

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WORKING ON THE RUBBISH DUMPS AND STREETS OF NAIROBI



Context

Kenya is a major business and communications hub in East Africa. It has a growing economy and thriving finance and tourism industries. Many people have migrated to the cities in search of new opportunities. Despite this, Kenya still has huge inequalities and 46%

of the population living below the poverty line. Only 66% of births are registered, 12% of children have no access to a toilet and 14% of primary age children do not go to school (source, UNICEF State of the World's Children 2015).

The problem

Approximately 60% of Nairobi's 3.5 million inhabitants live in informal settlements, slums and dumpsites. Most do not have access to basic services such as electricity, clean water, health and education. Many people are threatened with losing the basic home they do have when the authorities threaten to clear slums to build new buildings and roads.

Life is especially risky for children and young people living on the streets. Many have lost their parents or have escaped from abusive homes. They work in hazardous conditions on the huge rubbish dumps, are sexually exploited or get by with petty crime. Many become addicted to glue, using it to take away hunger pangs. Unable to take time away from earning money or afford the costs of school fees, uniforms and materials, the prospect of getting an education to build a better future is a seemingly impossible dream for many of these children.

Adding to the already dangerous conditions is the trauma of abuse from the authorities and those who have a duty to protect them. Police in Nairobi have a track record of targeting street children, in particular boys, and imprisoning them for crimes they did not commit or handing out excessive punishments for minor offences.

Local authorities, state bodies, community-based organisations and schools are all under resourced when it comes to fulfilling their duty of care to protect children. Understanding of safeguarding and child rights issues is poor.



Project objectives

- Support girls and young women living in slum areas to develop skills and resourcefulness needed to build and secure a stable future.
- Support parents and siblings so that whole families are strengthened, in particular supporting parents to become more financially sustainable.
- Train parents, schools and those in positions of authority to understand child rights and child protection issues.
- Support children who are being persecuted by the police and unlawfully imprisoned.

Our local partner

Our partner in Nairobi is Pendekezo Letu. For more than 20 years Pendekezo Letu has been supporting street children and their families to escape extreme poverty and lead more fulfilling lives away from the streets and slums. They have developed a very successful rehabilitation programme that every year supports 100 girls to get away from the dumpsites and streets and into education. Their parents and siblings receive support too, so that the whole family is strengthened. Pendekezo Letu also runs a justice programme for children who have been unlawfully imprisoned.

Our donor

We came to the end of a three year partnership with Comic Relief in July 2018. A further one year of funding has been granted to ensure the sustainability of the organisation. If you are interested in supporting the 2019 intake of girls, please [get in touch](#).



Our activities

The intensive rehabilitation programme includes a range of support. Girls live in on site in a hostel for the full ten months, have lessons based on the school curriculum, access to vocational skills training and receive medical care and counselling. A family tracing and reintegration programme means that when the girls complete the programme they can, if they wish, re-join their family.

Parents are given help to overcome some of the challenges that resulted in their children getting into a crisis situation. They receive home visits from social workers who monitor the standards at home and offer advice on child protection and parenting skills. They receive vocational and financial training so they can rely on more secure income and improve the way they manage the family money. Mothers are encouraged to come together to pool their funds into group savings and welfare funds. Siblings are giving education and vocational skills opportunities.

We have delivered child protection training and guidance to members of Local Area Advisory Councils and secured funding to enable them to operate more effectively. These councils are now better at handling child abuse cases and children are more aware of how to report abuse. The councils are also more effectively monitoring school registration and attendance and the quality of day-care centres. Pendekezo Letu now

has a full time trained lawyer who provides legal representation for children appearing in Nairobi's Juvenile and High Courts. Police and remand officers have been trained in child rights education.

2017 in numbers

During the first three years of the project we have achieved the following impacts and outcomes:

- **300** street girls have completed the rehabilitation programme and a further **100** enrolled in March 2018.
- **133** teenage mothers and young women at risk of becoming pregnant have received vocational skills training.
- **647** siblings have received education support.
- **210** child peer educators and **105** teachers have been trained in child rights and child protection.
- **300** parents and caregivers have received financial, business, health and wellbeing guidance.
- **1,050** school children have joined child rights clubs.
- **18** saving groups have been set up by groups of parents.
- **607** children in conflict with the law have received free legal representation.

WATCH ME





In their words

“I am proud to be a member of this group.”

In the Mathare Slum in Nairobi, 15 mothers have come together to form a group savings scheme that means they are working together to plan better for their children’s futures.

When the mothers first met in 2016 many were unemployed and a few were earning one or two dollars a day doing odd jobs. They started meeting on a weekly basis and began contributing 100 Kenyan Shillings (80 pence) each to the communal savings kitty. Each week one member was allowed a loan from the kitty to spend as she wished - often on investing money in supplies for small businesses. The member would then repay the money after one week with an interest of 10%.

The women approached Pendekezo Letu for further guidance. They were given a three-day training course where they identified what skills existed amongst them, learned financial management skills and considered how they could use their savings to encourage community growth. Once the group’s savings had grown to 60,000 Kenyan Shillings (£465), Pendekezo Letu gave them a grant of 115,000 Kenyan Shillings (£900) so they could

expand their businesses. Payment into the savings increased in line with income growth and the fund now stands at 300,000 Kenyan Shillings (£2,500).

The capital the women have means that all 15 women have been able to set up their own small business, ranging from grocery and fruit stalls, small food kiosks and second-hand clothes shops. They also operate a welfare fund to support members in times of crisis. The financial security the women have has reduced homelessness and school drop outs because they can now pay their rent and their children’s school fees.

One mother said: “We often used to be thrown out by the landlord due to rent arrears, but since I joined the group I can pay the rent before our house is locked. I am proud to be a member of this group.”

The group has now registered with the government social development department and opened a bank account. The women hope to start accessing larger loans to undertake bigger group projects and investments together.

You can read more stories from ChildHope [here](#).