



# EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS WITH STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN

## Lessons Learned in Kisumu, Kenya & Recommendations for the Future

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BLUE CROSS KENYA-KISUMU



KISUMU URBAN APOSTALATE PROGRAMMES



## Version Control

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## Introduction & Purpose

The Kisumu Street Children Rehabilitation Consortium (KSCRC) operates collaboratively to affect the problem of children living on the streets of Kisumu. KSCRC leads the nation in the deployment of innovative solutions that have effectively reduced the volume of children living on Kisumu's streets. The purpose of this report is to share with local and national governmental leaders about Kisumu's successes in significantly reducing the street population within the city and to inform others of the successful (and unsuccessful) interventions deployed in order to achieve these results. Likewise, the report works to identify the ongoing challenges with street children within Kisumu and the Consortium's recommendations to mitigate these challenges in the future. Detailed below is a brief summary of the report's contents:

- KSCRC Mission
- KSCRC Member Institutions
- The Current State of the Street Population in Kisumu
- Common Misconceptions about Street Children in Kisumu
- Factors Driving Children to Kisumu's Streets
- Interventions with Street Children That Do Not Work
- Interventions with Street Children That Work
- Existing Challenges on Kisumu's Streets and Recommendations for the Future

### KSCRC Mission:

"Kisumu, a city free of children living on the streets."

### KSCRC Member Institutions

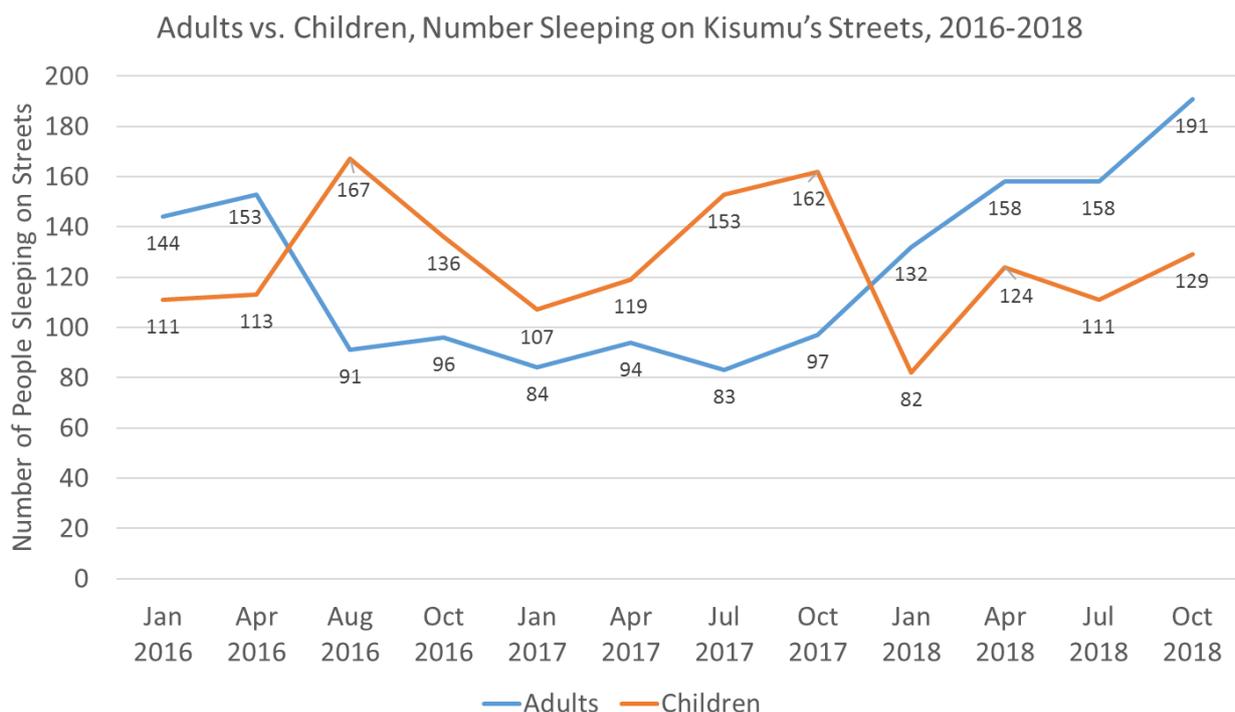
- Agape Children's Ministry  
*agapechildren.org*
- Blue Cross/Kingdom Kids  
*bluecrosskisumu.org*
- Capstone Ministries  
*capstoneministries.org*
- Kisumu City Office of Social Services
- Ebenezer Children's Home  
*ebenezerlifecenter.org*
- Hope for Victoria's Children  
*hovic.org*
- International Fellowship Kenya-  
*interfelk.org*
- Jamii Ya Tumaini
- Kisumu Central Sub-County Children's Office
- Kisumu Children's Remand Home
- Kisumu Urban Apostolate Program  
*pandipieri.org*
- Lake Victoria Nonformal School
- Serenity Family CBO
- St. Joseph's Rehabilitation Centre
- St. Philip Rehab
- Undugu Society of Kenya  
*undugukenya.org*
- Wanyalo Wellness Foundation  
*wanyalo.org*
- Watoto Rescue  
*watotorescue.org*

## Consortium History

Since 2013, the privately-run Charitable Children’s Institutions (CCIs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and government Children’s Homes working with street children in Kisumu County have maintained an informal partnership to share best practices for the rescue, care, rehabilitation, and reintegration of street children. Beginning in 2016, the partnership formalized as KSCRC and began conducting bimonthly meetings, expanding its vision and scope to advocate for governmental policies that work in the best interests of street children living in Kisumu. The Consortium works closely with numerous governmental partners at the county, municipal, and national levels to meet the needs of these vulnerable children in Kisumu. The Consortium works in accordance with and within the auspices of the Constitution of Kenya and the Children’s Act of Kenya.

