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STREET CHILDREN THROUGH
ACTION AND PARTNERSHIP



Food for Life Project

Keeping Street Children off the Streets

Introduction

This is a partnership project between UK NGO **Street Action** and Kenyan NGO **Action for Children in Conflict** (AfCiC). Street Action and AfCiC have been working in partnership since the beginning of 2011. Street Action is committed to supporting the work of AfCiC through advocacy, research and raising financial support for specific programmes that focus on prevention, intervention and re-intergration. The **Food for Life** programme is an extension of the continued work that AfCiC is already undertaking in the local communities it serves. For the first 12 months this will be a pilot project with a target of reaching out to 1,000 children. With further funding, AfCiC plans to roll-out the programme to a further 4,000 children over the next three years.

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Country Perspective

One of the major challenges facing urban development in Kenya and many developing countries is the growing number of street children, youth and families. The Kenya government

estimates the number of street persons in the country to be more than 300,000 out of a population of slightly over 38 million (SFRTF, 2010). The phenomenon is slowly changing from just street children to street families with the children growing up on the streets, getting into relationships and building their own families on the streets.

The number of street children in Nairobi is over 50,000, and the government estimates that their numbers grow at 10 % per year. Street children are often involved in theft, drug trafficking, assault, trespassing, and property damage, (US Dept of State, 2005). Fifty three percent of street children in Nairobi are born in the slums while the rest migrate from other provinces. Most of them come from single mothers. The parents are young with about 80% with under 40 years of age (Kilbride, Suda and Njeru, 2000).

Kenyan street children, as in the world over, are often observed sniffing glue, as do street children world over who often develop addictions to glue and other substances such as thinner (Kilbride, Suda and Njeru, 2000). The children are stigmatized, as their counterparts elsewhere, and this can be seen in constant police harassment and public fear of them, symbolic of their lives lived apart from school, family and community in contrast to legitimate social contexts for children (Kilbride, Suda and Njeru, 2000).

There are macro and micro factors pushing children to the streets. The macro factors include poverty, HIV/AIDS, post election violence, rural –urban migration and apartheid while the micro factors include family breakdown and step parenting which has been identified as one of the immediate factors precipitating push factor that prompts a child to leave home directly to the streets (Kilbride, Suda and Njeru, 2000). Others include single motherhood, which has resulted in an aberrant movement of children away from homes that no longer adequately provide for them adequately. Further, abandonment, abuse at home, lack of food, unplanned adolescent pregnancies, high birth rates and self recruitment were cited as additional factors pushing the children to the streets. In the same study, the children identified possible solutions to their problems which included provision of basic needs, education, skills training, identity cards, jobs and family planning services.

In a study carried out in Eldoret and similar study carried out in Nairobi the key health issues affecting street children in Kenya were highlighted as trauma due to physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse; hygiene related illnesses such as skin conditions, URTI, typhoid etc; malnutrition and stunted growth, drug abuse and sexually transmitted illnesses including HIV/AIDS.

Why AfCiC wants to Keep Children Off the streets

In the last five years Action for Children in Conflict has been preventing street children from dropping into the streets through implementing a nutritional improvement programme in three extremely poor schools, Garissa Road Primary within the Kibandutu slums, Karibaribi and St Patrick's Primary within the Majengo slums. The schools are located in the four slums of Thika and between them there is a population of over 250,000 residents, all living in unsanitary poor shelter mainly constructed from tin and polythene paper. The slums are unrecognized by the Thika Municipality and thus there is no running water or neither electricity nor recreation space for the children and the adults. Crime and substances of abuse are the only source of solace allowing the residents to forget the problems they are faced with.

In the above circumstances we have over 140,000 Children and youth below 18 years, all struggling to grow up, of course under very limited opportunities. Among the opportunities is walking into Thika Town where they are likely to get a generous person who will buy them food or else scavenge for the food in the dustbins.

Action for Children in Conflict has over the years recognized the effectiveness of the nutrition improvement programme not only as a health intervention that addressed long term effects of malnutrition including stunted growth and wastage but as an extremely essential intervention that addresses the human rights of the children to food enabling them to access other basic rights like education.

It is with the lessons learnt through the interventions in the schools and the community that AfCiC seeks funds to continue to further develop with the programme as a means of ensuring that 4000 Children are rehabilitated enjoy their rights to health and education and develop to productive citizens of the world away from the dangers of the streets. AfCiC's request at the national level is supported by among others reports like "Kenya faced with eminent food crisis" which states that; Kenya now faces a risk of deteriorating food security conditions due to unanticipated early end to the 2010 long rains coupled with the likelihood of poor short rains, owing to effects of La Nina.

