

Chiedza Adelaide Mavengere. Human agency and everyday risk: comparing household protective measures for children in Ward 7, Epworth,(Harare) and Samora Machel, Philippi, (Cape Town) (MPhil in Disaster Risk Science, 2011).

Africa is now reportedly the most rapidly urbanising continent, and is projected to surpass Latin America by 2030 (UN, 2009). Approximately one-half of all inhabitants of cities in developing nations live in informal settlements, areas that not only provide livelihood opportunities, but also are fraught with hardship (Pelling & Wisner, 2009). The need for residents of informal settlements to implement proactive risk management and protective interventions is particularly apparent in the case of young children. These constitute an especially vulnerable group that is exposed to multiple dangers and threats in poor, urban areas. Unfortunately, as is the case with other forms of everyday risk, examples of collective, as well as proactive individual actions that reduce child risk; remain poorly researched and documented in African informal settlements (Pelling & Wisner, 2009). Specifically, this study sought to explore and examine the role of human agency in reducing and managing everyday risks in two African informal settlements through the lens of child injury prevention. The methodology used for data collection and data analysis comprised both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A total of 100 household questionnaires were administered in the two study sites. In addition, field observations, two focus group discussions in each study site were facilitated and key informants interviews were conducted. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data, which was complemented by qualitative data. The findings in this study suggest that informal settlements can vary substantially and each particular settlement is likely to have its unique characteristics. In this study, both mothers and caregivers from the two sites differed significantly in their socio-demographic profile and this subsequently led to major differences in the levels of prevention strategies adopted. Also, this research has highlighted the important role of community mobilisation and vigilance as an active strategy in child injury prevention. Furthermore, a need for preserving traditional practices such as back-carrying was seen as an essential factor in reducing child vulnerability and thereby reducing child injuries. This study further showed that child protection and injury prevention can only be successfully achieved by incorporating both active and passive strategies. This will not be achieved without responsibility being taken at both household and community scales.