

Street Children in Wamena: A Holistic Approach to Intervention

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## **Introduction**

*“Orang tua tidak memerhatikan saya*

*Bapak menyangkal saya*

*Hidup saya sudah kacau*

*Makan tidur di luar, hidup di luar*

*Makanan pokok saya itu Aibon dan minuman keras*

*Tidak pikir untuk makan*

*Teman-teman sudah banyak yang meninggal”*

“My parents neglected me

My father disowned me

My life was a mess

I ate outside, I slept outside, I lived outside [on the street]

*Aibon* glue and alcohol were my staple food

I did not think to eat

Most of my friends are dead”

- Budi,<sup>1</sup> an ex- street child describing life on the streets of Wamena.

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<sup>1</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

In the streets of Wamena, the capital town of the Jayawijaya regency (*kabupaten*) in Indonesia's Papua highlands, children are living a life of hunger, thirst, addiction to glue, alcohol, and cigarettes, and often times struggle against violence from fellow peers, adults, and security officers. Neri Payage's ministry, the Arrow Generation Orphanage (*Rumah Singgah Pembinaan Anak-anak Jalanan "Generasi Anak Panah"*), is a response to the silent suffering of the street children of Wamena. There are only three other orphanages in the Jayawijaya regency, and the Arrow Generation Orphanage houses the largest number of street children. However, during my fieldwork, I found that an intervention model that would address the present problems faced by street children—physical deprivation, addiction, and attachment with the street, or street-connectedness—has not been effectively developed by either the Arrow Generation Orphanage nor other agencies that work with street children. To my surprise, when I looked at how the local government, educators, and social policy makers deal with this issue, I also found that they have not yet developed an intervention plan that could meet the street children's most pressing needs. Apart from the absence of a robust collaboration among institutions in Wamena, I also discovered that the Papuan church has not invested their position and resources in the lives of the street children.

For any holistic healing to happen in the lives of street children, such as those in Wamena, Papua, an intervention plan should include a rehabilitation and family reintegration program that is child-centered, faith-based, and community-led. Based on these ideals, in this thesis I first provide readers with an in-depth discussion about the lives of the street children of Wamena, their most pressing problems, and the complex underlying factors at play behind this issue, such as poverty, family dysfunction, and failing education. Then, largely grounded on an extensive analysis, rights-based research, and my fieldwork data, I present a guiding framework

that details the rationales, challenges, as well as opportunities of pursuing a child-centered, faith-based, and community-led intervention plan in Wamena. My hope is this framework becomes a resource for any street children practitioners who wish to better understand the issue of street children in Wamena, as well as to best utilize the resources and potentials they possess holistically to help the children leave street lives. Finally, I include a project that I designed, the Wamena Project. It is the result of a replication and contextualization of a street children ministry in Kenya, Agape Children's Ministry. The Wamena Project is meant to equip workers of local orphanages, social activists, church and tribal leaders, as well as government officials in Papua with a framework of practical actions to empty the street of Wamena and help children leave a life of addiction.

## 1. Context

My first encounter with the Papuan street children in Wamena was when I visited Neri Payage's Arrow Generation Orphanage (*Rumah Singgah Pembinaan Anak-anak Jalanan "Generasi Anak Panah"*) during my 2017 summer fieldwork in Papua, Indonesia. Neri Tulalessy, my main informant, added a last-minute trip to Wamena to the original schedule. Indeed, my initial intention was to come to four other big cities in Papua and interview Papuan activists, students, scholars, government officials, and everyday people about human rights issues, Papuan cultural identity, and reconciliation. Prior to the fieldwork trip, I had no knowledge that the issue of street children in Wamena was alive and prevalent. My short visit to Wamena ended up being the centerpiece of my future research.

At the Arrow Generation Orphanage, Neri Payage together with his wife, Yandina Wenda, have multiple roles in running the orphanage, from being the street outreach workers, to

teachers and parents to the children. They only have one program in the orphanage called the “3Bs: *Berdoa- Belajar- Bekerja*” (Pray – Study – Work), where they give spiritual assistance to the children, teach them English, music, and computer skills, and encourage them to do housework and sell cell phone data plans. I met Neri Payage and Yandina Wenda during a very difficult season of their lives and ministry. Tearfully, Yandina Wenda told me that lack of financial, material, spiritual and emotional support from the local churches, Papuan community, and the government have caused their ministry to struggle. However, from my interviews with Neri Payage and his children, I see that the greatest need of the Arrow Generation Orphanage goes beyond just financial and other material resources. The Arrow Generation ministry has not developed a holistic intervention model that would truly address the present problems faced by street children in Wamena. The government, similarly, has rather created policies that potentially perpetuate the cycle of children leaving their homes and living on the streets of Wamena.

Wamena is the capital town of the Jayawijaya regency (*kabupaten*) in Indonesia’s Papua highlands and is located in the Baliem Valley. It is the most populated town compared to the ten other districts (*kecamatan*) in Jayawijaya. Today, Wamena is facing pressing challenges, such as poverty, with around forty percent of its population living below the poverty line, health issues such as HIV/AIDS, poor education, with high rate of teacher’s absenteeism and illiteracy, alcohol abuse and addiction, domestic violence, and violence by state apparatuses. While Wamena’s economic, political and social-cultural state depicts similar challenges faced by any other town in Papua, its situation is far more critical than the others, particularly due to its remote geographic location that makes access difficult.

Wamena is deemed isolated by locals, Indonesians, and foreigners alike. Before the Wamena Airport was established, the only access to Wamena was air transportation provided by

the Indonesian military, and missionaries' aviation services, such as the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), operating since 1952, and the Association Mission Aviation (AMA), operating since 1959. The establishment of an airport in Wamena and the operationalization of local commercial airlines created greater access to Wamena. However, even with this significant advancement, flying to Wamena remains a difficult and risky journey, as airplanes have to go through two mountain peaks in order to land, and in case of poor weather and thick fog, landing would be a life-risking effort. Wamena also serves as the main entry to other regencies in the central highlands, and air transportation is the only way to access those regencies from Wamena (Paransa and Elisabeth 821). Wamena's geographic location not only affects the movement of people and goods, but also significantly limits the flow of information. As consequence, many pressing social issues, including the issue of street children in Wamena, remain hidden and overlooked from the larger Indonesian society.

Understanding the lives of street children is a prerequisite to any intervention effort. Thus, I sought to understand the core factors that push children to the street in the first place, as well as what keeps them on the street. I found two recurring themes throughout my interviews with ex-street children, street children, Neri Payage, local officials, church leaders, and the local community: poverty and family dysfunction. In the initial research process, the absence of academic research that especially focused on the issue of street children made it difficult to test the correlation of poverty and family dysfunction with the issue. I also found that there are no existing literatures that specifically focused on the issue of street children in Wamena. The closest discussion was about runaway youths. Such absence may also explain the existing discord among local officials, church leaders, and the community, in regard to the causes that push children to live on the street, the number of street children in Wamena, the factors that keep



them there, and community intervention or practices that may work to address this issue. This thesis thus seeks to fill this gap in research.

Regardless, previous studies that addressed other prevalent social issues in Wamena, such as failing education system, alcohol abuse, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic have been a valuable resource in my attempt to better understand the life of street children in Wamena (Anderson, “The Failure of Education”; Anderson, “Land of Ghosts”; Anderson, “Living Without a State”; Butt, “‘Lipstick Girls’ and ‘Fallen Women’”; Butt, “‘Secret Sex’”; Butt and Munro, “Rebel girls? Unplanned pregnancy”; Munro, “The Violence of Inflated Possibilities”; Munro, “Home-Brewed Alcohol”). I found a striking similarity between the factors at play behind these social problems and the core factors behind the issue of street children in Wamena that emerged from my fieldwork data. It turns out that poverty and family dysfunction are also the factors behind the other existing social problems in Wamena and the greater Jayawijaya regency. Ultimately, educational issues are the lens through which I explain the contemporary factors that push and keep children on the street in Wamena. This is also to assess how the government’s flawed solutions to education actually perpetuate the issue of street children.

## **2. Street Children in Wamena**

### **2.2 Background**

During my visit to the Arrow Generation Orphanage, Neri Payage as the director of the orphanage recounted a long season of severe drought and famine that engulfed the central highlands of Papua in October 1997. He explained to me how it deeply affected Papuan families by causing deaths and pushing the remaining Papuan families to migrate from the central highlands to the town of Wamena. Children who lost their parents were also part of the in-

migration wave. Once these in-migrants made it to Wamena, some adults could not find places to stay, and others could not find jobs. The children, similarly, were deserted since most of them did not have or know any relatives in town. According to Payage, this was Wamena's first encounter with children living on the streets. Twenty years later, in 2017, the number of street children living in Wamena had risen significantly. Today, Papuan children and youth can be found roaming the streets of Wamena. They commonly spend their time by either playing with their peers, or hanging out at the local markets, begging for money, stealing, sniffing glue, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and engaging in sexual activities. Their distinct characteristics and lifestyles have further stigmatized them in the eyes of the local community, and sometimes created a social anxiety (*keresahan masyarakat*). Below is an analysis of their origin, stories, identities, and struggles.

### **2.3 Who Are the Street Children of Wamena? How Many Are They? Where Do They Come From?**

Phyllis Kilbourn categorizes street children into three groups. The first group is “children on the street,” who have regular family contact and commonly spend their time during the day on the street either working to support their families, or simply having fun due to the mundanity of school or troubles at home. They usually return to their homes in the evening (11). The second group is “children of the street,” and these children have occasional family contact, do not attend school, and typically come from poverty-stricken families or broken households. Kilbourn notes that these kinds of children equate street life with freedom (11). The third group is “children in the street,” who have neither family contact nor a home, and thus consider the streets their home. Killbourn points out that these children are victims of physical and psychological isolations and have been abused by adults (11-12). Neri Payage uses the same categorization to group the street

children of Wamena. Based on his experience in both ministering to street children at the market in Wamena, and taking care of ex-street children at his orphanage, he found that the two groups have diverse stories of how they ended up living the street life.

