Derailed by the Search for Greener Pastures? A Socio-Cultural and Religious Dilemma of the Youth in Epworth Circuit of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The year 2000 saw many Zimbabweans migrating to South Africa, escaping from the brutal socioeconomic and political environment that rocked the country. Most Zimbabweans who travelled to South Africa saw the country as a potential economic destination and a political refuge. This form of migration was mostly involuntary. Some Zimbabweans without proper travel documents illegally crossed the Limpopo River into South Africa. Most migrants left their children at home because they had no proper destination. Those who eventually settled in South Africa were reluctant to move their children to join them, claiming that South Africa was not safe for children. The migration was done mostly by men, leaving women caring for children. As the Zimbabwean situation continued to deteriorate, some women also left the country leaving their children in the custody of relatives, with some sent to boarding schools. Using qualitative methodology, the paper argues that the search for greener pastures by migrant parents negatively affected the children with some dropping out of school, some engaging in drug abuse, prostitution and others forced to lead families. The paper concludes by challenging the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in Epworth to be relevant in the context of forced migration.

Keywords: derailed, greener pastures, socio-cultural and religious dilemma, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, youth, Epworth circuit

Introduction

Migration is a socio-political, religio-cultural and economic dilemma to the world at large. Much research has been conducted by a number of countries, organisations and groups of people on the effects of migration (Mpofu 2018; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2007). This research aims to investigate the effects of emigration by parents in search of employment opportunities on the lives of their children in Zimbabwe. The research analyses the socio-cultural and religious dilemma of the youth in the Epworth circuit of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ). The paper will first define the methodology employed in this research. The second task is to delineate the term ‘seeking greener pastures’ after which the location of the study and the history of migration in Zimbabwe will be explored. The third mandate is to tabulate the complexities of the Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa (SA). Fourth, the study will use the lived experiences of the interviewees to interpret how the socio-cultural and religious lives of the migrants' children have been negatively affected. The research will conclude by proposing ways in which the MCZ can act the place of a parent (*loco-parentis*) of the abandoned youth.

Methodology

The responses to how the youth in Epworth were being negatively affected by their parents' emigration to SA was collected using both primary and secondary methods. The primary sources were semi-structured and focus group interviews, while secondary material was from literature reviewed, mostly relating to the field of migration. The aim of this research was to establish how migration has affected the future of the youth in Zimbabwe in general and those of Epworth circuit in particular. The semi-structured interviews were used to both purposive and randomly select church leaders. Random sampling is ‘unbiased and every member has an opportunity of being selected’ (Mouton 2009: 138). On one hand, purposively selected church leaders were the Superintendent of Epworth Circuit Rev. Josias Mudenda, Circuit Youth Pastor Rev. Charity Kambarami, Matthew Rusike Children's Home Director Rev. Linre Link Mutendzwa and the Home Chaplain Rev. Faustina Mhlanga. On the other hand, randomly selected church leaders were four stewards representing eight societies and two youth leaders from each of the four societies. The random selection took into consideration, gender and influence of the leaders at the

church among other issues. A total of 16 church leaders were interviewed. The selection of these church leaders was based on the fact that they are the custodians of the MCZ policies in the Epworth circuit (MCZ 2011).

Focus group interviews were also conducted with three categories of participants. First was the snowball-sampled guardians living with the abandoned children. According to Donalek (2004: 24), ‘snowball sampling or chain referencing is used where potential participants are hard to locate’. The purpose of networking with the guardians of the youth whose parents are in diaspora was to elicit their experiences of raising these children. The second category was a mixture of both the parents and the youth, while the third focus group comprised youth aged 12–18 years. This group was interviewed after getting consent from their guardians. From the four societies only three youth above the age of 18 were interviewed using semi-structured interviews because they were the only ones who were identified. All the participants were interviewed after giving their consent, expressing their voluntary willingness to share the data. Focus group interviews allow the participants to feel more at ease participating in a group than they do as individuals. Their coming together allows them to speak with a collective voice (Patton & Cochran 2002). Six to ten guardians (Ferm 2001), were interviewed at the selected four societies making a total number of 32 participants.

