not have been the only one involved; others, neighbours in particular, may have been supportive of his actions. As discussed previously, these avenues of enquiry are inaccessible today in Rwanda.

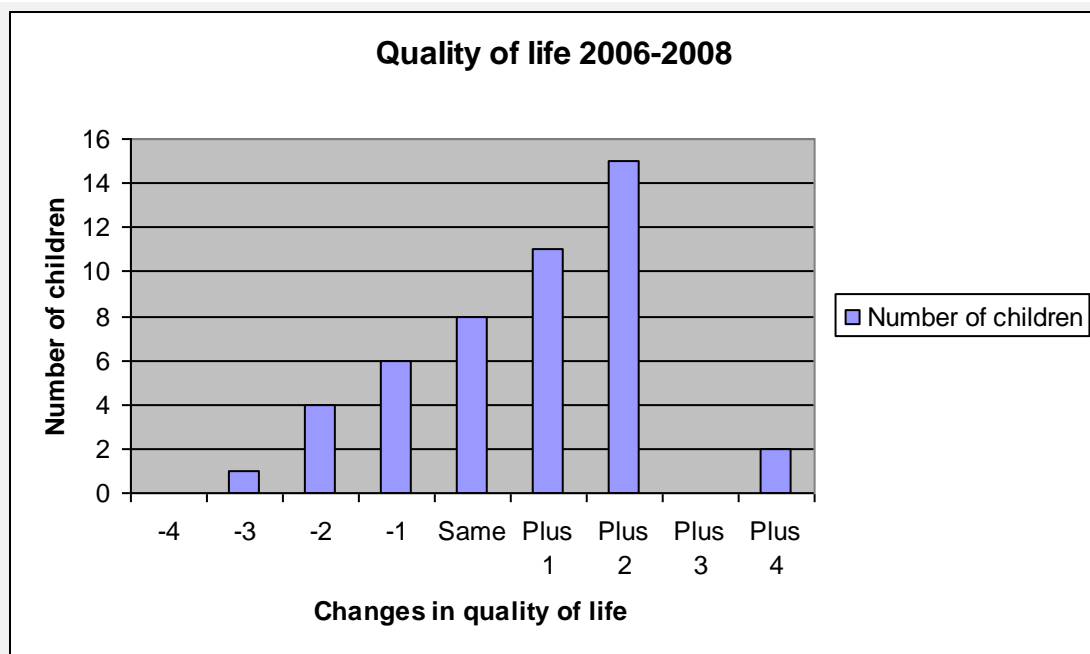
Integration and participation are integral to the notion of "belonging"; for children who may have no family roots, and know little of their historical narratives, being part of a community is important. Joining in events and being invited to meetings

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<sup>50</sup> The researcher wondered whether Jacques was a reliable source of information as he acted in an agitated way throughout the interview.

are significant steps to belonging; they allow one's voice to be heard, and one's presence to be acknowledged and accepted. Child headed households are often discounted and marginalised from the community landscape, as non-adults they have not yet earned their place. Yet this research has demonstrated that Roalkvam's findings on rekindling relationships, as encountered in Zimbabwe, are also relevant in Rwanda in some instances; the child begins the relationship anew as an independent individual.

The longitudinal method of research used in this study afforded a comparison between aspects of the lives of these young people at two set points in time, and this was useful in offering a fuller perspective from which to evaluate the measure of "contentment" they felt in their lives at these times. Children were shown five pictures of faces which portrayed levels of happiness becoming increasingly sadder, and were asked to compare how they felt in 2006 and 2008 and what had influenced those feelings (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 5 (iv)). Figure 7.6 illustrates the changes in the quality of life each respondent experienced, and it can be seen that the majority (some 28) felt that their situation had improved between these two years. Reasons for this varied from being included on a programme to getting married, having a baby, or finishing school. For those whose situation had worsened, it was often due to a child head or other member of the household leaving the home, the end of project funding, a lack of opportunities to generate an income or fear and loneliness. Eloise, living alone when her three brothers and sister had left the home stated, "my dream is for my brothers and sister who went away to come back".



**Figure 7.6: Changes in quality of life 2006-2008**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

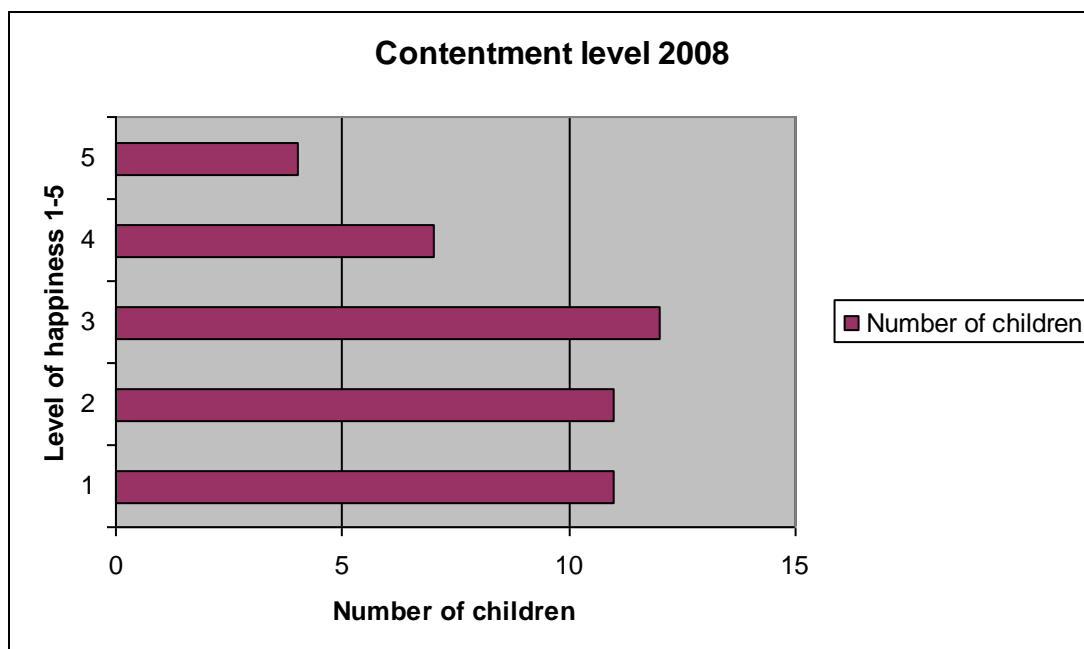
The end of schooling or training was perceived by some as negative, others as positive. For the former, the difficulties they would be facing in gaining employment outside of education, even with their qualifications was all too evident. For the latter, they were pleased to be finished with schooling, especially if they had been boarding, even though none of them had found permanent employment or even found a means of earning through informal employment. The termination of financial support from a donor or NGO programme led to a downturn in the household's fortunes, and a decrease in contentment. Josèphe's view of going back instead of forward (see Chapter 6) confirmed the deterioration in his quality of life, between the visits, due to the changes in provision and circumstances.

The continuous deprivation in households was another major cause of dissatisfaction, especially with no potential income generation activities or training. Sickness in the family was also another reason why some households felt that their situations were worse than before. Change in the composition of the household was also a reason for deterioration in the quality of life; the arrival

of new people to join the household led to a scarcity of shared resources and increased responsibilities for the household head.

The most recent level of happiness or contentment is presented in Figure 7.7, which reveals that the majority of the respondents did identify with the happier faces. This may be an indication of the “settling” of child headed households into the community; children who are becoming used to their situation and feel that they are learning to employ new coping strategies to enable them to function as viable units in society. This measure, albeit crude, enables the researcher to examine a comparison between relevant levels of satisfaction or contentment within these micro societies. In these examples an indication of an improved quality of life might be as fundamental as the ability to afford to eat twice a day instead of once.

However the ability to give an indication of a satisfaction or contentment level which is improved offers a positive prognosis for long term integration for these households. For some the reasons given for the response they identified with could be considered as relatively minor - the end of school, meeting a partner, or settling down. These can be categorised as “rite of passage” junctures which, in Western society, are usually indicators of maturing. So it is for some of these young people, that reaching these milestones allows them to be considered adults finally -which confirms the hypothesis of the dilemma of definition of child headed households set out at the beginning of this work, that of the identification of the moment when the child becomes an adult. Bernadette and Guillaume, both of whom married between the second and third visits, claimed the mantle of adulthood at the time when they married and had children.



**Figure 7.7: Level of contentment: 2008**  
**Source: Author's fieldwork**

The need for security, love and belonging is integral to each individual's sense of worth and place in society. Issues which have arisen from this research have revealed that such things are often absent in the lives of children in child headed households. This compounds the emotional traumas that they have all experienced in the process of becoming part of a CHH- whether it is through the violence and destruction of genocide and conflict, or the loss of parents and close relatives to terminal illness. The role of community and society is intrinsic to their rehabilitation and their reintegration into a society in which they can play a full and valued part. Ethnicity and poverty are two of the factors which can exert an influence over this within the time frame considered in this work, and since the 1994 genocide.

