

Child Rescue Kenya

A poem by a formerly street-connected¹ child:

*They call me Street Child.
It means "anonymous." That's not my name.
My name is Adeline. It means "beloved."
They call me Urchin. That's not my name.
My name is Ilario. It means "cheerful."
They call me Spinning Top. That's not my name.
My name is Cara. It means "precious jewel."
They call me Dust of Life. That's not my name.
My name is Mateo. It means "gift of God."
They call me Street Child.
It means "anonymous." That's not my name.*

Poem reproduced by Martin Thomas²

Report for 2015.

The overall goal of CRK is a society where children enjoy all their basic rights and lead dignified lives. A family is key to ensuring appropriate long term care and to achieve this CRK works one-on-one with disadvantaged children, their families and communities leading towards auto-sustainable transformations for both the children and their families.

Our purpose is to protect and nurture vulnerable children while working with families to effect long term sustainable change that enables them to care for their own children. Families for Children is our programme that embodies all this work.

Activities:

1. Vulnerable Children:

CRK's cornerstone activity is working directly with street-connected and vulnerable children who, often alone are living precarious lives on the fringes of society. Life is hard, rights are denied and survival depends on acquired ingenuity. CRK reaches out to them offering opportunities to reclaim their childhoods:

- I. Street outreach teams regularly circulate within Kitale town identifying new street arrivals and maintaining contact with the established street community.
- II. Drop-in services are maintained at our town based Street Smart centre. A respite from street life in a safe place offering a timetable of structured activities that are designed to ensure any child can access:
 - i. Responsible, non-judgemental adult care and direction
 - ii. Healthcare and personal hygiene
 - iii. Intermediate education
 - iv. A nutritional meal
 - v. Sports and games
- III. Rescue and transitional residential care services are offered at our Birunda Rescue Centre to any lone child. Primarily, though not exclusively, an extension of the drop-in provisions focusing energies on reunification of the child with their family.
- IV. Family reunification takes place after initial identification of the family and following what can be an extensive period of working with family and child to ensure that

¹ Live on or regularly frequent the streets and etch a livelihood there

² Thomas, M. (2012). They call me street child. Retrieved May 1, 2014, from the VIVA: Together for Children blog: <http://blog.viva.org/index.php/2012/05/15/call-street-child/>

reunification is possible, safe and desirable.

- V. Longer term residential care is offered at our Liyavo Children's Centre to children for whom family reintegration will require an extended programme of intervention or no family has been identified. The home remains transitional however is structured more as a 'children's home' and has a less transitional feel.

2. Family:

The family structure remains under pressure in many Kenyan homes. Poverty³, some cultural practices and disease all pay their toll often leaving a single parent or grandparent to care for several children. Largely dependent on seasonal manual work children are left alone, when there is no work hunger is never far.

Working directly with families CRK provides the necessary training and support that enables families to generate income and take control of their lives.

Where severe poverty and hunger have been a cause for their children's vulnerability CRK has a toolkit of options:

- I. Bio-Intensive Agriculture (BIA) is a method of farming that requires little input, and is simple and straight forward. Local materials are used and produces high returns from even a small plot of land. This enables any struggling family, even with minimal access to land to grow food and realise food security. Target families are those whose children regularly have had to go without food⁴, have access to land and are willing to work to improve its productivity. Families are initially supported with 2 days intensive training at CRK and a start-up kit of seeds and tools. Then training continues on their own plots as they are assisted and mentored to prepare, plant, harvest and replant. Improved nutrition and income generation uplifts the entire family. Disengagement can normally occur after second harvest when the family is realising self-sufficiency in seeds and producing some surplus food (income).
- II. Small Business Grants: Not all families have access to land and some have proved adept at running their own businesses. Basic business training is provided to ensure families are prepared to handle cash and fully understand the relevant small or micro business models.
- III. Psychosocial Support: The families who need our support have all suffered some kind of breakdown, symptomatically they have been identified through a child who has run away, been rejected or been abandoned. The reasons for this are varied but let it suffice to say that all require some element psychological reparation.
- IV. Interim Nutritional Support in the form of food baskets are provided where hunger prevents a family from fully participating in the training and/or followup activities of this programme.