Take the cases of Badu, Yandu, and Wendu<sup>2</sup>. Badu was a child on the street. Even though he was enrolled at school, Badu also had an affinity with life on the streets of Wamena. He described how he skipped school to hang out at the markets and steal goods. Badu confessed how once, during Christmas, he stole around four hundred dollars from the market with his friends. They then used the money to not buy food or clothing, but for gambling, drinking, sniffing glue, and chewing *pinang*<sup>3</sup> (*makan pinang*). Yandu, on the other hand, was a child of the street. He mentioned that he used to live with his mother. Yandu's biological father is dead, and his mother went through two other marriages before ending up with her current husband. Since he did not go to school, together with his friends, Yandu lived on the street and survived by selling *pinang*. Sometimes he would go back to his mother's home, and sometimes he would not (8/22/2017). Finally, Wendu was a child in the street. His parents died when he was in third grade. He explained to me that he did not want to continue going to school when he lost his parents, so he decided to go with his friends to live on the streets of Wamena. There, Wendu became addicted to sniffing glue, chewing *pinang*, and drinking alcohol. He also described how

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<sup>2</sup> Names have been changed for privacy.

<sup>3</sup> *Pinang* or Betel Nut leaves are widely consumed in Papua, especially in the central highlands. Papua Heritage Foundation (PACE) calls chewing *pinang* "a popular past time in Papua," which is enjoyed by all Papuans from all walks of life. It has certainly become not only part of Papua's social culture, but also their ethnic identity. PACE points out that "a mouth full of red teeth, [from the red colored streaks of spit when it is chewed], is something that distinguishes Papuans from non-Papuans." During my fieldwork, I have met Papuans, including some of my informants, chewing *pinang*. I also witnessed how widespread the mini kiosks that sell *pinang* on the streets really are in Papua. However, *pinang* also causes euphoria and hallucination if over-consumed. In the case of street children in Wamena, *pinang* has become their addiction.

every time he was high, the police would beat him up until his whole body was red and sometimes bleeding. The lives of these three ex-street children represent the differing backgrounds, as well as the current lives of hundreds of children and youth still living on the streets of Wamena.

The exact number of children living on the streets of Wamena is uncertain. Killbourn explains that it is “extremely difficult” to calculate the number of street children since they are moving around during the day and going into hiding at night (13). The latest survey on their number was conducted by the Social Agency of Jayawijaya Regency (*Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Jayawijaya*) in 2016, in which they estimated that the number of street children would reach six hundred (Adisubrata). Neri Payage, also acting as a street outreach worker, estimated that there were around five hundred street children in Wamena at the end of 2017, with the majority coming from the Dani tribe<sup>4</sup> (8/22/2017). To date, prominent newspapers in Papua that usually provide reports on the latest development of the issue of street children, such as *Jubi Tabloid* (*Tabloid Jubi*) and the *Voice of Papua* (*Suara Papua*), still referred to the 2016 survey when they covered the issue. Nonetheless, their reports have been a great resource to see where the children originally came from, as well as what kind of responses and practical steps that the local officials have taken to tackle this issue.

In an interview with the *Voice of Papua* (*Suara Papua*) in 2016, Welmina Logo, the Head of Commission C of the People’s Representative Council of the Jayawijaya Regency (*Ketua Komisi C Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Kabupaten Jayawijaya*), expressed his dismay over the rising number of children “hanging out on the streets” of Wamena during school hours (“*berkeliaran di jalan*”). According to him, the children are usually playing video games

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<sup>4</sup> The Dani tribe is the largest tribe in the central highlands of Papua, among two other tribes, the Lani and the Yali.

at “Internet Cafes” (*Warung Internet*), or simply working at the market. He argued that they should not be considered as street children because they still have parents and live with their families. Logo also indicated that not all of these children are originally from Wamena. Some of them come from other towns outside the Jayawijaya regency (Kogoya). However, the children that Logo described are actually street children who fall under the category of children on the street, whom, according to Killbourn, are more easily reached because they are “not yet deeply entrenched in street life” (11). A solution that Logo proposed was to establish an orphanage that also operates as a school. However, a question remains: would this work?

Another report by Jubi Tabloid in December 2017 reveals that the issue of street children in Wamena, particularly about children sniffing glue, has actually reached Dr. Yohana S. Yambise, the Minister for Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia (*Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republic Indonesia*). In the interview, Dr. Yambise stated that she has asked the local officials of Jayawijaya regency to fulfill the rights of these children through quality education. Jubi Tabloid also included an interview with Tinggal Wusono, the First Assistant for the District Secretariat of Jayawijaya (*Asisten I Sekretaris Daerah Jayawijaya*). Wusono revealed that in response to the growing number of “*Anak Aibon*,” or “Aibon Kids,” the government has created more regulations for the production and distribution of alcohol and *Aibon* glue. He also acknowledged that his department was aware of the differing origins of these children, but unfortunately, Wusono admitted that there have not been any communication or coordination with the local officials of other surrounding regencies in the central highlands.

These two reports show that the local officials have not worked with their best ability in solving the issue of street children. In 2015, the local government of Jayawijaya regency stated

that the issue of street children has come to their attention. In a meeting that was held in 2015, various government, military, community, and church representatives were present, which included the vice regent of Jayawijaya, the Indonesian military and police (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia dan Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia*), Papua Interfaith Communication Forum (*Forum Koordinasi Umat Beragama*), Jayawijaya Church Alliance (*Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Jayawijaya*), and tribal leaders. The result of the meeting was an agreement that the prevalence of children on the street has created a less conducive situation to security in Wamena, and there had to be an action taken. The local government revealed that they planned to send children who had been skipping school back to school. While those who had never attended school would be sent to a training center in wood carving or a car workshop. Those who were sniffing glue would be invited to attend church services (“Fkub Menggelar Rapat”). However, it has been almost three years since these reports have been written, and very little change has happened in the lives of street children. Children are still living with addiction, and rather than decreasing, based on continued reports by *Jubi Tabloid*, it appears that children continue to come into Wamena from other regencies. Thus, why do children continue coming into Wamena? What are the contemporary factors that push children to the street and keep them there? I argue that this can be best understood through the lens of education.

#### **2.4 Through the Lens of Education: The Contemporary Factors that Push Children to the Streets of Wamena**

The quality of education in Papua remains the lowest in Indonesia. According to UNDP Indonesia, thirty-two percent of Papuan children under the age of fifteen were illiterate in 2010. However, according to UNICEF Education Specialist Sri Rezki Widuri, the illiteracy rate in the highland districts is much worse, reaching up to ninety percent. Some teachers were also found

to lack literacy and numeracy skills (Grainger). According UNICEF and UNDP, the region's isolated location and teacher's absenteeism are the two major factors that hinder Papuan children from gaining access to quality education ("Fighting Illiteracy"; "Students Walk a Rough Road") In a joint research study on teacher absenteeism in Papua and West Papua led by UNICEF, USAID Indonesia, Cenderawasih University (*Universitas Cenderawasih*), University of Papua (*Universitas Negeri Papua*), Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*), and SMERU Jakarta, researchers found that with the overall rate of teacher absenteeism at 33.5%, absenteeism is lowest in urban sub-districts and highest in rural or isolated sub-districts of Papua (UNICEF). They concluded that the more isolated a school is, the higher the rate of teacher absenteeism. Wamena's isolated geographic location does play a major role in the region's educational problem. Some children have to walk for hours to school, others for days. UNICEF Indonesia reports how long walks to school can be a demotivation for children to go to school (Grainger).

From the previous discussion it is apparent that government agencies, the Indonesian military and security officers, the church, and tribal leaders agree that poor education contributes to children living on the street in Wamena. They notice how children who are "hanging out on the streets" and at the market are skipping school or running away from home. However, they did not mention the underlying factors that cause it, which, according to accounts of international organizations, as well as Papuan universities and other local organizations, are shaped by Wamena's economic, political, social-cultural, and geographical landscapes, as well as Papua's social history. In their studies, both Bobby Anderson and Jenny Munro reveal the complexities surrounding educational problems in the central highlands of Papua and point out that the causes are simply not black and white, as it is shaped by "a special arrangement" made by the Indonesian government. They also assert that the government's housing-based solution is flawed

because it leads to other societal issues, such as alcohol, drugs, and glue abuse, and rape (Anderson, “The Failure of Education”; Munro, “The Violence of Inflated Possibilities”). What they do not mention is how flawed solutions to education problems are also related to the issue of street children. Based on my fieldwork data, children who quit school later live and work on the streets.

In her study, Jenny Munro asserts that the unavailability of high quality education in the central highlands of Papua is caused by what she refers to as “a practice of diminishment,” which according to Joel Robbins is “...discourses of race, wildness, childishness, backwardness, primitiveness, and temporal ‘behindness’ at play in colonial situations that cause humiliation and a sense of inferiority” (27). Drawing from Robbin’s definition, Munro explains this practice of diminishment used during the Dutch rule is reshaped by the Indonesian government and translated into the education system operating today in Papua (27-28). Munro notes how the government’s agenda of educating the Papuans is done under the mission to “civilize” the indigenous people and not to *really* set an education system that would allow them to succeed (28). Consequently, this mission, according to Munro, “set indigenous men and women up to fail amid unacknowledged conditions that make personal, social, and political transformation a highly improbable outcome of schooling in highlands Papua,” and consequently, further marginalized the indigenous Papuans since they are unable to compete with the Indonesian settlers and migrants (28). Munro’s analysis reveals how educational problems in Papua are the result of a deliberate arrangement made by the government, which is also a counter argument to those who argue that they are a result of the government’s incompetence. However, as revealing as Munro’s proposition has been, in this research the government’s intention will not be the subject of contention. In the case of street children in Wamena, I rather focused on what the



government has done to solve this problem, arguing that is more critical and relevant to our discussion.

Bobby Anderson in his studies contends that the failure of education in the central highlands of Papua is due to the absence of the state in providing an education that is accessible to the indigenous Papuans. Pertinent to the issue of street children is Anderson's criticism on the pathways that the local government and the local churches have taken to solve educational barriers to Papuan children. One of these pathways is the utilization of functioning schools. Anderson explains how the practice of sending children to walk the long distance to villages that accommodate functioning schools without adult supervision is common in Papua's central highlands. Children who have travelled to Wamena to attend these functioning schools will stay at "student hostels" operated by the church. However, calling them "flophouses," Anderson reveals that these hostels are public health threats and a transmission center for tuberculosis since there is no running water and has open defecation on the grounds. Even worse, he notes that without adult supervision, this living condition entices children to abuse drugs and inhale solvents, like the *Aibon* glue (Anderson, "The Failure of Education"). Most unfortunately, cases of rapes within the group is also not uncommon.