## Kisumu Streets - Current State

Within Kisumu town, the street population lives and operates from seventeen distinct “bases” spread throughout the city. Some bases are relatively safe, while others can be very violent. On a quarterly basis, KSCRC conducts a census of the number of adults and children sleeping on the streets of Kisumu. The census typically takes around five hours to complete, occurring between the hours of 9:00 PM and 2:00 AM. The census workers physically count the number of people sleeping in each of the bases (with the exception of the Kachok base at the Kisumu dumpsite, which is too dangerous to approach at night) and tracks this information on a quarterly basis. As the graph below indicates, over the past twelve calendar quarters the number of children sleeping on Kisumu’s streets has fluctuated between a high of 167 children in August 2016 to a low of 82 children in in January 2017. Likewise, the number of adults sleeping on Kisumu’s streets has fluctuated between a high of 191 adults sleeping on the streets in October 2018 to a low of 83 adults sleeping on the streets in July 2017. (Note: 100% of children counted on the streets are male; there are no girls sleeping on Kisumu’s streets. Likewise, women are rarely found sleeping on Kisumu’s streets (<1% of population).)



## Common Misconceptions about Street Children in Kisumu

Most people in Kisumu have seen or met a street child, and many have developed perceptions about who these individuals are and why they are on the street. Unfortunately, children living on the street typically lie about their identity and why they are on the streets in order to illicit sympathy from well-wishers and Good Samaritans. These mistruths have led many within Kisumu town to develop unrealistic perceptions as to why these children live on the streets. Here are a few misconceptions about the street population in Kisumu:

- **Misconception #1:** *“These boys are orphans and don’t have families.”*
  - The Reality: While some partial or total orphans may find themselves living on Kisumu’s streets, only five children out of 3,090 rescued street-connected children in a member institution’s database had no family or home. Four of these children spent considerable time at Children’s Remand Home and simply could not remember the location of their homes. The fifth child is mute and has severe mental disabilities, rendering her unable to communicate the whereabouts of her family.
- **Misconception #2:** *“These boys are from street families.”*
  - The Reality: Currently, there are no street families living in Kisumu, meaning that there are no adults living with biological children on the streets. The past eleven quarterly street censuses have never counted a street family in Kisumu.
- **Misconception #3:** *“These boys don’t have homes.”*
  - The Reality: 98% of Kisumu’s street children (+/- 2%) of Kisumu’s street children have living relatives and homes. One member institution has had a 100% success rate in finding former street children’s families and homes.
- **Misconception #4:** *“Poverty led these boys to the streets.”*
  - The Reality: While some children come from impoverished homes, poverty is never the sole reason why a child chooses to go the streets.
- **Misconception #5:** *“The number of street children is growing.”*
  - The Reality: The KSCRC street census shows that Kisumu has seen a 27% reduction in children sleeping on the streets from 2017 to 2018. See the section entitled *Kisumu Streets - Current State*.
- **Misconception #6:** *“These street children are from Kisumu’s slums or Luanda.”*
  - The Reality: While many children come from Kisumu Town, the largest percentage of children reintegrated with families come from rural Kisumu County. Here is a percentage breakdown of where Kisumu street children were reintegrated by a member institution (% based upon 942 reintegrated children):

County	% of Children	County	% of Children
Kisumu Rural	20%	Migori	4%
Siaya	17%	Busia	3%
Kisumu Town	12%	Trans Nzoia	2%
Kakamega	11%	Bungoma	2%
Vihiga	11%	Kisii	2%
Homa Bay	8%	Other Counties*	4%
Nairobi	4%		

\*Mombasa, Nandi, Nakuru, Kericho, Uasin Gishu, Turkana, Nyamira, Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, Kiambu, Narok, Nyeri, West Pokot

## Factors Driving Individuals to Kisumu's Streets

There are a multitude of reasons why children decide to leave home to pursue a life living on the streets, and at times there are numerous factors contributing to a child's decision to leave home. These reasons and factors can be categorized into two major groups: Family-Centric Issues and Child-Centric Issues.