There are further obstacles which prevent these children from integrating and participating in society which have not been considered in this work. These include the problems of loss of proof of identity; during times of conflict and mass displacement, as happened in 1994 in Rwanda, documentation is often abandoned or destroyed, and exacerbated by the loss of family members who might give credence to identity claims. With estrangement of siblings and other

kin in the chaos of conflict, younger children left alone might have no knowledge of their name, family, the place of origin, or their age. A consequence of this was the vast numbers of children in unaccompanied children centres, 100,000 as estimated by UNICEF, estranged from their family after 1994 (UNICEF 2005). Many were transported to camps set up for unaccompanied children, and some remained for several years after the war, indeed there was still one camp for unaccompanied children in 2004.

Items of documentation such as proof of identity or birth certificates may never have existed due to limited formal registration processes; if the parents were not legally married for example. The lack of proof of identity is a barrier in many societies which are trying to cope with child headed households. In those countries which are able to offer some welfare provision and support, proof of identity is a pre-requisite for those applying for that assistance. Sloth-Nielsen (2004) has called for the conferring of active legal capacity status on child heads in South Africa, despite their age; the recognition of these households as valid units of society despite the ages of the children or their circumstances is crucial for practical assistance but also for societal integration and reconciliation. To be acknowledged and accepted as a legitimate and valued household in a community is an important progression towards this.

Emotional space cannot be ignored when considering these challenges of identity and participation; the lack of an identity at a time when family has died leaves a legacy of abandonment and loss; lineage and heritage, which can be so important in the spiritual lives of people in some cultures, is unknown or forgotten; and children in these households are given a status which does not allow them the privilege of participation in their societies.

Non-material needs are often the last to be considered in the mêlée of survival, reconstruction and development. Rebuilding a nation post conflict is seen through the lens of the physical and practical by NGOs and international players.. However it is the people who actively ensure a “successful nation”, where the government cares for its primary asset, its people.

This thesis has documented earlier work published regarding the psychosocial needs associated with the child headed household. It has been revealed that the questions of security, protection, support and integration in the community are of concern to CHHs in Rwanda, where the notion of “community” as a source of support is often left wanting. Whilst some of the reasons behind this have been difficult to explore at an individual level due to political and legal restrictions on the discussion of ethnicity, support for CHHs in some communities has been exposed as non-existent, even when children were very young. This lack of support has been attributed to the insularity of other households in the community. Fissures in Rwandan society, wrenched apart by the genocide, led to a breakdown in the structures of communities, both physical and emotional. The nature of the conflict and its consequences left a people who were traumatised by their experiences and who were mistrustful of others. Hence an individual often focuses on the survival and management of his or her own household, and is unprepared or unable to alleviate the suffering experienced by a neighbour.

Many child headed households feel that they are not considered part of the community although evidence over the four years of this longitudinal study demonstrates that such integration and participation within the “micro-society” of their neighbourhood can increase over time for some children. In the same way, it is hoped that the psychosocial challenges diminish in general, as children get older, and enter adulthood. Shaped by their experiences, they are equipped to play a part in the society they can shape, if they are given the opportunity.

## Chapter 8: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This section presents recommendations resulting from this research directed at both the global and the local Rwandan context. I am aware that such theses often end with policy recommendations, and there are a number of things which need addressing in the light of the findings. However I am aware that obstacles intrude upon the implementation of these recommendations. Child headed households are not high on the political agenda and as resources are limited. In addition organisations are reluctant to change long used definitions and the urgency of post genocide context is no longer applicable. The research results have implications for international humanitarian organisations, national governments, local NGOs and local communities and their leaders. Each can play a role in delivering services and support to CHH.

### 8.1 Disaster Management

Child headed households emerged in Rwanda as a consequence of the specific convergence of the AIDS pandemic and genocide. Thus for Rwanda, whilst child headed households continue to be established, it is on a much decreased scale, and only as a result of AIDS or poverty (the official HIV infection rate being 2.8 per cent (UNAIDS 2008)). This double causation may be replicated in other countries with high incidents of AIDS wherever sudden high numbers of deaths occur, due to conflict or natural disasters. For example the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the late 1990s led to the formation of child headed households, some of whom are living in Gihembe Refugee camp. No official data on the number of these households, either in the country or living as refugees elsewhere, is available. Added to this is the *probable* high number of people suffering from HIV/AIDS; official statistics state that the rate is 4.2 per cent, but considering that the east of the country has been subject to continuous conflict and internal displacement over the past 10 years, accurate rates are difficult to estimate (CIA 2009). Such a combination of AIDS and high numbers of casualties from natural or human initiated disasters is very likely to lead to the existence of a high number of child headed households. Disaster planning by



international humanitarian organisations and governments should anticipate this and implement effective and sustainable support mechanisms.

## 8.2 Defining Child in “Child Policies”

Weaknesses within the understanding of the notion of the child which are based on legal or institutional paradigms prohibit support networks from gaining access to some child headed households. Policies and programmes of states and humanitarian organisations should recognise the paradox that exists in CHHs when the “child” fulfils normalised “adult” roles, as parent, carer, and worker, and when, conversely, society identifies a 27 year old head of household (siblings or of the same generation) as a “child”, due to custom and history. The tension that exists between these concepts must be acknowledged so that policy does not overlook need because of definitional straightjackets.

Age should not be the measure of a child headed household. Since the household by its nature is fluid, there is a need to broaden the construct of child. Vulnerability is not age dependent, and so a more inclusive construct should be adopted, which will incorporate variability in age, composition within the household (non-active adults, children of children), and focus instead on need.

## 8.3 Information dissemination

Initiatives by governments and NGOs are crucial in forming part of the support network to the child headed household. However equally important is that those the initiatives are targeted at are made aware of their availability. In this research few government originated policies were observed, apart from the FARG scheme for victims of the genocide and the legislation passed to allow females and children to inherit land. The FARG scheme only helped two households in the sample group. Others were unaware of it, felt that they were not eligible, or did not know how to seek more information about it. Some children had not taken advantage of the land laws, as they were either unaware of them or were

unwilling to engage in court cases with family members, for cost reasons, although it would not have cost them money, or due to a desire not to prolong any familial dispute. This reveals a lack of knowledge about rights and policies which would be beneficial to the household. Therefore there is an urgent need for more effective dissemination of information to all those in vulnerable positions. The means of achieving this may involve alternatives to poster or leafleting campaigns, such as radio programmes, advice centres, and mobilising local leaders (nyumbakumi and pastors) and schoolteachers, informing them in focus group type meetings, and even text messaging which can impart information. The need for agencies to advocate for these vulnerable children is also crucial, and this could be achieved through individuals or NGOs.

Some households had failed to be included on NGO programmes in their community. The reasons were multiple. Firstly they were unaware that an NGO was working in the area, or had no information about the criteria for inclusion on the programme. Others did not know when or how the “recruitment” to the programme took place. They had no knowledge about the NGO representatives to get that information. NGOs tended to work on word of mouth systems, personal relationship contacts, and church contacts and, in a small number of cases, children in households already on the programme mentioning others in similar situations (a type of snowball inclusion approach). Thus more publicised information about programmes, content, criteria and benefits will broaden the access to include those marginalised from this normally. However, the nature of NGO programmes such as the ones encountered here is that the need usually exceeds the programme capacity, and there are often waiting lists for children to join programmes. The method of gathering in the most vulnerable to these projects is important – it needs a “fishing net” approach, where all CHHs in an area are encouraged to meet gatekeepers at a focus group meeting, information about which must be accessible to all. The reality is that publicising the programmes might only serve to disappoint those who cannot be included due to limitations on programme funding and budgets. Nevertheless more information about the projects and access to the programmes would enable more households

to benefit. This again could be carried out by local community leaders, churches, schools as well as by leafleting or posters.

#### 8.4 Appropriate Programme Provision

Assistance in the first place should be the provision of basic goods: a “survival bundle” of include household materials (cups, plates, pans etc.), some basic foodstuffs (rice, oil, beans), items of clothing, and some money. Thereafter, having determined the status of education, training and income generation possibilities in the household, a key individual should be identified as household “mentor”. This could be someone linked with the NGO, government or someone from the community.

On a more long term basis, government policies and NGO programmes should dovetail with one another, with the aim of enabling household members to continue with education and training, appropriate for the income generation opportunities in the area, and which will be sustainable. Help should be forthcoming to prevent children from missing out on education due to caring for others or working. Other assistance and advice should be offered with regard to looking after the house in particular helping with repairs.