Going back to Munro's analysis, she echoes Anderson's contention that the use of boarding schools is a flawed solution to respond to education challenges in the central highlands of Papua. Munro once again offers a revealing analysis about the rationale behind the educators and government's decision to put Papuan children and youth in dormitories. Munro explains how the perception of Indonesian scholars that Papuan students have "limited cognitive learning capacity and creativity" due to their "backwardness" or "primitiveness," is once again at play in their decision-making (29-30). Under this perception, they favor putting children and youth in

dormitories since they believe that this arrangement will isolate them from the “negative cultural and social influences” that their families and tribal community have on them (Munro 30). As a result, many youths in the rural central highlands moved to dormitories in Wamena so they could attend school. This came with a price. Munro notes how Papuan and Indonesian men reportedly “came to the dorms seeking out young indigenous women for sex with the knowledge of the Ibu Kos, or ‘Homestay Mother’” (“The Violence of Inflated Possibilities,” 40). This is why these children and youth very much prefer to work as a domestic laborers in an urban Dani or Indonesian household, so they are able to live closer to school (Munro, “The Violence of Inflated Possibilities,” 40).

Both Anderson and Munro pointed out that dormitory-style housings are flawed solutions to education, yet the government apparently has been using the same approach to deal with the issue of street children. As the government acknowledged that educational problems in the central highlands played a role in the increasing number of children “hanging out on the streets” and at the market during school hours, they tried to solve the issue of street children in Wamena by focusing on education reform and the utilization of more dormitory-style housings. However, there are several problems with this approach. First, as pointed out by Munro and Anderson, with limited supervision and poor services, the dormitory-style housings for the street children ultimately end up as “flophouses.” Second, the government is actually overlooking the underlying factors that both *cause* children to move from their homes to the streets and *keep* the children on the street. My fieldwork data shows that the causes of why children quit school range from poverty, broken family structure, parental neglect, family dysfunction, violence at school, and being orphaned. These causes are also the key factors that perpetuate the cycle of children leaving home and living on the streets of Wamena. Some children were forced to quit school

because of a combination of two or three of the causes. Therefore, the government should pay attention to these key factors in order to come up with a properly run dormitory-style housings with holistic services. In regard to the key factors, below we learn about the stories of children who were either forced to quit school or simply have never gone to school.

Take the case of Narni and Sila,<sup>5</sup> whose background is a combination of poverty, broken family structure, and parental neglect. Narni quit school when he was in ninth grade. He used to live with his uncle who became his adopted parent, since they did not know where his biological parents were. However, his uncle then kicked him out from the house and told him to look after himself. Today, Narni is sleeping at random places. During the day, he works carrying people's groceries, becoming a parking attendant, or a bus driver's assistant (*kenek angkot*). Sila, similarly, lives on the street since his father's death. Since his father died, Sila's mother remarried and went to live with her new husband, leaving Sila with no one and nothing. He described how not once in his life has he ever received any help from anybody.

Loko's background is a combination of poverty, family dysfunction, and violence at school. In our interview he explained that he quit school when he was in second grade. When he began sniffing *Aibon* glue, his father kicked him out of the house. Loko then told me how soon thereafter, he decided to quit school because he received violent treatment from his teachers. On the other hand, Dimi and Oga's case represent children who come from a dysfunctional family. Dimi stopped attending school when he was in eighth grade, and Oga was in third grade of elementary school. Both of their stories have similarities. They ran away from their parents' house in the central highlands of Papua because their parents often beat them up and cursed them (*dimaki-maki*). Dimi told me that he was also persuaded by his friends to leave the hard situation

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<sup>5</sup> Names have been changed for privacy.

at home and go to town. When they got into town, Dimi and Oga found they could not afford buying their own food, let alone paying the school's tuition. Dimi did not further explain his living condition on the street. For Olga, after quitting school, he told me that every day he has to wash people's cars or become a parking attendant at the market so he can eat rice with eggs. Oga shared how he decided to eat once a day, so he could use the rest of his money to buy cigarettes. At night, he sleeps in front of the stores at the market. Oga emphasized that he wants to go back to school and live in some kind of a dormitory, as long as he is still allowed to go back to the market from time to time.

Being orphans also caused children to quit school. One of the children I talked to, Siru, quit school when his parents died and went to the street to work at the market. Like other children previously described, Siru used the money he got from working to eat and sniff *Aibon* glue. Hudu, on the other hand, was still attending school even after his parents died. Later, however, his friends lured him to join them working on the street. He recited, "*lebih enak cari uang buat jajan MILO (Minuman Lokal), rokok, dan Aibon,*" or "it is much more enjoyable to work and have money to spend on alcohol, cigarettes, and *Aibon* glue." Tupi is different. He has never been educated at school. When he was little, his parents neglected him and told him to look for food by himself until the two of them passed away. Tupi then left his home in the central highland and headed to Wamena, only to find himself homeless and alone in the town. Tupi told me that he works as a parking attendant during the day and uses the money to buy cigarettes and *Aibon* glue.

Lastly, I include the story of Miku, a street child who is still attending school, however looking at his current situation, Miku is on the verge of becoming a full-time street child. It is thus worth our attention to consider his voice. Miku's background is a combination of

entrenched poverty, family dysfunction, broken family structure, and parental neglect. He is living on the street because he fled from his parents' house. When they were still living together, his parents liked to beat him up and cursed him (*dimaki-maki*). Both of his parents then re-married. He left his village in the central highlands and went to Wamena where every day after school he works loading goods or carrying people's groceries at the market. He then uses the money to buy food and sniff *Aibon* glue. Miku told me that he can sniff *Aibon* glue until midnight and that way the school officials will not notice his addiction. Contrary to his peers' common longings to go back to school and live in a safe dormitory with some degree of freedom, Miku said that he does not want to live in a dormitory because he likes the free life on the streets.

From these children's accounts, it is apparent that most children quit school not simply of boredom and the lures of the street, which is a common misconception on the part of educators, the government, and community leaders. In fact, their decisions are also influenced by their life circumstances at home, such as poverty, family dysfunction, broken family structure, and parental neglect. Some are orphaned and have no choice but to live on the streets in order to sustain themselves. Only a small number of children run away from school because of teachers' violence and boredom. We are also invited to understand their addiction with alcohol, cigarettes, and *Aibon* glue. When we follow their stories, we see how they are using them to numb the pain of living the harsh street life. The topic of their addiction is also questioned by Munro, stating how she found that "Wamena is the only place in Indonesia where [glue-sniffing] is the drug of choice among youth, and, despite over a decade of interventions to assist these mostly homeless youths, the 'Aibon Kids' (*Anak Aibon*) only seem to grow in number" ("The Violence of Inflated Possibilities," 40). From my interviews with Neri Payage's children, I found that even after

spending some years in the orphanage and completing their education, some still decided to go back to the street with their old friends and live a life of addiction.

Viewing the complexity and differing backgrounds of these street children through the perspective of education invites us to see beyond a common perception taken by educators, the government, and community leaders, that this problem can be resolved through education reform and more housing-based solutions. These two solutions are certainly needed, but they are lacking in a holistic component. The government has not developed an intervention mechanism that would holistically meet the children's most pressing need, and cure their addiction to alcohol, solvents, and their street connectedness, or the children's bonding and attachment issues with the street. Housing-based solutions should be holistic, and I argue that this can be done through adding a rehabilitation and reintegration program. By not doing so, the government would only prevent children from going back to formal or vocational school, and living a life free of addiction.

## **2.5 Street Connectedness among the Street Children of Wamena**

Carole McKelvey, in her study, "Restoring Fragile Bonds: Bonding and Attachment Issues," explains that most street children who have lost their immediate families, extended families, and support from the community they belong to, are most likely to have deeper bonding and attachment issues with the street compared to those who have not (42). McKelvey also points out that because "they are broken in spirit," those who are not orphaned still have these issues, although not as deep as those who are (41). At some point, both orphaned and not orphaned street children must have received a bad treatment from the local security forces and the local community. All of Neri Payage's children whom I interviewed have experienced certain

kinds of violent abuses by the local security forces and the military. Daya<sup>6</sup> told me that when he was still living on the streets of Wamena, a policeman burned his hair when he was sleeping on the street. Another day, a group of policemen hit him with rubber, or what he called a dead rubber (*karet mati*), breaking his bones. When street children receive such treatment, they will find comfort in one another and form a group identity to cope with their pain and suffering.

Harriot Beazley, in “The Construction and Protection of Individual and Collective Identities by Street Children and Youth in Indonesia,” studies how street children in Yogyakarta, West Java, Indonesia deal with the numerous negative experiences they receive on the street, as well as “social and spatial oppression geographically,” by developing “repertoire strategies” to survive (106). Based on the experiences of the street boys in Jogjakarta, Beazley found that one of the strategies they use is a new construction of their own subculture, in which the boys called themselves as the Tikyan (106). Being a Tikyan has become a social identity of the street children, and newcomers would be socialized “with peer support [,] survival skills as well as a collective identity” (109). Although Beazley considers this as the boys’ attempt to replace the negative image the rest of the society has placed on them with a new positive image, in the case of Wamena, the collective identity of the street children nurtures their street addiction.

In Wamena, most of the time, when someone in a street children’s group was being abused by adults, other street children were usually present. Then, they would either try to save him or her, or watch in horror. Yaya<sup>7</sup> told me how he once watched his friend get shot in the chest by a policeman. Neri Payage explained that in Wamena, it is common for some of the military and local security officers to abuse and sometimes kill the street children based on

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<sup>6</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

<sup>7</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

accusations of robbery or rape. These experiences bring the children together and nurture a sense of solidarity with each other, which, unfortunately, also creates bonding and attachment issues. Consider what Alemtsehai Alemu states about membership in street gangs, or groups in the case of Wamena:

[It] is a defense mechanism to ensure survival in a hostile environment. A gang provides the children with a degree of physical and emotional security. It also provides the protection, comradeship, status and sense of belonging of a substitute family. The rules to which the children subscribe are ones with which they can conform. Gang membership also meets the need for a sense of identity and self-worth. (36)

This is why in her study, Hellen Shedd completely rejects the notion that persuading children to leave street lives is easy and all we have to do is just promise them a warm bed, food, and some toys (126). Having been experiencing the toughness of life on the street, and managed to find ways to numb the pain, most street children would not even find those promises appealing. Persuading children to leave the streets is not easy since the street can offer children many things, from having the freedom to do whatever they want, to finding “a family” in the midst of life’s difficulty (Shedd 129). Street connectedness keeps the children of Wamena on the streets, and this identity bond has to be broken in order to successfully move them to a transition center where they could be rehabilitated and reintegrated back to the mainstream community.