3. Youth and Young Family:

Many of the street-connected children we come into contact with have themselves grown up in street-connected families, themselves the children of people who grew up in the street communities. This is a generational cycle of poverty that creates poorly educated youth and leaves children vulnerable and open to abuse. A strategy of youth development and empowerment⁵ breaks this cycle, offers youth opportunities enabling their children to grow up away from the streets.

- I. Association: Most street-connected youth are members of an informal group defined by location and occupation. Starting with these groups a period of formalisation and

3 Absolute poverty, Trans-Nzoia County: 51% (Kenya National Census 2009)

4 Stunting in children, Trans-Nzoia County: 29.2% (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2014)

5 Developed with the Undugu Society of Kenya (Nairobi)

consolidation is necessary to form a structured 'Association' that can then register with the government as a Self-Help Group and open a bank account. For many of the youth this is the first time their very existence is recognised and lends the group credibility. This process may take months or years depending on the group membership; issues such as drug dependency, etc.

- II. Education: Most group members will have received little or no formal education and lack the skills, both social and technical, to undertake meaningful employment. To mitigate this several opportunities are available through the programme:
 - i. Apprenticeships may be undertaken with local tradespeople and last between 2 – 6 months. On successful completion of the apprenticeship basic tool kits and micro-business training are provided.
 - ii. Business Grants may be provided directly to a group to distribute to members who already have some skills or business experience. Micro-business refresher training may be provided as needed.
 - iii. Formal Education: For some group members who had attended school but had had to drop out completing their education (primary or secondary?) is important to them and may be provided for through the programme.
- III. Consolidation: Now able to generate income both as a group and as individual members a Table Banking and Loans scheme is encouraged. With continued mentoring the groups can start building on their own successes and consider accepting new members.
- IV. Disengagement is possible when a group is strong enough, self perpetuating and able to attract new members.

4. Advocacy/Awareness:

Working in the rural and peri-urban contexts education levels are low making this programme vital in promoting children's and human rights, and empowering women and families. Our staff work across 5 Counties holding one-to-one and group meetings with Administrators, Teachers, Religious and Village Leaders. Specific Child Protection workshops are held and Child Protection networks established. Awareness is further spread through community gatherings such as open days, barasas (village meetings) and even weddings and funerals.

This programme trains key individuals, raises awareness in communities and, most importantly; brings the discussion to the villages.

Achievements (as per activities):

1. Vulnerable and street-connected children have been given the opportunity to enjoy their basic rights be it a respite from their daily activities or full 24/7 residential care in an interim home or with a family:
 - I. Street Outreach has a register of 342 new children
 - II. The drop-in centre footfall has been 355.
 - III. 258 children entered the Rescue Centre at Birunda
 - IV. 161 children successfully reintegrated into their families and provided with the necessary assistance to enter schools near their homes.
 - V. 22 children for whom family reintegration has required a longer term approach have been enrolled in local schools and benefit from the home environment of our home at Liyavo.
2. Families have been strengthened and now have the necessary emotional and

material ability to care for their own children. In cases where training and income generation was supported 85% have already reported a significant improvement in living conditions and income:

- I. 38 families completed BIA training and have established plots
 - II. 24 families benefitted from business training and start-up grants
 - III. 137 families helped resolve issues through counselling and psychological support
 - IV. 16 families were provided with Interim Nutritional Support
3. The cycle of street youth – street family – street children has been broken with networks of 'Associations' that enable transitions for street-connected youth to viable long term futures with the security offered to mainstream society:
- I. 5 new associations have been formed in 2015 bringing the total to 16 with a membership of 327 youth
 - II.
 - i. 40 youth enrolled in apprenticeships
 - ii. 147 youth benefit from business grants through 7 associations
 - iii. 20 youth opted to complete their Secondary education
 - III. 7 Associations are in the pre disengagement stages of maturity with
 - IV. 5 associations expected to disengage in early 2016.
4. At least 13,870 people have been reached and are now more aware of children's rights, parental responsibility and, importantly, what to do when/if abuses are suspected.