The roles and responsibilities of child heads should be recognised and acknowledged as vital to the survival and psychosocial needs of the children in the home. Thus support networks might include a social worker (as in Inkuru Nziza) who can call on the household regularly and be available for them when they need help, to advise on looking after children, behaviour problems and to help create a loving family atmosphere. Schools, government, NGOs and communities should work together to build up the self esteem and resilience of children in these households, developing confidence.

There is a need to make these households as resilient as possible to “tipping point” events which can precipitate a sudden downturn in fortunes, leading to both physical hardship and further emotional trauma. The notion of needing to

earn a “supra-income” (see Chapter 5) might be a valuable aim for the household - to store up assets which might be used in times of particular hardship.

Yet initiatives must not create overdependence on the programme by the children. The building of resilience, coping strategies, and confidence should be a primary objective. Enabling households to be self-sustaining will at times include some element of dependence, but the strategies should aim to build independence. This should not preclude the households from feeling valued and loved and from experiencing the support, but the need to be self-sufficient at some point is recognised. Where possible, programmes should be shaped to the specific needs of individual households at certain times and in differing circumstances.

## 8.5 Community

As has been discussed elsewhere in this work, the label of “community dependent” families is inappropriate for the child headed household. The notion that these households would be dependent on the community puts too much onus on the role and responsibility of the community. The idea of dependence itself belies the independence, resilience and capabilities seen in some of the children. However the community should have a role to play in the lives of those in child headed households.

The child headed household should not be an ignored element within a community, indeed the children, who are often traumatised, insecure, and sick, have need of those amongst whom they live. The community then should be a significant source of support and assistance for these households. What, then, should the individuals in the community be doing?

Firstly the community needs to be aware of child headed households in its midst. They can then act as intermediaries in informing individuals and agencies which may be able to help- in Rwanda’s case, the *nyumbakumi*, community leaders, church workers, or NGOs. This may allow the households to be included on an

NGO programme, or receive other assistance which might significantly improve their quality of life.

Secondly they can protect the child headed household. Child headed households often feel insecure and vulnerable within their community; they are subject to attacks, thefts and stigmatisation. This is especially true of households where girls are left alone. Communities and their leaders should ensure that these children are safe and that harm does not come to them. They should be aware of any problems in relationships between the children and neighbours or others in the community and try and help resolve any disputes as soon as possible. They should be watchful of any strangers in the area, and should be observant regarding the state of the house, whether thieves could break in and so on.

Thirdly, if they have goods especially food to spare and the CHH has none, they should share. Many children said that their neighbours were also poor and unable to help with practical assistance such as giving food, but there will be some who can help. This might involve sharing crops they have grown, or other things. An awareness of the needs of the household is then important.

Fourthly, they should be a source of advice for the children in the child headed household. There will be times when a child head or others in his or her care will need help and advice and the community should be happy to offer that. As they grow up and encounter challenges and difficulties they need to have support around them and people who can advise them appropriately. In the absence of parents or relatives then, neighbours can help direct them in their lives.

Finally people can ensure the child headed household is not marginalised within their community and by society in general, by inviting them to participate in meetings, asking their views, including them in community work, and inviting them to share in celebrations. This should be practiced despite the age of the child head, thus acknowledging and accepting the parentilised role of authority that they undertake.

Community can play a significant role in the support of the child headed household. If CHHs were supported by the community in more formal and accepted ways than at present, their livelihoods would improve, and their long term survival would be more assured. This might be encouraged by government; in similar ways to the fostering campaign (One child, one family). Thus families (neighbours) might be exhorted to take under their wing one child headed household, “one neighbour, one child headed household”. Although full dependence on communities which themselves may be fragile might be neither appropriate nor effective for the child headed household, the notion of the households as being “community supported or community assisted households” is one which would converge with NGO programmes and government initiatives.

The challenge in initiating and sustaining a dynamic of community action and support in relation to the child headed household is, in some areas, considerable. This research revealed that some children felt that their neighbours were insular, “rural minded” and did not offer assistance, and sometimes did not even bother with them. History and experiences colour the landscape still, and impact relationships and progress. However reconciliation is happening in many areas, and for unity within communities, it must be a priority. Only then will communities be able to help and sustain vulnerable children in child headed households.

## Chapter 9: CONCLUSION

Rwanda's place on the world's stage has been observed, examined and discussed by analysts and participants in the fields of politics, development, disaster management and sociology over the past fourteen years. Mention of the country's name immediately evokes images of massacre, refugees, and violence. In the midst of the catastrophe that befell Rwandans in 1994, the children of Rwanda witnessed the death of fathers, mothers and siblings, neighbours and friends. They were observers and victims in a violence that they did not understand; murder, mutilation and rape were commonplace. Worse, the perpetrators of this horror were often people they knew, even relatives, who took it upon themselves to avenge perceived injustice and who were swayed by the rhetoric of hatred and the dynamics of group action.

Amid this maelstrom of chaotic activity, people were forced to flee the fighting and threat of death, which resulted in the dislocation and estrangement of family members. Streams of refugees making their way hundreds of kilometres to the neighbouring countries of Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire), Tanzania and Uganda sought shelter and protection in hastily erected camps, where they hoped to flee violence and conflict.

Many children made their way to these camps having witnessed the horrors of genocide, and knowing or suspecting that one or both parents had been killed, as had other relatives and friends. Families had become separated on the long route to the camps where many of the children were found to be unaccompanied. At that time they were not to know that the familiar composition of their households was lost and that a new configuration of household structure was being shaped.

In subsequent years, on the return to their home communities, these children were found to be without parental care; sometimes with one or both parents killed, children were vulnerable in a country which was struggling to rebuild itself physically, politically, economically and socially. Many families took in double orphans from their extended family, and the government encouraged others to give a home to a child in need. The numbers of families able or prepared to

assist in this was not adequate, however. The coping mechanisms had reached saturation point.

A further setback was the increasing numbers of children who were being orphaned, since in the years following the genocide, women who had been infected with the HIV virus as a consequence of rape during the genocide, developed full blown AIDS. This necessitated long-term care by family members and ended in death, thus increasing numbers of children were being left without a parent. For many of these, staying with extended family was neither possible nor desired in some cases.

Responses to this were few, but one which emerged was that of the child headed household, with children whose parents were dead or incapacitated deciding to live together as sibling groups, relatives or with friends. This was sometimes for reasons of safety or to protect land and dwellings, because relatives were unable or unwilling to take them in, or simply due to the desire to stay together after experiencing such trauma.

At the same time as the phenomenon of the “child headed household” was emerging in Rwanda, similar developments were occurring in other countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where the conjunction of high incidences of parental deaths and saturated coping systems was evident in countries such as Uganda, Rwanda’s neighbour, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, with the single devastating cause of their establishment being AIDS.

The nature of the lives of children in child headed households is one of vulnerability and hardship. In the intervening years since the genocide, academics and local NGOs in the country have commented and undertaken some research on the subject, in particular with regards to the programmes implemented. In addition work has been undertaken concerning the rights of vulnerable children and also limited work on the community support for these children both specific to Rwanda, but also more generally (UNICEF 2000, World Vision 1998, CARE 2003, Rose 2005, Veale 2000).



This thesis has sought in the first place to occupy a void in the research by exploring the actual structure and definition of the child headed household, in particular within the context of Rwanda, which has been discussed in Chapter 5. Whilst official terminology provides criteria to be utilised when defining a child headed household, primarily that of the head of household being under 18 years of age, the research has demonstrated that within the context of Rwanda, the reality is more complex. Socio-cultural interpretations of age, along with the fluidity of the household substantiate the argument that definitions should not include “age” as the determining factor. The individual may be a child within certain definitional criteria, and yet an adult in others. There is a tension, then, within these children who are both child and adult. I have made the case that households can be identified as “child headed” when they have as their head a 27 year old or a 15 year old; that they are child headed when an adult living in the home is not able to take responsibility for the children; that they are child headed even though some lost their parents or “adult carers” 14 years previously. Examination of the concepts of childhood has shown that local references indicate that marriage is the gatekeeper to adulthood; those who married during the process of this research claimed that to be the defining moment of reaching adulthood. Thus they are trapped in their identity as a child until they are able to marry, and some may enter marriage to escape their “child”hood.

These findings allowed an opportunity for an examination of the interpretation of childhood within the vulnerable group, by current literature as well as experience in Rwanda, and has led me to conclude the experience of this vulnerable group is but another way of “being a child”, according to necessity and spatial context.

The thesis also had to explore the notion of “household” when all those who slept under the same roof and ate from the same pot were not necessarily all kin. Further, the composition of the households was found to be prone to changes, with headship temporarily yielded because of boarding at secondary school or due to temporary work opportunities which obliged them to live away from home. These circumstances at times provoked significant differences in coping strategies within the household, with younger children then obliged to find food, care for others and the home, leading to worsening conditions in some cases.

Many households were fluid in their composition, in that new members joined and others left sporadically. Additions were accepted into the household despite the hardships that could ensue - more cramped conditions, less food and an overall strain on the already meagre resources of the household.