Although it is not easy to break street connectedness, Shedd believes that it is possible. She proposes that to overcome the children’s street addiction, “... it is crucial to have an intervention program in a group home where children may be given a taste of healthy family living, a taste that includes healing doses of structure, love, responsibility, and discipline” (138). However, Thea W. Wilshire argues that healing the street children’s deep emotional wounds



should first incorporate a spiritual component, and second, involve a collaborative effort between institutions. Wilshire explains that “intervention for the emotional traumas and needs of street children [should be part of] our ministry strategies” because “God knows the connections between emotional, physical and spiritual development. He can work miracles of instant psychological healing or he may orchestrate slower processes of emotional healing” (58). Here, we see how Wilshire’s argument is consistent with the fact that ex-street children who are now young adults and helping Neri Payage with his ministry are the ones who received and responded to Payage’s invitation to grow in their faith in Christ.

### **3. Intervention**

*“Jika anak-anak jalanan ini tidak lagi diperhatikan dan ditolong dapat dibayangkan apa yang akan terjadi kelak dengan masa depan Tanah Papua yang kita cintai ini. Sebab mereka adalah mutiara-mutiara Papua yang sangat berharga. Mari selamatkan mereka”*

“Imagine what would happen to the future of our beloved, beautiful land of Papua if we no longer took care of these street children. They are the precious pearls of Papua. Let’s save them.”

- Neri Payage in an interview with Dr. Roland Lalo.

#### **3.2 Intervention that is Child-Centered**

There are several approaches that have been used throughout the years by policy-makers and practitioners across the globe to intervene in the lives of street children and adolescents. In her 2011 report prepared for The Consortium for Street Children (CSC), Sarah Thomas de Benitez recognizes three policy approaches for intervention, which include repression-oriented, protection-oriented, and human rights-based (38). De Benitez explains that a repression-oriented

approach views children as deviants as opposed to the prevailing standard set by society for what is considered as normal for children (38). This consequently results in a repressive response from the government, security officers, or the community because they see the children as threats to public order due to their particular characteristics and lifestyles. In Wamena, this approach is adopted by some local security forces. Neri Payage shared how once, policemen took some children away from the market, intending to get rid of them by throwing them into a river. Below is his description of the event:

Honestly, we have faced many cases... it was in the middle of the night, my brothers and sisters [the street children], twenty of them... the police came, and they put the children in sacks. They brought them... approximately 2 kilometers away from the city to a bridge... at night they wanted to throw the sacks, but they were afraid of the community, so they stopped their cars on that big bridge, then they were looking around... but there was a policeman called brother Didi<sup>8</sup>, he is a Papuan, a very nice man. Often times if there is a problem he comes forward, but regarding the issue of street children, he usually defends us because he is close to us. So, when he saw that, he opened the sacks and saw his brothers and sisters [the street children], “wow these are my brothers and sisters in here.” So, he let them run away, he woke them up from their sleep, and the children ran, ran to our house [Neri Payage’s Arrow Generation Orphanage].

Neri Payage’s account illustrates an existing stigmatization and resentment from some of the security officers in Wamena. He explained how before the event, security officers have been “bombarding” their orphanage, accusing Neri Payage and some of his children for robberies or rape that happened usually at the market or in the central areas of Wamena. In fact, according to

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<sup>8</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

Andy Butcher this situation is not uncommon in the lives of street children. He explains that they tend to “avoid policemen and security guards at all costs, because once a street kid is known and recognized, he or she is likely to be blamed for anything that happens in the area. Anonymity spells security” (25). Further, the stigmatization adopted by the security officers in Wamena can be best understood through Lilis Mulyani’s study in “Street Children and Broken Perception: A Child’s Rights Perspective.” Although this study is in an urban context, which was based on the lives of street children in Jakarta, there are striking similarities between the treatment and perception of security officers in Jakarta and in Wamena.

Mulyani points out how the government and the Indonesian society adopted “broken perceptions” about the street children in Jakarta. One of the perceptions is seeing children as violators of the street and other public spaces. Mulyani explains that this is so because the Indonesian society considers public spaces as “adult places” (189). Thus, they dislike the reality that more and more children are living and working in the streets without adult supervision (189). Mulyani notes that their use of the street for “different” lifestyles contradicts “the real, normal or acceptable purpose of street or public spaces” (Mulyani 189). As we see in the previous sections, street children of Wamena “occupy public spaces” by working at the market since they are not going to school. When they are not working, they are sniffing glue, smoking cigarettes, and drinking alcohol.

Other perceptions include looking at children as criminals and thus the society wishes “to see them off the street” (Mulyani 189). However, Mulyani stresses that this is so not because they cared about the children’s life, but because they have felt “threatened” by the existence of the street children (189). While this is true in Wamena based on Neri Payage’s accounts, I stress that his accounts do not represent neither the general perceptions of most security officers in

Wamena nor their use of repressive-oriented approach. From my fieldwork data, it appears that the government officials, church leaders, and security officers in Wamena have differing perceptions about the street children and what considers as a favorable approach to this issue. I notice that some also use the protection-oriented approach.

A protection-oriented approach views children as victims whose basic rights to food, shelter, education, and health are repeatedly violated (De Benitez 38). This approach therefore seeks to protect children by restoring their basic immediate rights. In their 2012 review of effective interventions for Children and Adolescents in Street Situations (CASS), Berckmans et al. further expand on Benitez's notion about the protective approach and point out a critical assertion. They argue that protective-oriented approach focuses on the immediate causes of problems, such as basic needs rather than the structural causes of the issue, such as poverty and social exclusion (Berckmans et al. 1260). As we learned in the previous sections, the issue of street children in Wamena is shaped by structural forces, such as poverty as the result of economic and social marginalization due to the failure of the Special Autonomy Law of 2001. In the long-run, a prevention model should be developed to stop children from moving from their homes to the street. This requires collaborative, structural solutions from the government and policy-makers.

In regard to social exclusion, the protection-oriented approach actually conceals the stigmatization of the street children in Wamena. In Neri Payage's account, the police officers take the repressive-oriented approach where they resent and wish to get rid of the street children, but from other interviews we had with street children living and working at the market in Wamena, they shared how oftentimes, policemen and the church bring them food and drinks. Clearly, by focusing on fulfilling the children's immediate needs, the security officers and the

church move in the protection-oriented approach. Most importantly, the protection-oriented approach does not address the questions of why children still live on the street in Wamena, as well as why they still live in addiction. It is insufficient to only focus on fulfilling the children's basic, immediate needs and not responding to their addictions.

Finally, the human rights-based approach views children as citizens whose rights have been violated. Benitez states that these children “are denied or unsecured by society” (De Benitez 38). This particular approach reflects the two key principles set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC): the protection and participation principles. Berckmans et al. explain how protection and participation, the two key principles for implementation of the convention, work as a rights-based framework for intervening in the lives of CASS (1259-1260). The protection principle is defined not solely as “immediate protection from danger, abuse, and exploitation, but [it] also covers more long-term proactive approaches designed to promote development of children's skills and knowledge, build support structures for children, and lower their vulnerability” (Berckmans et al. 1260). The government and the community, including the church and orphanages like the one that Neri Payage is leading, have not successfully fulfilled the rights of the street children of Wamena.

The participation principle is defined as including children and youth in the design process of an intervention program, and this can be done in the form of thoughtful and careful listening to what they have to say. Berckmans et al. stress that children should be considered as “the most knowledgeable” about the factors that push children to the street, and thus, their participation should be prioritized during intervention design, implementation, and evaluation (1260). Among the three policy approaches, I contend that the rights-based approach is an effective intervention for Children and Adolescents in Street Situation (CASS). De Benitez

points out in her study that best practices of street children policies all around the globe have been the ones who protect children who are living and working on the street by using a holistic, child-rights, gender-based approach (2). The human rights-based approach is essentially child-centered, because part of fulfilling their rights is to listen to them and make sure that their participation is voluntary and active.

### **A Child-Centered Approach in Practice: Listening to Street Children's Voices, Experiences, and Identities**

De Benitez reveals that there is a consensus regarding the value of designing policies for street children that fully take into account their voices, experiences, and identities to ensure the success of those policies (42). The intervention approach I propose is based upon the stories of the street children of Wamena. Turnbull et al. acknowledge that based on most cases across the globe, “a considerable number” of children and youth continue returning back to the street “in spite of resources and time spent on their behalf by committed, capable street workers, organized institutions and generous donors” (1283). The problem they identified is because oftentimes, those programs and services are “[imposed] upon the children, [based] on the outsiders’ idea of ‘help’ and ‘rehabilitation [,]’ but the children have their own ideas...” (1283). For this reason and to avoid committing the same mistake, I held a second-round of interview, with the generous help from my team in Wamena.

We used an action research method since it is an approach to social inquiry that seeks to answer social problems by not relying on centralized policies and programs generated by “experts”, but rather, focusing on ones that are shaped in a community-based response model (Stringer 2). As a result, researchers can formulate effective and sustainable solutions that are appropriate in a local setting (Stringer 3-6). We interviewed the street children working and

living at the market in Wamena, asking them to share their stories, as well as their pressing needs and greatest longings. The investigative nature of action research, as well as its commitment for community's participation, (Stringer 5-6) have helped us during our interview and research process significantly. It brought to our attention issues, such as street-connectedness in the lives of street children, that would otherwise remain hidden if we do not uphold the commitment for children's participation. Coren et al. approve the participatory model of engagement in approaching street children, since they believe that it "[ensures] that sufficient time and space is given to children to demonstrate to outsiders why they came to the street, and what their background is" (8).

So, what do these children need? What do they dream of? Of all the street children I interviewed, most of them stated that despite the opportunities that the streets offer them, they still dream of a chance to go back to school and live a safe and healthy life. Madu<sup>9</sup> told us that he does not want to continue being a street child. He revealed that one of the challenges of living on the street is often being chased down by policemen. Madu wanted to go back to school and live in a safe house. He also shared with us how he dreams of someday becoming an aircraft attendant. Suli<sup>10</sup>, similarly, does not want to be a street child anymore. He told us that it has been really hard for him to eat. He usually eats one time a day and uses the rest of the money to buy *Aibon* glue. He expressed that he would like to join a safe house so that he would no longer have to be in despair of eating. He has a dream to be a pastor. Having been living and working at the market, Wagu<sup>11</sup> expressed that he really wanted to go back to school and live in a safe house, but

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<sup>9</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

<sup>10</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

<sup>11</sup> Name has been changed for privacy.

only if he would still be allowed to freely go “play”<sup>12</sup> at the market. He has a dream to be a policeman someday.

