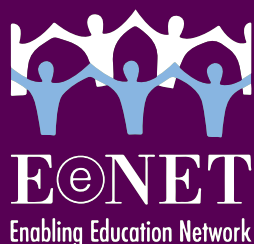


# Enabling Education Review

Issue 6 - 2017

Special issue on street-connected young people and inclusive education



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Cover photo: © Retrak Ethiopia

Edited by: Su Corcoran and Ingrid Lewis

Layout and design: Alexander Hauschild

## About EENET

The Enabling Education Network (EENET) is a global information-sharing network. Established 20 years ago, we encourage and support critical thinking and innovation on issues of inclusion, equity and rights in all levels and types of education.

We help education stakeholders to document and share their experiences of making education more inclusive. Our website contains over 800 articles, reports, posters, guidance documents and videos. Each year we publish at least one edition of Enabling Education Review – often on a specific topic, like this edition which focuses on street-connected young people. We also still prioritise the free dissemination of printed materials to stakeholders who are not able to access information electronically via the internet.

EENET's work is funded through small grants and donations. We also carry out consultancy work for other organisations, to help fund our information-sharing activities.

# Editorial: Inclusive education and street-connectedness

Sarah Thomas de Benitez

Young people who are street-connected depend on the streets to live and/or work, whether alone, with peers, or with family, periodically or more long term. They form strong bonds with public spaces, which play a vital role in their everyday lives and identities. Being, and having been, street-connected has implications for effective education provision, which is the theme of this edition of Enabling Education Review. In this editorial, I explore what is meant by 'street connections' and why a focus on inclusive education is important. For the purposes of this article, and the articles in the Review, 'young people' refers to children and youth.

## Understanding street connections

The term 'street-connected children' emerged in a global study<sup>1&2</sup> for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and was embedded in the High Commissioner's 2012 report on the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the streets.<sup>3</sup> Using the term 'street connections' means understanding individual young people as capable of forming, maintaining and renewing relationships, associations and attachments. Using the terms 'street children' or 'street situations' labels, objectifies and limits individuals to specific types of location and a passivity of circumstance. However, the term 'children with street connections' suggests agency, empowerment and a dynamic spectrum of situations, ranging from maintaining close ties with home to total immersion in street culture. An emphasis on connections suggests children have relationships within the streets as well as with family and community; all forming part of their life trajectories.<sup>4</sup> 'Street connections' positions the young person at the centre of our thinking. It encourages us to explore the types and strength of his or her connections with and within public spaces, within family, neighbourhood and school – indeed within whole child protection systems. The language of 'street connections' is ecological, systemic and holistic, offering a way of thinking that bridges the divide that the term 'street children' created between research, policy-making and practice.

This edition of Enabling Education Review explores the intersection of inclusive education and street-connectedness at a time when policy mechanisms promise important strategic change for practitioners, advocates, researchers and policy-makers: namely considering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN General Comment on Children in Street Situations (UNGC No. 21).

## The Sustainable Development Goals

There are 17 SDGs.<sup>5</sup> SDG 4 specifically aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Several of SDG 4's targets are relevant to street-connected children e.g.:

- Target 4.5 seeks "...equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including [...] **children in vulnerable situations**";
- Target 4.7 considers what is needed for inclusive education, including "education facilities that [...] provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for **all**".

The SDGs are different from their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in fundamental ways that are encouraging for inclusive education. The SDGs are interdependent, holistic and aimed at 'leaving no-one behind', whereas the MDGs were 'stand-alone' goals. Human development, human rights and equity are deeply rooted in the SDGs: seven targets explicitly refer to people with disabilities, six to people in vulnerable situations, and two to non-discrimination. Civil society and the private sector participated in framing the SDGs, which prioritise partnership building between governments, private sector, civil society and individuals.

Inclusive education has, in the SDGs, moved from policy sideshow to policy focus. Positioned within key wider ambitions to address poverty and inequalities, improve health and make cities sustainable, civil society engagement is explicitly

welcomed. In theory, at least, fighting for inclusive education now means swimming with the tide rather than against it. Organisations seeking to encourage inclusive education now have a policy frame more receptive to evidence of innovations that respond to the needs of vulnerable and excluded children.

### UN General Comment on Children in Street Situations – UNGC No. 21

Delivered in June 2017, **UNGC 21** is the authoritative interpretation for street-connected children of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This new policy framework applies to all States party to the Convention (<http://bit.ly/EER-SC13>) and is fundamentally different from any previous guidance.

UNGC 21 is the first definitive international legal guidance for governments on protecting children on the streets. It is rooted in research evidence, civil society experiences, and seven regional consultations with 327 street-connected children from 32 countries. UNGC 21 recognises inequalities as structural causes of the emergence and exclusion of children on the streets, instead of singling out families for blame; it describes children as street-connected.

UNGC 21 characterises children as relational beings, capable of making choices, not as passive objects of rescue or rehabilitation. It makes perfectly clear that both welfare (rescue-based) and repressive (punishment-based) approaches to street-connected children are incompatible with the CRC and children's rights. Children's rights to associate and assemble freely in public spaces without harassment or arbitrary removal are fully recognised. Round-ups of children contravene the CRC: children must not be removed from the streets as an excuse to fulfill their rights (even though this has sometimes been advocated).

UNGC 21 recommends partnerships and State support for civil society "providing personalized, specialist services for children in street situations on the basis of a child rights approach, through funding, accreditation and regulation" (para. 15). This is the first authoritative guidance that recognises civil society's capabilities in providing tailored services for street-connected children.

UNGC 21 matters, because it moves street-connected children from the policy fringes to a legitimate subject of policy-making. As a holistic, child-centred policy framework, this well-informed guidance is compatible with the SDGs and fully in line with rights-based approaches to inclusive education.

SDG 4 and UNGC 21 both invite specialist and innovative civil society participation. Tracking SDG 4 targets without implementing UNGC 21 will **miss** street-connected children, who need interventions tailored to their lives and contexts. On the other hand, UNGC 21, if implemented with street-connected children, will **help** States achieve SDG 4 targets for inclusive education.

### On-the-ground innovations – this edition of the Review

This edition contributes to understanding the intersection of inclusive education and street-connected young people – a group of excluded, hard-to-reach and vulnerable learners. The articles articulate a broad range of complex challenges faced by young street-connected people, giving insights into social innovations that might be usefully scaled up, adapted for use in other environments, or with other groups of excluded children.

The multiple barriers faced by street-connected children help to explain why these learners are often unable to access education. Barriers include:

- lack of identity documents;
- precarious families with no experience of education;
- challenges of daily survival on the streets;
- engagement in child labour;
- discrimination facing street-connected girls;
- dental health issues;
- experiences of violence, abuse and neglect – including as perpetrators, as well as victims;
- trauma as a block to learning;
- experiences of 'failure' in formal schooling with teachers using deficit-based approaches that discourage learning;
- stigmatization and prejudice;
- overcrowding at home;
- high rates of illiteracy in the community;
- substance abuse;
- juvenile crime;
- conflict.

The articles in this edition provide valuable insights into educational innovations that operate on the ground, navigating barriers facing street-connected children. Each innovation aims to meet learning needs of children with highly complex needs in specific street-based circumstances and within their local contexts. Together they show that 'sites' of inclusive education are possible anywhere.

Innovations are sometimes located in public spaces. **Mobile School** offers an innovative approach to delivering education, in local languages, to hard-to-reach communities in a number of countries. **CHETNA** provides street outreach linked to workshops in school and after-school education clubs. **Life Skills Oasis** in Kenya uses football to engage children's interest and start conversations about school and life-skills. Several innovative services are offered through drop-in centres, such as **Child Rescue Kenya's** 'Street Smart', where children can build trust with social workers and youth can access non-formal schooling support to prepare for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.

Some innovations involve residential programmes. **Retrak** in Ethiopia provides catch-up classes and intensive counselling, with each child allocated a social worker case manager. In India, **Rainbow Homes** use peer education and older students coach new arrivals in an informal space, to prepare them for entering formal education. In Uganda, **S.A.L.V.E. International** uses creative play to engage young people transitioning from the streets, and helps teachers listen to how children communicate, so they can more easily understand, feel comfortable and enjoy learning.

Other projects prepare children and support them into and through a formal education system. In Kenya, the **St John Bosco Rehabilitation Centre** provides weekly boarding facilities for children, while in Uganda, **CROSO** runs a scholarship and mentoring programme for secondary school graduates wanting to attend university.

Some innovative programmes are holistic, with education forming part of a wider, child-centred focus. In Kenya, **Glad's House** uses boxing and golf caddy programmes among options to help young people combat low self-esteem and the fear of being viewed as worthless, so that they feel able to manage taking first steps back into

a classroom. In India, **Street Invest** and **Child In Need Institute** work to develop street-based life-skills and a bridging package for different ages and abilities, linked to after-school coaching and support in local school and club premises, seeking to ensure each child can access education.

Other pioneering approaches aim to change formal schooling into a more inclusive experience for all, including street-connected children. **ChildHope** and **CESIP** in Peru raise awareness about child labour and violence in schools, helping teachers develop inclusive teaching practices through psycho-pedagogic support and social skills workshops. In Uganda, the **African Education Trust (AET)** and **Child Restoration Outreach (CRO)** work with street-connected children, as well as with parents, teachers and officials, to understand and act upon children's specific difficulties about returning to school.

Some formal education systems are not open to changes that could enable street-connected children to have positive learning experiences. In such circumstances, alternative schools can be a valuable option: Brazil's **Project Uere** has an innovative educational method designed for children suffering the effects of trauma. In the Philippines, **Fairplay for All's** school, based on the idea of democratic education, helps children to choose what is important and to have a say in defining their own education.

Community space is another fertile site for innovative educational approaches with children who are excluded from education. In Kenya, **Chance for Childhood** trains community-based learning assistants for children with special educational needs, especially communication disabilities. In Haiti, **Dynamo International** works through street social worker networks, using Capoeira dancing to develop relationships with adults that in turn help create respectful relationships between teacher and child. Taking a multi-stakeholder approach, street social workers and university researchers combine their knowledge, experience and methodology for innovative alternatives that are tested in 'micro-actions'. In Panama, **TECHO** takes a cross-sectoral, participatory approach to developing educational projects in informal settlements, through a 'Life Skills Education' project that connects young people with a bigger picture of their community, surrounding environment and living conditions.

## **Introducing the language of street connections into education**

The projects in this edition are full of commitment, bravery and creativity. It will be exciting to follow them as they explore the new paths that this language of 'street connections' opens to street educators, school teachers, social workers and providers of holistic services, when engaging with young people. For those who approach education as relational – something that happens between learner and educator – the concept has enormous potential. No longer facing a 'street child' or a child in a street 'situation', but instead an individual who makes and is capable of forging new **connections**, an educator/teacher engages with a learner. A challenge presents itself: to discover the learner's pattern of connections (what better way than to start by active listening, as part of building a relationship?) and then to puzzle out (together?) how and with whose support this young person's learning might progress. Social work research has begun to accommodate this new way of engaging with street-connected children;<sup>6</sup> the opportunities are now open to educational research.

Language influences thought and action. Whether students are 'given' grades, 'earn' grades or have no grades, represent radically different approaches to education and to the power relations between students and teachers. When teachers 'correct' homework, the assumption is

that students make errors and teachers rectify them. The assumption changes when students use teacher's 'feedback' to identify and fix mistakes. Language can stigmatise, encourage or empower. The terms we use influence our approach to children. Consider the images we conjure of 'street child' (abandoned, victim, orphan, vulnerable?) and of 'child in street situations' (passive, located?), then 'child with street connections' (relationships, choices, social actor?). Changing the story from 'street child' to 'street connections' opens the pathways to inclusive education.

[1] Thomas de Benitez, S. (2011) 'Making Global Connections: Children, the streets and us' <http://bit.ly/EER-SC14>

[2] Thomas de Benitez, S., & Hiddleston, T. (2011). 'Research paper on the promotion and protection of the rights of children working and/or living on the street: OHCHR 2011 Global Study'. Geneva: OHCHR. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC15>

[3] UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2012). 'Report on protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street'. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC6>

[4] Rizzini, Irene, Udi Mandel Butler, and Daniel Stoecklin, eds. (2007). 'Life on the streets'. Sion, Switzerland: Institut Universitaire Kurt Bösch/IDE (Institut International des Droits de L'enfant). <http://bit.ly/EER-SC16>

[5] <http://bit.ly/EER-SC17>

[6] Dabir, N. (2014). Street-Connected Children. 'Encyclopedia of Social Work'. Retrieved 20 Aug. 2017, from <http://bit.ly/EER-SC18>

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# Democratic education in the Philippines: What happens when students and teachers run the school together?

Roy Moore



## Reframing the problem

The Fairplay for All Foundation is based in the Philippines. The official literacy rate here is 95.6%, yet half of Grade 1 students here will drop out of school. You do not need to pass a Mathematics class to realise those numbers do not add up. We have seen many children 'pass' several grades still unable to read and write their own name. But because they are now at a higher level they are labelled as literate. Many students drop out not just because class sizes are huge and going to school is expensive, but also because much of what they learn is useless in the real world.

Research in the Philippines shows students typically cite two reasons for dropping out: 'it's too expensive' and/or 'a lack of personal interest'. The researchers often describe 'lack of personal interest' as the child's fault, but this is the wrong way round. The problem is not that students lack interest in school, it is that school is not interesting. Students are not bored in class; class is boring.

In business, if a customer does not like a product we innovate and make something new. In politics, if a voter does not like a policy, we adapt it. But in the classroom, if the student does not like what happens in school, their opinions and feelings are usually irrelevant.

This is an expensive mistake. The Philippines spends almost one-sixth of its national budget on education, building huge schools and

classrooms. Many developing countries are following the same path, adapting education systems along similar lines to countries such as the United States; building more classrooms, hiring more teachers, and putting more technology into classrooms.

However, few countries spend much of their budget on understanding students' experiences. Few countries even ask students for their input. In business terms, they fail to do research and development and that kills the product. This is why our children's experience of childhood in general will be vastly different to our own, but their experience of school will be much the same. The result is low student engagement, high dropout rates, and a terrible return on investment.

## A brief history of school

So why is school done this way? Much of how we do school was invented in the 1800s and it has not really been updated since. It was designed to prepare students for factory life. This system was introduced to countries through colonisation regardless of how effective it was. When the Spanish arrived in the Philippines, for example, they were surprised to find that despite no formal education system the Philippines had a higher literacy rate than in Madrid.

But the modern education systems are based on Western countries' development. The economy, rapidly expanding in the Industrial

Revolution amid a population explosion, needed uniform workers to slot into their roles. And the education systems were mainly created in response to this need.

This is why students have no say in the traditional classroom. A child is compelled by law to go to school; they have no choice in what they learn, how they learn, and who they learn from and with. Even what students wear, talk about, and when they can go to the toilet is decided by school authorities.

Basic human rights, such as freedom of expression, movement, and participation, are curtailed towards the goal of learning. We still assume this is for the good of the student but we also know sitting for long periods is unhealthy. We know lecturing at children and expecting them to memorise everything is ineffective. We learn better the more we are actively engaged in an activity on our terms. So it is no surprise that students across the world are so disengaged, but what alternative is there?

### **The Fairplay School: A local solution**

At the Fairplay for All Foundation we work in Payatas, one of the largest and poorest slums in the Philippines. With support from the Silver Star Century Group, we bought and renovated a building to evolve from a drop-in centre into a school.

As a drop-in centre we were a safe space for out-of-school children to learn, eat, and build relationships. We sponsored children back into the nearby government schools. Over time, though, it became clear this would not work for everyone. While the attendance and grades of our individual students generally improved, it would not fix the real problem. Classes regularly contain 60–80 children, the students talk about corporal punishment as normal in their schools, and the quality of teaching is woeful. Putting more and more children back into this system would stretch an already broken system.

The problem was not that children were out of school, it was that the schools in the area were not effective. So we started our own school. An alternative. Based on research, we have no uniforms, no compulsory homework, and our students choose if they even go to school that

day. We hired people who cared most about the students as individuals. Without the baggage of how teaching is taught here they could look at building an environment celebrating critical thinking and problem-solving.