In the interviews that included the guardians and the youth, the groups were slightly larger in order to ascertain the security and the integrity of the children aged 12–18 years (Liamputtong 2011). When the youth were being interviewed alone, the researcher requested the company of Rev. Kambarami. This group characterised participants by homogeneity. ‘In a homogeneous group, people freely discuss according to their occupation, history, social class, educational level, age, family characteristics, economic history gender and psychological aptitude’ (Narayan *et al.* 2009: 10). All the guardians and some young adults who preferred to be interviewed as individuals were given pseudonyms. These names guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, including unrecognisability (Liamputtong 2011).

Definition of Seeking for Greener Pastures

The idiom ‘seeking for greener pastures’ refers to a number of terms like asylum seeking, deinstitutionalisation, diaspora, economic migration, emigration, rehoming, resettling, resettlement or transferring (Cambridge Advanced

Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus 2019). The phrase originated in the context of moving from the place of origin to a more promising environment. This new setting can be another country or to new employment within the same country but at a different organisation or company. The phrase is believed to have originated from a Latin proverb cited by Erasmus of Rotterdam and translated into English by Richard Taverner in 1545, which says, '*the corn in another man's ground seems ever more fertile and plentiful than our own does*' (Stimphil n.d.). This expression came from the habit of the cattle grazing through the fence on the grass of the adjacent field, or escaping from one pasture to another through a broken fence line in search of new grass to eat. The concept of perceiving greener pastures thus entails that, other people's lives always seem more desirable than our own.

Theologically, the idea of greener pastures is depicted in the biblical story of Abraham and Lot who; because of the constant quarrelling among their servants decided to part ways. Gen. 13:10–11 says, '*And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord... and Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley*'. In this article the phrase, seeking for greener pastures refers to the exodus of Zimbabweans to SA, particularly in search of employment. The period under study scattered Zimbabweans all over the world in search of greener pastures. Common destinations were the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States of America where the migrants were mostly asylum seekers. This study is more concerned with SA because of its geographical proximity to Zimbabwe.

Crush *et al.* (2015) maintain that Zimbabweans' migration to SA since 1990 has consistently increased over time, and can be broken into three waves with distinctive drivers of migration patterns and migrant profiles. The first wave occurred in the 1990s when the Zimbabwean economy started to weaken. The second surge was from 2000 to 2005 when Zimbabwe experienced serious political turmoil. This situation was exacerbated by the formation of the first-time strong opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Its winning of most urban constituencies turned the Zimbabwean political landscape towards a new direction of intolerance and political trauma by the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) that had enjoyed one party state rule since 1980. The third wave was in 2008 when Zimbabwe had seriously contested elections that resulted in a severe deterioration of the country's economy (Hanke 2009). Many Zimbab-

weans, dampened by the hardships, saw no future in the former breadbasket of Africa and migrated from the country.

Although the migratory trends of Zimbabweans to SA has a long history, as will be discussed later, this research places its interests on the last phase for two reasons. First, this is the period when the Zimbabwean economy was on the decline. Hanke (2009) argues that 'by the end of November 2008, the Zimbabwean dollar 'died' from hyperinflation that made it useless'. The Webster New Encyclopaedic Dictionary (1993: 488) defines hyperinflation as 'a situation whereby inflation becomes very high in a very short space of time'. Hanke (2009) adds that, the Zimbabwean annual inflation rate was 89.7 sextillion. McGreal (2008) stresses that '80% of Zimbabwe's population was living on less than £1 a day with children being malnourished. The Reserve Bank resorted to strapping zeros [to the currency] but by September 2008, inflation had reached quindeccillion and novemdecillion percent'. This period caused many Zimbabweans to see life as better across the border, with SA in particular as a potential destination.