The research into the reasons for the establishment of these households mirrored previous findings, that the main drivers were – the lack of extended family able to help, desire to live together, and the concern to protect property. There were also the additional perspectives from a state rebuilding itself after conflict, which included ethnic differences between families, lack of community integration and the challenge of reconciliation, all of which are viewed through the lenses of poverty and inequality.

Besides exploring the structure and definition of child headed households, the thesis has, secondly, critically evaluated the livelihood needs of child headed households within Rwandan communities. Utilising the Maslow hierarchy of needs and the DFID sustainable livelihood strategies models, focus was centred on the physiological needs of land and property ownership, income generation and education. In addition the emotional challenges facing those in CHHs were considered, particularly the psychosocial needs of safety and belonging.

Studies (Rose 2005) which have focused on the land ownership barrier faced by orphans in the country have been corroborated by this research. Clear evidence has been provided of land theft by relatives and the attempts to overturn such violations. Legislation by the Rwandan government has failed to assure the land rights of orphans in particular those in CHHs, that is, without adult carers. In fact those cases where attempts at land and property theft failed occurred when there was a network of advice and support from key actors outside the family, for example households which were incorporated onto NGO programmes and whose representatives were in a position to offer advice or in some cases to advocate for the children in court. Similarly, cases occurred where neighbours were the ones advising. However the precariousness of the position held by households which have been recently child headed should be noted and acted upon. The government legislation has proved of no use to those who are fearful of taking

relatives to court, through ignorance of the processes involved, fear of cost, reticence when dealing with adults in authority, or emotional trauma due to what might be the very recent death of a parent.

Rose's call for orphans to be assigned "legal active capacity" so that they might be able to avail themselves of the same advantages as adults in their situation is laudable (Rose 2005). However those in the research sample would benefit just from securing knowledge, confidence and self empowerment. This would improve their prospects when land has been lost or relinquished.

Rose's model of land as the sole asset and cornerstone to sustainable and successful survival is questionable (2005). This research found many cases of households which owned land and property but which found it difficult to manage or just coped day to day.

This prompts the question as to what is the key to ensuring sustainable livelihood. Whilst land ownership can offer some measure of security, this study found that the opportunity for income generation was the key to survival and to enabling a more sustainable way of life. However the main challenge to this in Rwanda was found to be the lack of opportunities to earn an income, a point reiterated constantly within the sample group.

Land ownership and income generation together can assure a more successful life management, and offers the potential for earning a little more than is needed to merely survive, referred to in this thesis as "supra -income". This could be the starting point of the possibility of house improvement, more training, and other non-necessities, which would in themselves contribute to a better standard of living.

The possibilities for such levels of income generation should be improved with educational opportunity, the third livelihood need examined in this research. Primary enrolment in Rwanda is almost at full capacity, however retention rates are lower. It was clear that education is seen as the gateway to a better life by all of the individuals interviewed. There was no gender distinction between girls and boys attending school. The only proviso was that the household would be able to

afford it. The differences between those households included on an NGO programme and those not were most visible in the field of educational and training opportunities. The support offered by NGO programmes with regards to schooling and vocational training has been very effective in assuring that the households with no parent responsible are offered an opportunity for continuous education and training. This in itself should provide qualifications which might facilitate their finding employment. However the prospects for engaging in formal employment are so poor that the benefits of education from the income generation perspective are not always obvious in the short term.

Whilst the majority of the children in this sample had experienced some level of disruption to their education at certain times, due to the genocide, displacement, caring for a sick parent or inability to pay the fees, most had been determined to restart school or training when possible. The catch up classes implemented by the government have been beneficial for such children, and with even some of 27 year old “children” attending secondary school, this will allow those for whom the genocide and AIDS and their consequences prevented attendance at school to be given another opportunity to be educated.

The benefits of the methodology utilised in this research include the facility to observe households over time, with the use of a longitudinal study. This inductive study used participatory methods of research, semi structured interviews and observation to explore the child headed household in Rwanda. It revealed the changing nature of the household with regards to its composition, but also allowed an examination of changes that occurred to those in the households, for example relocation, end of education provision, curtailment of NGO support, and the departure of family members. It was found that while many households remained vulnerable; veneers of coping could quickly be removed by one tipping event, exposing the weaknesses beneath the surface. It was not a stated objective of this research to effect a comparison between the coping capacities of child headed households supported on an NGO programme and those which survive independently. Nevertheless, the experiences of the households confirm that those which can source some support from such agencies are inevitably better able to cope in some areas of their lives than those

without help. This ranges from programmes which focus on providing assistance for one specific need, for example free education, to those which help with housing, education, a regular income, food supplements and emotional support. Those surviving without external assistance are more disadvantaged from the start, and are obliged to develop their own coping strategies in order to survive. They are more vulnerable to change and to events that can provoke a deterioration in their standard of living. However those households which are reliant upon NGO support are also vulnerable to change, whether it is within their household or on the part of the programmes themselves, that is, a change in policy such as the withdrawal of resources. It is the coping capacities of the households themselves which dictates their effectiveness in managing and surviving those changes. This raises the question about the levels of dependency upon programmes and NGO support, and the burden of dependency and expectation. The dangers of overdependence are a factor for agencies and households to consider, and have been discussed in the previous chapter.. The legacy of being a child headed household is a challenge, and the ability of the children to be able to cope with it and move forward is dependent to some extent on their determination and self will.

The psychosocial needs of the children documented and discussed by academics and practitioners elsewhere were evident in the research. Many children in child headed households have experienced traumatic lives, either during the genocide or afterwards, in refugee camps, or through the loss of family members due to HIV/AIDS. This study has not focused on the psychological impacts on individuals *per se*, but has considered the more wide-ranging questions of safety and belonging.

Particular attention was given to issues of safety and security, integration and participation within Rwandan communities. The vulnerability of children, especially girls, in these households with regard to protection and safety, particularly at night, was manifest as a real fear in many communities. While some local community leaders have implemented patrols to ensure the safety of all households at night, this is not possible in all districts. Protection of girls in

these households requires real will from the community leaders, and the community itself in ensuring the safety of the vulnerable.

There is a broader debate regarding the question of the role of family and community when considering in particular these more non-material needs. Whilst the issue of safety and security is important, the more long-term concept of belonging, which includes integration, participation and inclusion, is the most significant in the reality of the present and for the future of Rwandan society. In this study the marginalisation of these households was apparent with some children commenting that since 1994, everyone in their communities was just concerned with looking after his or her own family. Others spoke of a non-existent community spirit. Despite the efforts by the government to end ethnic division, and to extol the virtues of everyone being “Rwandans”, there are doubts about how fully this has been imbibed. Communities may on the surface adhere to these aims, but beneath the surface, there still remain levels of mistrust and a lack of forgiveness. This has a deep impact on communities and particularly for child headed households, where in some areas any hope for support and their inclusion are dashed. Whether ethnic division, so inherent in this country in the past, will be finally resolved, cannot be assured. Further in depth examinations of issues of reconciliation, ethnicity and attitudes in today’s Rwanda need to be undertaken, and should be free from censorship and unrestricted in their focus.

Since, in many cases, family members have not supported child headed households, with land grabs and refusals to offer assistance, some academics question whether the idea of the extended family and shared community life were ever the reality in African society (Roalkvam 2005). The Rwandan experience, in Veale’s view, is that community no longer exists (2000). This research has revealed that the levels of integration and acceptance vary between communities and households. The notions of “family” and “community”, with underlying expectations of support, protection and acceptance are not universal in Rwanda. This research has shown that many households feel they live in isolation within their locality. For others, limited assistance and support is offered from neighbours and others in the area. What exists at the core of Rwandan society is often sadness at the past, uncertainty in the present and fear for the future.

Subjects such as these lead on to the final part of this work which discusses shortcomings in this research and areas which require further examination. The significance of community and ethnicity has been debated above, and is of immense significance to all Rwandans in particular those in vulnerable positions in communities. The process of gathering the data for this study has revealed new directions of potential research in particular regarding marginalisation of child headed households, how they cope with not participating, but also whether, when they cease to be part of a child headed household, they will integrate into society, and play a full and useful part in it. Similarly, as they are unused to alternative family and household structures, and have not been “parented” by an adult of the older generation, the question of how they themselves will “parent” their children, run their homes, or behave with their spouse is crucial, and will have an impact upon the “communities” of the future, and social attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, will a sense of community ever return? The long term legacy of genocide memories and these children’s opinions of ethnicity in the Rwanda of today are also extremely valid and important areas of study.

All of these areas of study however will require a widening of access for researchers: - to interface with all levels of society, to gain access to documentation and most importantly the permission of the government to pursue a relevant and necessary investigation. The censorship which has been placed upon the population of Rwanda, for an ostensibly good cause, has proved to be a barrier to the deeper investigation of certain themes when carrying out this research. Such freedom would have offered a more acute and realistic picture in some instances.