We are registered as an 'ALS Center'. This means students study with us and, once ready, can take an equivalency test for their Elementary and then High School Diploma. Now that we are officially registered, we are the Fairplay School.

At the Fairplay School there is essentially one rule: you are free to do what you want as long as you do not disturb anyone else. Everything else stems from that. This is based on the following assumptions:

- Children are naturally curious about the world they live in.
- Everyone learns at their own pace, not in neat lines from A to B but with ups and down, twists and turns.
- Children can and should be part of the decision-making process of their own learning experience.

We have a Weekly Meeting where students and staff discuss problems and ideas together. With one vote per person, students regularly outvote teachers, and throughout the week everyone lives with the consequences. These consequences are crucial as freedom without responsibility is chaotic, but freedom with responsibility creates a flourishing community.

Students feel trusted because their opinion counts. Students do not feel valued only by their grades, so they explore learning for intrinsic reasons. For children used to life on the streets this is huge. The biggest gains are usually social and emotional; long-term academic development comes afterwards.

The most common question we get is 'if attendance is not forced, will the children just stop going?' For the first 3–6 months this may be true. We call this the 'deschooling period' after an essay by Ivan Illich.<sup>1</sup> One of our girls was a classic example.

Dora<sup>2</sup> had dropped out in Grade 3. She was unable to read or write her own name after

nearly three years in formal schooling. She was constantly reprimanded by an overworked, undertrained teacher dealing with a class of more than 60 students. Repeatedly told she was a failure, Dora inevitably became a confused, anxious, and scared learner.

Dora was invited by her friends to join them at the Fairplay School. She was still very shy and afraid. She would hang back and just watch. Eventually she began taking small steps to test boundaries. As long as she did not bother anyone else, she found she was free to do as she liked. Free to go to our small library and look at the pictures (she could not read), free to grab a board game and play, free to talk and play with friends in the backyard.

Finally, Dora took a leap and signed up for a single class. After she finished her first cycle (our cycles are four weeks of teaching then one week of break), she signed up for everything she could in the next cycle. Our problem with Dora was not getting her interested in learning, she could do that herself when she was given the space and time. Our problem was keeping up with her. Dora found a place where her learning was about her, where she could learn on her terms and from what she understands now, not where she was supposed to be according to a curriculum. She flourished.

Due to family problems Dora was adopted by another family. Her new family wanted her back in public school and after taking an acceleration test Dora was placed into Grade 6. She had caught up 5 grades in one year with us.

By no means is what we do perfect or easy. We have made plenty of mistakes along the way and expect to make plenty more. But with support, love, and an open environment to explore, a typical illiterate 12-year-old can learn the Elementary curriculum in a year. This is nothing new. Fifty years ago John Holt, Paolo Frere, and other stalwarts of the education world all said the same thing from their alternative schools. We hope we can one day become as good.

So surely then, it is about time that learning be about the learner? That the person the school is meant to be for, has some sort of voice within the school?

[1] [www.ecotopia.com/webpress/deschoolingillich.pdf](http://www.ecotopia.com/webpress/deschoolingillich.pdf)

[2] Name has been changed for child protection purposes.

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# Life skills education for youth and families in informal settlements in Panama City: A case study of a cross-sectoral and participatory project

Ksenia Fiaduta and Anna Spezie

'Gardens of Eden' is one of 36 informal settlements in Panama City where a strong interconnectedness exists between living in a precarious habitat and inequalities in access to basic human rights, such as education and health, especially for children and youth. Their living conditions are intrinsically linked to problems associated with street-connectedness, including illiteracy, school drop-out, parental neglect, substance abuse, violence and recruitment into criminal activities. Socio-educational support towards these communities remains low. This article describes the Life Skills Education project, a cross-sectoral and participatory approach to developing education projects in informal settlements developed through collaboration between: the non-governmental organisation (NGO) TECHO Panama, specialising in emergency housing and urban interventions; psychologists at UDELAS University; and the community of 'Gardens of Eden'.

## Setting the basis for effective collaboration

TECHO Panama started working with the community in 2014, providing emergency housing and constructing community spaces. Residents reported concerns about issues such as school drop-out, parental neglect, and youth violence. TECHO's capacity to address these was limited, with no previous experience of relating education with building projects and housing rights. They formed a working group of individuals with previous experience in socio-educational interventions and/or knowledge of the community. They applied TECHO's methodology – of community assemblies, participatory diagnosis and design – as a framework to develop, facilitate, monitor, and evaluate an education project, encouraging the community to be central agents of their own learning and development.

The first stage of the project involved developing background information about the community and familiarity with this

methodology. Facilitators used brainstorming, community mapping and storytelling during two community meetings to conduct participatory diagnosis: helping the residents identify their problems and generate possible solutions. The participants identified pressing concerns including: illiteracy and school drop-out, substance abuse, juvenile crime, cultural and ethnic conflicts, youth violence, lack of values, and parenting skills. As possible solutions, the community suggested organising a workshop for community leaders, parent education seminars, and an intercultural fair.

## Areas of intervention

Thematic workshops were created that promoted the development of 'soft' skills, such as: leadership and project management; values education and conflict resolution; parenting skills and intrafamily communication; and social inclusion and intercultural communication. This life skills education curriculum holistically addressed a significant number of problems and solutions identified by the community and were suitable for both adults and youth.

To develop continuity, each workshop included a set of routine activities: a footprint activity outlining learning objectives, revision of mutual responsibilities, thematic dynamic activities, role-play games, drama reading, and take-away reflections. The unity of the cycle was reinforced with homework assignments to design original community projects in groups of two or three. Step-by-step design and regular revision of group projects helped participants to put their diverse soft skills into practice, recognise their own capacities and limitations, and track their personal progress. The final versions of the projects were presented to the whole community at a graduation ceremony.

We sought external support for some aspects of the course. Lesbia González (Faculty of Social Education and Human Development at UDELAS University) led sessions on 'Parent

Education and Intrafamily Communication', and a young community leader facilitated part of the 'Conflict Resolution' workshop, reinforcing the community's active role in the learning experience.

## Results

At the graduation ceremony, a semi-structured survey was conducted to evaluate participants' levels of satisfaction with each workshop, learning outcomes and expectations for the future. Surprisingly, no specific workshop was valued more than another, each one was described as having unique contributions. For example:

What workshop did you like most and why?  
 "I liked all the workshops because I learnt something valuable every day. The leadership workshop helped me to understand how to be a better leader for my community, the qualities of a good leader and how to listen to my neighbours. The values workshop taught me how to be a good neighbour, to resolve conflicts without fights, and I also learnt how to be a better parent for my children. The intercultural fair showed me many different cultures of my country... And the project management taught me how to make my ideas a reality."

One of the most significant long-term outcomes of the project was preparing community members to take active roles in the development and implementation of future education projects aimed at preventing street-connectedness. Early childhood development was identified as a crucial first step for preventing future problems, such as school drop-out during primary and secondary education, parents' neglect, and other issues associated with street-connectedness in informal settlements. A kindergarten, developed by community members in collaboration with a local NGO, Changing Lives, offers support and care services to children under six, and runs workshops on parenting skills for community members to reinforce parent-child bonding.

The parents participating in the workshops also took leading roles in setting up education programmes in collaboration with the local government. Although these projects do not solve all the problems the community

faces, they are indicative of the community's initiative and willingness to continue working on problems facing young people. The Community and Family Centers for Integral Education (CEFACEI) is one such collaborative programme. The kindergarten and CEFACEI centre are both located in the community house built jointly by TECHO and community members through participatory design. Their successful operation results from active engagement of community leaders throughout all stages, from infrastructure design to collaborative initiatives with NGOs and local government.

A significant outcome of the project was connecting people with a bigger picture of their community, surrounding environment, and living conditions. This led to a mutual reinforcement between socio-educational programmes and TECHO's methodology of community empowerment through participatory design and community assemblies. Given the global context of broader intersection of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Priorities for Children and Youth, and the New Urban Agenda, this project shows that cross-sectoral collaborations between the urban development sector and education sector are effective. It is an important avenue in developing holistic approaches to prevent children and youth from becoming street-connected, by addressing the interconnectedness of the living environment, their access to basic human rights and improved well-being.

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TECHO Panama:  
<http://www.techo.org/paises/panama/>

NGO Changing Lives:  
<http://cambiandovidaspanama.org/Blog/>  
 (available in Spanish)

CEFACEI Program: [http://cefaceipanamanorte.blogspot.com/2016/02/que-es-cefacei\\_93.html](http://cefaceipanamanorte.blogspot.com/2016/02/que-es-cefacei_93.html)  
 (Spanish)

# An integrated approach to including vulnerable children in India

Jacob Brunner, Georgina Day and Mandipa Ghosh

Child In Need Institute (CINI) was established in 1974 with an aim to achieve sustainable development in health, nutrition, education and the protection of children, youth and women in need. It has grown into a vibrant organisation working in various thematic divisions across West Bengal, gaining extensive expertise of working on integrated models of education and protection for street-connected children.

## The Education Programme

In Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal, CINI works in and around the streets, slums, pavements and station platforms where street-connected children and families can be found. These places lack basic amenities such as sanitation, water and drainage, and, the children born to the families who live on the streets are often deprived of nutrition, education and health and a safe environment in which to grow and play.

To provide these children with an education, CINI has developed strategies that complement government efforts to universalise elementary education and to control the increasing numbers of working children. The Education Programme focuses on the enrolment and retention of all children aged 6-14 years from the streets, informal areas and redlight districts.

Out-of-school children are identified during outreach work on the streets, where they have their places of work, and the surrounding slum areas, and taken to age appropriate classes in neighbourhood government schools, as per Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE'09).

However, a street-connected child who is taken immediately back to school is not likely to stay there without extra support and encouragement. Those who are referred through CHILDLINE (a call centre that a child can call for help or an adult can report abuse) are brought to stay in CINI's transit home before being reintegrated with their families. Others are able to access support through CINI's drop-in-centres. All of these children receive a special education package which takes into account

their individuality and variations in needs. It is a three-month activity-based package that helps the children with functional literacy and life-skills education.

This non-formal education follows the Bridge Course Curriculum: an accelerated learning methodology, to suit different ages and abilities that aims to bridge children's learning gaps using specially designed child-friendly course books and teaching manuals. These resources have been adopted by a number of government and non-governmental organisations. Life-skills education is integral to this package, providing street-connected children with the knowledge of how to face the difficult conditions and challenges they experience on the streets. The learning packages have also been adapted for coaching children with specific learning needs.

For children who live in slum areas, CINI provides after-school coaching support to prevent them from dropping out and help first generation school attendees and other vulnerable children with their studies. The children receive academic support, counselling and lessons on child rights and life-skills to support their holistic development. To help teachers to deliver this support, CINI has developed Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) on different subjects. These are upgraded each year to meet the children's changing needs.

These centres run for 3 hours, 5 days a week in local schools and youth club premises. Presently, 3500 children are supported through this programme. Each year approximately 100 children complete secondary education.

## An integrated approach to inclusive education

CINI works with teachers and other stakeholders to develop child-friendly schools that welcome and support the children arriving from the streets and slums. Training is provided to help teachers understand specific needs of vulnerable children and the reasons why they are more prone to dropping out of school. In addition, a pool of training resources, including



manuals, hand-outs and other documents are available to use by the schools. Presently, this model is followed by nine government schools in Kolkata.

To keep children in school, families and community need support. A number of parents have not been educated themselves and so CINI begins by working with families and communities to understand children's rights and their duties and responsibilities as caregivers to uphold those rights. A family is the best place for a child and we aim to help families become a safe place, conducive to the development of the child. Some families need more assistance than others.

There are, however, many children living on the streets without parents. In collaboration with State Education Department, CINI provides the hardest-to-reach children, with residential housing on the premises of the government schools that they attend in Kolkata. Care is taken to ensure that these facilities enable access to education from a home-like environment, where they can build friendships and access adults who care about them and their needs.

### **Additional support for deaf children**

CINI has initiated a programme for deaf children aged 3-14 years, living in different slum areas of Kolkata. Child Friendly Corners have been established in 8 locations where the children are provided with education, and supported to develop communication, socialisation and life-skills. From here the children are able to access

government-run schools and pre-schools. CINI provide additional support through regular training sessions for school teachers, special educators and the peers of the deaf children on communication, teaching methodology, the preparation of deaf friendly teaching and learning materials, and lesson adaptation to enable deaf children to easily understand.

Again a family strengthening approach is implemented, where parents receive training on deafness and related issues, including education and communication to support their deaf children at home.

Ensuring participation of deaf children in all school related events and giving them responsibilities is one major focus of CINI's inclusive education approach. Currently, 250 children are receiving education in inclusive classroom environments.

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# Providing boarding settings to ensure completion of basic education in Kenya

Russell Brine

The St. John Bosco Rehabilitation Centre (the Centre) is a community-based organisation working with children and their families living in the slums around Kitale, Kenya. Set up in 1992, the programme operated as a drop-in centre in the compound of the local cathedral. At the time, a number of the children did not stay at school after having been supported to return. The reasons for dropping out again varied, but included being unable to afford school fees and the long journey to school. These were key motivations to develop an alternative programme for them.

In 1998, classrooms and residential facilities were constructed. The children now stay at the Centre during the week and spend weekends and school breaks with a parent or guardian. The challenge was to provide enough formal structure for the children so that they stay in school, while at the same time keeping them in frequent contact with their home communities.

## Private education in Kenya

As the population, and consequently enrolment in primary schools, in Kenya has increased, class sizes have grown and parents have become less confident about sending their children to state-run schools. Many of these schools are overcrowded and under-resourced. Private schools, with

smaller class sizes, are perceived to provide better education. They have become popular, even with parents from low-income backgrounds who struggle to send their children to low fee-paying schools rather than local public schools. A significant number of these private schools demand that children board, even when they live close by. Consequently, many children in Kenya attend boarding schools.

Secondary school places are allocated according to the grades children achieve in their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations. The majority of children are expected to board if they want to attend good secondary schools (whether private or state-funded). There are local day schools for those unable to pay boarding fees. These, like local public primary schools, can be oversubscribed and under-resourced, and often offer a smaller range of subjects than the larger boarding schools.

The Centre provides for children whose parents cannot pay fees, or the associated costs of attending the 'free' public schools, such as uniforms, resources and exam fees. The out-of-school and working children from these families are at risk of migrating to the streets or in some cases being taken to children's homes (of which there are a significant number in the area), where



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all their needs could be met. The Centre's model fits in with parents' expectations of boarding private education, while still enabling the children to maintain regular contact with their families.

### **The Centre's residential model**

Children who are out-of-school, on the streets, or at risk of migration to the streets are identified during outreach work by social workers. The children need to be able to name a parent or guardian who can take care of them during weekends and holidays – this could be a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or even adult older siblings.

Relationships with family are important for ensuring that children stay connected with their community as they grow up. The Centre therefore aims to ensure family cohesion by providing only part-time residential care for the children. Returning home for the weekends ensures they interact regularly with parents and guardians. The families are responsible for looking after their children on Saturdays and Sundays and for the transport required to get the children back to the Centre for school on Monday.

When a street-connected child comes to stay at the Centre they initially attend non-formal education classes delivered by qualified teachers. Once they have overcome any addictions they acquired on the street, (re-)developed relationships with their families and gained the confidence to go (back) to a mainstream classroom, they begin to attend a public primary school across the road from the Centre.

### **Graduating to other schools**

We aim to ensure that the children are able to graduate from primary education and transition onto the next stage of their education journey, and that they are reintegrated full time to their home communities by the time they complete primary school. How and when a child leaves the Centre depends mainly on their educational level and/or academic ability and the situation at home.

All secondary level education is fee-based in Kenya. A limited number of social assistance awards, to cover the costs of fees, uniforms and books, are available from local education offices, but these are merit-based and limited in number. Therefore, organisations like ours have to make decisions about children's next steps based on their academic performance.