The second justification for selecting 2008 onwards is political. Although Zimbabwe is not a warzone the country has serious political instability, to the extent that those suspected of supporting or actually belonging to the opposition parties were assassinated and those believed to be suspicious in the ruling party also suffer the same fate. Since 2005 an estimated 1 – 1.5 million Zimbabweans fled to SA. These people were escaping from persecution, in the form of targeted, mass, forced evictions, destruction of homes and livelihoods, and from economic destitution as the Zimbabwean economy collapsed (de Jager & Musuva 2016). In 2008, opposition party members fled as refugees from the brutal crackdown as political opponents of President Robert Mugabe in the aftermath of the March 2008 Harmonised Elections (de Jager & Musuva 2016). SW Radio Africa report, reproduced on a number of websites, records over three million Zimbabweans as living in South Africa (Chiumia 2013), although Chiumia cautions that these numbers are unrealistic. This situation disrupted the lives of children who were left in Zimbabwe. The migrating parents left their children in less than desirable situations. There was no one to take care of them. Some families became child-headed, other children were left in the custody of relatives and others were sent to boarding schools. Migration has a negative impact on many children and those who are taking care of them, not to mention the trauma on the migrant parents themselves.

Identity of the Epworth Community

Epworth is a peri-urban settlement about 15km east of Harare. The settlement was established in the late 1890s by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries. The missionaries were welcomed by Chief Chiremba who became the first convert and, many of the residents of Epworth farm converted to Methodist faith after him. Throughout the colonial era, the settlement grew as a church mission. In the late 1970s, the settlement saw a surge in the population as people fled the liberation warzones which had made the countryside unsafe. After the Zimbabwean independence of 1980, more people came to Harare in search of economic opportunities. Epworth, with its informal set up, provided a destination for the new arrivals (Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation 2009). In 1986, the Epworth Local Board was created to formalise the settlement and this attracted more people to seek accommodation in Epworth. The influx was also necessitated by the rising cost of living, to the extent that even the middle-class citizens from medium densities like Braeside and Queensdale retreated into the slum areas of Epworth in search of a cheaper life (Masuku 2013). This situation resulted in the emergence of more informal settlements as people occupied the remaining spaces, giving birth to new settlements called '*magadha*' (unplanned settlements). This situation led to more than 70% of the 30 000 families in Epworth staying in informal settlements. Msindo *et al.* (2013) says 'some of the people who found refuge in Epworth were the victims of the Zimbabwe's 2005, clean-up campaign popularly known as Operation Restore Order or '*Murambatsvina*'. The operation was meant to remove illegal settlers in Harare in particular. This clean-up campaign left many people homeless.

Economically, most of the people in Epworth are poor and when an opportunity to emigrate Zimbabwe arose, a number of people went to SA and settled there illegally. Most of the people especially those in the informal settlements built their houses out of poles, mud, sunburnt earth bricks, wooden planks, grass and plastics. Msindo *et al.* (2013) reports that the unsettled areas of Epworth are fertile campaigning grounds used by ZANU PF in particular to advocate for 'land justice' for those that are landless and live on the margins of mainstream society.

History of Migration in Zimbabwe

Migration is a movement of people from one place to another within and across geographical, ethnic, cultural and religious boundaries (Aboagye-Mensah

2013). This movement is an integral part of human experience and is as old as humanity (Aboagye-Mensah 2013: 14). Globally, by 2013, 215 million people were on the move and these forms of migration were either voluntary or involuntary (Asamoah-Gyda *et al.* 2013; Muzondiwa 2019). For Blinder (2010) these push and pull factors are caused by socio-economic, political, environmental, religious and cultural reasons. Socio-economic factors are both pull and push factors while political elements are major push factors. The United Nations (UN) Population Fund report estimated that, in 2005, 191 million people lived outside their country of birth, a figure that has doubled since 1975 and continues to rise (UN Population Division. 2006). In Africa, this flow has been experienced in SA which arguably has the largest number of migrants (Crush 2015). According to McDonald (1999: 15), ‘most Africans migrate to SA to look for work, visit friends, to sell and buy goods among other reasons’. This situation according to Khan (2007) means that SA is one of the few African countries that allows refugees and asylum seekers to move freely throughout the country. Khan (2007) also claims that, there are no refugee camps in SA. As soon as an asylum seeker applies for sanctuary, they are allowed to seek employment and access housing. Refugees are also granted rights to primary and emergency health care and basic education, the same as is afforded to South African citizens.