The voices of the three street children represent the needs and longings that other children have. In general, all of them dream of having access to education and live in a safe and comfortable house where they can get food, drinks, and freely “play” with their friends. They all share the narrative of “*Tidak mau hidup terus begini karena tidak enak,*” or “I don’t want to continue living like this because it is unpleasant,” as shared by Wiga. However, this goes without saying that they also admitted that they still wanted some degree of freedom to enter and leave whenever they want to when they are later housed in a transition home or a dormitory. This, in particular, only reveals their street connectedness and their struggle with addiction to alcohol, cigarettes, and solvents. The street children also told us that a house established by the local government called “New Hanoi” (*Hanoi Baru*), has exactly a system that they like. Built and funded by the local government of Wamena, New Hanoi is a shared place with cement floors on which the children can use to rest and sleep during the day and at night. Apart from still having their freedom to enter and leave the house, they also pointed out that they like sharing the place with their friends, although some expressed that the place has increasingly been too crowded.

In early February of 2018, the government announced that they are planning to establish another temporary housing in early 2019 (Adisubrata). This house is intended to be used for a training and seminar center, where the children will be given some life skills, taught how to regain access to education, and educated about health and nutrition (Adisubrata). However, in an interview with Jubi Tabloid, the Head of the Social Rehabilitation Division of the Jayawijaya

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<sup>12</sup> The children living and working at the market in Wamena use the word “play” interchangeably, which can literally be playing with their friends. In other cases, it can be smoking cigarettes, inhaling *Aibon* glue, drinking alcohol, or having sex with their peers, prostitutes, security officers, or other adults.



Social Agency (*Kepala Bidang Rehabilitasi Sosial pada Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Jayawijaya*), Indar Budyowahyanto still questioned how to reintegrate the children back to their families and send them back to school (Adisubrata). Budyowahyanto's concerns highlight the problem with the current perception and approach taken by the government, educators, policy-makers, and the church alike. The current housing-based solutions and education reform are not holistic. New Hanoi is a good example of how the children are living double-lives, having access to meet their immediate needs, like food, drinks and a place to stay, only to return to the street again.

Although New Hanoi is favored by the children, if the government is not careful, this could backfire and actually perpetuate the flow of children leaving homes and schools to the street. A holistic rehabilitation and reintegration program should be a part of their intervention program, and it should take place before they are sent back to their community and school. However, we cannot force them to join our program either, we can only invite them.

### **A Child-Centered Approach in Practice: Voluntary and Active Participation in a Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program**

Voluntary participation should be the model for a rehabilitation and reintegration program. Kilbourn argues that in order to be an effective ministry, intervention programs should “address [the children's] tendency to run away from problems that occur instead of discussing and solving them,” and he suggests that voluntary participation is the key (178). Kilbourn asserts that “children must be allowed to feel that they are taking charge of changing their circumstances – not being coerced to do so [,] because they often reject authority figures as hypocritical and punitive” (178). Pushing street children to live in a house and join rehabilitation programs against their own personal will is not going to work well in the long-run. This may also explain why some of the street children living and working at the market in Wamena favor a house to

sleep in and get food, rather than joining any social programs held by the government or the church. They want to maintain the sense of independence and ownership of their situation on the street.

In this case, street outreach workers play an essential role in building relationships with street children to nurture trust and create more likelihood for the children to accept our invitation. In his study, "Street Worker Profile," Jeff Anderson believes that the role of street workers is so vital because they are the link between the government, security officers, different social agencies, churches, and the street children (120). Street workers stand in a unique position because they are typically able to identify and immerse themselves in the children's world (121). However, Anderson emphasizes that they have to maintain the right attitudes since "the worker's attitudes are important to the children. The children are upset when a worker can see nothing but their filth, smell and how dirty they are, never trying to understand them as people, let alone attempting to understand their culture" (123). Additionally, using an authoritarian approach should also be avoided, according to Anderson, since the children may feel threatened and be suspicious of the street workers' motives (121). In his ministry, Neri Payage also serves as a street worker, with the help from some of his children who used to live and work at the market. This is a good example of a street children ministry that utilizes an insider's culture to reach out to their brothers and sisters who are still entrenched in lives of the street.

Active participation, instead of turning street children into passive recipients of our program, is another key for a successful intervention. Berckmans et al. reveal that this has something to do with children being the "subject of aid," in which they explain that the children have to admit "that someone has to take care of them and are therefore surrendering their responsibilities over their lives" (1267). Sometimes policy-makers work on intervention

programs from a limited understanding of childhood, that the ideal picture is providing children with food, drink, shelter, as well as loving and caring adults. These are of course necessary things, but only looking at the solution from a single perspective risks overlooking the complex, multi-faceted identities and roles that the street children have. Their experiences differ from one another.

Other studies have shown that street children view themselves as adults who have the capacity to control their own lives (Panter-Brick, “Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health”; Stoecklin and Boenvin, “*Childrens Rights and the Capability Approach*”). Berckmans et al. suggest that we have to “broaden the ideas of what childhood is to local ideas by wondering how CASS see themselves within family and society. Above all, we have to learn from the local creative solutions of people living in, and those working daily with poverty” (Berckmans et al. 1267). This is consistent with what Merriam and Tisdell state about the importance of taking the role of a participant in research. They argue that understanding a social phenomenon from the participant’s perspective will provide us with a unique standpoint as we take the role of the emic or “the insider’s perspective,” as opposed to etic or “the outsider’s view” (Merriam and Tisdell 713-714).

Ultimately, an intervention model in Wamena would start with the identification of what already exists in the community, and build it upon a system that already works. This supports what Berckmans et al. believe in, which they assert, “ultimately, a key role for organizations should be the capacitation, support, and strengthening of the existing natural networks within communities as the primary responses to the needs of the children” (1264). Similarly, De Benitez supports Berckmans et al.’s contention, recommending policy makers to build upon “existing

indigenous protection mechanisms that are susceptible to being strengthened” (42). In Wamena, there are two existent systems that can be further developed.

The first system is a housing model like New Hanoi. New Hanoi is considered as a working model, although incomplete, because it is accepted and favored by the street children living and working on the streets of Wamena. This system represents the voices of the children, where it meets their immediate needs: food, drink, shelter, and the freedom to come and go. The second system is a training and seminar center, and this system meets the children’s long-term needs. The government’s plan to establish a center for teaching children life skills and giving educational, health, and spiritual seminars is a working model as well because it attracts street children to develop what they already have and gain access to income-generating opportunities. Nonetheless, it is critical to remember that there is a missing component from these two models: a holistic rehabilitation and reintegration program that is faith-based and community-led.

### **3.3 Intervention that is Faith-Based**

#### **The Link Between Faith, Freedom from Addiction, and Reconciliation**

An intervention plan for street children should be faith-based because I believe in the powerful interconnection between faith, freedom from addiction, and reconciliation. In his study, “Interventions: A Holistic Approach,” Perry Downs stresses that “interventions for children in difficult circumstances must be holistic and compassionate” (189). Here, Downs defines holistic as “ministering to the whole child,” physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, and that without a spiritual aspect, the intervention is incomplete (190). This is true in Wamena. The street children are hungry and in need of a place to stay, but they have also been angered, broken-hearted, and disappointed by adults, their own families, and the community. They think *Aibon* glue, alcohol, and cigarettes could numb their pain, but rather these addictions are

nurturing their street-connectedness, and slowly killing them. Further, psychological traumas are also a challenge faced by street children.

Staub et al. in their research discuss the impact of intense violence on the lives of the Rwandan Genocide survivors. They describe how the basic psychological needs are “profoundly frustrated” and “their identity, their way of understanding the world, and their spirituality [are] disrupted” (Staub et al. 299). Consequently, suffering under these trauma symptoms, the survivors feel vulnerable in living their day-to-day lives because “the world looks dangerous to them, and other people [outside their group] seem untrustworthy” (Staub et al. 300). While the experiences between a survivor of genocide and a street child may differ to a greater extent, the psychological impacts that Staub et al. discussed also apply to the street children of Wamena. In the previous section we have learned how children develop attachment with their peers as a coping mechanism, and thus often times children who are in an orphanage are still struggling with street connectedness. Undoubtedly, street children need a holistic service. In “The Church and the World’s Children,” Sam Martin shares his reflection based on his experience with street children ministries across the globe. He comments,

When you are alone, rejected by family and friends and forgotten by society, how important to be told that there is a God who loves you! When life is all messed up; when sniffing glue becomes a way to escape the pains of hunger and stealing a way to survive; when selling your body is a false but easy way to find some kind of love and affection; and when you are too embarrassed to look anyone in the eye, how necessary it is to discover a God who not only loves but who also cares and understands. (113)

A Christian understanding of the issue of street children would suggest that there should be a reconciliation that takes place between street children, their selfhood, and God, as well as their

families and communities in order to enable healing and sustainable transformation. This reconciliation, in particular, is only available through God's redemptive love. Under this understanding, if an intervention model only focuses on the physical, emotional, and social aspect, then reconciliation would not be possible.

Katolunge and Rice remind us that God's story goes beyond any earthly human sufferings. He has His promises for hope and restoration. The two authors explain how the Scriptures work as a reminder that anyone who is in Christ has an everlasting "hope of the promises not yet fulfilled" (Katolunge and Rice 66), and in terms of reconciliation, those promises could be restoration of broken hearts and relationships. While individual restoration may work through Christ's healing by forgiveness, Katangole and Rice ask us to also consider justice as God's shalom, which is "a notion that carries with it the idea of completeness, soundness, well-being and prosperity" (72) in all aspects of life. Therefore, anyone who intends to help street children get to a place of healing should carry God's definition of justice, knowing that it was designed to bring communal healing through a continuing journey of reconciliation.