If they do well at KCPE level, the children go on to secondary school and later to university. Those who do not achieve a minimum grade move onto a polytechnic offering formalised vocational training, such as bricklaying, auto mechanics, welding, electrical installation, tailoring, cooking or hairdressing. These are traditionally gender-based professions, but there are opportunities for young people to choose the course that they would like to follow.

Where possible we prefer the children to stay in local public primary schools to complete their KCPE and, for those that are able, to move to a school closer to home where they stay full time. However, as places in universities for professions such as medicine are highly competitive, those able to obtain the highest Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) scores are found alternative pathways. Sponsors are sought for those who perform well at the public primary school and they may be moved to an excellent boarding primary school nearby in preparation for their KCPE examinations. This is not ideal in terms of inclusion, but provides these children with optimum opportunities within the current system. The Centre also has links with a local hospital. Internships provide work experience for young people hoping to become nurses and clinical officers; a number of them have moved on to medical training.

Those who remain at the local primary school are provided with additional support. After-school sessions run at the Centre develop study skills and work on problems the children may have with their school work. Those who have graduated from vocational training at the polytechnic are found work with people in the community who run construction companies, tailoring centres, auto garages, restaurants or salons, or move into self-employment. All of the vocational school graduates are provided with the tools necessary for their trades.

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# From street to school: Experiences from India

Saumya Gupta



CHETNA stands for Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action, and we work to provide essential services for street-connected and working children in India. The participation of children is fundamental to the achievement of our objectives at CHETNA and we work together with street-connected children to design the interventions that can best meet their needs. Our Street to School project in West Delhi, funded by Toybox, engages with children, their parents, the schools and high-level authorities, to offer a range of activities that ensure street-connected children are able to access education.

## Background

One challenge of India's public education system is the retention of children from low-income communities in schools. There are many reasons why children are not in school. Some of those voiced by the communities we work with reflect the perceived and actual problems faced by families with very little historical experience of education. For example: parents do not have identification for their children, such as birth certificates, with which to enrol them into schools; or they do not see how it is possible for their children to study when they are required to earn money to meet the needs of their family; or because the child may be older, has never studied, and they do not think that a school would accept them.

Children who are struggling with poverty, are more at risk of being involved in child labour and becoming street-connected. CHETNA works with parents and local authorities to support their enrolment into Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) schools. Parents are counselled about the need to send their children to school instead of engaging them in labour. They are encouraged to participate in their children's education by attending parent-teacher meetings and becoming members of the School Management Committees (SMCs). When parents face issues because of incomplete or inaccurate documents, CHETNA staff members accompany the parents and children to school to sort out the differences and ensure admission of children. The staff regularly meets with school authorities to find out if there are any obstacles to children's education that CHETNA can help address.

## Keeping children in school

When children return to school, or begin school at an advanced age, it can be difficult for them to cope with the expectations of formal classrooms. CHETNA coordinates after-school education clubs, where street educators assist children to complete their homework, bridging the learning differences that cause difficulties, and talking through their day-to-day issues at school. These classes are held at negotiated locations within the communities,

usually in open areas under a tree. Initially the educators had to mobilise the children to visit the education clubs, but now the children come in groups by themselves, often inviting their peers to come along. The children are taught in classes of approximately 35, at 13 education clubs around West Delhi. Each club has a unique name and two student leaders are elected by their peers in each class.

As well as covering the subjects taught in school, the children are given opportunities to showcase their talents through art, craft or music. The street educators also organise participatory life-skills workshops, at the education clubs and in the schools, that cover the knowledge and life-skills needed by street-connected and working children on and off the streets. For example, the workshops develop awareness of emergency numbers that children can call for assistance, such as Childline, police, health centres, fire services, etc., and increase their awareness of child rights.

The street educators also acknowledge and attempt to address the issues that the children face in school and at home. They make regular home visits and talk to school teachers to understand the progress and gaps in children's education. The aim is to maintain engagement with teachers and parents on a one-to-one basis, discussing the concerns of the children, such as attendance, health and hygiene, self-esteem, and leadership, etc. These children can face stigmatisation because of working as rag-pickers, etc., and we need to regularly engage with parents, teachers, and children's peers to discourage such behaviour.

The street educators also facilitate peer support group meetings, which provide a space for the children to discuss their concerns with each other, and find solutions to their problems. Peer support meetings enhance the participation of the children and to give them agency in their own lives, boosting their confidence. This includes going on a four-day workshop outside of the city where they can reflect on their lives and set future goals. The natural environment of the retreat provides a welcome change to the chaos of their everyday lives and a space where their problems are heard and potential solutions discussed.

## **Engaging with schools, parents and the wider community**

The Street to School project aims to include all the elements of a child's environment to ensure that children are able to overcome barriers to accessing and continuing their education journeys. CHETNA organise teacher training sessions to familiarise teachers with children's rights and to help them understand how to prevent and deal with child protection issues. The meetings also act as a platform to discuss the concerns of the parents and children in nearby communities. To complement these sessions, we have painted child-friendly murals on the schools' walls, to display information about children's rights in a visually attractive manner. Additional display boards also encourage the children to contribute their opinions and emotions via paintings, poems, notes, etc. These displays reinforce the child rights messages, develop creativity and contribute to child-friendly environments.

We hold regular parents' meetings at the education clubs on a quarterly basis, to introduce the importance of education, and encourage them to share their concerns. Parents' trainings are held annually in each community, to help them address their concerns and familiarise them with their responsibilities in ensuring the rights of their children. Community rallies, organised in collaboration with schools and publicised through banner displays and sloganeering, build wider awareness of and reinforce the importance of education and children's rights.

Finally, to advocate for the children, we work with and lobby stakeholders from higher authorities. Regular meetings with the education department are held to promote the CHETNA model of working and encourage their participation. We have developed a number of documentaries and newsletters about our project, such as this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wZM8uouPKA>.

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# Attending Street Smart: Non-formal education leading to formal qualifications in Kenya

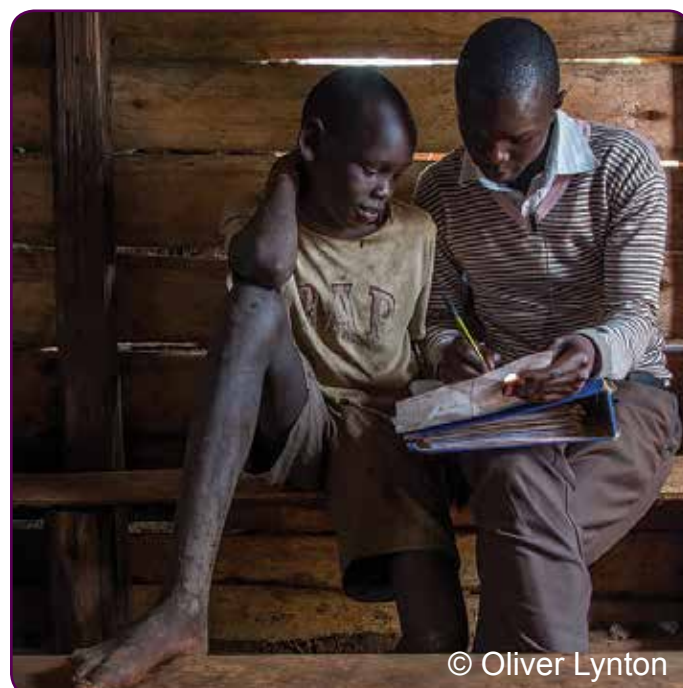
Su Corcoran and Ian Wilson

Child Rescue Kenya (CRK) works with street-connected children and youth in Kitale, Kenya. They implement a three-stage programme of reintegration to encourage young people to leave the streets and return home: 1) building relationships with the young people on the streets; 2) providing up to 12 months of residential care while they prepare to return home, or go to alternative care situations, and school; and 3) returning home. Ian and Su explore the first of these stages in this article.

## Developing trust

Street Smart is a drop-in centre run by CRK to provide a place in which young people living and working on the streets can wash, gain non-formal and life skills education, access basic first aid and support to attend hospital for medical care, and eat a meal. To encourage them to come to the centre, Street Smart teachers and social workers conduct street walks to get to know the young people on the streets in Kitale, check that they are ok and catch up on their news, remind them that the centre is open, and identify new arrivals to the town or streets.

CRK is primarily concerned with assisting street-connected children and youth to return home. Street Smart is a first stage in this process. The ongoing conversations and relationships developed between CRK staff and the young people on the streets, during the street walks and at the centre, are the beginning of a process in which these young people begin to trust adults. This is especially important if the reason for their being on the street is the result of neglect and/or abuse. If a young person is newly arrived on the streets, it can be straightforward to return them home almost immediately after minimal mediation, for example if they have come to the streets after an argument with their parents or a similar event that can be easily resolved. For those who need time to prepare for their reintegration journey when they decide they want to leave the streets, CRK's Birunda Rescue Centre provides residential care for up to a year.



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At Birunda the children attend non-formal education. The curriculum is designed to remind, or in some cases teach, the children about what is expected of them when they go back to school. It helps them to catch-up with some of the content they missed so that they do not have to repeat time at a particular level when they go back. For those children who have never been to school, the teachers ensure they are able to read and write as much as possible, to give them confidence in their own abilities before they go to school.

## Studying for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

There are always young people who chose to remain on the streets. In these cases it is important that CRK provides trustworthy adults to whom the young people can confidently turn for advice and assistance. For youth engaged with income-generating opportunities on the streets, leaving does not always appeal. The vast majority of these youth are young men, many of whom would like to achieve education-based qualifications but feel they cannot attend school full time, especially if their income is supporting their families. In addition, older youth do not want to attend classes with much younger children. In Kenya they return to the class at the level they dropped out of school, so an 18-year-old could be placed in a class of 9 or 10-year-olds.

Street Smart provides morning classes that cover the subjects examined for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). The young men are able to attend for a few hours each day, eat lunch, and then return to their street-based work in the early afternoon. Those who attend classes regularly, and show commitment, are registered with the national examinations board as adult candidates to sit for the KCPE. Afterwards they are able to choose the next stage of their education journey. If they get high enough grades at KCPE, they may be assisted to attend secondary education at an adult education centre. Otherwise, and if they would rather follow this route, they are assisted with securing vocational training as apprentices.

### **The livelihoods project**

CRK assists the young people who have finished primary education, as well as others who have not, to find either short-term vocational training or apprenticeship placements as tailors, hairdressers, construction workers and mechanics. CRK runs tailoring classes, but the other professions are taught on-the-job in placements with local businesses, which can provide them with a minimal income as they train. The trainees also acquire skills – like business planning – to help them start service-based businesses with low capital outlay.

Many of the young men in particular have been, or continue to be, street-connected. Some will have lived on the street full time, but most now reside in low-quality housing in the slum areas and tend to rely on street-based informal employment networks for survival. This can involve the illegal brewing

of the alcoholic drink changaa and other risky activities. To encourage the young people in vocational training to attend training sessions and complete their courses, CRK developed a system of peer networking and support, to build a community around the young people.

Alongside sports activities that encourage the development of relationships between the young people, CRK sets up peer networking groups in which the alumni of the vocational training project are assigned to support those new to the project. These social support groups become formalised and the members are encouraged to meet regularly to share experiences. They may also develop group savings plans, in which each member pays into the group on a regular basis and takes a turn to receive the lump sum. This money can be used to develop their business, pay for unforeseen events or make large payments on essential items, like school fees if the young person is already a parent, or taking care of siblings.

In some cases the young people develop business plans together and are supported by CRK staff to become more economically self-sufficient. The peer groups provide a community in which they can move forward together – an inclusive network that operates as a team to gain entry into the labour market.

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# Catch-up education: The door to future possibilities in Ethiopia

Biruktawit Yohannes, Berhanu Sintayehu, Yoseph Alebachew and Lynnette Kay



## Background

Retrak is an international NGO working with street-connected children in Ethiopia. It helps them move off the streets and reintegrate with their families throughout the country. Street outreach workers interact with children on the streets to build relationships of trust before inviting them to join the Retrak programme. At Retrak's transition centre, children receive safe and secure accommodation overnight, three meals a day, basic health care, life skills training, psychosocial support, and educational catch-up classes.

## Structure of the programme

When children first enter the centre, their literacy and numeracy skills are assessed using informal assessments of Amharic literacy and numeracy based on expected grade levels. It is an informal process because they are not used to formal educational assessments and we want to build a positive attitude to education. Children are provided with individual learning plans and assigned to one of three groups for educational catch-up classes:

- Those who have never attended school;
- Those in Grade 1 or above Grade 1 who cannot read and write Amharic;
- Those who are functioning at a level above Grade 1.

Daily classes focus on literacy (Amharic), numeracy, science and social studies with regular debating, reading and drawing classes. As the children come from different regions, with different education systems, Retrak developed a basic framework for these subjects. Each child's learning plan is developed using the assessment of their current

status and Retrak's framework. The learning plan is flexible because children's performance improves as they settle. Each child receives individual attention within their group of 8-10, from supportive, qualified teachers.

## Objectives of the programme

The primary objective of the catch-up classes is to prepare children to resume formal education at school when they are reintegrated with their families. Due to children's experiences of interrupted education, and abuse and neglect on the streets, we need to:

- Build children's self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn;
- Help children to overcome specific barriers to learning such as addiction, poor concentration and the emotional and psychological trauma of abuse;
- Help children to develop literacy and numeracy skills to resume education at an age-appropriate level.

The children therefore require intensive individual and group counselling in addition to catch-up classes. Each child is allocated a social worker who is their case manager.

## Activities

The teachers work with children in their groups using the government curriculum. Each child works at their own pace and on their specific programme. Teachers provide positive feedback on their progress.

To support the catch-up classes, children also receive daily life skills training on issues such as:

- health and hygiene;
- HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases;
- addictions;
- child protection;
- communication (including negotiation, conflict resolution and assertiveness skills);
- self-management (including anger and time management, thinking, planning and decision-making skills, perseverance and motivation);

- gender empowerment (including gender differences, roles and equality);
- cultural awareness (such as tolerance, harmful traditional practices, dangers of migration and trafficking).

When the time comes for a child to be reintegrated with their family, social workers accompany the child to their (new) school to facilitate enrolment. Retrak teachers provide a letter outlining the child's progress and current academic level. Retrak raises awareness with the school principal about street life, by sharing examples of the problems children face finding food, shelter and work, and their experiences of abuse. This helps address myths associated with migration to the city and the stigmatisation of children who have been on the streets.

## Results

Retrak Ethiopia has reintegrated hundreds of children, and 80% are still with their families and at school two years after reintegration. Many have passed the National Exam to allow them to progress to high school (Years 8-10) or preparatory school (Years 11-12). Some go on to achieve outstanding results and have been accepted into university.

However, the change in children's attitudes to education is the most encouraging result. When children leave the Retrak centre they complete an exit interview. Most children report that the best aspect of Retrak's programme is the catch-up classes. We observe children who are eager to learn, reading in their free time rather than playing sport, and choosing to do assignments to hasten their progress.

*"Education helps me to distinguish good and bad things and think critically".*

Asmamaw (aged 14)

## Alternative options

For some youth over 15 years, reintegration with their families and returning to school is not a preferred or realistic choice. Therefore, Retrak also offers support through non-formal technical and vocational training (VOT) and transition to independent living in the community.

To be eligible for VOT, children need to have a basic level of literacy and numeracy, which the catch-up education provides. The young people

choose the training course they want to pursue (e.g. tailoring, mechanics, carpentry, catering and hairdressing). We provide guidance on employment opportunities, salary expectations and advantages and disadvantages of each option. We also support them to find accommodation in the community, provide food, health care, educational resources and VOT training fees. Weekly follow up and support from social workers is important, as well as regular training in the 'soft skills' needed to learn effectively and find and maintain suitable employment. Retrak's individual focus is maintained through vocational training, as each child has specific strengths and needs.

Retrak recruits and trains community mentors to follow up with the young people after our formal intervention has finished. Mentors frequently include the young people in their family activities and encourage them to persevere in employment even when it is difficult.