### Family-Centric Issues

- Parental divorce/separation: When conducting visits to a former street child's home, rarely will a social worker find that both of a child's biological parents still live within the home together. Due to the high cost of marriages and bridal dowries, many couples opt to forgo a traditional marriage and choose instead to "come and stay." Because the society fails to recognize this union, it is very easy for the couple to separate, leaving children behind with either the man, woman, or extended family members.
- Polygamy: Polygamy continues to be a problem for many rural families. Family resources can be strained and available family land stretched when a man takes multiple wives and produces children with each. In some homes, husbands have favored and unfavored wives, which results in favored and unfavored children, leading to the neglect of some.
- Conflict with step-parents: Many children choose to leave home due to an inability to get along with a step-parent. The step-parent may fail to recognize the child as their own, leading to neglect and abuse. Likewise, the child may fail to recognize the step-parent as a parent, leading to rebellion and disrespect.
- Work-related parental separation: Many children come from homes where the parents are married but are never together, due to one parent working in the city, while the other remains within the rural home. This absence of parental care leads some children to the streets.
- Cultural traditions: Cultural beliefs relating to issues of incest, remarriage, and succession can lead to neglect and violence against children, leading some to the streets.
- Physical abuse within or outside the family: Within some homes, the traditional practice of caning can be taken to lengths of abuse against a child, leading the child to run to the streets.
- Sexual abuse within or outside the family: Sadly, sexual abuse occurs within some homes in Kenya, leading children to flee their homes. Within the family, the



perpetrators of these crimes are primarily stepfathers and older relatives (e.g. uncles, cousins, etc.), but incidents have occurred where a child's biological father was the perpetrator. Sexual abuse at the hands of neighbors also occurs at times, leading children to go to the streets.

- Parental death: While rare, the death of a parent (or parents) can motivate a child to leave home to seek support on the streets. Succession problems associated with the inheritance of land can sometimes leave a child to leave home when they feel threatened by relatives who desire their deceased parents' land.
- Child neglect: Child neglect due to poverty, family addictions, parental apathy, or poor parenting skills is a common factor driving children to the streets.
- Drug/alcohol abuse within family: Drug and/or alcohol dependency within the home is a common issue amongst children who decide to flee to the streets for a better life.
- Lack of parental maturity: Early marriages and teen pregnancies result in families led by immature parents that do not know how to raise their children well. This lack of parental maturity leads some children to the streets.
- Gender favoritism: A family's favoring of one child's gender over another can lead to a child's growing frustration, culminating in their running away.
- Child born out of wedlock: When children are born out of wedlock, many women find it difficult to raise and parent their child appropriately, leaving the child with relatives.
- Lack of family academic support: At times, children fall behind in school and are caned by the teachers for failing to perform. Some families do nothing to support their child by ways of academic support or through standing against the school administration for abusing their child. At times, a child can become frustrated by being "older" within a small class, and can run away to escape the ridicule of their agemates.
- Food shortages at home: Typically, in the months of March through May, the volume of children on Kisumu's streets swells due to a shortage of food in some homes as they await to harvest. Likewise, there is also considerable work to be done within families' shambas during this time frame. The combination of these two factors drives many children from rural homes to Kisumu's streets.
- African religious traditions: At times, families in the rural take their children to traditional prayer men for issues related to health and discipline. In many instances, children receive significant abuse and neglect at the hands of these prayer men, and choose to run away to the streets.
- Parents sending children to beg or to look for sponsorship: While rare in Kisumu, cases have arisen where children decide to live on the streets after being sent to the streets to beg for money or to look for a sponsorship with a CCI or NGO.
- Moral decay/Absence of values: In general, a breakdown in the traditional concept of marriage and family leads many children to abandoned their homes to pursue a better life on the streets.

### Child-Centric Issues

- Rebellion/Desire for freedom: Many children decide to leave home after rebelling against their parent's direction/wishes. Refusal to do chores, disobedience, disrespect to elders are just a few of the many examples of a child's rebellion against parental authority, leading them to desire to be their own "boss".
- Peer Influence: Children, at times, get involved with the wrong crowd within their community and/or schools, leading them to involve themselves in mischievous and



sometimes illegal activities. Also, children that have spent time on the streets sometimes come back home to share with their friends and classmates about the ways that they earned money in town, leading others to follow them to try street life in Kisumu.

- Problems in school: Children who are lagging behind their classmates in school can grow frustrated with school, though their families require that they continue to attend. To avoid having to attend school any longer, the child opts to run away from home and heads to Kisumu's streets.

- Issues with Stealing: Almost all of the boys that the member institutions work to rehabilitate struggle with stealing. Many develop a habit of stealing prior to leaving home and fear of punishment for their crimes lead children to run to Kisumu's streets.

- Spiritual Issues: Some children run to the streets after being directed by dead relatives within their dreams to leave home. Invariably, these children's families actively practice African traditional religions steeped in witchcraft.

- Mental Instability: Some children wander from home due to mental instability or deficiency and find themselves on the streets.

## **Interventions with Street-Connected Individuals That Do Not Work**

The member institutions of KSCRC have worked with Kisumu's street children for decades, and in that time these institutions have attempted a diversity of interventions to address the challenge of assisting those children who find themselves living on the streets. Many of these interventions have worked effectively to help those living on the streets, but there have also been a number of interventions that have not worked well, some of which exacerbated the street children challenge in Kisumu, as opposed to lessening it. Detailed below is a listing of interventions that do more harm than good when attempting to affect the challenge people living on the street:

### **Rescue**

- Drop-In Centres

- Summary: Over the past two decades, numerous institutions in Kisumu have attempted to operate drop-in centers in town to provide basic services (food, medical care, remedial academic instruction, trade skills, etc.) to the street population.
- The Unintended Result: When services are provided to street children via drop-in centres, the incentive is removed for street children to seek assistance in residential rehabilitative programs, leaving street children open to numerous health and safety risks associated with ongoing life on the streets. Street children instead choose to stay longer on the streets, because free services are rendered at the drop-in centre, usually with little to no commitment being required on the part of the street child. Drop-in centres

can also draw individuals from their homes to live on the streets because the services rendered within the drop-in centre program are free.