The Zimbabwe to SA migration has a long history that traces back to the 1970s. This point contradicts the findings of Crush (2012) who locates the date from the 1990s. Zimbabwean migratory history has taught us that some men who moved to SA and worked in mines and plantations and not all returned to Zimbabwe. Matabvu (2019) confirms that Zimbabweans have always been attracted by greener pastures in South Africa. She attests that:

Attracted by the allure of gleaming yellow nuggets of the South African gold mines, multitudes left the country with the sole wish of breaking poverty’s leash that had ravaged and haunted their families for generations. The populace trooping down south soon found employment in the booming gold mines and were soon conscripted by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), the biggest umbrella body of South African Chamber of Mines that include, Harmony Gold Mine, Gold Fields, African Rainbow Minerals, Sibanye-Stillwater, AngloGold Ashanti and

Anglo-American South Africa at the time (2019).

With the passage of time, the acronym WNLA was literally translated to ‘Wenera’ in Shona dialect of Zimbabwe (Chikamwe 2015). ‘Wenera’ was created to use all means at its disposal to force, deceive, bribe and use criminal tactics to recruit African labour. Due to the labour shortage in SA, ‘Wenera’ extended to countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Chikamwe 2015). In Zimbabwe, recruiters came face to face with another monster – the Rhodesian settlers who were equally hungry for cheap labour and there was conflict between Wenera recruiters and the Rhodesian settlers (Chikamwe 2015). The resultant altercation led to the creation of a new labour recruitment law, called the Compulsory Native Labour Act (Chikamwe 2015) which was later translated to ‘*chibharo*’ literally meaning ‘abuse’ in Shona dialect of Zimbabwe. The newly enacted law resulted in every able-bodied male African being forced to work for white people on farms and mines under strict slave-like conditions (Chikamwe 2015). *Chibharo* brought about great suffering among Africans who lost their homes, families and became vagabonds and miserable slaves in both South Africa and in their own motherland Zimbabwe (Chikamwe 2015).

The sad news about ‘Wenera’ is that those miners who returned to Zimbabwe were literally ‘moving graves’ because the harsh mining environment negatively affected their health. Dube (2015) records a very sad story that attracted the attention of the Zimbabwean print and electronic media, where South African gold producers asked Zimbabweans who used to work as mine workers in the 1970s and contracted the fatal lung diseases, silicosis and tuberculosis to come forward and receive compensation. In giving the notice, the South African High Court announcement read thus, ‘eligible claimants will be entitled to receive a once-off payment of between ZAR10 000 and ZAR250 000, depending on the nature and seriousness of the disease. In certain exceptional circumstances, this amount may be increased to up to ZAR500 000’ (Ndlovu 2019). Although ‘Wenera’ was purportedly a greener pasture, Ndlovu decries that thousands of Zimbabweans who migrated to SA in the 1970s to work in the mines, by 2019, their pensions were yet to be released and a number of them have since died (Ndlovu 2019).

The latest development in Zimbabwe is that, many young people from the Midlands and most parts of Matabeleland provinces in particular drop out of school to go to ‘eGoli’ (the place of gold). The lure of SA is fuelled during

the festive season, when Zimbabweans from SA are seen driving South African registered vehicles.

Traditionally, it is during this time of the year that Zimbabwean migrants visit their families, bringing with them luxury goods, party food and drinks and wearing expensive clothing. Their short stay in the country is characterised by pomp and prestige, however, this joy normally ends in January as some would have overindulged, and may fail to raise money for bus fare or fuel to return to SA (Mudenda 2019). The first reason for these continuous migration tendencies was expressed by Wa Kabwe-Segatti (2008: 29) who argues that SA has attracted both highly skilled and less skilled migrants to work in the key sectors of economy, yet large numbers of South Africans live in great poverty. Although many SA equally live in poverty, migrants who opted for SA as a destination are not worried about the low wages that they receive arguing that it is better than not having a job in their home countries.

The second justification was echoed by Crush (2012) who mentions that SA is increasingly seen as a place to try to build a new life rather than a place of temporary residence and quick income for Zimbabweans. Although SA is argued to have greener pastures by many Africans, it is plagued by brutal xenophobia targeted at African foreign nationals (Crush 2012). Some of the reasons for these heartless attacks were summarised by President Jacob Zuma in his Freedom Day Speech:

... let me emphasise that we have noted the complaints raised by South Africans and these will be attended to. These include: that the number of illegal and undocumented migrants is increasing, that immigrants take their jobs as some employers prefer workers who are prepared to accept lower wages. There are also complaints that foreign nationals benefit from free government services, and that they run businesses illegally. There is also an accusation that undocumented foreign nationals commit crimes in the country. We have to address the underlying causes of the violence and tensions, which is the legacy of poverty, unemployment and inequality in our country and our continent and the competition for limited resources (2015).