Retrak has supported young people in the following ways:

- to gain long-term, sustainable employment in growing industries in Ethiopia;
- to set up their own business, employing others;
- to become teachers at vocational training schools.

Companies with whom we collaborate frequently ask for more trained youth from our programme because they are reliable and hard-working employees.

## Conclusion

Supporting children to leave the streets and resume formal education or technical training requires a comprehensive, holistic approach. Each element is important to address children's individual needs. When street-connected children have the opportunity to engage in education they are eager to learn and able to achieve. As Bireda (aged 15) reported, "I lack an opportunity, not an ability to learn".

**Lynnette is Country Director for Retrak Ethiopia. Biruktawit and Berhanu are teachers and street outreach workers. Yoseph is a social worker responsible for youth in vocational training.**

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# Life Skills Oasis: A project for the streets, by the streets in Kenya

**Newton Kiarie Njoroge**

Life Skills Oasis (LSO) is a project delivered in Kiandutu slum, near Thika in Kenya. The organisation was started in 2006 by a group of young men who had previously lived and worked on the streets in and around the town. I am the Director, and I lived on the streets for three years in the 1990s. When I was younger, getting an education required that I pay school fees, which we could not afford, and so I went to the streets to earn money. I was lucky and found benefactors who helped me finish my education and complete my training as an Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) teacher.

Many of the children found on the streets in Thika, like me, come from Kiandutu. It is one of the largest informal settlements in Kenya, with over 13,000 residents in over 5,000 households (according to the 2009 census). Although it is impossible to generalise, many of the residents rely on casual work, such as work in nearby quarries and plantations; hawking businesses that involve selling items on the street; sex work; and brewing Chang'aa (a traditional

alcoholic drink). These forms of income generation are not dependable, and a number of families struggle to meet the costs of basic needs.

My friends and I decided to use our experience of growing up in Kiandutu and living on the streets to help others in similar situations. We began as a weekend project that delivered life skills education to children living in and around the settlement. The sessions covered topics such as sex and relationships education, drug misuse, health and hygiene, and the importance of going to school. Over time, the project has expanded to meet a growing need. We have a drop-in centre that opens seven days a week. From Monday to Friday, we deliver a programme of support for children who are not in school, both those who live on the streets and those who are at risk of going to the streets. At weekends and during the holidays, we organise additional activities for children who go to school. One of the activities that brings all our children together is football.



© Julius Macharia Maina

### Using football to engage children

LSO uses football as a way of developing relationships with the children, who love to play or watch football. Each day at the centre begins with a football focus. The coaches, who have all lived and worked on the streets and come from Kiandutu, arrive at the field at 8am and start the day with warm up exercises, skills training and then a game. Sport is a useful tool to engage young people and promote inclusion. It provides a social space for interaction with others, brings children from different ethnic backgrounds together, and develops their physical and mental health. It also helps the children to develop relationships with the coaches and teachers at LSO.

LSO has a number of football teams that compete in local leagues. The children develop as team players and have the opportunity to represent themselves and their communities in a public forum. Last year the girls' team, 'The Queens', did really well in the competitions. The children develop confidence and character through their involvement in the sport.

After the daily game, everyone gets to eat porridge and talk. This is an opportunity for the children to discuss their lives, and maybe bring up any issues they are facing. It is a useful forum that brings the children together and helps them get to know each other off the pitch. It also provides an opportunity to talk about life on the streets and the possibilities of leaving the streets. After porridge, the children are given non-formal education that teaches life skills, develops literacy and numeracy skills as well as art. These lessons help to develop a love for learning and encourage the children to think about going back to school. In the early afternoon lunch is provided, followed by a more relaxed afternoon programme that includes games, crafts and farming activities.

### Working with families to keep children in school

When children are out of school there is often a problem at home that means they need to work or find food. Therefore, we work with families, particularly single mothers, on the development of agricultural projects that can provide both food and extra income. We have recently extended this idea to a plot of land near the LSO centre that we are farming with the

children to help grow food for lunches and teach the children basic farming skills that they can use at home.

Family planning is also an important aspect of the work we do with families – helping our young people to make wiser, more informed life decisions. As well as the sex education sessions we provide, we have set up free 'condom dispensers' for people in the community. These are made from old jerry cans mounted on posts around the settlement. We regularly fill them up to make sure that safety is not something that is compromised because young people cannot afford protection.

### LSO – a community venture

LSO is a truly community venture. We rely on others' good will to keep going. A fair amount of our funding comes from public donations, both in Kenya and from overseas. LSO is run and delivered by volunteers. Many of the volunteers are young people who have lived on the streets themselves and want to help others in the same situation. Others are social workers and teachers who work for other organisations locally, as I used to when we first started. They give up their time in the evenings or at weekends to deliver sessions, fundraise for LSO, and provide training for the young people who volunteer as coaches and teachers during the week.

The community is also engaged in helping the organisation. As we are supporting children to stay away from the streets, and teaching skills and values that benefit them for life, community members help to support us through food donations from their family shamba (small holdings) or through financial contributions when they are able. We canvass local businesses for support, encouraging them to think of us as part of their social responsibility. We also network with other local organisations who do similar work and who extend their projects to include LSO or provide training – collaborating to ensure that as many children as possible stay in school.

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# Creative learning inside and outside the classroom for street-connected children in Uganda

Faisal Kapeli

S.A.L.V.E. International works in the Jinja District of Uganda. Our name stands for “Support and Love Via Education”, so education is a critical part of what we do. At our headquarters outside Jinja town is our Halfway Home. This provides temporary accommodation for children who have lived on the streets before they are resettled with their families. We also have a Drug Rehabilitation Centre for children who have become addicted to harmful substances such as *Mafuta* (aeroplane fuel) while on the streets. As a teacher, my role is to encourage children at both centres to continue with their education despite the time they have been out of school.

## The challenges of re-joining education

Some of the children are too old for their class. For example, Sula is 17 and should be in Year 2 or 3 of secondary school, but his educational level is only Year 2 of primary. When he first arrived, he did not feel comfortable saying his class level, especially because he acquired most of his academic knowledge through our drop-in centre. He, and others, have friends of a similar age or younger who have reached higher educational levels, and this makes them feel ashamed.

Sometimes a child who was studying in Primary 4 before spending three years on the streets, will tell me they reached Primary 7. Through interacting with them I discover their actual learning level. When children arrive at the Halfway Home, we organise some general lessons and then organise them into classes according to their ability. On the streets, children live a ‘free-range’ existence. It can be difficult for them to follow a timetable or a formal programme after this freedom. It is my role to encourage them to come to lessons and develop their concentration skills ready for their return to formal education.

## Learning through creative play

Learning through creative play involves using available resources in the community to aid the

facilitation of the lesson. For example, if we are teaching about the weather but do not have weather instruments like a wind vane, we can use a plastic bottle, sticks, bicycle spokes and banana fibres, as shown in the photograph. The compass points are made from cardboard boxes. We also use young trees or plants for science classes, taking children outside to teach them about how plants transpire. We cut the top off a plastic bottle and put it over a young branch. We cover the top of the bottle using cloth or paper, and tie it with string. After four hours we can see that the plant has given out water through its leaves, hence showing how plants transpire.

The playground at the centre is an important resource in my lessons. I teach mathematics using tyres. The children can easily identify the shapes and colours and I set tasks appropriate to primary mathematics activities where they sort and identify as a technique. The swings can be used to teach many ‘doing’ words (verbs), especially when we are developing the children’s English language skills. In Uganda, the children speak their home languages but by law school classes must be conducted in English. The children learn as they play. We say things like: “Go and sit on the swing”; “What they are doing on the swing?”; “I am swinging”; “I am sitting”; “He is pushing me”; etc. I create games that can teach as many verbs as possible related to the children swinging with their friends.

Using creative play has helped me, and the children, to feel a lot more confident about our teaching and learning. It has helped me to identify and develop the learning abilities of the children, and they feel more comfortable to express themselves through play.

Using learning through creative play you can develop a stronger relationship and understand the child better. For example, if a child is shy or does not enjoy sharing, games can help you to involve them and develop skills such as sharing and communication.

### Preparing for formal education in Uganda

I want to encourage teachers to include a creative play learning approach in their teaching. Learning through creative play is an approach like any other teaching approach, such as demonstration, illustration, etc. Children who are street-connected are often playful, and teaching them through this way of learning makes them feel they are doing what they liked to do before. This encourages and motivates them to develop their love for education. We teach from known to unknown to help them feel confident.

To prepare a child to go back to mainstream education, I try to increase the amount of time they spend in the formal classroom before they are ready to be resettled with their family. I also encourage children to keep using the creative play techniques with their friends. We invite the children to come for special workshops in school holidays to check on their progress, and we help them to look at difficult topics in other ways.

Learning things through observation and practice is not easily forgotten. Using the very games that the children enjoy in their free time provides an aspect of continuity when they go back home to their family and re-join school, and play the same games.

Using creative play in their teaching helps teachers to listen to the children and to learn their language, in reality and metaphorically. By learning the words they use and using them as part of the medium of instruction, the children can more easily understand you. As a teacher I want my students to express themselves. Starting with their language helps me to move onto what I need to teach them and engages them in their learning. Many street-connected children experienced problems at school before they went to the street. Creative play is a way of helping them to love learning and feel comfortable with you, especially if they have been out of school for a long time.

I hope that more teachers in Uganda and across the world will start to teach using creative play ideas. If we make education enjoyable and accessible, every child should always find something useful in a lesson.

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# Mobile School: An innovative approach to learning on, and from, the streets

Sander Degeling

Imagine you are 12 years old, living and working on the streets of a giant city. You are facing the unstable and constantly changing reality of the streets on a daily basis. To cope in this extremely challenging environment, it is vital to possess survival skills, such as having positive focus, agility, resilience, creativity, and competitiveness.

It is important that we recognise the capacities and talents of these young people, rather than only focusing on the harsh realities and resulting problems they face. For instance, in Antigua, Guatemala: Hudiel has learned to communicate in more than 12 languages by handing out leaflets for a pizzeria on the streets; and Luis faces constant violence from police officers, but is nevertheless earning a living by entertaining tourists and locals with his clown and circus acts. If you are able to deal with and adapt to the realities of life on the streets, you are not just a poor, needy or addicted street-connected child, but a creative and entrepreneurial survivor with lots of potential.



## Blackboard on wheels

In order to highlight the positive capacities of street-connected children, the Belgian social enterprise StreetwiZe • Mobile School came up with the concept of a mobile school. The mobile school is an extendable six-metre-long, two-sided blackboard on wheels. It comes with more than 300 educational panels ranging from literacy to street business, to health and hygiene. It allows local organisations worldwide to unlock and discover the talents of street-connected children in their own environment.

The educational panels are easily attached to the mobile blackboard with plastic screws before being taken to the streets for non-formal educational sessions, through which street educators interact creatively with street-connected children and youth.

By focusing on opportunities, rather than the problems children face on the streets, these mobile schools provide an open, accessible and recreational meeting place where children and young people are unconditionally accepted and appreciated. Through this positive approach, young people feel empowered, regain a positive self-esteem and self-image, and develop the tools to make conscious and sustainable decisions about their own futures.

## A brief history

The mobile school was developed in the late 1990s by Arnoud Raskin, a Belgian product designer who was looking for a purposeful project for his thesis. After attending an information session by an organisation working with street-connected children in Colombia, Arnoud decided to travel to Colombia to see how he could develop a product for this target group. After working intensively on the streets of different Latin American countries, Arnoud noticed that there were few materials adapted for interactions with youngsters on the streets. The idea for the mobile school was therefore born, as a tool to broaden social impact and reinforce the efficiency of organisations' outreach work.

Today, Mobile School has a continuously growing network of 46 partners in 24 countries across Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia. These local partner organisations take their mobile schools to fixed intervention areas multiple times a week to meet street-connected children in their own environment.

## How to get involved

The mobile school can be used by any organisation doing outreach work with street-connected children. Interested organisations can apply to become a Mobile School partner by submitting an application document and a



video in which they explain with whom, where and why they want to use the mobile school. After a successful application, a first exploratory visit is organised to introduce the mobile school concept to the applicant's staff. During this visit, Mobile School and the applicant identify potential locations for using the mobile school and align the vision of both organisations through basic street work workshops. Key topics such as the importance of empathy, self-esteem, play, and creativity are introduced, or reinforced, and discussed.

After the visit, a joint decision is made on whether the mobile school is the right solution to reinforce the outreach activities of the organisation. If there is a positive decision, all materials are adapted to the local context, such as using the dominant local language, and the mobile school is ready to be used. The partner organisation then receives two weeks of hands-on training and on-the-street-coaching to ensure the quality of their outreach interventions. Throughout the partnership, Mobile School stays in close contact with the local street educators and offers face-to-face training, support from a distance, and coaching and monitoring. All trainings and materials are offered for free although Mobile School remains the owner of the school and the panels during the first four years. In return, Mobile School asks partners to actively use the methodology and report back about the social impact of the outreach work on the streets.

### **A hybrid social enterprise**

Producing mobile schools and offering street work training requires a lot of investment. In its early years, Mobile School was able to sustain its programmes through charitable

donations from an individual donor. However in 2008, Mobile School decided to generate its own income and not be dependent on philanthropy or government subsidies, so it created StreetwiZe. As a talent-development organisation, StreetwiZe offers workshops, training sessions and experience-based learning programmes to businesses in Belgium, all based on the capacities of the young people we meet with Mobile School on the streets. In the training programmes, the StreetwiZe crew shares stories from the inspiring survivors on the streets, allowing employees to reflect on and develop these 'street skills' which they will need in their daily business context.

The business clients pay for these learning programmes, and as a hybrid social enterprise 100% of the profits of StreetwiZe are reinvested in building more mobile schools to have more impact on street-connected children, resulting in a lasting impact both on the streets and on our business clients. By asking the question 'what can managers and employees learn from street-connected children?', StreetwiZe deliberately focuses on the talents and potential of people living on the streets. By using the learnings from the street, the company guides teams and individuals on how to deal with change in an economic context. So, even if you did not grow up as a street-connected child, you had better start thinking like one!

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# Supporting street-connected children's special educational needs through learning support assistants in western Kenya

Connie Wu

School (re)integration programmes for street-connected children tend to focus on (re-) enrolment, with little to no consideration for children's specific learning needs, which may contribute to high drop-out rates later on.

In 2014, Chance for Childhood and Yellow House Children's Services Trust, a Kenyan speech and language therapy organisation, assessed 15 street-connected children, at a non-formal education (NFE) centre, and found that all had learning difficulties. Screening of a further 32 children in 2015 revealed similar results and 52% had difficulties with presented expressive language. These findings prompted the replication of an inclusive education model from our project in Rwanda, using community-based learning support assistants (LSAs) to provide individual support.

## Rwanda's community LSA model

The Rwandan government has put together a Special Education and Inclusive Education Strategic Plan 2011-2015. However, communication disability continues to be 'hidden' and excluded, as too often only physical and intellectual disabilities are taken into account. People with communication disability may have difficulties understanding what others say, using spoken language effectively, making their speech understood clearly, or a combination of these. In addition, communication disability severely reduces access to education, both due to a predominantly verbal and written pedagogy, and stigma affecting participation in class.

Chance for Childhood therefore introduced their LSA model to play a significant role in:

- ensuring the inclusion of children with special educational needs and/or communication disability in education;
- creating a positive impact on their learning and behaviour;
- creating awareness in schools and families on the rights of children with disabilities;
- reducing stigma and negative attitudes towards children with disabilities.

This low-cost, community-based LSA model has been adapted to other contexts, such as with child survivors of conflict in northern Uganda, and with street-connected children in Kisumu, Kenya.

## Delivering the model in Kisumu

Chance for Childhood's local partner, Kisumu Urban Apostolates Programme (KUAP), has been delivering NFE for over 20 years, providing out-of-school learners with education. A low-cost, flexible community-based approach to NFE is well positioned to support children adjusting (back) to a classroom environment, whilst providing an opportunity to assess their abilities and challenges in learning. The project builds on an established relationship with education directors, referral mechanisms across more than 26 schools, and the addition of LSAs, to reintegrate street-connected children into inclusive, mainstream classroom settings.