I consider the spiritual aspect as fundamental to the intervention model for Wamena because I do not want to risk missing a component that would address the problem of why street children are returning to the streets even after being part of rehabilitation or social programs. I also want to make sure that we reintegrate children who have been healed from their street-connectedness and any emotional or social issues. Here, spirituality through the Christian faith offers a possibility for not only an effective and strategic intervention model, but also a transformational and sustainable one. Myers contends that "the only way leading toward abundant life for all [is to have] transformational development that enhances life works to promote relationships that work as well as they can in a world of fallen people. Life and

relationships are inseparable” (181). As the focus is on repairing broken relationships, how does reconciliation take place?

Brenda Salter McNeil reasons that “among those who seek to follow Christ, it is generally understood that in order for reconciliation to occur, there must be repentance, justice and forgiveness” (183-184). Myers echoes Salter McNeil, stating that “[a] Christian process of change must include processes for repentance and forgiveness” (183). In a rehabilitation program, children should be taught these ideals through child-friendly materials, and by caring adults. Downs stresses that children “must be taught to respond to God’s love and to allow the love of God to bring healing and redemption” (190). These ideals open up the possibilities for children to repent (leaving their street-connectedness and other addictions), receive justification (having a second chance in life), and forgive (healing their broken hearts as well as broken relationships with self, others, and God).

Sharing the love of God to children during their stay at a transition home can be fruitful. Downs points out how “traumatized children have had violence, inhumanity, and wickedness modeled for them. They may be imitating these actions in their own lives” (200). However, adults who are taking care of them at the transition house can “model for them the more excellent way of love” (200) by valuing, respecting, and treating the children with dignity and worth. This is why delivering these ideals to children in an accepting, caring, and loving setting can beneficially affect other areas of development in the lives of children. Therefore, when we reintegrate them back to their community, they are able to go to school, work, and serve their communities in significant ways. Other than becoming a street outreach worker and helping Neri Payage in his ministry, some of his other children who have been healed from their street-

connectedness and other addictions are now pastors, teachers, policemen, or hold other social roles in their communities.

### **Christianity and Papua's Social History**

A faith-based approach to intervention in the case of Wamena also shows a practice of contextualization, as the Christian faith fits into the social and cultural climate of Wamena. UNDP, in their 2014 report, highlights the importance of having faith-based organizations and religious leaders involved in development, since they hold an important presence in local communities. UNDP believes that faith-based organizations have the capacities “to deliver critical services, [which] allow them to mobilize grassroots support, earn the trust of vulnerable groups, and influence cultural norms – all of which make them vital stakeholders in development” (3). This is particularly true in the case of Wamena. The Papuans have a special relationship with the church, and this goes back to period of the Dutch colonization. The Papuans' positive relationship with the church started with them working alongside the Dutch and missionaries in the spirit of what they called Papuanisation, in exchange for access to education, health, and governmental positions to open up the interior highlands of Papua from complete isolation (Rumbiak 124-125). After the Dutch colonization ended, which was marked with Indonesia's settlement in Papua in the 1960s, Christianity once again influenced the Papuan's struggle for freedom. Rumbiak's account following Indonesia's rather “chaotic and violent settlement” in that period below describes the role of Christianity in shaping Papua's social history:

We were educated, and guided by our faith as Christians, we remained resilient in spite of all these events and circumstances. God's eyes were not closed to us. God also came to see and feel the situation we were experiencing. If we hadn't had strong faith, we might



have collapsed. That was our experience at that time. We steeled our hearts, in the faith that that the whole situation would surely pass. (Rumbiak 132)

To date, Papuans still look up to the church for spiritual as well as daily guidelines. The ex-street children I interviewed at Neri Payage's orphanage revealed how they were able to completely leave the street life along with their addictions, finish school, and have vocational careers because they have been "redeemed" by the Gospel given to them under Neri Payage's ministry. However, what if a child has a different religious belief than Christianity?

With a commitment for inclusivity in our service, children of other religious backgrounds are still invited to join the rehabilitation and reintegration program. Thompson asserts that "only under God's steady gaze of love are we able to find the healing and restoration we so desperately need" (2371- 2372). Under this belief, although the program is largely grounded on the Christian ideals of healing and reconciliation, children of different religious backgrounds who wish to be a part of the program are welcomed to experience a faith-based approach to rehabilitation and reintegration. However, we will make it clear to these children in the first place that the program, methods, and teachings of our intervention program are Christ-centered. Thus, we will always ensure that prior of joining, children of different religions already have a clear understanding of this, and are willing to be voluntary and active participants throughout the whole rehabilitation and reintegration process.

### **3.4 Intervention that is Community-led**

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or

thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,’

- NIV, Matthew 25:35-40

An African proverb says that “it takes a village to raise a child,” and the same case holds true for Wamena. Apart from being child-centered and faith-based, an intervention plan should also be community-led. Community in this context refers to any committed individuals, street outreach workers, organizations, churches, and the local government. Intervening in the lives of street children is the responsibility of the whole community. It is not the task of the government alone nor the church and the rest of the community, it must be a collaborative effort between institutions. Without the willingness and commitment of the community to be the counterparts of an intervention plan, any project would not be truly transformative and sustainable. However, the community of faith in Papua is especially called to initiate the collaborative effort in intervention and use its position to influence policies and actions at the local and national level. This is particularly important to challenge an existing barrier to collaboration between institutions: stigmatization over the street children of Wamena.

### **A Calling for Papuan Churches to Do Justice and Challenge Stigmatization**

A community-led intervention means that every stakeholder in the community agrees that they bear a responsibility to take ownership of a situation, and work together with what they have to solve the situation. However, in the case of Wamena, the negative stigmatization towards the street children is a barrier to any intervention plan. Based on my fieldwork findings, the

prevailing use of labels such as “*Aibon Kids*” (*Anak Aibon*) may explain why some churches and government officials are delaying to fully invest in emptying the streets of Wamena. From a rights-based perspective, stigmatization is counterproductive because it views children as helpless individuals, rather than valuable children who have a sense of agency. From a Christian perspective, on the other hand, stigmatization is a distortion of the belief that all human beings are made in the image of God. In the case of Wamena, this is unfortunate because the church should be the one who challenges injustice and changes the prevailing conception existent in a community, instead of indulging in a stigmatization like the rest of society, and thus postponing the creation of a strong partnership among institutions.

The community of faith in Papua has to realize that they hold a significant role to play in issues pertinent to social justice in their community. Sider repeatedly stresses how important it is for followers of Christ to model the life of Christ in their pursuit of peace and justice in a broken world. He draws his argument from the life examples of Jesus Christ himself, whom Sider calls as “a disturber of an unjust peace” (5). In the midst of injustice under the rule of the Roman Empire, Jesus challenged the status quo “so forcefully that the authorities had only two choices [:] they had to accept his call to repentance and change or they had to get rid of him” (Sider 5). How transformative it would be if only Papuan churches come together and call out the wrongful stigmatizing of the street children in Wamena.

Similarly, Katalonge and Rice echo Sider’s notion of naming out injustice. Katolonge and Rice argue that we need to step back and recognize God’s story of reconciliation. They explain that the story is about “contemplation and action, sanctuary and streets, heart and body, worship and activism, theory and practice...” (44). Here, the two authors clearly point out that a calling to serve the oppressed is not separated from a Christian life. Rather, it is God’s calling to practice

the faith we profess to God through a life of activism. The church in Wamena is called to practice what they preach. They should model the kind of street children ministry that is rooted in selfless love, and encourage the community as a whole to also take ownership of the challenges faced by street children. Part of it is to challenge stigmatization.

Why is stigmatization ultimately dangerous? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speaks about “the Danger of a Single Story” at a Ted Talk event. The central message of Adichie’s talk is how a single story has a relation with power, and that it creates stereotypes about people. As consequence, “it makes [the notion] of equality among mankind impossible [as] it normalizes how we are different, rather than how we are similar.” Adichie stresses that stereotyping people, which is the outcome of our personal judgment, “robs people of their dignity.” In the case of Wamena, stigmatization caused the exclusion of street children in the Papuan society. Volf agrees, arguing that when one’s judgment causes one to exclude people, one is treating human beings illegitimately (1105-1107). Indeed, judgment and exclusion of people are striking contradictions to the Christian belief of the Imago Dei. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman argues that seeing those who suffer injustices as defenseless people, or simply weak, ignorant, and backward are not in line with the teachings of Christ (2). Myers supports Thurman’s assertion, arguing that if we continue to perceive people like this, we are “playing God in the lives of people” (220) and thus robbing the supremacy of Christ.

The church in Wamena should influence the government, bringing the message of recovering the true identity of children as made in the image of God. Labels, such as “*Aibon Kids*” (*Anak Aibon*), should not be used anymore since it is disempowering and counterproductive to any intervention effort. In her reconciliation map, Salter McNeil stresses that reconciliation is possible, especially when people begin to shift the way they view their own

identity and people from another group (778-779). When people do this shift, they will be able to “[build] a new collective identity and a collaborative community that can hold the concerns, values, desires, and experiences that they share [with each other]” (Salter McNeil 782-784). The community of Wamena can build a new collective identity, where street children are no longer seen as deviants, but rather valuable stakeholders of the community. Reiterating the words of Neri Payage, street children are “the precious pearls of Papua.” The government and the church have the authority and influence to boldly and publicly challenge this stigma in order to reshape the rest of the community’s perception on the street children. Neri Payage’s children described how they prefer the term “children who struggle on the street” or “*anak-anak yang berjuang di jalan*” (Lalo). In order to make this happen, the church has to change itself.

John Lewis asserts that to transform ourselves, we must first leave behind “our condemnation of others” who based on our personal judgments are different. We also have to accept them as our brothers and sisters (Lewis 172). The church in Wamena may find it difficult to challenge a stigmatization that has been adopted throughout the years. However, it is possible if they are willing to have a shift of mindset. Lewis argues that this is why the church has to truly be reconciled with the Truth (177). The Truth, whom in Lewis’ context is God, is the source of a divine love whose power is greater than anything in this world. When the church is reconciled with the Truth, they would not only be able to lovingly embrace those who practice injustice, but also bear the kind of fruits that perpetuate love and peace to the people they serve (Lewis 177).