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Ziehl, S. (2002) 'Baby Headed Households: Media (Mis)Representations and "The AIDS Debate".' *Society in Transition* 33, (3) 432 - 446



## APPENDIX 1

EDUCATION TABLES (the following World Bank Statistics have been removed for copyright reasons)



**Table A:1 Government Spending on Education, Rwanda, 1981-2001**

**Source: World Bank, Education in Rwanda 2004: 29**

**Figure A:1: Enrolment Trends in Primary schooling, Rwanda, 1971-2001**

**Source: World Bank, Education in Rwanda 2004: 32**

**Figure A:2 Enrolment Trends in Secondary Education**

**Source: World Bank, Education in Rwanda 2004: 33**

**Table A:2 Grade Specific Enrolments**

**Source: Ministry of education school statistics for 2000-20001, cited in World Bank, Education in Rwanda 2004: 51**

n.a. Not applicable because the primary cycle was shortened from eight to six years in 1992.

a. Estimates adjusted by World Bank for differences in grade repetition between contiguous grades.

**Table 5.6: Percentage Survival Rates in Primary Schooling**

**Source: World Bank, Education in Rwanda 2004: 41**

## APPENDIX 2

### INFORMATION CHECKLIST

#### **Information to be collected (for research assistants, interpreters)**

The research involves initially the collation of information on the *composition of child-headed households, their history, and the reasons for the establishment of the household*. This will be done with the use of narrative and storytelling, the drawing of pictures, and the use of timelines.

In addition, information on *the way the households function and who their support networks are, including the coping strategies they employ when they have problems* will be collected by means of diagrammatic and network drawings.

*Access to education and health and property ownership*, although not specifically targeted, will become clear during these sessions within general descriptions of day-to-day life described by pictures or stories.

Since the use of interviews, questionnaires etc is not appropriate for use with children, the use of narrative and story telling is particularly appropriate, as is illustrative description and the use of timelines, which facilitates the clarification of events in the past.

Equally, the use of network diagrams to demonstrate who does what in the household is a basic yet effective means for the children to identify roles and responsibilities.

With key informants (NGO staff, academics, government employees) the issues of the definition and identity of households along with the themes of livelihood rights as mentioned above will be discussed in informal focus groups. Themes will include the following: -

- The composition of the household
- The length of time it has been established
- Reasons for the establishment of the household – conflict, AIDS, poverty
- How it functions
- Who are their support networks
- What are their coping strategies
- Who goes to school
- Where do they go when they are ill

Similarly, information on land rights and legislation will be gathered from key informants at the university and NGOs.

### **NGO programmes**

Organisations involved in programmes targeted at child headed households will be identified, and research will be carried out into the

- Objectives – what was the aim of the programme,
- Target group- who qualifies to be the target group,
- Content- what does the programme do,
- Duration- how long is the programme designed to last, and
- Evaluation- is it achieving its objectives

This will be realised by focus group and informal discussion as well as observational methods.

## APPENDIX 3

### Subjects to be covered in “interviews” with Child Headed Households

1. A suitable household:
  - Children living alone – preferably with the eldest under 18 years, but accept older years
  - Brothers and sisters, or non related
  - Might be adult present, but not capable of heading the family, making decisions etc. (maybe sick/away working/hospital/prison)
  
2. Who lives in the home:
  - Names
  - Sex
  - Ages
  - Relationship to one another
  
3. History of the family:
  - How long have they lived without parent
  - Are they no longer alive
  - If possible find out why they died, but should be sensitive
  - Have they lived with any other family member- aunt/grandmother etc.
  - Why no longer with them
  - Did anyone else used to live with them
  - Where are those people now
  
4. Roles in the household:
  - Who makes the decisions
  - Who cooks
  - Who washes clothes
  - Who gathers water
  - Who earns money
  
5. Education:
  - Who has attended school
  - What age did they leave school
  - Why did they leave
  - Who attends school now
  - What class/year are they in
  - Who pays for the schooling (education/uniform/books etc.)
  - Is anyone undertaking vocational training

- Where
- What type
- How is that paid for

**6. Health:**

- Is anyone sick at the moment
- What do they do when they are ill
- How do they pay for health care
- Who cares for them when they are ill
- What sort of illnesses have they had in the past year

**7. Income generation:**

- Who earns the money in the household
- What do they do to earn that
- How often do they work
- (How much do they earn? If they would rather not say, fine)
- Do they earn enough to buy food, rent etc.

**8. Property and land:**

- Where do they live
- How long have they lived in the house
- Did they live there with the parents
- Do they own the house
- Have they any land- do they use it for cultivation
- When their parents died, did anybody want to take the house/land from them

**9. Programmes:**

- Have they ever been part of or included in a programme by an organization such as UNICEF, Food for the Hungry, JOCUM etc.
- What did that offer as help to them

**10. Advice:**

- Who do they turn to for advice
- Do the neighbours help them. How
- What would make a difference in their lives

**11. Community and security:**

- Are they included as a family in community matters
- Is the household head treated as an adult
- Are they given a voice in the community
- Do they feel safe at home - in the daytime/at night
- Have they ever had anything stolen
- Do girls in the household feel safe-any incidents that have occurred
- Do they feel protected by their community

## APPENDIX 4

### Questions relating to social issues and child headed households

- What is the attitude of people of the village or neighbourhood towards child headed households?
- What about safety and security of the household?
- The girls particularly?
- Are they more vulnerable to theft etc. due to the lack of an adult?
- How do you think children and young people in child headed households in Rwanda integrate with the community?
- How do they feel about the community support they receive?
- Government programmes do target the vulnerable - does it work in practice?
- Do you think that children in CHHs feel included in the community or marginalized? – use the drawing below to indicate where you think they might be.
- How easy will it be for them to mature into responsible adult citizens considering their experiences?
- How does Rwandan society react to child headed households and orphans?
- How do you see these children and young people joining in society bearing in mind their past experiences and traumas?
- What will be the effect on Rwandan society?
- Will CHHs become an accepted social unit in communities, considered equal to “normal” families?