Our successful LSA model stresses community ownership and buy-in, adapting the principles of a traditional LSA role found in education systems of many developed economies. Community LSAs provide specialised support to children in schools, like traditional LSAs, but they also champion the rights of children with disabilities within the community and children's families. Often, they are the key drivers of change at village and community levels, where stigma is widespread.

Community leaders and retired teachers are recruited and trained in inclusive teaching methodologies to provide children with special educational needs and/or communication disability with inclusive and quality education through four key objectives:

- promoting independence and social skills;
- providing personal and physical support by assisting students with feeding and mobility;
- providing learning support services, such as one-to-one or small group learning opportunities;
- ongoing communication with teachers, head teachers, and family members about students' progress, strengths and needs.

LSAs attend training to understand the basics of inclusive education, terminologies, and teaching methodologies. They later attend in-class training alongside teachers to gain practical experience of how to work collaboratively with class teachers, a key factor of success.

Trained LSAs are then assigned to street-connected children who have been assessed by education specialists and speech and language therapists (SLTs) as having a special educational need and/or communication disability. Each LSA supports 2-5 children, three days a week. The part-time nature of the LSA support prevents dependency and encourages self-confidence and self-learning. LSAs and class teachers work together with the teacher trainer, and sometimes an SLT, to create individual educational plans (IEP) for each child. The IEP sets short- and long-term individual learning outcomes and outlines the psychosocial background of the child. Progress is measured against the plan and parents are familiarised with their child's special educational need. Once the child is ready to be mainstreamed into formal schooling, usually having spent up to three months in NFE, the IEP is introduced to the class teachers. Ideally, an LSA is also placed in the mainstream school to offer uninterrupted support to the child, and the LSA can support the child until they can learn independently. Some LSAs are placed in more than one school, depending on the number of children who require LSA support and the proximity of the schools. When learning outcomes reach a satisfactory and consistent level that is unique for each child, the LSA-supported child 'graduates' from the LSA model and learns independently. Formal school teachers are also trained in inclusive teaching methodologies and managing the classroom through positive discipline techniques.

The close coordination between LSAs and class teachers results in positive learning and social impact for children with special educational needs and/or communication disability but also for their non-disabled peers. For instance, teachers with LSAs in class are much more confident in encouraging children without disabilities to participate. Children without disabilities have also contributed to the reduction in stigma and negative attitudes, as

they learn alongside their peers with disabilities. In general, all children's school performance increased, though LSA-supported children displayed a greater improvement, which is to be expected since it is the first time that many of them have received special learning support.

We have now introduced the LSA model to seven street children organisations, providing their NFE teachers with inclusive education training and rolling out LSAs to each NFE centre to support their children with special educational needs and/or communication disability.

### **Collaboration and advocacy**

Various stakeholders have been part of the development of the Kenyan project. Therapists, university researchers (in the UK and East Africa) and disability and social inclusion advisors have contributed to the LSA model, ensuring it is fully adapted to the local context and beneficiaries. Together, we have developed an inclusive education training manual, accredited by Maseno University, and built the capacity of local staff to understand disability and special educational needs and strengthen their support for children with special educational needs and/or communication disability. Our learning and progress is being shared with the Kisumu Street Children Consortium of NGOs. Using the consortium as a platform, we aim to generate evidence about supporting the special educational needs of street-connected children.

The LSA model strengthens and tailors support for street-connected children's specific needs, ensuring they have sustainable access to quality inclusive education and are not left behind.

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# Providing sustainable futures for girls from low income backgrounds in India

Neil Farrelly

I first met Sister Cyril in 2009 when I was running workshops in Calcutta. That first meeting ended with us drawing up a plan for me to write a book about her ideas for inclusive education. For many reasons the book took six years to complete and was finally published in early 2017 by Konark Publishing, in Delhi, India.\* Sister Cyril, now in her eighties, has worked with schools, NGO partners and the ministry responsible for education to increase access to education for marginalised learners for over 40 years. In this article, I share the work with girls who are street-connected or vulnerable to migrating to the streets. This work started in the Loreto Day School in Sealdah, Calcutta where Sister Cyril worked, and now continues as part of a larger collaborative effort across India.

## Educating Rainbows

In Calcutta in the 1970s, the better-off students in the city had access to private tutors, the best books and teachers, and a way into college. To enable street-connected girls to access such opportunities Sister Cyril set up a school where half the students pay full fees, covering the costs for the other students who either come from the slums or are encouraged to make the transition away from the streets. These girls have all their costs met by the school.

In the last 40 or so years, around 40,000 girls have passed through the school, many of them graduating to colleges in India and overseas.

## Rooftop 'classrooms'

Starting school can be a difficult transition, especially when you are used to the relative freedom or open spaces of living on the streets or in rural communities. A process of peer education was started at the school to ease the girls' transition and prepare them for being in a classroom. Older, secondary-age students at the school lead small groups of younger new arrivals from the streets. The older girls teach the group basic literacy – reading and writing – and numeracy skills. These classes take place on the roof of the building in an informal setting, with the girls sitting in informal groups.



When the younger children were ready, they graduate to attending the formal classes downstairs. Every student at the school is required at some point to help and teach the younger students something that could help their future in some way. This is both profound and effective, and one of the simplest ideas that can be enacted in any school, anywhere in the world.



## Teaching children in rural communities

Girls tend to be more likely to return to their communities after graduation while boys often move on to pastures new. This is not a defining stereotype, but it was an observation that influenced the decision to provide teacher training opportunities for girls who want to teach, and related peer education projects, which increase access to education for hard-to-reach communities in rural areas.

Young women graduating from schools such as Loreto, particularly those from rural areas who are not going to college, are given the opportunity to receive teacher training. Although

they are not 'highly educated' they possess more education than some people living in the villages and small rural settlements identified as needing assistance to develop better education provision. The women understand the local situation and environment, which is important to providing context-appropriate education. They are also willing to work in remote places where many qualified teachers would rather not work, preferring to be posted in better resourced schools in urban centres.

The young women are provided with training to help them become effective teachers, empowering them to use their knowledge and education to help children in the villages access basic education. Local partner organisations pay their wages as part of their education project work. Training is also provided to older men and women from the villages, who are unable to access teacher training and employment through traditional routes. The training covers the skills needed to be able to deliver activity-based teaching to out-of-school learners.



### Brickfields

Over time the education outreach has diversified to focus on the children living and working in the brickfields around Bengal and India. These brickfields are industrial sites where migrants, from across India, make bricks and fire them in giant kilns. It takes a whole family a whole day to make a thousand bricks for which they get paid as little as £2. Because the whole family is so involved, including young children, there is no time for school.

After negotiations with factory owners, for the right to set up small schools on the open ground in the middle of the brick complexes, teaching is provided to children who want to learn. A

'school' here means a circle of bricks with a child seated on each one and a teacher sitting with them.



The brickfield teachers, employed because of their ability to speak the languages spoken by the migrant communities, are trained by locals NGOs in teaching methodologies suitable to the context. As the children are migrants, and their time at the brickfields is likely to be transitory, the syllabus is a 7–8-month programme, taught in their home languages. There is constant monitoring and evaluation by project personnel to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to the needs of the learners.

It is, quite possibly, one of the harshest environments in which to start a child's education, but it works, albeit imperfectly. It is temporary at best, because the families are migrants who work seasonally all over India, so schooling is at its most basic level.

Sister Cyril retired from Loreto Day School in 2012. She continues to share her experience with local authorities setting up schools across the country, and joins staff at the Rainbow Homes project and partner NGOs to facilitate workshops for teachers and students in India and overseas who want to develop similar projects.

\*'Girls are the Future' is published by Konark (<https://konarkpublishers.com> or [www.flikart.com](http://www.flikart.com)), and can either be bought from them in India direct or as an E-book.

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# Protection and education of street-connected children in Mbale, Uganda

Lesley Waller and Moses Bwayo

Africa Educational Trust (AET) works to build education systems that provide education for all, while meeting the needs of people who are most excluded from education. In looking to support educational opportunities for street-connected children, they initiated a partnership with the Ugandan organisation Child Restoration Outreach (CRO) in 2011, to strengthen support in the areas of education and child protection.

## Background

CRO has been working with street-connected children and youth in Mbale since 1992, providing holistic support through services to address hunger, health needs, resettlement, counselling, access to education and family empowerment. CRO's approach to enabling these children to access formal schooling starts with daily street visits by the staff to identify children, build trust and empower them to make their own decisions to leave the street. Once ready, the children enrol in school preparation classes at CRO's centre. After a year, the children are enrolled in mainstream schools or vocational training, depending on their age and ability.

## The project

Project design started with a needs assessment with current and former street-connected children. This aimed to understand their day-to-day challenges and how we could best support them to access quality education. We conducted focus groups with 50 current and former street-connected children, and consultations with teachers, community members, and district officials. Representatives of CRO, local government and head teachers took part in a planning workshop to verify findings and use lessons learnt to inform project design.

AET was involved in three key areas of intervention, supported by the Big Lottery Fund. These interventions were based on the premise that enabling street-connected children to return to and succeed in education requires them to be empowered to bridge the gap from

street life to school and family life, and requires the creation of support structures at school, community and district level.

## 1. Developing the skills and confidence to transition successfully back to school

The project provides support to enable new cohorts of children to access CRO's school preparation classes, counselling and recreation activities, and increased resourcing for these activities. Qualified teachers deliver classes in literacy, numeracy and life skills at CRO's day centre. This helps children to catch up with aspects of education they missed when they were on the streets. The learning activities run alongside psychosocial support and recreational activities that enable children to build resilience to cope with difficult situations, enhance confidence, boost interest in the preparation classes and support children to drop street habits such as substance abuse.

## 2. Improving inclusion in mainstream schools and the quality of education for street-connected children

Government primary schools in Mbale are overcrowded and under-resourced. This creates a challenging teaching environment where specific needs and learning outcomes for children are difficult to identify. Street-connected children may struggle to adjust to formal schooling and may face stigma from classmates and teachers. To address this, we have trained teachers about child protection and inclusive education, to enable them to better support street-connected children. The training covered areas such as child abuse, alternative discipline, and child participation, and provided a forum for the discussion of issues faced by vulnerable children. We used the testimonies of former street-connected children to provide examples of what children can achieve with support, and advocated for the equal treatment of street-connected children with other children.

The project built the capacity of Parent-Teacher Associations and School Management Committees to take ownership of planning and implementing school improvements. They

consult with teachers and pupil committees to create and agree school development plans, which inform annual budgets to improve learning environments: e.g. improving water and sanitation, renovating classrooms and providing equipment for sport and craft activities.

Peer mentoring clubs provide opportunities for street-connected children to work alongside other children in schools to develop their ability to support each other, reduce irregular attendance and improve literacy and life skills. To develop business skills, raise funds for school development, and subsidise fees for the children participating, the schools were encouraged to choose a school enterprise project and develop a business plan. The children took responsibility for planning and running the business. In one school, the children formed a music and dance group. They have grown in confidence, able to express themselves on key issues such as girls' rights to education.

### **3. Community and district level advocacy to improve understanding of and support for street-connected children**

Education happens within the wider context of the local community. The project has enabled CRO to develop awareness and advocacy activities to challenge the negative attitudes towards street-connected children and build systems to support their resettlement. These activities include quarterly radio talk shows on topics such as skillful parenting, mentoring, career guidance, domestic violence, child rights and preventing children coming to the streets. Training has been provided to Community Child

Protection Committees to prevent and respond to child abuse in the community. They also advise parents on good parenting skills, and work with police on monitoring the situation of children on the street. Quarterly day and night surveys collect information on the number of children on the streets, the reasons they are there, and the activities they are engaged in. This data is shared with local government and used to lobby for legislation on the protection of vulnerable children. As part of this wider advocacy approach, we collaborated with the Probation and Social Welfare Officer to establish a desk in the District Education Office to support the reintegration of street-connected children and strengthen the role of local authorities in child protection.

### **Challenges and the way forward**

Although this project has been successful in enabling access to education, continued attendance in schools requires the ability to meet the costs of fees and resources (despite Uganda offering Universal Primary Education there are additional costs to parents for exam fees, uniforms and resource costs, etc.). Meeting this need through financial support is unsustainable in the longer term. To address this, we plan to enable families of street-connected children to contribute to their child's education in the longer term through initiating self-help groups and income-generating activities to help alleviate poverty and address one of the key causes of children coming to the street.

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# Educating children in risk zones

**Yvonne Bezerra de Mello**

The experience of constant violence often contributes to learning difficulties and in the worst cases, disabilities and severe neurological problems. For example, extreme emotional trauma and neglect often leads to cognitive and psychological problems, which can result in school truancy, continued poverty and social exclusion.

Since the 1970s, I have studied cognition and the behavioural effects of violence in children and adolescents living in difficult circumstances such as countries at war, slums with urban guerillas and drug lords, refugee camps and children on the streets. This experience showed me that children affected by trauma do not respond to traditional teaching methods. They need to be taught using a different method if they are to understand and remember.

## **The Uerê-Mello Pedagogy**

Between 1980 and 1998 I taught street-connected children in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 1993 an event changed my life. Eight children from one of my street groups were killed by the police in the Candelaria Massacre. In response I started “a school without doors and windows” - the first Uerê school - under a viaduct in downtown Rio. The survivors of the massacre were the first students. After one year, 150 children were attending the school.

In 1998, I founded the Projeto Uerê NGO, in a house in the Favela da Maré complex. Uerê is derived from Erê, the word for child in Yoruba, a Nigerian language.

Based on almost 30 years' experience, I developed the Uerê-Mello pedagogy to use in the school. The pedagogy was tailored to improve knowledge, learning and focus on children with learning difficulties caused by emotional distress. It offers disadvantaged children a chance to compete in equal conditions with children who are not experiencing distress because it takes into consideration the effects of violence and provides a path to escape the further violence that can result from poor education. It is worth noting that cognitive problems due to violence exist in all social classes and are not related to economic status.

The Uerê-Mello pedagogy is a classroom management strategy for teachers. It uses special oral exercises to help reconstruct mental pathways and strengthen brain connections which often get disrupted in children who are traumatised by violence and experiencing sensory-deprivation neglect. These oral exercises combine discoveries in neuroscience with a new way of teaching academic subjects, performing tasks, expressing feelings and reducing stress in affected children. The use of oral exercises, instead of written exercises, activates emotions, facilitates oral skills, and enables children to focus. In addition, it greatly improves brain plasticity, memory and coordination. Oral exercises help overcome the negative impact of violence on short-term memory by increasing correct information storage, improving cognition as well as resolving issues related to violence-induced trauma and blockages.

The Uerê-Mello pedagogy is successful because it provides an alternative to traditional teaching methods, which do not take into consideration the children's exceptional circumstances. The intelligence of children experiencing severe emotional trauma is not affected but their learning capabilities are.

Children learn by connecting new concepts to pre-existing references that they already understand about their environment. This concept is called “pre-knowledge”. Without pre-knowledge it is impossible to make the proper connections because the brain needs existing references to store new information. Teachers therefore need to find a link to something interesting and to which the children can relate, in order to create an emotional experience that promotes learning.

The pedagogy helps teachers to understand the brain functions involved in learning and provides a framework with which they can understand their students better. Combined with the use of oral exercises, it is appropriate for all students and can help teachers find creative solutions to individual students' educational dilemmas.



### How we work

There are 12 steps, used in a pre-defined sequence regardless of subject, each with a specific purpose. The first six steps are designed to warm up the brain and develop a positive learning environment. For children aged 6-11 it is sufficient to use these first six steps for 20 minutes each day. With older children, these oral exercises take 10 minutes during each class subject.

Traumatized children have shorter attention spans, so Uerê-Mello classes are divided into shorter teaching moments. No explanation should be longer than 15 minutes, which is the memory span in most children and adolescents. Short sessions of oral exercises in all subjects have been shown to improve mental response and brain speed. They help to increase alertness and are useful for all children, especially those who have attention problems (e.g. due to disability, ADHD, hunger, tiredness, etc.). Nowadays, technology usage requires faster mental speed, so the new cognition, as I call it, uses oral exercises to increase speed in the children's synapses and neuronal pathways. For both primary and secondary schools, the six final steps comprise usual school activities.