When the church is fully transformed in the way they do justice, then there is an opportunity for a collaborative effort between institutions. This, in particular, will only benefit the church. Based on his street children ministry in Manila, Philippines, Jeff Anderson believes that collaboration between “churches, agencies, and individuals of common faith in Jesus Christ”

can improve “ministry stewardship and efficiency.” He states that working together can not only “sharpen each other’s skills and hold each other accountable in our walk with Christ and our ministries,” but also ease the sometimes painstaking ministry efforts in other areas of the city, such as disseminating information and materials related to their street children ministry (Anderson 7). In the end, it is about serving on behalf of the street children, and to see their lives healed and flourishing. A community-led intervention plan can pave the way for this kind of transformation.

### **A Calling for Papuan Churches and the Government to Support Children’s Families in the Reintegration Process**

Supporting children’s families is critical in order to have a transformative reintegration process. Coren et al. argue that family reintegration is “potentially a highly valuable outcome for many street-connected children and young people,” and thus, “the effectiveness... of interventions aimed at family reintegration [should be] based on access to appropriate resources for assessment, support and follow-up” (11). This is why an intervention plan that is community-led also has to be based on existent indigenous resources and capacities. As Papuan families in Wamena are a strong asset for a reintegration effort for street children, they should be supported with both material and financial support as needed, as well as emotional, social, and spiritual support. Here, a collaboration can be forged between the government and Papuan churches. The church can step in and play a central role in breaking the generational cycle of family dysfunction through faith-based counseling services and seminars, and strengthening families through prayer walks, and outbound and other community-based activities. The government can support the work of the church by providing any material or financial support as needed by the church.

This shared practice between the church and the government essentially reflects an asset-based approach to community development. Mathie and Cunningham explain that Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) has its appeal because it “draws attention to social assets: the particular talents of individuals, as well as the social capital inherent in the relationships that fuel local associations and informal networks” (474). In the context of Wamena, the church may help to uncover the social capital of families in the Papuan community. Here, the church can use a tool widely used in ABCD, Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is a powerful tool to shape policy-making process and bring about more personal and effective solutions that very much reflect the unique values of a certain community. One of the approaches of AI is to discover what a community already has, and this is intended to uncover what works best in facing a situation (Hammond 27). Rather than focusing on problems, community participants are asked to focus on their strengths and what has been going well (Baquet et al. par. 2-4). By doing so, a community may appreciate and celebrate their potentials, and use it to make significant changes. As a collectivist society, AI activities in a Papuan setting can be done through prayer walks and outbound activities. These kinds of activities will remarkably strengthen families and the community as whole.

Further, these activities also reflect a group approach to social integration. Clinard, in his research, proves that a group approach and citizen participation can be a powerful tool to bring about local community reintegration (261). With this approach, his research findings show how young people “with delinquency and other adolescent difficulties” have integrated their individual selves, overcome stigma, changed his or her conception of himself or herself, and made him or her feel again the solidarity of the group behind the individual (Clinard 262). Apart from the aforementioned AI activities, the church may also collaborate with the government to

include street children and their families in other community-building activities, such as cleaning the streets of Wamena from garbage in the spirit of togetherness (*gotong royong*), planting plants and trees, and involving children in basic pig husbandry, all of which are contextualized to the local custom in Papua. Clinard believes that activities like these will give individuals “a place of belonging in the local structure” (261). Papuan community members should also be invited to participate and work together with the children and their families.

Breaking the generational cycle of family dysfunction is also fundamental to create resilient families in the Papuan community. The church can play a role by providing faith-based counseling services and seminars. The government, on the other hand, should consider creating early childhood programs for Papuan parents. The American Center for the Study of Social Policy suggests that an early childhood program that strengthens parents may be the best child abuse and neglect prevention strategy (1-1). Modeled upon family strengths and resiliency, instead of family risks and deficits, the Center seeks to create a framework for parents to receive education about childcare and any other support they need, such as childcare services and preschool programs for children (CSSP 1-1-1-3). In the case of Wamena, the government should also work in partnership with other development organizations who have a similar program already running in Papua. World Vision Indonesia (WVI) is a good example.

WVI has a program called the Safety Net Program, which aims “to ensure that children at risk [particularly due to Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN)], will complete secondary school and not be forced by family financial pressure to earn income for the family on the streets” (46-47). The program has three objectives: first, “that vulnerable students are kept in school and improve their capacity through access to quality education,” second, “to improve parents’ awareness of the rights of children,” third, “to strengthen the capacity of schools through curriculum and



teacher training in integrating child rights into teaching methods” (47). With WIV’s assistance, the government may provide trainings for teachers and parents of designated families, and this in return would nurture a greater readiness in teachers and parents to accept children back in the community, send them to school and other vocational centers, and keep them off the street.

In order to have a community-led rehabilitation and reintegration effort, Papuan churches have a significant role to play in terms of leading the intervention plan and influencing government policies and actions. However, in order to do so, the church is called to first conduct a self-examination in regards to its current treatment and perception of the street children. The church then has to be a catalyst for social justice, and in the case of Wamena, it has to challenge the prevailing stigmatization of the street children. Furthermore, children’s families should be strengthened in order to ensure the success of a reintegration plan. The government also plays an important role, where they should provide any necessary support to the church, as well as mobilizing support from other local community stakeholders.

#### **4. Replicating and Contextualizing the Agape Model in Kenya into the Case of Wamena**

In practice, the Agape Model is a good example of an intervention plan that is ultimately child-centered, faith-based, and community-led. Thus, I see that there is an opportunity for success by replicating and contextualizing the Agape Model, an intervention program for the street children in Kenya, into Wamena. The Agape Model is a faith-based children’s ministry in Kenya and has been serving the street children of the country since 1993. Their ministry started when Darla Calhoun encountered begging street boys in the town of Kisumu, Kenya on her way to work. Starting with five boys that Darla helped, with her dedication and perseverance to help

children in Kenya leave the life of the street, today Agape is a thriving ministry. It has three campuses with seven missionary couples and Kenyan staff of around eighty-five teachers, house parents, guards, and administrative personnel (Agape, “Our Story”). Most importantly, for about two decades, the ministry has reintegrated 1,800 former street children in Kisumu into safe and loving families after extensive rehabilitation and pastoral care. Currently, the ministry’s staff members are visiting over seven hundred children that have been reintegrated and over eighty percent of the children are staying at their homes (Agape, “Reintegrate”). What is the key of their success?

The Agape Model is based on four components: Rescue/Receive, Rehabilitate, Reintegrate, and Redeem. In the first component, Rescue/Receive, Agape focuses on building relationship and sharing the gospel with Kenyan street children and opening up an invitation for them to join Agape. In this stage, Agape’s Outreach Team plays a central role. Almost every day the team goes out to the streets of Kisumu, and they are targeting twenty-one different “bases” where street children usually live, work, and gather. Some of the activities they do are playing with the children, getting to know them, and sharing the Gospel with them (Agape, “Redeem”). Afterwards, the Outreach Team ends by inviting anyone who would like to share more about their problems at home or on the street, or to join Agape. Usually, some children and youth tell the team that they want to leave street life, while others express how they want to go back to their families. For the latter, Agape Outreach Team works closely with the Agape Child Welfare Team and helps the child to get back to his or her family. This individual then is added to their reintegration follow-up visit plan (Agape, “Redeem”). For children who are not that old and want to join Agape, the rehabilitation process begins.

The second component is the Rehabilitation. At this stage, children are housed in a transition center, where they are given a nutritious meal, drink, new clothing, and necessary medical, emotional, and spiritual care. This process also requires children to attend a Transition class. The Transition Class itself is a 4-week program that takes place after the child's spirituality is assessed by the team. Then, children are given life skills training, group and individual counseling, team building, and Agape's Reasons to Believe class. This is a 20-lesson course that is based on an understanding and personal relationship with Christ. Some of the foundational questions include, "How do we know He exists? Why did He create us? Where does God live, and who goes there? How big and powerful is God? Is the Bible different from other holy books? Why did God give us the Law? How do I know God loves me? What did it cost God to rescue me? Does Jesus understand me? Why should I trust in Jesus? How can I be saved?" (Agape, "Redeem").

When children eventually take a commitment to further deepen their faith in Jesus, they are enrolled in Agape's Discipleship class, another 20-lesson course. The goal of this class is to equip new believers with the fundamentals of faith in Christ in order to sustain them when they are later integrated back into their families and community. Indeed, Agape Children's Ministry is centered on Biblical teachings and faith in Christ (See Appendix A: The "Four R" Process). The three stages are all influenced by the Redeem aspect, which is "the good news of Jesus Christ." Agape uses a faith-based approach because it believes that when children are in Christ, they can learn about God's grace and forgiveness. Further, when they stumble, they know that they can always come back to the faith that allows them to repent and continue to grow. In Kenya, this approach has been generally successful, with children being responsive to the Gospel teachings. Additionally, during weekday evenings, Agape's House Parents have devotionals with the

children, and on Sundays, Agape holds church services on its campus. They note that, “[it is] our goal to saturate our children with the truth of God’s Word!” (Agape, “Redeem”).

The last component, the reintegration process, consists of five steps: Identify the Family; Prepare the Family; Place the Child; Empower the Family; Release the Family (Agape, “Reintegrate”). This ministry is highly committed to the reintegration of children back to accepting and loving families in their community. Agape clearly emphasizes that it is not a long-term care facility because they believe that “the best place for a child to be is with his family, in his home community.” The process of identifying the family of a child takes one to three months. The Agape team begins this process by trying to find the parents or home where the child originally came from. However, if a suitable home is not found (due to various reasons, such as child abuse and neglect), the team looks for extended families or other families in the community that are ready, willing, and capable to provide necessary care and protection for the child (Agape, “Reintegrate”).

Preparing families takes around one to three months. In this second stage, the Agape team assesses the child’s family in order to prepare the family with a guiding and resourceful plan. This includes family training, counseling, and/or financial assistance. Additionally, the Agape team also conducts short term weekend or week-long visits if it is necessary for the family and the child. In the third process, the placement stage takes one month, where the child is finally placed in the designated family. The Agape team then closely monitors the child’s living situation in order to determine the progress of the placement. The team also makes sure that the child attends school, church, and other community activities (Agape, “Reintegrate”).

In the fourth stage, Agape focuses on empowering families, which takes from one to four years. To empower families, Agape provides family training, counseling, follow-up visits, and

financial and/or material assistance as needed. The goal is to create “independent, healthy, and loving [families] that can sustain [themselves] in the long term” (Agape, “Reintegrate”). Finally, in the last stage, Agape releases families, and this process takes around one to ten years. Once families have been empowered and children have been stabilized at their homes, the Agape team begins the process of releasing these families. Financial assistance is no longer provided, and they also reduce their follow-up visits. Agape stresses that the goal is “to let [families] detach from our programs and services in a healthy way while still monitoring the status of the child.” Nonetheless, how do they make sure that it is safe for a child to be reintegrated into a family?