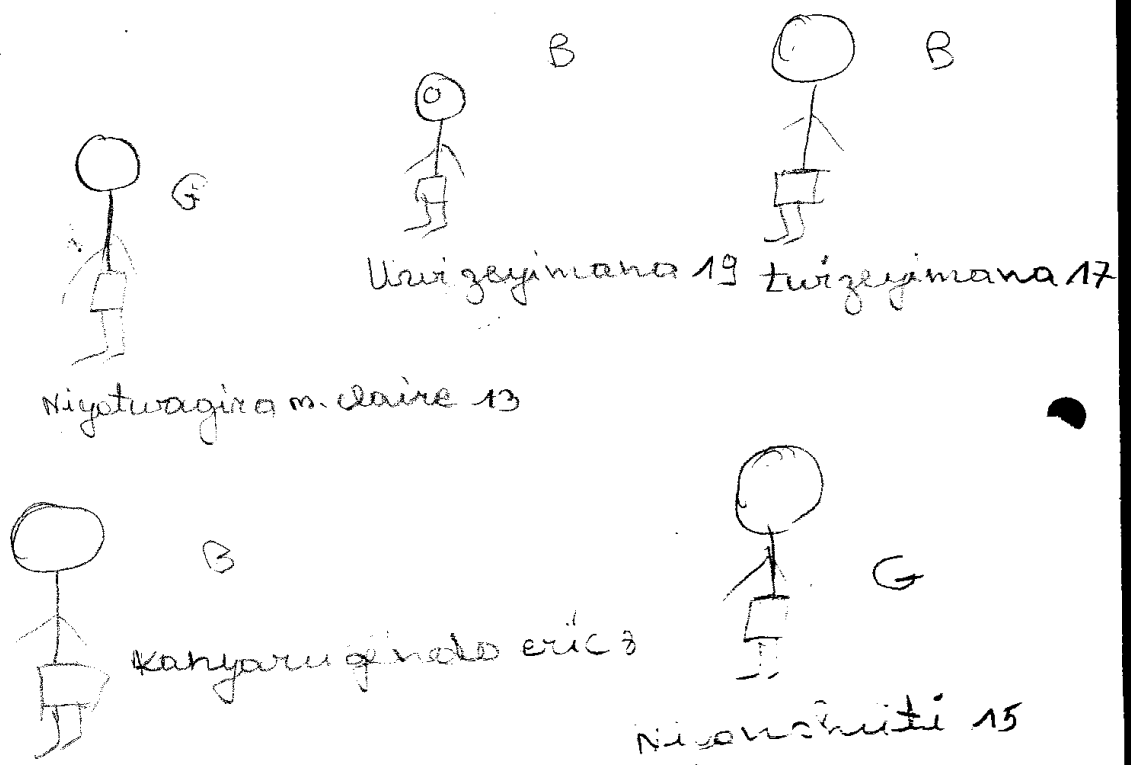


## APPENDIX 5

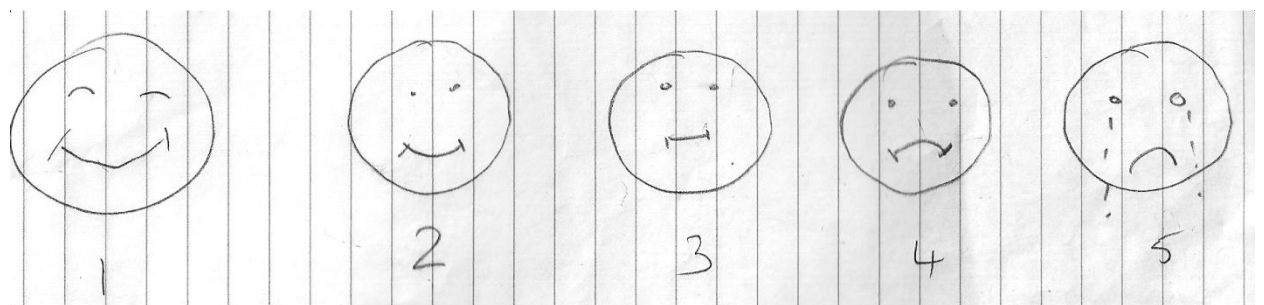
### Research tools (i): Community Participation



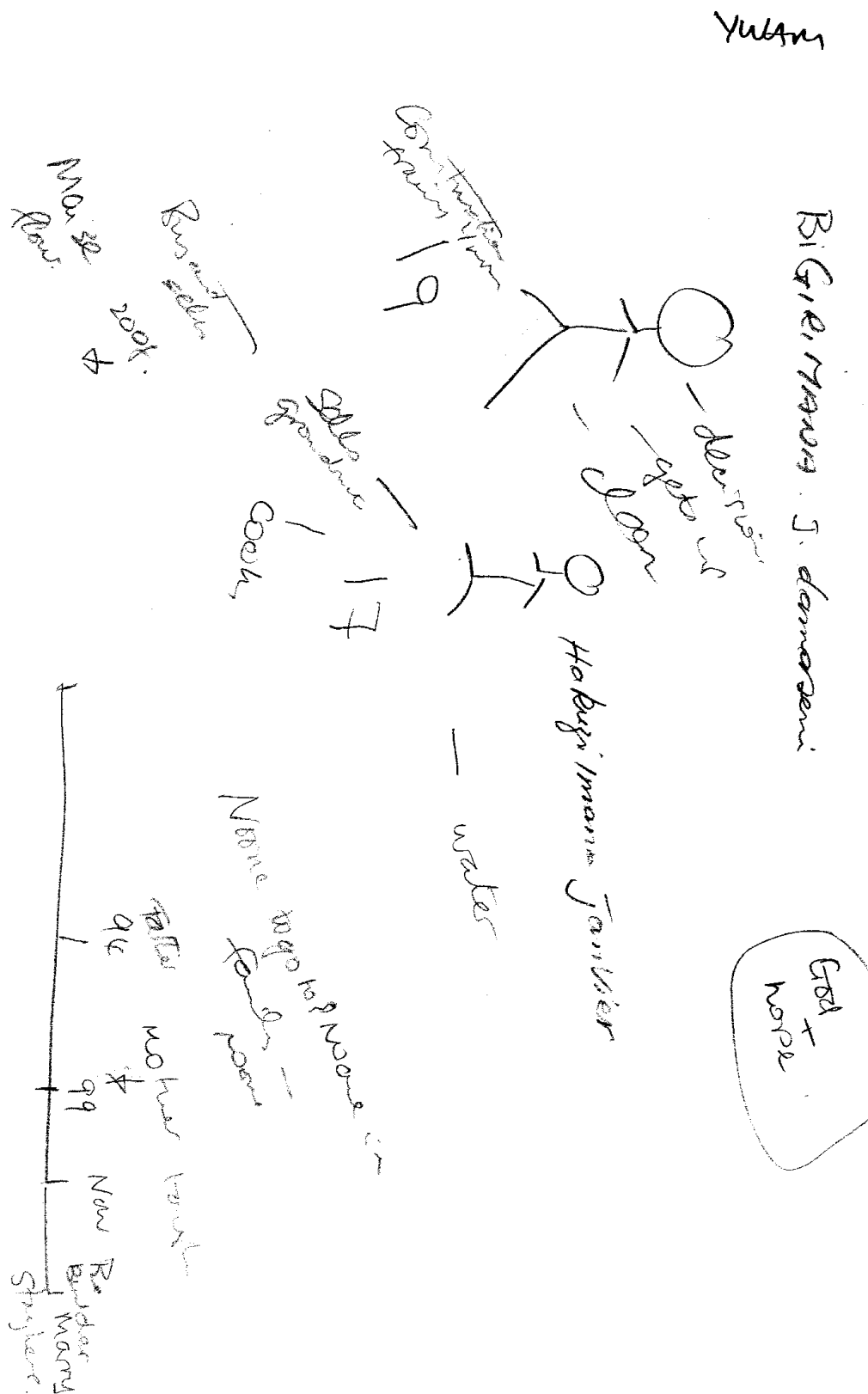
Research tools (ii): Household composition, response from interviewee



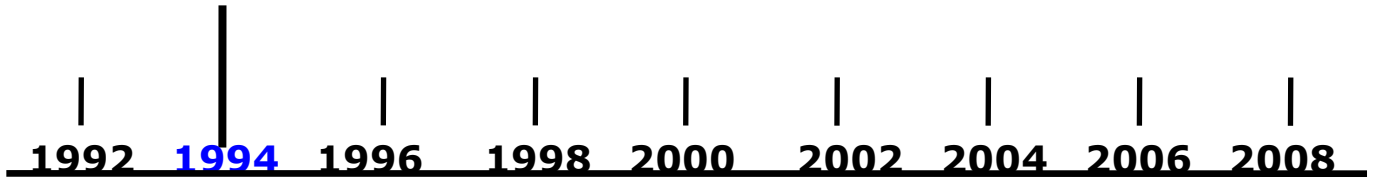
Research tools (iii): Contentment index



Research tools (iv): Interview with child headed household:  
 Household composition, timeline (history), income  
 generation, hope for future



Research tools (v): Blank timeline



# APPENDIX 6

## ETHICS FORMS

**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY**  
**African Studies Centre**  
**RESEARCH ETHICS FORM**  
**(To be submitted to Dr R Jayram, HSS)**

**STUDENT SUBMISSION TO SCHOOL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Students must submit the following forms if needed:

- Completed ethics form
- Completed subject informed consent form (or Subject Information leaflet if appropriate)
- Risk assessment form; note for taking blood samples you must use the STANDARD procedure(s) and append the standard risk assessment form
- Copies of any other questionnaires that will be issued to subjects/ questions that will be used in interviews

1. Student's name:

MARION MACLELLAN

2. Course:

PhD

3. Title of project:

Child-headed Households: Dilemmas of  
Definition and Livelihood Rights

4. Name of supervisor

Professor Roy May

**Aims of research:**

AIM: To analyse the dilemmas in child headed households in Rwanda and Uganda.

1. To critically review literature about child headed households and orphanhood, due in particular to AIDS and conflict, in Sub-Saharan Africa.
2. To investigate the impact being a member of a child headed household has on children's education, access to health care and rights to land inheritance in Rwanda and Uganda.
3. To explore differences in experiences between those households left child headed due to conflict and those due to AIDS.
4. To evaluate programmes put in place by agencies working with child headed households in specific areas of Uganda and Rwanda.

**Details of subject population:**

There are two principal groups of subject population that will be participating in this research:

**1. Child-headed households.**

The subject population for this research are a sample of child-headed households in Rwanda and Uganda. By their nature these are households without adult membership and where the household members are orphans or abandoned children under the age of 18. As such it will not be possible to get informed consent from parents or guardians. Such children tend to be very mature and independent and will have the nature and purpose of the research explained to them by the researcher with a translator present. The methods to be used and the benefits of the research will also be explained and subjects will be assured of the confidentiality of the information collected. Subjects will also be told that they can withdraw at any time and if they feel distressed who they can turn to for confidential counselling. These young people will thus be asked to give their own consent, either by signature or by fingerprint (if illiterate). It is expected that many of the children will be illiterate. It is anticipated that 15 child-headed households will consent to participate in the research. Only households that are headed by a child under the age of 18 will be included in the research. It is anticipated that most households will be headed by a child aged 14-18, with Rwanda Orphans Project, Street Child Africa (Uganda) and other appropriate organisations will facilitate the sampling.