### The scope of Uerê-Mello pedagogy

Many countries are affected by conflicts, terror and/or oppression. Constant exposure to violence increases children's risk of developing mental health conditions. Brain regions responsible for emotion are particularly affected as well as areas associated with maintaining attention, execution functions and sensory processing. Many children become aggressors, acting violently toward others. They may enter a marginal life and live shorter lives. The magnitude of violence in many poor communities has often been

underestimated, and governments do not always seem to take this problem seriously or find educational or social solutions.

Trauma in children growing up in contexts of conflict and violence, including children living on the streets, needs early identification. Providing them with access to appropriate learning methodologies requires changes in government education policies. From 2008 to 2015 I worked with Rio de Janeiro's Secretary of Education and UNESCO to design the 'Schools of Tomorrow' programme to improve the ratings of 20 public primary schools in risk zones with the worst national test scores. The programme's success led to other municipalities requesting it. In 2017, 293 schools in Brazil use the Uerê-Mello pedagogy and 12,000 teachers have been trained to use it. Due to its success, UNICEF has chosen the pedagogy as one of six strategies for action to end violence against children.

### Training teachers in the Uerê-Mello pedagogy

Teacher training can involve either:

- 20 hours, with an on-site instructor, and later monitoring once a month;
- 80 hours training via e-learning (only available in Portuguese for the moment);
- an 8-hour (one-day) conference giving an introduction of the pedagogy.

The Uerê-Mello pedagogy book is being translated into English and will be available to buy in 2018.

**Yvonne Bezerra de Mello is the founder of Projeto Uerê and the Uerê-Mello pedagogy, writer and children's activist**

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# “Safe Schools”: Keeping vulnerable and working children in education in Peru

Himali Dave

Access to safe and good quality education remains a widespread challenge across Peru, especially for many poor communities with a high prevalence of street-connected child labour, violence and exploitation. ChildHope and local partner Centro de Estudios Sociales y Publicaciones (CESIP) have begun to address these issues through targeted activities. They are providing direct educational support to children, as well as engaging key people and institutions in their lives: parents, teachers and the local government.

## Situation

Three-and-a-half million people in Peru (approximately 14% of the population) live in situations of extreme poverty and homelessness. Two million are children and young people, of whom 1.2 million are engaged in some form of work – from agricultural labour to commercial sexual exploitation, both of which increase their risk of being trafficked or trapped in dangerous working situations.

In Lima alone, there are approximately 2000 children and young people living on the streets. However, this figure does not consider various transient forms of street-connectedness, especially linked to informal or unregulated employment, such as selling sweets, washing cars, street acrobatics, garbage collection, and even forced begging.

For example, a number of children in schools are street-connected in that they spend evenings, weekends, and even some of the days when they should be in school, working. As a result, they fall behind in class, either through lack of engagement, fatigue or difficult home/family circumstances (including violence and abuse). Those children returning to or starting school after time living on the streets may struggle to transition back into classroom learning.

## The project approach

ChildHope and CESIP are in the second year of a three-year project in Lima: ‘Safe Schools: Promoting the protection of children and young people against mistreatment, sexual abuse and

child labour’. The project works across eight schools in the sub-urban districts of Lima, with the aim of supporting vulnerable children to achieve academically, build their confidence and develop valuable life skills.

The project is working towards these outcomes through three key interventions:

1. The first aims to challenge the context within which the children work and/or become street-connected. CESIP encourages the development of school child protection policies and aims to improve reporting processes – both within and beyond schools. This involves improving the links between schools and external safeguarding authorities to better protect children and young people. It also includes working with parents through workshops to raise awareness around issues such as violence in schools and the harmful impact of child labour. All eight schools have approved the implementation of measures to protect children and young people from mistreatment, sexual violence and child labour. This will be critical to improve the reporting of violence or abuse to the local authorities within what is currently a time-intensive and bureaucratic process.
2. CESIP is supporting teachers to develop innovative and inclusive teaching strategies through educational reinforcement, psycho-pedagogic support and social skills activities. A psycho-pedagogic specialist supports teachers to develop engaging lesson plans and teaching strategies to support the learning of all children – especially those falling behind in class. Alongside the more academic subjects, social skills workshops – using art, theatre, and dance activities – aim to encourage creativity and build the children’s self-confidence. In addition, therapeutic support is available for children identified as requiring more intensive attention during small group sessions.

3. CESIP has signed collaborative working agreements with four local education authorities (UGEL), within which the eight schools fall, to promote positive education strategies for vulnerable children. The eight schools are used as an example of good practice for developing effective strategies for the prevention of violence and child labour, with the intention of mainstreaming such an approach across all the other schools for which the UGELs are responsible.

### Challenges and opportunities

While the project has had a notable impact – reaching over 9000 children and young people and improving the implementation of child protection measures in schools and across UGELs – there have been challenges. Parents' participation has improved overall, but there is a notable drop in parental engagement for secondary school children, as well as discrepancy between the numbers of mothers and fathers involved. This is due in large part to prevailing attitudes amongst parents; they feel that their secondary-age children no longer require as much attention and support. As a result, many children are left to make their own way to and from school, which has led to cases

of involvement in drugs and even teenage pregnancies. CESIP is working closely with each school to encourage parents to assume greater responsibility in their role as caregivers – making them aware of the risk that their children could become street-connected. Secondly, although four UGEL have signed agreements for collaborative working with CESIP, it has been difficult working within a context of general elections and the frequent rotation of ministry staff, which has required building new relationships with new government personnel. However, two UGEL have expressed an interest in promoting strategies for the prevention of violence and raising awareness about child labour. In addition, the Peruvian Ministry of Education extended its national educational support programme in 2017 to cover the eight schools involved in this project. This provided an opportunity to extend the focus on the psycho-pedagogic support and social skills workshops for another two years.

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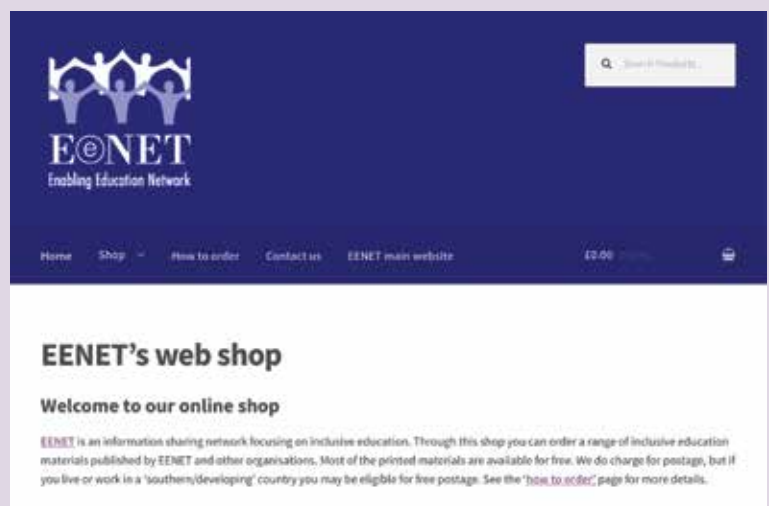
## EENET's online shop

### <http://shop.eenet.org.uk>

EENET has always printed and distributed hard copies of inclusive education materials because so many people around the world still do not have access to the internet or only have limited access, such as via a mobile phone. Printed copies are also very useful during training courses or advocacy campaigns.

To make it easier for you to request printed copies of our materials, we have created an online shop. All the documents in the shop are **free**. There is a charge for postage. BUT readers in developing countries are eligible for free postage – you just need to ask us for a free postage voucher.

Visit the online shop to see what documents are available and to find out more about how to order and how to claim your free postage voucher.



# Assisting former street-connected children in Uganda to access higher education

Molly MacCready

Child Restoration Outreach Support Organization (CROSO) has provided access to post-secondary education since 2007, through a scholarship programme available to former street-connected children in Uganda. CRO (Child Restoration Outreach), a partner organisation of CROSO, works with children living and/or working on the streets to provide life-changing support throughout primary and secondary school. However, funding was limited for any further academic expenses. As CRO's programme manager, explained, "Most of the donors prefer supporting the children in primary...the challenge is (funding) after secondary and yet we feel these children should attain quality education".

CROSO was founded to raise the funds necessary for higher education to become a reality for the children who had successfully completed secondary school. Scholarship programmes in and of themselves are neither new nor innovative, but we believe CROSO has established several important programmatic structures that are specific to supporting former street-connected children.

It was clear from the beginning that a traditional scholarship, offering tuition fees only, was not enough. Having been street-connected, CROSO scholars do not have access to financial support for even their basic needs, so the CROSO scholarship also provides funding for housing, food, books, supplies and graduation fees. In the last 10 years, the programme has evolved to also encompass the areas of communication, relationship building, academic tools and employment preparation.

## Creating channels for communication

CROSO is a US-based organisation. When we started, inconsistent electrical supply, and limited internet access restricted communication between the CROSO office and the scholars in Uganda. We could not expect the scholars to communicate directly and so we only communicated with CRO staff members. Over time, the frequency of communication with CRO staff has increased,



and improved access to technology means that contact can be made directly with the scholars. Consequently, we have established the CROSO liaison programme. Each CROSO scholar is paired with a liaison (or mentor) in the US who communicates monthly with via email. These relationships have several positive impacts: the scholars feel more supported and more connected to CROSO, and CROSO has developed additional accountability as we are able to better understand the scholars' experiences. Expectations have therefore been set for regular monthly communication with both CRO staff and the scholars.

## Strengthening relationships

Members of the CROSO Board of Directors make regular visits to Uganda to listen to our partners and scholars. These visits have helped strengthen our relationships and the impact of our programmes. The visits also provide the board with an understanding of the context in which the programme is conducted when making strategic decisions.

These trips also provide an opportunity to visit scholars at their college and university campuses, to talk with their professors and gain interesting insights into how they see the scholars in comparison to their classmates. While the scholars are often concerned about the stigma of having been street-connected following them to campus, the professors and administrators have said the opposite. A

number have shared their admiration of the scholars' propensity for leadership on campus, acknowledging that some had been elected to student government roles such as guild speaker or class representative, or had become captains of their sports teams. Seeing the respect they are gaining on campus is a welcome reminder of the importance of this scholarship in building self-esteem and developing their abilities beyond academic skill-building.

As part of the visits to Uganda, we enable as many of the scholars as possible to come together for CROSO scholar gatherings. These not only help us to meet the scholars and hear their stories, but it also creates a sense of community within the group, encouraging them to continue connecting and supporting one another throughout the year. Inviting the graduates to join these gatherings allows them to re-connect and reinforce necessary peer support systems as they seek employment and begin their professional lives.

### Identifying opportunities for greater success

Each gathering opens dialogue for the scholars to share their frustrations and challenges. It often takes the scholars a few days to warm up to the idea that they can openly share some of the challenges that they have faced without offending us or appearing ungrateful. These conversations often lead to the most tangible changes to our programme.

### Laptops

During a 2013 visit, CROSO board members met with university personnel and better understood the reality of computer access on campus, as well as the importance of providing each scholar with a laptop of their own. This has enabled our scholars to complete their assignments on time, rather than depending on the availability of a classmate's computer or the communal computer lab.

*"The computer we got made it so easy for me this whole semester. It helped me access the internet from the university wireless internet and I used it to type my coursework and assignments."*

Kiseka Samson

In addition to coursework, the scholars found the laptops helpful for their correspondence with their US liaisons. Most of our scholars now attend colleges or universities with wi-fi enabled campuses, which means their computers are an even more necessary resource. Teachers assign students research that requires the internet, and some scholars have found useful online training videos to increase their skills even further.

### Internships

During our 2015 and 2016 visits, the scholars expressed their concerns about successfully navigating the job market after graduation. As is true in most developing countries, job offers in Uganda are typically driven by personal connections, rather than a formal recruitment process. The scholars lack access to these professional networks because their parents are not connected to these influential groups. After a lot of listening and brainstorming, CROSO has made a commitment to support larger internship expenses. Scholars can now request additional funding from CROSO for internship-related expenses (such as temporary housing, transportation, or supervisor fees) that enable them to gain better internship placements. This will provide them with the opportunity to build larger professional networks during their academic experience and to develop more practical job skills. Also, as more graduates of the programme find employment, the current and future scholars will find it easier to navigate the job market.

CROSO scholars and graduates are an inspiration to the younger children currently supported by CRO. Their success makes it possible for children who have recently left the street to dream of a life that includes higher education. We, and they, have come a long way in our ten year existence!

### Molly MacCready is the Executive Director of CROSO

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# Reintegrating children in street situations into schools in Haiti

Mathilde Dufranc

Dynamo International is an international network of street social workers. We bring street social workers who work on the streets together in order to exchange practices and build common advocacy campaigns around the exclusion of street-connected populations, especially children.

The international network comprises 51 national platforms of street social workers from northern and southern countries, one of which is Haiti. Each platform brings together several local associations and/or street social workers individually. These platforms meet regularly to create strategies and develop activities that help social street workers to share their experiences. Training is also delivered through these meetings.

## Returning children to school in Haiti

We have supported the Haitian network of street social workers for a number of years, as the situation of street-connected children in the country is a major concern. One of the many projects implemented focuses specifically on the reintegration of street-connected children into schools. However, the street social workers who facilitate this project have met several difficulties in its implementation.

In Haiti, street-connected children are exposed to abuse through: prostitution, enrolment in negative political activism, drug use, violence and related gang membership. The authorities deal with these abuses by treating the children as offenders rather than victims. In addition, street-connected adults who have grown up on the streets, dominate youngsters and coerce them into working for them. Consequently, street social workers have experienced verbal and physical aggression from these adults – creating a situation in which street-connected children are more and more difficult to reach. This vicious circle of violence can make street-connected children violent themselves.

The context of the project has helped us to understand some of the difficulties of reintegrating street-connected children into schools. For

example, the children sell on their uniforms and school materials, either to make some money for themselves or their families, or because they are forced to do so by older members of the street-based community. The children may also have behavioural problems as they are used to being part of, and surviving within, a violent environment on the streets. These behaviours can carry over to the classroom – particularly with regards to their relationships with adults. If a child has continually experienced violence and abuse from adults, developing trusting, respectful relationships with other adults could be difficult. Addressing these issues has led to collaborative projects to design new interventions for work with street-connected children.

## The use of Capoeira to instil respect

The street social work has three components:

- Individual work: the street social workers follow an individual on the streets and address the specificities of her/his profile.
- Collective work: street social workers organise sessions for a group of people connected to the street: for example, awareness raising activities (on drugs etc) or recreational activities like sport or art.
- Communitarian work: street social workers have an active role in society. They raise awareness of the situation of street-connected people with the general public to advocate for their rights and engage citizens in the fight against their exclusion. Street social workers are development agents in this way.

These components are interdependent and bring the street-connected individual complete support.

For example, Braz, a street social worker from Brazil, stayed in Haiti for a while for an exchange of practice between members of the two national platforms. He started developing Capoeira activities with children to develop structure, discipline and respect toward each other. Through this kind of collective activity, the child's social integration is enabled and an easier reintegration into school can be



facilitated. In respecting Braz, as the teacher, the children are able to extend this respect to the teachers of their classes when they arrive in school. As the Capoeira project had worked well in Brazil, Dynamo International enabled Braz's journey to Haiti to train street social workers there and pass on the practice.

### **Long-term approaches to reintegration into schools**

A round table on child protection in Haiti decided to address the problems of reintegrating street-connected children into schools. The Belgium platform, Haiti.be (<http://www.plaformehaiti.be/>), which coordinates the cross-sectoral networking of a number of organisations active in the country, supported us. We decided to explore the problems facing the reintegration of street-connected children into schools and research of alternatives through an action research project.