Foreign nationals' problems in SA include social, economic and legal challenges. Zimbabweans, in particular, suffer legal problems that are not

experienced by other Southern African Development Community (SADC) nationals. For example, the availability of various permits allowing legal entry cases excludes Zimbabweans. The permits include: the ninety days visitors authorisation for SADC citizens from Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Botswana; the one-day 50km border pass in Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia; and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) permits in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. None of these instruments caters for Zimbabweans, resulting in some illegally crossing the Limpopo River to SA (Kiwanuka & Monson 2009). A number of these illegal migrants are killed by crocodiles or drown in the Limpopo River, others are attacked by wild animals in the game parks along the way, while others are murdered for ritual ceremonies. If they manage to cross the river, these migrants are often ruthlessly ill-treated by South African security forces (see also Kumalo & Mujinga 2017; Kiwanuka, & Monson 2009; Crush 2015).

Socio-cultural and Religious Experiences of the Affected Children

More than 25 families in one society had children under the age of 18, whose parents were away in SA. According to Nyanjaya (2013:vii), family functions as the primary government. A government is as good as its leaders and inhabitants. A family is thus as good as its parents. Family provides care, education, counselling, stability, unity, corporation, and development. When parents fail to raise their children well, the entire social, and political system suffers (Nyanjaya 2013). The experiences of the children and guardians interviewed demonstrates that migration in search of greener pastures actually yields more negative than positive results, because the families become disentangled. These challenges include emotional, social, economic and religious trauma. One child-headed family leader interviewed regretted that their parents went to the diaspora and was left in the custody of a neighbour who was a stranger to them, although they were told she was their aunt (mother's sister). The family leader also expressed the sorrow of being alienated from their grandparents whom their mother accused of witchcraft. The father's parents live in the vicinity but the children were instructed by their mother not to visit them nor have any contact with them.

Migration to the diaspora left-behind children isolated. They are disconnected from their parents and relatives. Sometimes their guardians are torn

between the child whom they are rearing who needs their care and the parent in the diaspora who always feel that their child is being abused (Kambarami 2019). The experiences of one couple who are both students, was one of the examples that presents the dilemma that guardians endure. The couple have eight children under their custody. Of the eight, three are their biological offspring, five are for the wife's relatives. Of the five, one belongs to her sister who stays in SA and the husband is in Namibia, the other four are two sets of siblings from two couples who are in SA. These children are aged between five and 14 years. The children have been staying with this couple since 2009. The wife stated that:

It is not easy to look after five children, all being my relatives. Culturally, it gives marital problems, both with the husband and with the in-laws. At one time my husband threatened to move out because being students, we cannot afford the expenses. This is worsened by the fact that the parents of these children seldom send food and money. When they decide to send money, they direct the money through their friends to the child and not us.

The eight children under the couple's custody are all enrolled at boarding schools. According to Mujinga (2012: 35), 'boarding school is not always the first choice but at times it is a 'dumping place' mostly for parents in diaspora, for children who are very mischievous or whose parents have a moral dilemma'. Although students at boarding schools have a better focus on their studies, compared to those enrolled at day schools, sending children to primary boarding schools is fast-tracking child development and these children risk losing family culture (Mujinga 2012). Nyanjaya (2013) describes family culture as the basic building blocks of transferring the instructions and limits of our civilisation from one generation to the other. When this is lost, the youth cannot sustain the push and pull forces of the fast-paced world. One guardian stressed that, 'boarding school children have different cultures imposed on them at the tender age. Some of the cultures are brought by friends and remote parental culture which is mostly compensatory spoiling behaviour instilled in the child once a year during the festive season'. Banana presents a diversity of challenges encountered by boarders. He accentuates that:

The frontline battle in the fight against pernicious influences and all

forms of anti-social habits, drugs, alcoholism and promiscuity are inevitable in boarding schools. There is no doubt that the above vices become the bane of our very existence. Unwanted premature pregnancies have ruined many of the promising girls' careers. They will be new parents to the new-born baby and yet children lose the indispensable motherly and fatherly love. This leaves the young woman/man with the scars of torture and stigma not to mention the scores of the unfortunate babies who never live to see the sun through abortion, abandonment and become victims of callous murder at the hands of many would be mothers (Banana 1977: 6).