**2. Key informants.**

Non-governmental organisations will also be an important source of information for this research, in particular with regard to details of the programmes put in place by those organisations. Similarly those working within government schemes will be a source of information about the policies in place for education and health care access, and also with definitional clarification of child headed households etc. Contacts within the Law department of the University are also a source of information with regard to Land and Property rights. Whilst Rwanda Orphans Project and Street Child Africa are the main collaborators for this work, the nature of the research is such that other non-governmental organisations involved in the field will be contacted with a view to looking at child headed households that they are involved with, as appropriate.

**Research site:**

The research will be undertaken in Rwanda and Uganda, involving both an urban and rural community in each country. Initial contact will be followed up over a period of 18-24 months. Children will participate in the research in their own compounds and a member of Rwanda Orphan Project (Rwanda) or Street Child Africa (in Uganda) will always be present. The ethical guidelines of the Rwanda Orphan Project and Street Child Africa will also be adhered to. Much of the data collection will take place with groups of children.

**Experimental procedure/methodology:**

My research focuses on child-headed households in Rwanda. These are households about which little is known, but which in turn are some of the most marginalized and needy groups of people in Sub-Saharan Africa. The work will be particularly targeted towards the recent history of the household, its composition and the relationships and roles of the various household members.

The socio-economic networks of the household and coping strategies will also form an important part of the work. Evaluation of support networks for households will include an identification of informal support networks and sources of income. Whilst the research conducted will be predominantly qualitative, the sensitive nature of the topic will necessitate a careful approach to data collection, and will draw upon previous examples of best practice in terms of children and ethical issues. An exploration of the themes of the composition of the household over time using story-telling, drawing a picture-based narrative or time-line exploration, group discussions and the drawing of network diagrams by the members of the household will help me understand the household's relationships and dynamics. Those who wish might want to participate in a more in-depth discussion, in which issues of responsibility and access to resources such as farmland and farming inputs will be explored. Areas of interest would also include the identification of sources of support, whether they have been helpful and what the main issues facing heads of household are. A representative of Rwanda Orphans Project or Street Child Africa will be present at all times and participants will be seen as a group. Any information gathered will remain confidential. Informal discussion with key informants will also take place regarding access to education and health and property rights. In addition, research will be initiated into the programmes currently in place by non-governmental organisations and government to support child headed households in general, and with regard to education, health and property rights.

**Foreseeable risks or discomforts and actions taken to reduce these:**

The research will take place over a number of days at times that suit the members of the household. It is not the intention to cause any stress or discomfort to participants or the household and they are free at any time to withdraw from the research. If, however, thinking and talking about any of the topics covered in the research causes them distress at any time during or after the research members of Rwanda Orphans project or Street Child Africa are available to talk to them in confidence. All participants will be given information leaflets and the research will be explained to them orally.

**Data protection and Consent:**

Any information given to me will be used to produce a report that will be submitted to Coventry University as part of my PhD. All data will be treated with the strictest of confidentiality and no information will be used that could identify individuals or households. Data that is stored electronically will use subject codes so that individuals cannot be identified. The information will be kept locked in a filing cabinet and will be destroyed when the research is successfully completed. The research may also be published in academic journals, but names or identities will not be revealed.

- 5. Will the project involve patients(clients) and/or patient(client) data? Yes [ ] No [ X ]
- 6. Will any invasive procedures be employed in the research? Yes [ ] No [ X ]
- 7. Is there a risk of physical discomfort to those taking part? Yes [ ] No [ X ]
- 8. Is there a risk of psychological distress to those taking part? Yes [ X ] No [ ]

9. Will specific individuals or institutions (other than the University) be identifiable through data published or otherwise made available? Yes [  ] No [  ]
10. Is it intended to seek informed consent from each participant (or from his or her parent or guardian)? Yes [  ] No [  ]

Student's signature:

Date:

Supervisor's signature:

Date:



**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY**  
**African Studies Centre**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM - Households**

<b>NAME OF STUDENT</b>	Marion MacLellan
<b>NAME OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR</b>	Professor Roy May
<b>COURSE TITLE</b>	PhD
<b>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</b>	Child-headed Households: Dilemmas of Definition and Livelihood Rights

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

My research focuses on child-headed households in Rwanda. These are households about which little is known, but which in turn are some of the most marginalized and needy groups of people in sub-Saharan Africa. I am particularly interested in the recent history of your household, its composition and the relationships and roles of the various household members. I am also interested in the socio-economic networks of your household and how you manage without adults. I am particularly interested in the problems you face and the ways you try to solve these problems.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE**

Your participation in this research will enable me to build up a picture of your household and the roles and relationships between household members and the broader community. In order to achieve this I will ask you to tell me something about yourselves and your household. This might be done by the use of story-telling, drawing a picture based narrative or time-line exploration. Group discussions and the drawing of network diagrams by the members of your household will help me understand your household's relationships and dynamics. Those of you who wish might want to participate in a more in-depth discussion with me, in which we will explore issues of responsibility and access to resources such as farmland and farming inputs. I would like to find out whom you turn to for help, do you think they have been helpful and what are the main issues facing you as a head of the household. How do you feel about the situation and what would help you most to perform your role better.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and without explanation. All information gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence and no identifying details (including your name) will be used in the report or any subsequent publications.

**FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS**

The research will take place over a number of days at times that suit you and other members of the household. I do not wish to cause any stress or discomfort to you or your household and you are free at any time to withdraw from the research. If however thinking and talking about any of the topics covered in the research causes you distress at any time during or after the research, members of Rwanda Orphans Project or Street Child Africa are available to talk to you in confidence. Representatives of these organisations will be present at all times the research is being undertaken and are there to offer you support.

**BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT OF PARTICIPATION**

There will be no immediate physical benefit from participating in this research, but your participation will help me identify issues that need addressing both by government and ngos. As such your participation will help to improve the lives of child-headed households in the future by giving a greater understanding of the ways your household operates economically and support each other socially. This information should allow help to be more effectively targeted and delivered, to all children in your situation.

#### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR DATA**

Any information given to me will be used to produce a report that will be submitted to Coventry University as part of my PhD. All data will be treated with the strictest of confidentiality and no information will be used that could identify you or your household. Data that is stored electronically will use subject codes so that individuals cannot be identified. The information will be kept locked in a filing cabinet and will be destroyed when the research is successfully completed. The research may also be published in academic journals, but your name or identity will not be revealed.

**If you have any questions or queries I will be happy to answer them. If I cannot help you, you can speak to Chrissie Hayward at Rwanda Orphans Project or Patrick Shanahan at Street Child Africa.**

#### **SUBJECT'S DECLARATION**

I confirm that I have had the nature, demands and risks of the research explained to me and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I have also been informed of the benefits to me from participating in the research and understand that there will be no payments to me for my participation.

I knowingly assume the risks involved and understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty and without having to give any reason.

As I am an orphan and have no guardian I have nobody to give informed consent. Despite being under 18 years of age, my signature or mark indicates that I have fully understood the nature of the research and am freely participating in it.

Name of subject:

Gender: M/F

Age:

Subject's signature or fingerprint:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

*An information leaflet should be given to the subject for them to keep for their own reference.*

**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY**  
**African Studies Centre**  
**INFORMATION LEAFLET - Households**

<b>NAME OF STUDENT</b>	Marion MacLellan
<b>NAME OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR</b>	Professor Roy May
<b>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</b>	Child-headed Households: Dilemmas of Definition and Livelihood Rights

**BY SIGNING OR PUTTING YOUR MARK ON THE CONSENT FORM YOU HAVE AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH AND YOU ARE CONSENTING TO YOUR DATA BEING USED IN MY REPORT. ALL INFORMATION WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST OF CONFIDENCE AND ALL INFORMATION USED IN THE REPORT WILL BE ANONYMOUS, YOUR NAME WILL NOT BE USED AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD WILL NOT BE IDENTIFIED.**

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

My research focuses on child-headed households in Rwanda. These are households about which little is known, but which in turn are some of the most marginalized and needy groups of people in sub-Saharan Africa. I am particularly interested in the recent history of your household, its composition and the relationships and roles of the various household members. I am also interested in the socio-economic networks of your household and how you manage without adults. I am particularly interested in the problems you face and the ways you try to solve these problems.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE**

Your participation in this research will enable me to build up a picture of your household and the roles and relationships between household members and the broader community. In order to achieve this I will ask you to tell me something about yourselves and your household. This might be done by the use of story-telling, drawing pictures to tell your story or time-line exploration. Group discussions and the drawing of network diagrams by the members of your household will help me understand your household's relationships and dynamics. Those of you who wish might want to participate in a more in-depth discussion with me, in which we will explore issues of responsibility and access to resources such as farmland and farming inputs. I would like to find out to whom you turn for help, whether you think they have been helpful and what the main issues are which face you as a head of the household. How do you feel about the situation and what would help you most to perform your role better?

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and without explanation. All information gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence and no identifying details (including your name) will be used in the report or any subsequent publications.

**FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS**

The research will take place over a number of days at times that suit you and other members of the household. I do not wish to cause any stress or discomfort to you or your household and you are free at any time to withdraw from the research. If however thinking and talking about any of the topics covered in the research causes you distress

at any time during or after the research, members of Rwanda Orphans project or Street Child Africa are available to talk to you in confidence. A member of Rwanda Orphans Project will be present at all times the research is being undertaken and are there to offer you support.

**BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT OF PARTICIPATION**

There will be no immediate physical benefit from participating in this research, but your participation will help me identify issues that need addressing both by government and ngos. As such your participation will help to improve the lives of child-headed households in the future by giving a greater understanding of the ways your household operates economically and support each other socially. This information should allow help to be more effectively targeted and delivered, to all children in your situation.

**If you have any questions or queries I will be happy to answer them. If I cannot help you, you can speak Chrissie Hayward at Rwanda Orphans Project, or Patrick Shanahan at Street Child Africa, Kampala.**

*A copy of this information leaflet, for future reference, must be given to all subjects who have consented to participate in the research.*

**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY**  
**African Studies Centre**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM - Key informants**

<b>NAME OF STUDENT</b>	Marion MacLellan
<b>NAME OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR</b>	Professor Roy May
<b>COURSE TITLE</b>	PhD
<b>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</b>	Child-headed Households: Dilemmas of Definition and Livelihood Rights

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

My research focuses on child-headed households in Rwanda. These are households about which little is known, but which in turn are some of the most marginalized and needy groups of people in sub-Saharan Africa. I am particularly interested in the recent history of such households, their composition, and the relationships and roles of the various household members, their socio-economic networks, the problems faced by the household members and strategies employed to overcome them. I am also interested in the issues of access to education and health, and also the problem of property inheritance within these households. In addition, I aim to look at the programmes currently set up by NGOs and government to help such households with these issues.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE**

Your participation in this research will enable me to build up a picture of households and the roles and relationships between household members and the broader community. Equally you may be able to broaden my understanding of the growth in child headed households over time, issues of education, health and property and current legislative support, and also programmes that you may be involved with which are in place to help child headed households. This might be done in focus groups or one to one discussions.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and without explanation. All information gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence and no identifying details (including your name) will be used in the report or any subsequent publications.

**FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS**

The research will take place at times that suit you. I do not wish to cause any stress or discomfort to you and you are free at any time to withdraw from the research. If however thinking and talking about any of the topics covered in the research causes you distress at any time during or after the research members of Rwanda Orphans Project, Street Child Africa or other appropriate organisations are available to talk to you in confidence

**BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT OF PARTICIPATION**

There will be no immediate physical benefit from participating in this research, but your participation will help me identify issues that need addressing both by government and NGOs. As such your participation will help to improve the lives of child-headed households in the future by giving a greater understanding of the ways in which households operate economically and support each other socially, whether members of such households have access to education and health, and an insight into the theoretical and practical property rights of such households. Similarly, information about the

programmes set in place by organisations will allow help to be more effectively targeted and delivered to all children in child headed households.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR DATA**

Any information given to me will be used to produce a report that will be submitted to Coventry University as part of my PhD. All data will be treated with the strictest of confidentiality and no information will be used that could identify you. Data that is stored electronically will use subject codes so that individuals cannot be identified. The information will be kept locked in a filing cabinet and will be destroyed when the research is successfully completed. The research may also be published in academic journals, but your name or identity will not be revealed.

**If you have any questions or queries I will be happy to answer them. If I cannot help you, you can speak to staff at Rwanda Orphans Project, Street Child Africa, or other appropriate organisations.**

### **SUBJECT'S DECLARATION**

I confirm that I have had the nature, demands and risks of the research explained to me and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I have also been informed of the benefits to me from participating in the research and understand that there will be no payments to me for my participation.

I knowingly assume the risks involved and understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty and without having to give any reason.

Name of subject:

Gender: M/F

Age:

Subject's signature or fingerprint:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

*An information leaflet should be given to the subject for them to keep for their own reference.*

**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY**  
**African Studies Centre**  
**INFORMATION LEAFLET – Key Informants**

<b>NAME OF STUDENT</b>	Marion MacLellan
<b>NAME OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR</b>	Professor Roy May
<b>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</b>	Child-headed Households: Dilemmas of Definition and Livelihood Rights

**BY SIGNING OR PUTTING YOUR MARK ON THE CONSENT FORM YOU HAVE AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH AND YOU ARE CONSENTING TO THE DATA YOU SUPPLY BEING USED IN MY REPORT. ALL INFORMATION WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST OF CONFIDENCE AND ALL INFORMATION USED IN THE REPORT WILL BE ANONYMOUS, YOUR NAME WILL NOT BE USED.**

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

My research focuses on child-headed households in Rwanda. These are households about which little is known, but which in turn are some of the most marginalized and needy groups of people in sub-Saharan Africa. I am particularly interested in the recent history of such households, their composition and the relationships and roles of the various household members, their socio-economic networks, the problems faced by the household members and strategies for overcoming them. I am also interested in the issues of access to education and health, and also the problem of property inheritance within these households. In addition, I aim to look at the programmes currently set up by NGOs and government to help such households with these issues.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH WILL INVOLVE**

Your participation in this research will enable me to build up a picture of households and the roles and relationships between household members and the broader community. Equally you may be able to broaden my understanding of the growth in child headed households over time, issues of education, health and property and current legislative support, and also programmes that you may be involved with which are in place to help child headed households. This might be done in focus groups or one to one discussions.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and without explanation. All information gathered will be treated in the strictest of confidence and no identifying details (including your name) will be used in the report or any subsequent publications.

**FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS**

The research will take place at times that suit you. I do not wish to cause any stress or discomfort to you and you are free at any time to withdraw from the research. If however thinking and talking about any of the topics covered in the research causes you distress at any time during or after the research members of Rwanda Orphans Project, Street Child Africa or other appropriate organisations are available to talk to you in confidence.

## **BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT OF PARTICIPATION**

There will be no immediate physical benefit from participating in this research, but your participation will help me identify issues that need addressing both by government and NGOs. As such your participation will help to improve the lives of child-headed households in the future by giving a greater understanding of the ways in which households operate economically and support each other socially, whether members of such households have access to education and health, and an insight into the theoretical and practical property rights of such households. Similarly, information about the programmes set in place by organisations will allow help to be more effectively targeted and delivered to all children in child headed households.

**If you have any questions or queries I will be happy to answer them. If I cannot help you, you can speak to staff at the Rwanda Orphans Project, Street Child Africa, Uganda or other appropriate organisations.**

*A copy of this information leaflet, for future reference, must be given to all subjects who have consented to participate in the research.*



## **APPENDIX 7**

### **Authorisation for Research Assistant to conduct interviews for this study**

**COVENTRY UNIVERSITY, COVENTRY, UK**

To whom it may concern

I am a research student at the above university and I have authorised Mbarubakeye Francois to interview those participants interviewed by myself, Marion MacLellan in November 2004. I would be very grateful if you would be willing to answer the questions he has to put to you.

Thank you for your cooperation

Marion MacLellan (MA)

## APPENDIX 8

### Letter of application to visit Gihembe Refugee Camp

Hotel Isimbi  
Nyarugenge  
Kigali

March 12, 2008

Dear M. Ngango,

My name is Marion MacLellan and I am a PhD student at Coventry University in the UK. I am doing a longitudinal study of child headed households in Rwanda for my research. I came to Rwanda in 2004 and 2006, and during that last visit interviewed 50 child headed families, 5 of which were living in Gihembe camp, Byumba. I am now here to do my final survey along with my supervisor, Professor Hazel Barrett. It has been very interesting following the progress of these families. I am therefore asking permission to visit Gihembe camp this week, in order to see the five families I have been monitoring.

I would be very grateful if you would help me to get permission to visit these families for a few hours so that I can complete my research. I have a research assistant and interpreters who are able to help me there.

Yours faithfully



Marion MacLellan

## APPENDIX 9:

### Authorisation to visit Gihembe Refugee Camp

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

Kigali, le 13.03.2008  
N°...026.622.102.



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES  
BP 3445 KIGALI  
TEL : 55103443  
FAX : 582228

MARION MacLellan  
Phd student at Coventry University  
UK

RE: Reference to your letter of the March 12,2008


Dear madam,

Reference to your letter requesting us to authorise you to visit Gihembe refugee camp,

I am chamed to grant this authorisation to you and kindly request you to send to us a reports after this visit. All the assistance you will need will be provided by camps coordinators.

Hoping this will meet your need and wishing you succes in your research.

Sincerely,

  
Executive Secretary for the  
National Council for Refugees.

CC:  
- Camp coordinator/ Gihembe

## APPENDIX 10

High density housing, Kimisagara, Kigali