The research project is in the early stages. To begin with, we are bringing different stakeholders together, such as street social workers and university researchers from Belgium and Haiti, to combine their knowledge, experience of practice, and methodology. The objectives are:

- to develop an overview of what interventions have already been carried out in Haiti in terms of school reintegration, in order to understand the opportunities and challenges, and the roots of problems;
- to document good practice;
- to trial innovative alternatives through micro-actions that could be implemented in different parts of the country.

This action research method is a continuous movement between micro implementation in the field and analysis. In every city involved in the project, a micro seminar will take place with

various stakeholders, to determine the micro actions that could be implemented at the local level. We imagine that a school and a centre for street-connected children will develop a special partnership. For example, school teachers could give additional lessons at the centre to better understand street-connected children and help the children get used to school teachers. The researchers will analyse information from this experiment to inform future projects.

Researchers, street social workers, schools, child protection officers, and local authorities are working in collaboration to define three micro actions that will be implemented in Port au Prince, Jacmel and Petit Goave over an eight-month period in 2017. It is a pilot project that will inform a transition toward more efficient systems targeting the reintegration of street-connected children into schools. Taking a multi-stakeholder perspective, includes different actors with different experiences, responsibilities and opportunities.

A final conference in December 2017 will present the conclusions of the research to the different stakeholders involved in the protection of children in Haiti. The objective is to develop knowledge and understanding, and establish recommendations based on the research and on practice to the Haitian and Belgian governments that direct their development cooperation policies toward more inclusive and efficient reintegration of street-connected children into schools.

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# Leaving the street?: A research focus

Su Corcoran

How do teachers feel about street-connected children being included in mainstream classrooms? How do young people experience leaving the street and going back to school? In this article, I address these questions using the findings of two pieces of research conducted in Kenya. The first examined teachers' understandings of inclusive education in relation to street-connected children returning to school. The second,<sup>1</sup> my PhD research, explored the experiences of young people leaving the street and returning to formal and non-formal education.<sup>2</sup>

## Rationale for the research

I have been volunteering with organisations working with street-connected children in East Africa since 2009. More recently, my involvement has included fundraising and the evaluation and analysis of monitoring and evaluation data. Originally I taught street-connected children and young people who no longer live on the streets at street-based drop-in centres and short-term transition centres. In addition, as a sponsorship coordinator, I tracked children's progress in schools after reintegration, assessing their additional support needs – in terms of resources such as study guides or extra tuition – and coordinating communication with the sponsors who were paying for their fees.

I noticed that a number of the young people supported through education drop out months or years after they return to the classroom from the street. However, it was difficult to predict who would not manage to reach their final year of primary/secondary school – ability is not an indicator. To understand the challenges they faced when returning to education I explored the transition experiences of street-connected children and youth, aged 12 and over, who were supported by three different Kenyan organisations in two Kenyan towns to return to education, or in some cases start school for the first time, after their lives on the street. To provide context to the study I also conducted a smaller piece of research that asked teachers about their thoughts on welcoming street-connected children into their classrooms.

## Talking to the teachers

I interviewed nine teachers at four primary schools in Central Kenya, to find out their thoughts about street-connected children returning to school. When the teachers talked about how they supported these children in their classrooms, they referred mainly to the provision of basic material needs such as food, clothing and shelter. They focused on what the young people did not have and on the negative aspects of street-connectedness, such as behaviours attributed to life on the street, including the potential to be involved in criminal activity and cigarette, alcohol and drug addiction.

When they talked about the academic support they gave children returning to the classroom from the street, one teacher described how they had to 'go down' to the child's level when pitching the work, and this was echoed by the others in their interviews. This response surprised me as the same teachers talked about how it was a shame when they saw children on the street who had been 'bright' when they were previously at school. They therefore suggest that all children living on the street are somehow less able.

The deficit approach they took towards street-connected children meant that a number of the teachers felt that they were unable to support the return of these children to the classroom. They expressed a wish for training, support and more government spending on resources. As an advocate of inclusive education, I know that these perceived issues are frequently voiced as reasons why inclusion into mainstream classrooms is not feasible for other marginalised groups, like children with disabilities. But if teachers are to be prepared for the inclusion of street-connected young people into their classrooms, some of whom may also have disabilities, what does this preparation need to consider? Understanding young people's experiences of returning to education could be useful as a starting point.

## Young people's experiences

To explore how young people experience leaving the street and returning to education I talked to participants who were attending primary schools (state-funded or private day schools and boarding schools), secondary schools, polytechnics and non-formal vocational apprenticeships. They mentioned various difficulties that they faced in returning to education, including:

- the inability to concentrate for long periods of time;
- having to deal with so many subjects;
- the problems of learning in a language that was not their mother tongue.

The most significant issue, however, was being recognised as being, or having been, street-connected.



Students who were attending schools where they were the only people who had lived on the street (that they knew of), invented stories to explain why they had been absent from school for a long time, or why they were starting a new school. For instance, they pretended they had been staying with a relative. They felt that their peers would not understand why they had been on the street, and were ashamed to share this aspect of their life stories. Other children, who attended schools as part of a group supported by one organisation, talked about how they were unable to feel understood by their peers who had not been street-connected. This was either because they were stigmatised by these peers, or they felt that they would be stigmatised if they were to share their experiences with them.

In many ways these young people could be described as having remained street-connected. The participants' street-based experiences

influenced how they saw themselves when they no longer lived on the streets. Some of the young people I spoke to did not feel they belonged in their new situations, because they had lived and/or worked on the streets. They struggled to integrate effectively with their peers and tried hard to create identities for themselves that would help them fit in. As a minimum this meant making the effort to be clean. For the young people in apprenticeships and vocational training placements, it meant dressing correctly and accessorising to maintain an outward appearance of belonging. For the young people in boarding schools, it meant outperforming their peers and proving they belonged academically. A number of young people explained how they did not belong, and this feeling appeared to intensify after transitioning to secondary school.

Interestingly, older participants in vocational training placements, many of whom had completed primary education, were more comfortable with their street-connectedness than their peers in formal, mainstream education. Some talked about how their time on the streets had developed strengths, such as survival skills, that were helping them as they prepared for the world of work. A number of these young people were engaged in the informal labour market alongside their courses or apprenticeships, carrying out similar jobs to when they lived on the street, to supplement their training allowances.

The attitudes of teachers and trainers were important to a young person's ability to develop a sense of belonging to a particular education pathway. There were a number of participants who felt that they had not been appropriately welcomed to their new school, having been treated exactly the same as the other students or singled out for previously living on the street. Two young people were introduced to their peers as having been street-connected: one was declared 'not to be trusted', the other had performed well in a previous school and was used as an example for other students to work harder as a 'street child' was outperforming them. Such introductions highlight a deficit view of street-connectedness held by the head teachers.

At one school, a boarding primary, the teachers helped the children to settle in and provided ongoing support through regular meetings with them as a group. The participants implied that it was easier to do well at this school as the teachers were engaged in the teaching and supporting them as students.

### Potential recommendations

One major observation from this study is that one young person's experience of leaving the streets and returning to education is very different from another's. There are many different things that affect the transition, some of which lie beyond school (for example, being able to pay for fashionable clothes or supporting their family). Since some of the participants did not want to be identified as street-connected and some teachers took a deficit approach to street-connectedness, it is debatable how useful it is to highlight a young person's previous life experiences to the teachers when they start at a new school. However, teachers need to be aware of the challenges that any young person returning to education faces – particularly with regards to self-esteem and belonging.

Children may require acceptance and support in order to feel that they belong and remain engaged in schools and training centres. Teachers therefore have a role to play in developing inclusive pedagogies and teaching practice that build the self-esteem of all learners. My recommendations are not new, but emphasise the need for collaboration, and drawing from the lessons learned by those

working to promote the inclusion of other groups marginalised from education. For example, materials on the EENET website<sup>3</sup> provide advice on advocating for inclusion and developing inclusive practice through an action learning approach.

Most importantly there is a need for joined up thinking in terms of reintegration that looks at young people's journeys after they transition from street to school. Organisations working with street-connected children should work closely with schools and teachers to develop an awareness of the needs of street-connected children that improves teaching practice and education interventions delivered on and after the street.

[1] An academic paper on this study is available from the open access journal Disability and the Global South: <http://bit.ly/EER-SC19>

[2] The thesis is available electronically from the EENET online catalogue: <http://bit.ly/EER-SC20>

[3] On the publications page of this edition, we have provided links to materials.

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## Share your experiences

EENET is always looking for more case studies to share through Enabling Education Review and our website. We would love to hear about your experiences of working on inclusive education or of learning within an inclusive system/provider of education. In this edition, we have focused on a specific group of learners – those who are street-connected – as we felt there was a place for bringing together different organisations' approaches to enabling access to education for this group of young people.

As an organisation and a network we are interested in inclusive education in the broadest sense, affecting many different groups of learners. If you feel you can contribute to the ongoing discussion, please get in touch. If you have a story to share, you can write your experiences in an article, or ask us to interview you about your experiences. Contact: [info@eenet.org.uk](mailto:info@eenet.org.uk)

# Enabling education for long-term street-connected young people in Kenya

Vicky Ferguson

## Being a young person on the streets of Mombasa

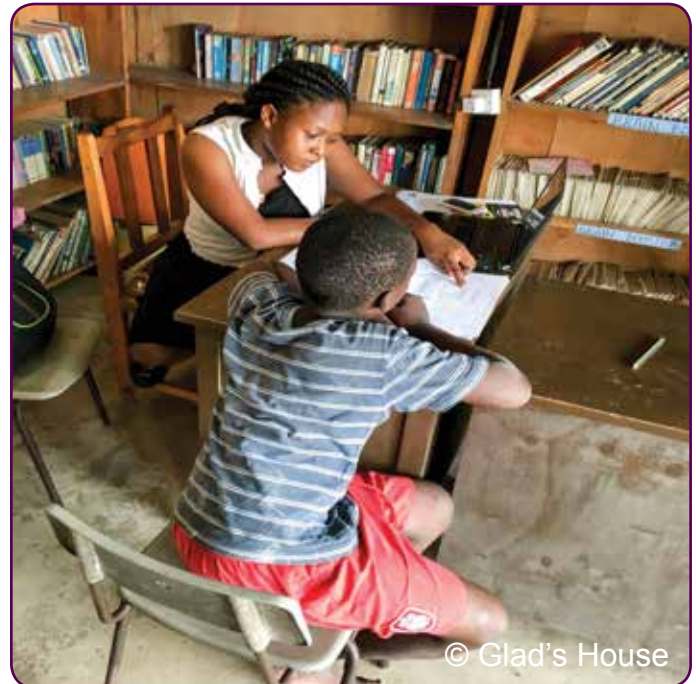
You are 21 years old. You arrived on the streets at the age of 7. You never learned to read and write and had only been to school occasionally, over 14 years ago. You came to the streets after fleeing a challenging situation at home. For 14 years you have hustled to survive, doing work in the informal labour market and begging. You have been a victim of all forms of violence from many people, on so many occasions that you have lost count. You have been sexually abused and have also been a perpetrator of sexual abuse.

You have been incarcerated several times for the 'crime' of being homeless. In those jails you have been frightened, hungry, persecuted, abused and beaten. On the streets you have been hungry most days, forced to eat out of bins or the rotten food handed out from cafes. You have not slept well for 14 years – always sleeping with "one eye open", fearing police round-ups, the theft of your few possessions, or being attacked while you sleep. You have been judged every day of your life. You have used substances to mask the multiple complex traumas you have experienced. These substances have been the solution to your problems.

This is the reality for most of the young men Glad's House supports to leave the streets and move into education, employment and/or training. Our aim is not for all these young people to go back to school, but we are passionate about ensuring every one of them leaves us with basic numeracy and literacy skills to give them a chance to be fully self-sufficient as they move on to live totally independently. In an area with 44% youth unemployment (double the national average) we have to do everything possible to give our young people a fighting chance in the job market.

## Barriers to education

Getting each young person to the point of self-sufficiency is a long journey. They present themselves as strong and resilient,



but vulnerability lies just below the surface. A fear of rejection stems from why they initially came to the streets. They are unwilling to show their weaknesses and fears as they needed to develop a 'tough' persona on the streets to survive. They are reluctant to trust anyone as they have frequently been failed by others. They have developed the low self-esteem of being Chokora (a negative word often directed at street-connected young people) and being viewed as worthless by everyone.

The challenge for Glad's House is to take account of all these issues when each young person takes their first steps into a classroom, sometimes for the first time in over a decade. At this point they become incredibly vulnerable, and allowing themselves to be vulnerable is a difficult adjustment to make. They often cannot write their name and admitting this begins the process of breaking down the 'tough guy' persona and putting themselves in the hands of others. Managing that is a huge challenge.

Making certain that they feel safe enough to be vulnerable is crucial to the success of ensuring all young people are included in our education programme. Knowing we will not misuse their vulnerability in that setting is key. Our street workers and social workers are on the streets

daily, building strong relationships of trust with the children and young people. But as the young people enter the classroom, we ask them to be at their most vulnerable with someone they do not yet trust – the teacher.

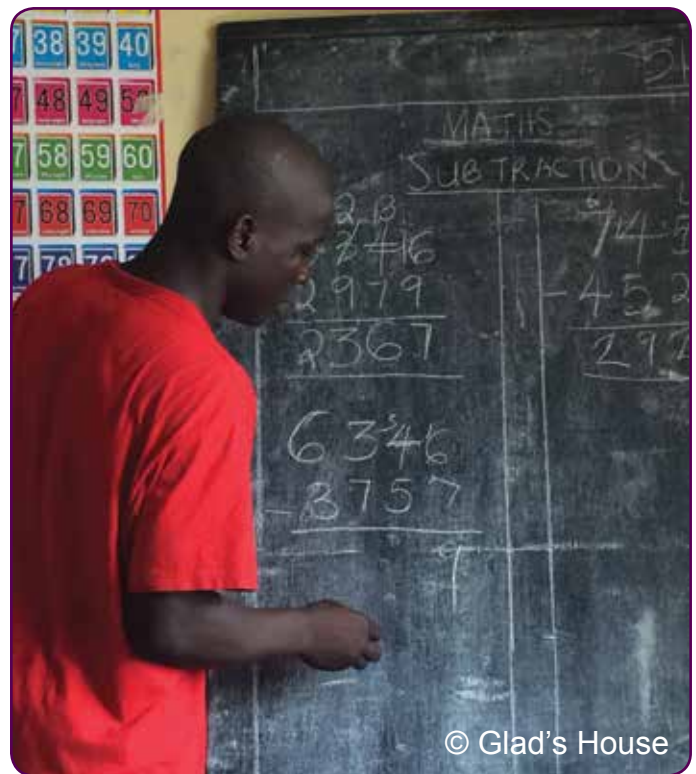
Other challenges also exist. The young people may have short attention spans after years of being on the move and from the withdrawal of or reduction from substances. (We do not operate a zero-tolerance policy, we work with young people to understand, manage and reduce their substance use.) They may also have poor communication and problem-solving skills having learned to communicate on the streets, and may have undiagnosed mental health issues in a country where this is simply not recognised.

### Moving forward

The challenge is to address all the issues to ensure that each young person can access the education journey they choose – whether that be a return to formal education or a grasp of basic numeracy and literacy. We meet a young person where they are and journey with them from that point. At Glad's House we do not have all the answers, but we do know that our holistic therapeutic programme is ensuring that we make strides towards breaking down the barriers to education. Here are four aspects of the programme:

**1. Our team members work incredibly closely.** The social workers and teachers supporting a young person develop their care plan together. The team from the streets will engage with the young people at the Education Programme and Transitional Home, and interact with the teacher, showing their trust and relationship with the teacher. In doing so, the staff demonstrate to the young people they are not isolated now they have left the streets, but instead that they are working together to support them.

**2. Qualified counsellors support the young people** who are making the transition away from the streets. Weekly one-to-one and group sessions aim to address the underlying traumas that pushed many young people to the streets, as well as the traumas they experienced while they lived and worked there. This gives them



a space to process what has happened and supports them to create coping strategies. Alongside the counselling sessions, we run non-formal life-skills lessons and a mentoring scheme. Together these three programmes improve self-esteem and support the development of communication skills, including problem-solving and conflict resolution, so that when the young people reach the classroom they are able to voice their feelings in a productive way.