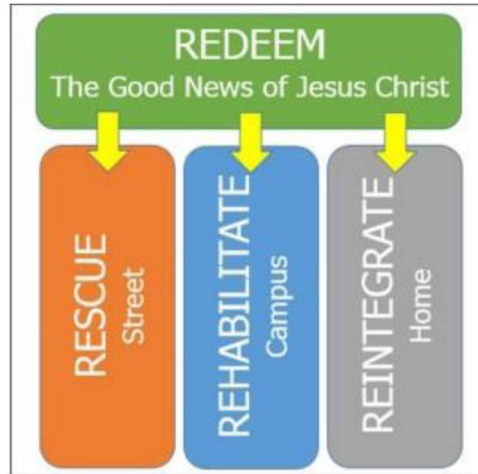
Agape uses a tool by USAID called the Child Status Index (CSI). Designed to assess the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children, the CSI looks at “children’s current needs, monitors improvements in specific dimensions of child well-being [,] and identifies areas of concern that can be served by program interventions” (USAID 1). There are six indicators for the well-being of a child: food/nutrition, shelter and care, protection, health care, social needs, and education (USAID 3). Some of the questions addressed in this index include, “Does the child have sufficient and nutritious food at all times to grow well and to have an active and healthy life? Does the child have shelter that is adequate, dry and safe? Is there at least one adult who provides consistent love and support? Is the child safe from abuse, neglect or exploitation? Is there adequate legal protection for the child? Is the child healthy? Does he/she have access to preventive and treatment health services? Does the child enjoy good relationships with other children and adults? Is the child performing well at home, school, job training, or work and developing age appropriate knowledge and skills?” (USAID 1). Agape is currently using these indicators to determine whether a child can be reintegrated into a family, as well as for follow-

up. In this thesis, I designed a project that showcases the contextualization of the Agape Model in Wamena (See Appendix B: The Wamena Project).

## **5. Conclusion**

This thesis presents the voices of the street children in Wamena and their heartbreaking yet hopeful stories, and offers workers of local orphanages, social activists, church and tribal leaders, as well as government officials the opportunity to collaborate with the children to help them leave street lives once and for all. Moving children from the street, fulfilling their needs holistically, taking up their cause, and reintegrating them back to their families and community are not a choice, but an obligation that has to be met critically and timely. Believing in the power of a holistic approach to intervention that is child-centered, faith-based, and community-led, I have an unshaken belief that someday the streets of Wamena will be empty of children living and working there. I am yearning to see Papuan children living a dignified life, free from the web of deprivation, addiction, and attachment to the street, and it is my greatest hope to someday see these children become tomorrow's leaders who are building and changing their community, their country, and the world. Let's work with them. Let's help them live their best lives.

**Appendix A: The “Four R” Process**



(Agape, “Redeem”)

## Appendix B: A Contextualized Model: The Wamena Project<sup>13</sup>

### 1. Invite

- Duration:

Four to five times a week, excluding Sundays / throughout the year.

- Place:

The streets of Wamena / a drop-in center located in the heart of Wamena.

- Description of Activities:

The Wamena Project would begin with street outreach workers going to places where children live and work. The street outreach workers would consist of Papuan pastors, trained volunteers from the church or the community, ex-street children, and medical workers. On the streets, the primary goal of the outreach would be to gain children's trust and build relationship with them. Some of the activities would include playing sports, sharing the Gospel, and having fellowship together. Sharing the Gospel should be done in an interesting and non-dominating way, one that does not force children to come to the Christian faith. In order to appeal to street children, street outreach workers should use interesting methods. For example, based on my fieldwork experience, Papuan children love to play instruments and sing. Therefore, the team should see how some children can be tasked to play guitars or acoustic drums and lead their friends in singing. In addition, food, drink, new clothing, and necessary medical assistance would be given during fellowship time. By then, children should know that they can share their problems or needs with the street outreach workers if

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<sup>13</sup> If this project is accepted by the local government and receives necessary support from related churches and organizations, then it would be a separate project from Neri Payage's ministry, since by the time this research was almost done, we received news that Neri Payage has started a partnership with a church based in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia.



they want to. They should also make it clear from the beginning that street children are invited to visit the drop-in center.

The drop-in center would be the integration of the New Hanoi model and the Training and Seminar center, with a Sports center as an added component. Children would have a place to eat nutritious meals, rest, get new clothing, shower, and play sports with their friends. However, apart from this, the center should also offer services that address the children's emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Children should be given health care, as well as counseling, prayers and pastoral care. Lastly, the center would offer catch-up education, HIV/AIDS, *Aibon* and Alcohol abuse awareness seminars, and life skills trainings. Throughout the whole process, from children being on the street to being participants at the drop-in center, an invitation to join the rehabilitation and reintegration program at the main campus should be made clear and remain open.

All children of different religious beliefs would be welcomed to use and receive services given at the center. However, street outreach workers should also make it clear to the children that the rehabilitation and reintegration program at the main campus is largely based on the teachings of the Christian faith. The program would require their commitment and discipline to participate in the classes and counseling sessions offered, in order to enter the reintegration process. As this program is designed for children's voluntary yet active participation, children of other religious backgrounds should have a clear understanding of this prior of joining the rehabilitation and reintegration process. In order to ensure this, The Wamena Project Team should create a Letter of Agreement that the children could sign, thus indicating their understanding and approval of the Christian content of the program, as well as their willingness to be voluntary yet active participants in such context.

- Actors and Possible Agencies / Organizations Involved:

Street children, ex-street children, The Wamena Project Outreach Team (Papuan pastor, trained volunteer from the church or the community, ex-street children, and a medical worker), the Social Agency of Jayawijaya Regency (*Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Jayawijaya*), the Head of the Social Rehabilitation Division of the Social Agency of Jayawijaya Regency (*Kepala Bidang Rehabilitasi Sosial pada Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Jayawijaya*), Papua Interfaith Communication Forum (*Forum Koordinasi Umat Beragama*), Jayawijaya Church Alliance (*Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Jayawijaya*), Agape's Children Ministry, "Filadelfia Fellowship" Assemblies of God Church Wamena, Mercy for All Assemblies of God Church Jakarta, and Overlake Christian Church.

## 2. Rehabilitate

- Duration:

One to three months.

- Place:

The main campus, not too far from the downtown district of Wamena.

- Description of Activities:

Once children receive the invitation, they would start the intensive rehabilitation process. This process would offer both psychological and spiritual assistance. The primary purpose of the psychological assistance is to help children recover from trauma, abuse, neglect, and other behavioral issues. As certified and trained psychologists would be leading this effort, the campus' house parents should also be trained to assist children on a daily basis. On the other hand, the primary purpose of the spiritual assistance is to help children grasp the content of the Christian faith.

The Reasons to Believe class (*Kelas Alasan untuk Percaya*) would be a 4-week program, based on an understanding and personal relationship with God. After children pass this class, they would start another 20-lesson course, The Discipleship class (*Kelas Aku Murid Yesus*), where children would be equipped with spiritual tools to strengthen their new faith. As children attend these classes, they would still be participating in the program's holistic services: catch-up education, seminars, and life skills training.

At the main campus, children would have similar services like those offered at the drop-in center. A day in the children's lives would be starting the day with a morning prayer with their friends and house parents. Then, they would do house chores, such as cleaning and cooking. By early afternoon they would attend school, whether formal or catch-up education. In the evening, their activities would be different every day. One day, they would attend the spiritual classes, and meet up with psychologists. The other day, they would attend seminars or life skills trainings.

- Actors and Possible Agencies / Organizations Involved:

Children, the Wamena Project Main Campus Team (teachers, house parents, house pastors, guards, administrative and operative personnel, a visiting team of psychologists, and a visiting medical team), Agape's Children Ministry, "Filadelfia Fellowship" Assemblies of God Church Wamena, Mercy for All Assemblies of God Church Jakarta, and Overlake Christian Church.

### 3. Reintegrate

- Duration:

First stage (one to three months); Second stage (one to three months); Third stage (one month); Fourth stage (one to four years); Fifth stage (one to ten years).

- Place:

Main campus, Wamena, and the central highlands.

- Description of Activities:

The reintegration process would consist of five stages: Identify the Family; Prepare the Family; Place the Child; Empower the Family; and Release the Family. To identify the family, The Wamena Project Child Welfare Team would try to find the parents or home where the child originally came from. However, if a child was either orphaned, did not have an extended family, or a suitable home was not found (due to various reasons, such as child abuse and neglect), the team would look for extended families or other families in the community that would be ready, willing, and capable to provide necessary care and protection for the child.

To prepare families, the Wamena Project Child Welfare Team would assess the child's designated family in order to prepare them with a guiding and resourceful plan. This would include family training, counseling, and/or financial assistance. Financial assistance would be in the form of income-generating businesses, which would be another area to develop in this project in the future. Additionally, the team would also conduct short-term, weekend, or week-long visits for the family and the child.

After placing a child in a designated family, the team would closely monitor the child's living situation in order to determine the progress of the placement. The team would also make sure that the child still attends school, church, and other community activities. To empower families, the Wamena Project Child Welfare Team would provide family training, counseling, follow-up visits, and financial and/or material assistance as needed. Finally, in the last stage, the Wamena Project Child Welfare Team would release families. Once

families have been empowered and children have been stabilized at their homes, the Wamena Child Welfare team would begin the process of releasing these families. Financial assistance would no longer be provided, and we would also reduce the team's follow-up visits. The goal is to build the capacity, resiliency, and sustainability of families, so they could meet their own needs in the long-run without The Wamena Project Team's intervention.

- Actors and Possible Agencies / Organizations Involved:

Children, the Wamena Project Main Campus Team, The Wamena Project Child Welfare Team, the Social Agency of Jayawijaya Regency (*Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Jayawijaya*), Papua Interfaith Communication Forum (*Forum Koordinasi Umat Beragama*), Jayawijaya Church Alliance (*Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Jayawijaya*), World Vision Indonesia, Agape's Children Ministry, "Filadelfia Fellowship" Assemblies of God Church Wamena, Mercy for All Assemblies of God Church Jakarta, and Overlake Christian Church.

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