The other socio-economic challenge is the payment of fees. One interviewee stated that at times, fees are not paid in time and the guardians are the ones who have to answer to the school. The reasons for not paying fees are varied. It can be that the parents fail to raise the money, the money is not sent in time or when it is sent, it is abused by those who receive it. This guardian shared an experience of a child who was never given a school progress report from grade three to grade seven because she was in school fees arrears and yet the migrant parents were sending money religiously through their friend. One focus group of children indicated that sometimes their guardians did not visit them at school on family visitation days such as consultation and prize giving days. One youth said, 'Visiting children at school demonstrates relationship, accompaniment, love and care'. The other mentioned that, 'when no one visits you, you feel abandoned, rejected and unimportant'. Parents never know how stressful it is to be lonely when other parents will be spending time with their children. This is the time you really feel that you don't have parents'. Another guardian mentioned that this tended to result in stress and the affected children developed a negative attitude towards their schoolwork.

Moreover, children with parents in the diaspora have the other losses like, family relationships, love from the family, family diet and rights. For the child who heads a home, it is worse because the one who is supposed to be receiving training is training him/herself to do adult work and to take on adult responsibilities. For Mutendzwa (2019), 'social background determines the character of the child. On one hand, family conflicts, skirmishes with others, bullying in most cases have a sociological bearing. On the other, softness, quietness and a possibly negative attitude towards school are traits of sociological background of someone missing parental guidance'. Children

with parents in the diaspora also have an identity crisis. Takunda Muzondiwa, a Zimbabwean and the winner of the 2019 Race Unit Speech in New Zealand bemoans that,

Yesterday I was African, but today I am lost maybe I was blinded by [a] neon sign opportunity, I failed to read the fine print which reads assimilation ... to go back to Zimbabwe I am lost among my own people. It is painful to be lost in a country that was formerly yours ... home has become a memory. To be relevant, you have to assimilate (2019).

From the international speech by Muzondiwa, it is clear that being derailed by parents also includes losing cultural identity in the name of economic empowerment.

One guardian cited an example of her niece whom she was staying with. The girl had her first menstrual period when the guardian was away. The girl cried miserably, assuming that something was wrong with her. The husband of the guardian called his wife to alert her to the situation, the guardian had to advise her husband on how best to counsel the child and to buy sanitary wear for her. Probably the most disturbing experience was given by one guardian whose child was sexually abused by her cousin, the child of the guardian's sister who lives in SA. This cousin is now a drug addict arguing that, 'I have lost life, and I have lost my parents... I have lost direction and I am a loser in life'. This shows intrafamily violence (one cousin raping another) as a result of parents leaving their homeland

The challenges faced by children whose parents are in the diaspora are also religious in nature. Often, there is spiritual warfare of which the guardians are not aware (Mhlanga 2019). Each time church services are conducted, some of these children are possessed by spiritual attacks and there is no parent to help during counselling processes and sessions that follow. Guardians force these youth to attend their church services against the children's will which causes tension. One youth expressed his involvement in Satanism because he had lost touch with his Christian spirituality. This was caused by depression brought on by the void left in the absence of his parents.

Conclusion

This research finds that the migration path to SA is never rosy. This is eviden

ced by the 'Wenera' experiences and the current socio-political and economic challenges faced by those in the diaspora. In spite of these challenges, the church in Zimbabwe still has a chance to rebuild the broken family ties. In Africa, families are entitled to infuse children with a good culture, socialisation and also teach them to obey the word of God. However, the absence of parents has a negative impact on the family in generality. Although the family can have diverse challenges imposed by the socio-cultural and religious challenges, there is still hope for the Epworth Methodist Church to continue rebuilding the present society through moral, psychological, biblical teaching and prayers. Since most of these challenges are found in the church, the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in Epworth has a mandate to be the Christ woven nest for the children whose lives have been derailed by the diaspora phenomenon in their community.

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