**3. At Glad's House we provide boxing sessions.** Boxing engages the frustration and aggression that young people feel, providing a way to release pent up energy in a positive way. It teaches about risk, that our actions have consequences and we therefore need to think before we act. It also helps young people to heal their bodies after years of neglect, and improve their mental health as their brains begin to release endorphins from exercise. We also run football training as part of the wider programme, for similar reasons. Providing a structured environment, where much of the training is non-contact and conducted within a system that develops self-discipline and respect, encourages the growth of self-esteem and conflict management skills. These sessions are delivered once in the morning and once in the evening, and are open to young men in our transitional homes and those living on the streets.

#### 4. We help the young people at Glad's House get a sense of what they can gain from education.

We run a Golf Caddy Programme for young people from the streets to enter employment. A good caddy needs to be able to read and write to fill out players' scorecards. We also encourage those who want to run their own business to recognise the importance of writing receipts, counting change and/or doing stock takes and the power of a basic education in their future lives. We help young people see education as a means to a sustainable future, supported through our programmes.

#### Our key message

Ensuring that all our young people can access the education that is right for them involves looking at the bigger picture. It is about not only recognising the trauma they have experienced, but also supporting them to address it and put coping strategies in place. It is about creating an individual plan for each young person, as

one size does not fit all. We accept that this journey is a marathon not a sprint, and some days education will be at the bottom of a long list of priorities for a young person. Some days there is too much other 'stuff' to deal with to even think about learning. Most importantly we recognise that children and young people own their journey to and through education. Their passion, drive and ambition need to push the process, not social workers, teachers, street workers or Chief Executive Officers (like myself) pushing a child and young person to learn. It is about us lighting a fire in their bellies, supporting them and empowering them to develop their own abilities.

**Vicky Ferguson is the Chief Executive Officer of Glad's House**

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## Final Word: Pedro's story through education

**Sarah Thomas de Benitez**

Young street-connected people live complex lives in chaotic circumstances, and their experiences of education reflect that. Here I share Pedro's story. It is 'typical' only in the sense that he faced challenges that many street-connected girls and boys confront – wherever they are – and his journey, like that of many others, does not follow a straight path through one particular type of education programme.

Pedro was 9 years old when he started living full time on the streets of Puebla City. Located in Mexico's central highlands, Puebla is a sprawling, commercial city of 2.5 to 3 million people. It has a thriving informal economy, and a steady flow of people migrating in from rural areas with a history of extreme poverty. Pedro's mother left before he was old enough to enrol in primary school. No free pre-schooling was available in their neighbourhood on the city's fringe. When Pedro was 7, his grandmother died and his father, a construction worker in the informal sector, left all four sons in the care of a local teacher, to move to the USA as an illegal migrant. By that time, Pedro was enrolled in Year 1 of the local state primary school, but a chaotic home life made for erratic attendance. Pedro and his siblings must have been more than their teacher/carer had bargained for, because she arranged for them to go into care within a year. Each child was taken to a different organisation. Pedro failed his first year of primary. He enrolled in another school from the more stable environment provided by the organisation, repeated Year 1 and passed into Year 2.

Pedro's unhappiness at being separated from his brothers overwhelmed any desire for schooling and stability. He ran to the streets at 9 years old to find his brothers. Street life was brutal, exhausting – and exhilarating. Running errands for a mechanic, ferrying market produce, opening taxis doors and carrying shopping bags, sleeping in urban nooks and crannies, Pedro had little time for thoughts of school. He briefly attended daily non-formal education classes at a street-outreach welfare centre, but it was far from his workplace and his hours were unpredictable. Pedro stopped going – but not before discovering the addresses where he might find his brothers.

By 10 he was exploring the wider city, finding and visiting these organisations when he had time – asking resident boys through open windows if they knew anyone with his (distinctive) surname. His quest was cut short by a police officer and welfare workers, who placed him first in a state welfare home and then, after he ran back to the street, with another organisation. Here there were hints but no firm allegations of sexual abuse. He failed his third year of primary, and in time became labelled as a serial runaway. At 12 welfare officials – in some desperation – placed him in the state juvenile detention centre to 'stop him running'. Pedro attended non-formal education classes. Despite his disrupted, sometimes chaotic schooling, Pedro quickly made headway in classes – once winning first prize in a quiz about children's rights. Even at the time, he was aware of the irony...

Finally, Pedro was offered a place at an organisation where staff started by listening to children's experiences and their opinions. Within a year, Pedro was in contact with his family, had visited both younger brothers, was in regular phone contact with his older brother and father, and had accepted that, rightly or wrongly, the other organisations would not release his younger brothers until they finished their basic education. Pedro settled in to catch up on his own missed schooling with some enthusiasm. He completed 4 years of primary school in 1.5 years through a state-run accelerated schooling programme, with supplementary support from the organisation. Enrolling at age 14 in junior high school he progressed at a rate of 1.5 school years each academic year – while also taking vocational training in baking and biscuit-making – until he caught up with his mainstream peer group. Pedro graduated from high school at 18, with a half-scholarship for a place at Puebla's Iberoamerican University.

By 18, Pedro had had first-hand experience of non-attendance, dropping out, failure, repeat years of formal schooling, non-formal education, accelerated/catch-up programmes, supportive and non-supportive mainstream schools, catch-up programmes for adolescents, learning by rote, life-skills training, vocational training, and holistic support.



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But life doesn't stop at 18. Pedro decided not to take up his university place. Instead, he took up an offer of support for (illegal) migration from his uncle in New York, and followed his father and older brother. Pedro used his vocational training experience to get a job in New York making pizzas, and saved hard until he raised the money for both younger brothers to join him in New York. By 22 he had achieved his dream of uniting his siblings.

I have met Pedro a few times in New York, most recently in July 2017. Aged 29, he has two young children with his long-term partner. Sadly, his youngest brother is dead, after a return to street life in Mexico City. The oldest battles with chronic depression and drug addiction. Pedro and the middle brother, who also has a young family, remain close – emotionally and geographically – living a few streets from each other.

Still an illegal migrant, a 'Dreamer', Pedro continues to make pizzas six days a week – now in a higher-class Italian restaurant that pays better, although for longer hours. He worries about his family's future as his partner and children are also 'Dreamers', but he feels 'blessed'; 'a lucky man – I have everything, with my family'. He is fit, healthy, hardworking, anxious to be a good father and loving husband. As he

contemplates becoming 30 he thinks wistfully of his abandoned university place. He would have liked to study psychology. He thinks maybe he'll find a way to go to university when his kids are grown, so his journey through education may still have some way to go.

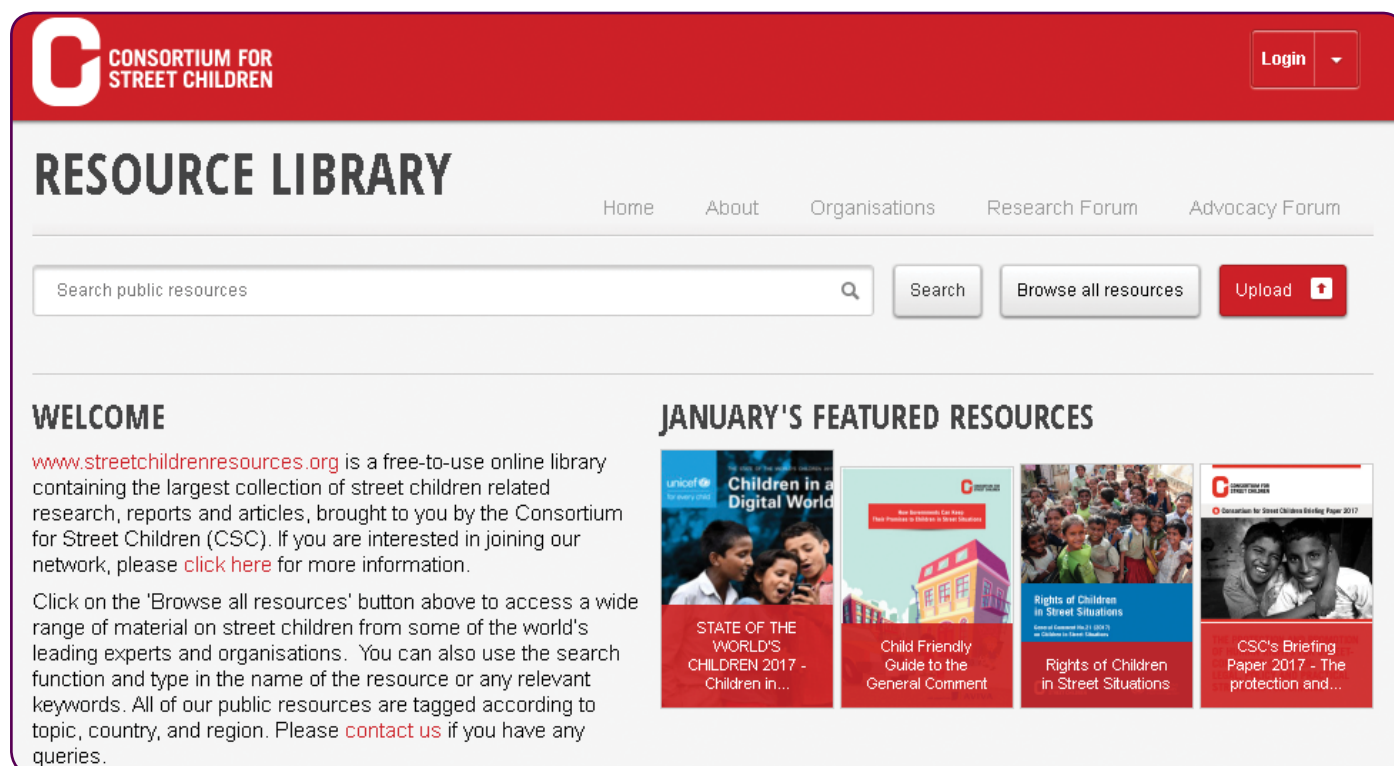
Pedro's diverse educational experiences as a child are echoed across Africa, Asia and Latin America, and by some children in Europe, North America and other rich nations. Educational systems everywhere exclude children who are most in need of educational support. At the same time, innovative programmes have sprung up – often on a shoestring and often at great personal sacrifice – finding ways to help young people with chaotic lives in complex circumstances forge their own paths through formal and/or non-formal educational opportunities.

**Sarah is a senior independent researcher and consultant currently researching street-family-work interfaces with street-connected young people and providing technical assistance to entities that encourage governments to apply UN General Comment 21 for street-connected young people.**

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# Sharing experiences and research through the Global Resource Centre

Lizet Vlamings



**WELCOME**

[www.streetchildrenresources.org](http://www.streetchildrenresources.org) is a free-to-use online library containing the largest collection of street children related research, reports and articles, brought to you by the Consortium for Street Children (CSC). If you are interested in joining our network, please [click here](#) for more information.

Click on the 'Browse all resources' button above to access a wide range of material on street children from some of the world's leading experts and organisations. You can also use the search function and type in the name of the resource or any relevant keywords. All of our public resources are tagged according to topic, country, and region. Please [contact us](#) if you have any queries.

**JANUARY'S FEATURED RESOURCES**

- Children in a Digital World
- STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2017 - Children in...
- Child Friendly Guide to the General Comment
- Rights of Children in Street Situations
- CSC's Briefing Paper 2017 - The protection and...

## Background

The Consortium for Street Children (CSC) is a global network that exists to give street-connected children a voice, promote their rights and improve their lives. CSC has over 100 members operating in more than 135 countries, united by a commitment to strive for a world where all street-connected children can access all their rights. CSC's work focuses on three key areas: advocacy, network development and research. Research is central to good development practice, yet past research about street-connected children has been fragmented, hard to access and underused in the development of policies and programmes. This creates the risk that non-governmental organisations and government responses to street-connected children's issues may be ill-founded, misdirected and/or ineffective. CSC works to address this by helping researchers, policy makers and grassroots practitioners connect with each other. We also produce and share high quality research on children connected to the streets, which keeps our network informed of best practice. We help members to share insights and experiences so that we can grow as a sector.

## A unique resource centre

With these aims in mind, CSC created the Global Resource Centre (GRC), which can be accessed from CSC's main website: [www.streetchildren.org](http://www.streetchildren.org).

The GRC is a free-to-use online library containing the largest collection of research, reports and articles related to street-connected children. The resources are aimed at academics, practitioners, journalists and the public and can be searched for by topic, country and/or geographic region, among others. Resources on the GRC are available in many different languages, and new resources are added each week by our team and by network members. This online platform was built in 2013 with support from HSBC and Aviva. CSC is now further developing the overall website and online library. An upgrade to the GRC will improve: the overall design and navigation; search functions and finding new resources; the email digest; the balance between academic and practitioner resources; and engagement and discussions on important topics and resources. As the ultimate library of resources for the sector, the GRC is improving awareness and understanding of street-connected children. The online community enables shared learning to strengthen our network and ultimately foster policy and programmatic responses which accurately understand and tangibly improve the lives of street-connected children.

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## Useful publications

### Background on Street-connected young people

The **State of the World's Street Children** are a series of reports commissioned by the Consortium for Street Children to promote a better understanding of street-connected children's lives and civil society initiatives to support them. There are currently two volumes in the series: Research (2011) <http://bit.ly/EER-SC1> violence (2007) <http://bit.ly/EER-SC2>

### Advocacy and Guidance

**A Passport to Participatory Planning: a resource pack to bring street-connected children's voices into NGO planning, monitoring and evaluation.** Produced by The Consortium for Street Children, Street Invest, Children Unite and AVIVA, this resource pack gives practical advice to NGOs working with street-connected children. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC3>

### Nothing About us Without Us

This toolkit aims to support organisations in their work with adolescent street-connected girls. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC12>

### Guidelines On Children's Reintegration

This publication by the Inter-agency group on children's reintegration (2016) builds upon evidence developed through extensive desk-based research exploring good practice in the reintegration of separated children in emergencies, former child soldiers, street children, institutionalised children, migrant children, and children who have been trafficked. It provides a framework for anyone seeking to ensure family care for children, offering a valuable tool for policy makers, program designers, and practitioners. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC4>

### Research and Guidance

**Practice Handbook: Methodology for delivering and practising non-formal education in Tanzania.** This handbook from Mkombozi is designed for use by educators working with street-connected children and can be adapted for use in formal and non-formal education settings. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC5>

### The journey of out-of-school girls in Ethiopia: examining migration, livelihoods, and HIV.

Written by Annabel Erulkar, Grimay Medhim and Lemi Negeri, this study highlights the situation for out-of-school girls in six regions of Ethiopia. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC11>

**Global research study on the promotion and protection of the rights of children working and/or living on the street.** This report analyses the circumstances of children working and/or living on the street and makes a number of recommendations to States for developing or strengthening comprehensive child protection systems. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC6>

**Young People's Experiences of Independent Living Programmes in Ethiopia.** Published by Retrak (2017) this research focuses on the experiences of older children who have spent an extensive amount of time living on the streets as they transition into supported independent living situations. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC8>

**Youth homelessness in Canada: Implications for policy and practice.** Written by Stephen Gaetz, Bill O'Grady, Kristy Buccieri, Jeff Karabanow and Allyson Marsolais, et al. this volume aims to highlight the best of Canadian research on youth homelessness related to pathways in an out of homelessness, housing, health, mental health and addictions, employment, education and training, legal and justice issues and diversity and subpopulations. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC7>

**Breaking the cycle of violence: building a future for the most excluded.** Developed by the Safe Families Safe Children Coalition, this report aims to promote thinking and discussion around critical issues of how to achieve inclusion for highly excluded children and solve intergenerational transmission of family violence. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC9>

**A Participatory Assessment of Street to school programmes: Global Report.** Written by Sarah Thomas de Benitez (2013), this report explains the findings, process and recommendations of an international study into young people's perceptions of the services they receive as part of four Street to School programmes supported by AVIVA partners in Canada, India and Italy. <http://bit.ly/EER-SC10>