- Arresting Children
  - Summary: At times, the county police in Kisumu conduct “sweeps” in town and arrest the street children within Kisumu, placing them with Remand or in police custody.
  - The Unintended Result: Rehabilitation is most effective with a willing participant; forced rehabilitation is rarely successful. For effective, long-term rehabilitation of street children to occur, it is necessary for the individual to realize their need for assistance and to agree to the terms of their rehabilitation. Typically, the intention of governmental interventions in arresting street families is punitive, as opposed to rehabilitative. As such, arrested street children are typically angry at their incarceration, and when rehabilitative efforts are attempted the interventions are rarely successful because the individuals have not come to an understanding of their need to change on their own terms; forced rehabilitation generally produces anger in an individual, not behavioral improvement. When the child is eventually released from governmental custody, inevitably the child returns back to the streets, because he never came to an understanding of his need to change, despite the rehabilitative efforts forced upon them.
- Rescue without Preparation
  - Summary: In the noble pursuit of removing individuals from the street quickly, organizations can rescue individuals without taking the time to properly prepare the street child for what they can expect within the organization’s program.
  - The Unintended Result: Upon initiation into the organization’s program, the individual decides to return to the streets, because they were unaware of the particulars and requirements of the organization’s program.
- Police Brutality
  - Summary: At times, the police can beat children on the street, as well as handle them roughly during police “sweeps” of the streets.
  - The Unintended Result: An adversarial relationship is created between street children and the police when the police are overly severe, resulting in the development of distrust of the police within the street community. As such, street children are much less likely to report the observation of crimes and crimes committed against themselves.
- Giving Money to Children
  - Summary: In addition to working small jobs, many children survive on the streets by begging for money. Many people give money to children on the streets, especially when they perceive that the individual is hungry.
  - The Unintended Consequence: Street children earn money on the streets by working a number of different jobs in the informal sector. When well-wishers give money (or alms) to children on the streets, the child on the streets now has extra money to purchase drugs, alcohol, or sex. For those with addiction problems, money always goes to drugs and alcohol first and towards food last.

- Renting Houses for Children
  - Summary: In the past, some have attempted to reduce the number individuals living on the street by renting houses for street children.
  - The Unintended Consequences: Sodomy and sexual violence is very common on Kisumu's streets, and when street children are placed into a "private" environment like a rental home, then they are at an increased risk for sexual abuse and rape by older boys and men.

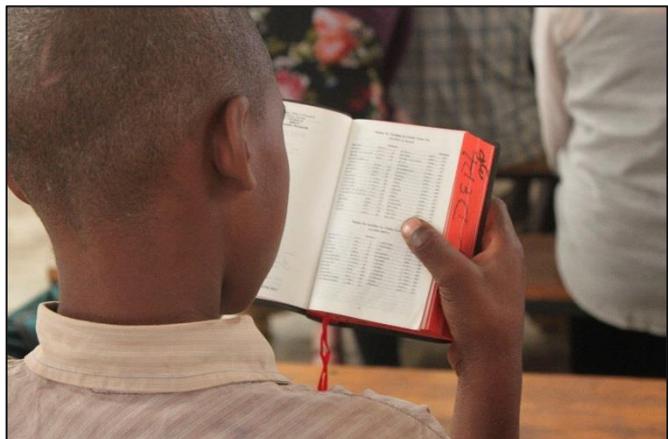


- Street Feeding Programmes
  - Summary: Some feel that providing basic needs (like food) for children on the streets is the best way to help that child.
  - The Unintended Consequences: In past years, there were so many street feeding programs in Kisumu, a street child could go to a different feeding program each day of the week. The easy availability of free food for street children led many children in Kisumu to leave their homes to pursue street life. Likewise, when food was free on Kisumu's streets, a street child was able to utilize any earned monies on drugs, alcohol, sex, or other illicit activities.

## Rehabilitate

- Generic Rehabilitative Programmes
  - Summary: After rescuing a child from life on the streets, some institutions enroll all children into generic rehabilitative programs, disregarding the diversity of needs manifested by the individual child.
  - The Unintended Consequences: Individuals within these programs grow weary of classes and rehabilitative interventions that do not pertain to their specific needs, and potentially the individual's needs go unaddressed by the rehabilitative interventions within the organization's programs.
- Long-Term Care Models
  - Summary: After rescuing a child from life on the streets, the child is placed into a boarding school-type environment where he has little to no interaction with his family or access to his rural home.
  - The Unintended Consequences: The child loses all connection with his home and family and begins to view the institution as both parent and home. Key family ties are lost, and the child loses his inheritance within the rural home.
- Failure to Identify Reasons the Individual Left Home
  - Summary: As this report indicates, children leave home for life on the streets for a variety of reasons. Failure to identify the push/pull factors that took a child to the streets could result in rehabilitation centers employing interventions that would be wholly ineffective in the rehabilitation of the child.

