# Transcript

**Interviewer:** In today’s episode we’ll look at how lockdown and Covid19 have affected young people living on Harare’s streets. Joining us is professor Lorraine van Blerk from Geography at the University of Dundee in the UK. With her are colleagues Janine Hunter, a researcher in Geography at the University of Dundee and Shaibu Chitsiku, who runs the NGO in Harare, Zimbabwe. Lorraine and Janine tell us about the project called ‘Growing Up on the Streets’.

**Lorraine van Blerk:** ‘Growing Up on the Streets’ is a longitudinal research project that explored what it’s like to grow up while living on the streets in three African cities. As well as Harare in Zimbabwe the research also took place in Accra in Ghana and Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and involved over 600 young people.

The project always believed that young people are experts in their own lives, so we worked with young people in co-producing in-depth, ethnographic accounts of street life, but we also tried to find innovative ways of enabling young people to tell their own stories to global audiences.

**Janine Hunter:** And this is where story maps come in. Story maps are web apps that look like web sites, so you can load up films, images and sound files and get a real sense of place and experiences. For example, we were able to create the story map which we called ‘In the Shadow of a Pandemic’ that really captured street children’s experiences of the Covid19 pandemic in Harare.

**Interviewer:** Lorraine – can you tell us why Zimbabwe’s curfew and lockdown have a bigger impact on the youth?

**Lorraine van Blerk**: The young people who were researchers and participants in the research project, particularly those who made the story map, explained the impact of lockdown on all aspects of their lives. The lockdown affected their ability to access basic needs – for example to make money and to find food. Young people living on the streets heavily rely on informal work for their income. For example, they might gather plastics to recycle, or sell small items on the streets to members of the public. So when the informal economy was shut down overnight they were no longer able to make any money.

**Interviewer:** Janine – how has Covid19 impacted young people living on the streets?

**Janine Hunter:** Well, thankfully infection rates in Zimbabwe have been relatively low. The knock-on effects of the lockdown and the closure of the informal economy have been pretty devastating. Movement around the city was banned, so it was hard for young people to get to their bases, which are their places of safety for sleep, and just before lockdown began children aged around 10 to 16 were rounded up by the authorities and removed from the streets. Street children tend to resist this because they resent being taken away from their friends and livelihoods, and losing their freedom.

**Interviewer:** Shaibu Chitsiku was part of the project. He shares some of his insights from the ground.

**Shaibu Chitsiku:** During that time business was not allowed to operate. It was only shops that could sell food and essential items that could open from 8am to 3pm. So in reference to children the time was very difficult because young people were not allowed to go on the streets. There were two challenges: first it was food. Young people often get food from working on the streets, begging, and also working in the informal sector. So since all business was killed, movement on the streets was not allowed so spending was a challenge, and therefore sourcing food was a huge problem. And also because the lockdown rules did not allow free movement in the centre centre for anyone, including the young people, that meant that moving around to look for food or to look for work was not possible. Looking for food was a very, very difficult situation.