A new report by the Renaissance Capital dubbed “Kenya: 2011 Economic Outlook” projects a slowdown in the growth of the agricultural sector at a backdrop of unfavourable weather conditions and a high-base effect.

The predicted La Nina and the ongoing drought that is already affecting some parts of the country will have negative implications in the production of grain and Kenya’s major cash crops: tea, horticulture, coffee and sugar cane.

And it came to pass, 2011 Kenya and the entire Horn of Africa region was faced with the worst drought ever, it is estimated that over 100,000 people died from hunger. Huge populations from Somalia migrated to Kenya, this movement caused displacement of people as families migrated in such of pasture and food. Thika is located in this envious position as the entry to Nairobi the capital city of Kenya which is perceived to have all the solutions facing the country. What this means is that there are thousands of families that have settled in Thika who do not have any means of livelihood safe for the streets, the families happen to be in great need and this what AfCiC attempts to address.

Nutrition support as a means of Keeping the Children off the streets

Introduction of the free primary education in Kenya in year 2003 brought a huge relief to families across the country. However this moment of hope and enthusiasm soon turned to a nightmare when most of the families realized that it was impossible for their children to access education due to poverty and other factors like recurrent drought, a poor economy and effects of HIV/AIDS (Thika district was number one nationally in the HIV/AIDS prevalence in 1999- it is time the effects are being felt)

The above situation has meant the most vulnerable in the community suffer the most, in the case of Thika it is women and Children. Children who happen to be AfCiC’s entry into the community suffer most as they continuously abandon school, move into the streets to collect waste so that they can put food on the table for their families. In the meantime the vicious cycle continues and the classrooms remain empty as the children flock to the streets and the coffee plantations while the girls become house slaves working from 4am to 1am taking care of families that can pay.

Results from Street Children censuses conducted in Thika every two years since 2004 indicate 65% of children who take to the streets initially do so due to hunger. It is for this reason that AfCiC has initiated the nutrition improvement programme to ensure that vulnerable children can remain in school, rather than being forced onto the streets searching for food. The provision of food to acutely vulnerable children in the 3 of the poorest local schools is a key prevention tool in AfCiC’s overall strategy of accessing vulnerable children access their basic rights to health and education.

AfCiC complements the school nutritional improvement intervention with an individual child feeding programme targeting individual children. These are children who AfCiC may have identified in the streets, placed back in schools or may have been identified by AfCiC social workers or school heads as likely to drop out of school if an intervention is not put in place. Individual feeding is a stop gap measure aimed at addressing the child immediate problem as AfCiC works with the family for a long term solution.

Goal: Contribute to reduced numbers of children turning to a life on the street in Thika and neighboring districts

Purpose: Prevent children from going to the streets

Objectives

1. Improve the nutrition status of 1000 children by the end of 12 months
2. Support the retention of children in school by providing nutritional support for 12 months
3. Reduce the number of children going to the street as a result of hunger within 12 months
 - a. Provide 1000 children with nutritional support for 36 months.
 - b. To rehabilitate 1000 Children using the community systems including the schools.
 - c. Equip 1000 Children in personal hygiene education in 3 local schools including ensuring good health.
 - d. To implement a pilot project for establishing kitchen gardens that will generate 20% of the total feeding costs.

Activities

The core activities of this project are:

1. Baseline study to establish magnitude of Children Affected by food poverty who are dropping to the streets
2. Nutritional status assessment to be conducted jointly with the Ministry of Health and the Municipal Officer of Health.

3. Procurement of food stuff and essential equipment to replace broken down cooking utensils
4. Provision of nutritional supplements (Vitamin A) for 1000 after every 6 months jointly with the Ministry of Health.
5. Quarterly de-worming exercise for the 1000 Children to be carried out jointly with the Ministry of Health.
6. Introduce personal hygiene and sanitation education (PHASE) in 5 local schools
7. Repairs and maintenance of Kitchen at Karibaribi Primary school.
8. Staff bi annual medical examination and training.
9. Establishment 3 kitchen gardens and small livestock units
10. Project monitoring and evaluation

Expected outcomes

1. Number of children affected by hunger and dropping into the streets established
2. Nutritional status of the children established and informing the programme.
3. 1000 Children kept out of the streets and with families.
4. 1000 Children retained in school and facilitated to complete the education programme.
5. 1000 Children de-wormed quarterly
6. 1000children supplemented with Vitamin A every 6 months
7. Personal hygiene and sanitation programme reaching 1000 children implemented in 3 schools.
8. 20% operation costs raised through the kitchen garden and small livestock produce contribution to the school kitchen.
9. 2 kitchen staff screened and of good health to handle food every 6 months.
10. Ownership of the programme by the government and the Municipality.
11. Best practices and lessons learnt documented and disseminated