- The Unintended Consequences: If a child's root problems are not addressed in rehabilitative interventions, then one should not expect to see a change in the fruit that the child is producing. Identifying the real reasons why a child left home for the streets is absolutely essential to the employment of effective interventions to help the child to stay off of the streets. Would a good doctor begin to prescribe medications to a patient prior to knowing the patient's symptoms and checking the patient's lab results? Neither should we employ rehabilitative measures with street children prior to ascertaining the reasons the child left home originally.
- Absence of Counseling and Addictions Programs
  - Summary: Many institutions attempt to rehabilitate street children without addressing the child's psychological needs and/or substance abuse issues.
  - The Unintended Consequences: The child may complete the residential rehabilitative program, but upon reintegration, the individual returns back to the streets, because their psychological needs (past trauma, anger issues, etc.) have not been met sufficiently and/or addictions (glue, alcohol, etc.) have not been addressed.
- Insufficient Staffing and/or Lack of Training and Professionalism within Organization
  - Summary: Due to resource constraints, many institutions operate with insufficient staffing. Likewise, the staff that are present within an organization are not trained appropriately to perform their duties well.
  - The Unintended Consequences: If sufficient staffing and supervision are not present within an organization caring for former street children, the likelihood of physical and sexual abuse being perpetrated in a resident institution is increased significantly. Also, if staff members are present but not trained in their duties, then the rehabilitative efforts of the institution will be hampered; when staff are untrained and/or are unprofessional, the former street child will likely choose to leave the institution.
- Harsh Discipline
  - Summary: Some institutions employ harsh methods of punishment when dealing with indiscipline cases with their residential rehabilitative programs.
  - The Unintended Consequences: Because physical abuse is common on the streets and some children have fled home due to physical abuse, harsh discipline (caning, etc.) within a rehabilitation institution will invariably lead some children to flee the institution to return to the streets.
- Failure to Address Spiritual Needs
  - Summary: Many programs operate with funding from secular sources who do not allow religious instruction within their rehabilitative programs.
  - Unintended Consequences: An individual's greatest need is that they hear clearly the Good News of Jesus Christ as it is presented in the Bible and respond to this essential truth in faith. Rehabilitative programs that neglect to address this core need of all people miss an incredible opportunity to exact eternal change in an



individual. “What does it profit a child to be rescued, rehabilitated, and reintegrated if they lose their own soul?”

## Reintegrate

- Failure to Conduct Follow-Up Visits
  - Summary: Many institutions do not conduct follow-up visits to children’s homes after children have been reintegrated due to programmatic deficiencies and/or funding constraints.
  - Unintended Consequences: Children who are not visited on a scheduled basis after reintegration run away from home again at a higher rate as compared to those who receive ongoing follow-up visits. Rehabilitated street children need accountability within their lives, and the knowledge that someone will be visiting them at home helps many children to remain at home. Many former street children build strong relationships with staff members from rehabilitation centers, and even after children are reintegrated, many feel comfortable in sharing their challenges at home with these staff members. A lack of follow-up visits can result in a child believing that they have been abandoned by the institution that reunited them with their family. Likewise, visits by the institution can also serve to help the child’s family/caregivers with any problems that they may be experiencing with the reintegrated child or with their other children. Frequent scheduled follow-up visits to a child in the home are critical to a child’s long-term stability in remaining with the family.
- Failure to Address Family Needs/Issues
  - Summary: The section of this report entitled “*Family Centric Issues*” details a variety of problems within the child’s family that can ultimately drive a child to the streets. If these family centric issues are not addressed, then the child may ultimately choose to leave home again and return to the streets.
  - Unintended Consequences: When working with street children, one must realize that in many cases the child is on the street through no fault of their own. Instead, family issues drive the individual out of the home and onto the streets.
- Failure to Reconcile the Child Back to Family
  - Summary: As this report details, children leave home to go to the streets for a variety of reasons. In some cases, a child has committed terrible crimes within their homes and/or communities. In other cases, families and/or neighbors have committed terrible crimes against the child. In either case, reconciliation between parties must occur for long-term reintegration to be successful. Without forgiveness between the family and the child, reintegration will fail.
  - Unintended Consequences: Albert Einstein is credited with saying, ““The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.” Failing to reconcile a street child with their family members prior to reintegration and then expecting that individual to stay home is similarly “insane”. In many instances, children have stayed away from family for years prior to being reintegrated; with street children, time does not heal all wounds. Focused effort to reconcile a former street child to the family is critical to the child’s long-term stability and success at home.
- Failure to Consider Extended Family Options
  - Summary: Many institutions only consider a child’s immediate family for placement when considering reintegration options. By assuming such a

myopic approach, institutions run the risk of placing children into unsafe home situations, or into situations where reconciliation between child and family is impossible.

- Unintended Consequences: If reconciliation is impossible with immediate family or if the home is unsuitable or unsafe for reintegration, then extended family members must be considered for the child's placement. Forcing a child into unsafe or unreconciled homes inevitably results in that child running away to the streets again.
- Individual Idle after Reintegration
  - Summary: In some instances, former street children refuse to engage in work or school after being reintegrated back with their families. In other instances, institutions fail to press the individual and family to engage the individual in work or school.
  - Unintended Consequences: If a child is idle at home, failing to engage in either work or school, then the child is far more likely to run away from home to return to the streets again. Benjamin Franklin famously stated, "Idle hands are the devil's playthings." This is similarly true of reintegrated former street children; it is of utmost importance that these children be engaged in work or school upon returning to their families.

## Interventions with Street-Connected Individuals That Work

### Rescue

- A Focus upon Relationship-Building and Trust: In most cases, street children live on the streets due to broken relationships at home. As such, a natural level of distrust exists in the hearts of many on the streets. With this truth in mind, individuals attempting to rescue children living on the street must first endeavor to build relationships and trust with these children. Any attempt to provide long-term beneficial assistance to a street children is hopeless without first establishing a foundation of trust and relationship with the child.
- A photograph showing three children in a grassy area. One child is sitting on the ground, another is kneeling and holding a bicycle wheel, and a third is sitting on the ground looking towards the others.
- Consistent Street Officers: Children on the streets more easily trust a familiar face. Institutions must maintain consistent street outreach staff to ensure continuity of service delivery to the street population. Likewise, a consistent presence on the streets is critical to understanding the ever-changing dynamic on the streets and to be able to identify new children on the streets. Success in rescue is directly correlated to the consistency of an institution's activities on the street.
  - Helping Individuals to Understand the Danger of Their Situation and Their Need for Assistance: Contrary to conventional wisdom, many children living on the street are content with their environment and situation. Many street children fail to realize the level of risk that they face by staying on the streets and instead enjoy the personal freedom and autonomy afforded by street life. When attempting to rescue a child from the streets, a street outreach officer must endeavor to communicate to the child the dangers of remaining on the street. Until a child begins to understand their need, they will never choose freely to leave the streets to seek assistance.

- Candor about How Rehabilitation Program Operates: Failure to effectively communicate how an institution's rehabilitation program operates is one sure way to frustrate a newly rescued street child. The establishment of trust between the child and institution must be maintained throughout the relationship. Any break in this trust inevitably results in the child's return back to street life.
- The Presentation of the Gospel to All Who Are Willing to Hear: In Mark 8:36 (ESV), Jesus asks his disciples, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" This is a question that must be applied to our work with street children, as well. The most effective intervention for street children is the sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ as explained within the Bible. Once God saves that person through the clear explanation of the Gospel, lasting rehabilitation of the child is truly possible.

## Rehabilitate

- Establishing a Climate of Love, Safety, and Acceptance: Rehabilitation is most effective when a former street child feels loved, safe, and accepted. Institutions desiring to rehabilitate those from the streets have a responsibility to establish such a climate.
- A Holistic Approach to Rehabilitation: The factors pushing and pulling individuals to the streets are many and diverse, but the primary areas of rehabilitation can be grouped into three primary areas:
  - Academic Improvement: Many children run to the streets due to frustrations associated with school. Repetitive failures in school due to gaps in a child's learning can lead to growing frustrations for a child, especially when coupled with harsh discipline and criticism from the school and/or family. Identifying and working to bridge these gaps through remedial academic instruction can help to equip a child to succeed when they return to school after reintegration.
  - Psychosocial Well-Being: Many former street children experience psychological trauma through experiences at home and on the streets. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, (PTSD), substance abuse/addiction, as well as other psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and poor self-concept can all serve to keep individuals on the street. These issues must be addressed through evidence-based methodologies that teach healthy coping mechanisms to assist in the child's long-term stability at home with their family.
  - Spiritual Growth: By simply leaving the streets to re-enter society again, a child vastly improves their prospects for improved health and long life. Likewise, taking the time to address and affect a former street child's academic and psychosocial needs can greatly reduce incidents of recidivism. But if one is truly concerned about impacting a child's well-being, then steps must be taken to address a former street child's spiritual life and growth. Understanding and believing the truth of Jesus Christ as detailed in the Bible is important not only for those leaving the streets, but for all mankind. Efforts must be made to feed not only the body and mind, but most importantly, the soul.
- A Varied, Customized Approach to Meet an Individual's Specific Needs: Any parent knows that each of their own children is different - personalities vary, interests differ, and the ways that we teach, reward, and discipline our children differs. The same is true for former street children undergoing rehabilitation. "One-Size-Fits-All" solutions do not work, because every person has a unique background and unique

struggles. Rehabilitative methodologies must be customized to meet a former street child's unique, individual needs.

- A Focus Upon Preparing an Individual for Success at Home upon Reintegration: Institutions desiring to rehabilitate street children must have a singular focus upon preparing these children to return to their families. The institution cannot be “double-minded”, meaning that the institution should not offer options for individuals undergoing rehabilitation that do not involve the reconciliation and reintegration of individuals with family at home. Organizations should adopt a mantra of “Home Is Best” when developing interventions to rehabilitate individuals from the streets.
- Teaching and Equipping the Individual on How to Work as Part of a Family: Children undergoing rehabilitation must be taught about their responsibilities within their homes now that they will be part of a family again. One of the most encouraging reports that an organization can receive concerning a child rescued from the streets is that, “He is doing well at home and is helping the family.” An organization cannot assume that those from the streets know their responsibilities within their homes as contributing family members.
- Obtaining Court Committal for Children Receiving Rehabilitation in a Resident Program: All former street children undergoing rehabilitation within a resident program must be committed to the institution by the local magistrate. This committal must be obtained through a partnership between the institution, the Judiciary, and the Department of Children Services.
- Maintenance of Confidentiality: As has been indicated within this report, establishing and maintaining trust between a street child and an institution is critical to effectively rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration that child. If a child perceives that the institution's employees are not closely guarding the details of their personal history and ongoing struggles, then the relationship between child and institution can be irreparably damaged.
- Cooperation and Information Sharing between Partner Organizations in Area: Street children are very intelligent. When institutions within a city fail to cooperate and share information about the former street children rescued by their programs and the former street children that run away from their programs, then the street children will exploit this lack of cooperation and information sharing. Within Kisumu, street children used to “jump” between institutions to avoid having to return to their families. A child would participate within an institution's residential rehabilitation program until the point of reintegration and then run away to start a new rehabilitation program at another institution. Once KSCRC began sharing information about children undergoing rehabilitation, children realized that they could no longer “jump” between institutions and resigned themselves to returning to their families. The rehabilitation of street children is not a competition, and institutions must cooperate in partnership to meet the needs of these vulnerable children.
- Close Partnership with Local Government Leaders: The work of street children rehabilitation institutions is an extension of the local, county, and national government's responsibilities. Partnerships between institutions and government entities must be forged to work in the best interests of children who find themselves living on the streets. If an adversarial relationship exists between the institution and government, then the street child will suffer. Rehabilitation institutions and government are not in competition, but instead they are partners that must work together to meet the needs of these vulnerable, at-risk children.

## Reintegrate

- Utilization of the Child Status Index (CSI) in Assessing an Individual's Home: The CSI is a tool utilized to determine the suitability of a home for a child's potential reintegration. Utilizing six criterion, an institution's social worker has the ability to objectively assess whether a home environment will be conducive to the child's long-term stability.
- Employment of Family Counseling: Many family's require intensive family counseling and instruction prior to being reunited with their child. This report details the many family centric issues that force children to the streets, so family issues cannot be ignored if an institution desires the child to remain home long term. Family counseling can occur within the institution or within the family home, based upon the capabilities of the institution and ability/willingness of the family.
- Reconciliation Visits When Necessary: Forgiveness is essential when reuniting former street children with their families. Children must be willing to forgive their families, and they also must be willing to forgive their family members. Likewise, family members must be willing to do the same. Without reconciliation, reintegration will fail.
- Identification of the Best Home for Reintegration, Not the Easiest Home: When considering where to place a child, some institutions opt to reintegrate a child to the closest family members home, not considering that the child might be better suited to live with another family member. When assessing reintegration options, institutions must consider both the maternal and paternal family members, consulting with the family to determine where the child will be most successful in reintegration. The CSI tool will also assist in objectively scoring the different family options for reintegration.
- Reintegration to the Rural Home, Not to the City: A large percentage of Kisumu's street children came to the streets from families and homes in Kisumu Town (approximately 12%). Because these family members live so close to the institution, it is very easy to simply reintegrate this child back to this family member, not considering the temptation of the street that exist when living in the city. Former street children do much better in reintegration when placed with family members living in rural Kenya.
- Identification of Alternative Family Care (AFC), When Necessary: The institution's first goal should be to reconcile and reintegrate a child to the home that they left (taking into consideration the two bullet points above). But, when reconciliation is not possible or if the home is deemed to be not safe for the child's reintegration, then AFC should be considered as a viable option. As a priority, the child's maternal and paternal families should be contacted and visited to identify the feasibility of the child's reintegration to one of these homes. But, if no family options exist, then other AFC alternatives should be considered: foster care, adoptions, etc.



- Weekend and Weeklong Visits to a Child’s Home: As a child nears the completion of their rehabilitation, the institution should take the child home for short visits (day, weekend, and weeklong) to accomplish the following:
  - For those children who are returning to their original homes, to acclimate the child to being back with the family again.
  - For those children being reintegrated to new homes, to introduce the child to the family members.
  - To acclimate the family to being around the child again.
  - To identify potential issues not previously identified in the institutions assessment process with the child or with the family, prior to full reintegration.
- Coordination of Local Support for the Child & Family: There is an African proverb that states, “It takes a village to raise a child”, and institutions should rely upon the informal network of support that exists culturally in Kenya to help support and sustain a child and family that have been reunited. The institution should leverage the assistance of all available entities: paternal and maternal families, the child’s school, the local church, the local community, the village elder, and the local chief.
- Reliance upon Family as Primary Caregiver and Provider: In Kenya, a culture of dependency has been developed in some families due to the surplus of foreign aid that has been provided within the country since independence. The institution must endeavor to avoid developing financial dependency within the family upon the institution. The institution must ensure that the family understands their responsibilities for caring for their child, while maintaining a willingness to assist the family when necessary.
- Identification of Best Program for the Child upon Reintegration - School or Training: When a child is returned to their family, an institution must work closely with the family to identify the best program in which to enroll the child. Schooling should be the first priority, but in some instances informal apprenticeship (jua kali) within the village should be considered for children who will not finish Class 8 due to learning disabilities or because of gaps in learning from a child’s time on the street.
- Creation of Social Support Groups Comprised of Reintegrated Families in Communities: In areas where many children have been reintegrated, the institution should encourage the establishment of informal, local support groups comprised of family members of former street children to encourage the sharing of information of how best to care for these children who are now living back at home.
- Family Lifeskills Training for Empowerment and Self-Sustainability: “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.” The same is true when institutions work to empower the families of reintegrated street children. Empowerment programs should be established to assist families that struggle financially and with food security to improve upon the stability of the home and family.
- Research on Runaways with Scheduled Follow-Up Visits: Inevitably, some reintegrated street children will choose to leave home again. The institution should not “give up” on this child, but instead should endeavor to locate, rescue rehabilitate, and reintegrate the child again. The best way to reach an institution’s reintegrated runaways is to conduct research with the family to ascertain the factors which led the child to run away again, so that when the child is found the institution can approach the child with an understanding of his problems and the challenges he is facing. Likewise, some children reintegrate themselves after running away, so the institution should maintain communication with the family even if a child runs away.

## Existing Challenges on Streets & Recommendations for the Future

Kisumu has enjoyed immense success in paring down the volume of individuals living on the its streets, but significant challenges remain in order to achieve the Consortium's goal of Kisumu becoming "a city free of children living on the streets." Detailed below is a listing of these challenges and KSCRC's recommendations to remove these challenges from Kisumu's streets.

- Challenge #1: Street Children Involved in Child Labour
  - Summary: All of the children living on Kisumu's streets work in order to survive. Street children typically do menial jobs in order to buy food while living away from their homes and families. The lure for a child to earn his own money to spend as he pleases remains a strong draw for children to go the streets and to remain on the streets. Typically, in Kisumu, street children work within Bus Park and at the lake cleaning hotels and matatus while the police do nothing to stop the illegal activity.
  - Recommendations:
    - Lobby local government leaders to enforce the laws against child labour as they currently exist on the books, and ensure that adults who are employing children are arrested and charged accordingly.
    - Sensitization training should be conducted with adults within Bus Park to inform them of the dangers of employing children within their small businesses.
    - Lobby with local government leaders to criminalize the purchase of scrap metal and plastic from individuals under 18 years of age.
- Challenge #2: Ongoing Street Feeding Programmes in Kisumu
  - Summary: While the Area Advisory Council (AAC) for Kisumu Central has instituted a ban on street feeding programmes in Kisumu town, many institutions (churches, business groups, etc.) have proceeded with the ad hoc feeding of children on the streets. Also, the Hindu community within Kisumu actively feeds on the streets on a weekly basis at the Hindu Temple in Central Business District (CBD).
  - Recommendations:
    - Conduct sensitization training within churches and community leaders, detailing the effects of street feeding programs in town.
    - Conduct meeting with Chairmen of the Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim communities requesting the cessation of street feeding of children in Kisumu, recommending instead the donation of foodstuffs to institutions caring for children within Kisumu.
- Challenge #3: Street Children and Youth Lack Access to Medical Services
  - Summary: When street youth and children get sick in Kisumu, some find it difficult to find adequate medical care even within public hospitals. Sometimes the issue pertains to the individual's inability to pay for the medical services. Other times, the individual is refused medical service due to his dirty and threadbare appearance. There have been issues in previous years where children have gotten sick and died on the streets of Kisumu, and it's possible that these children's deaths could have been prevented if medical care had been available to them.
  - Recommendation: In working with county and national government contacts, establish a path within government hospitals for street children and youth to obtain free medical care, potentially through hospital social workers.
- Challenge #4: Mortuary Fees Too Burdensome for Street Children and Youth

- General: When an individual dies on the streets, friends to the deceased find it difficult to raise the funds necessary to remove the body from the mortuary. Because the individual was on the streets, family members are sometimes unwilling to assist with paying the mortuary fees either.
- Recommendation: In working with county and national government contacts, lobby to obtain free mortuary services for street connected individuals.
- Challenge #5: Cheap and Easy Access on the Streets to Glue for Sniffing
  - General: Henkel glue is the drug of choice for street children around the globe. The glue is very cheap and easily purchased from local dealers around Bus Park in Kisumu. The short-term effects of inhaling glue carry potentially lifelong consequences, and the effects of long-term use are often fatal. Most individuals who spend any length of time on Kisumu's streets begin to inhale glue on a regular basis.
  - Recommendation: Through local government contacts, encourage leaders to prosecute the dealers that are selling glue to street children via Section 242a, Cap 63 of the Penal Code, Supply of Harmful Substances to Children.
- Challenge #6: Child Protection Units (CPUs) Not Organized to Support the Rights of Street Children
  - General: Currently, local CPUs are not child-friendly, especially as it pertains to street children. As a result, children fail to report crimes against them for fear of being incarcerated themselves for living on the streets.
  - Recommendations:
    - Work with Central Police Desk to educate and sensitize the Child Protection Unit on the plight of street children in Kisumu.
    - Teach the street children of Kisumu about their rights and where they can go for help if they have been a victim of a crime.

## Conclusion

Kisumu has seen immense success in paring down the number of children who live on its streets. Just 10 years ago, around 1,000 children called the streets their home, but today there are just over 100. We hope that the best practices and recommendations outlined within this report will be embraced by other cities throughout Kenya, East Africa, and the world.