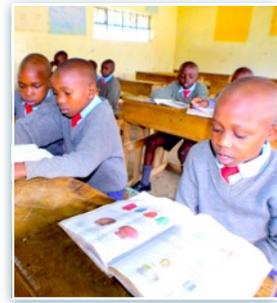


International  
Children's  
Mission (ICM)

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## The Plight Of Street Children In Kenya



### Facts About Street Children

Street children are minors who live and survive on the streets. There are an estimated 250,000 street children in Kenya. Studies show that the numbers maybe much higher now after the increasing poverty rates. The AIDS epidemic has also caused a surge in the number of street children as a result of the abandonment of AIDS orphans. Children end up on the streets for a number of reasons, many of which are rooted in family instability, domestic violence or poverty.

In order to feed themselves, many children work in unsafe and exploitative environments that expose them to the dangers of child labour, sex slavery and human trafficking. They survive by begging, scavenging, selling scrap materials for recycling or prostitution. Life on the streets proves to be treacherous for these children. Many are 'adopted' by gangs, who form and function to satisfy a much needed sense of 'belonging' and they are accordingly trapped in cycles of criminal activity and

violence. At one point or another, most turn to substance or drug abuse in order to endure the harshness of the streets, whether that be threat of violence or hazardous weather conditions (extreme cold, rain storms, etc.) Sniffing shoe-glue, is particularly prevalent and used as a way to numb the fear, hunger-pangs, pain and indignity of life in the streets.

Overlooked by society, they are at best disregarded and at worst dehumanized. All street children lack access to basic necessities and rights. Perhaps more importantly, they lack a healthy environment in which their worth and dignity can be affirmed. The health of children growing up on the streets is strongly compromised. Also, because of their lack of hygiene, street children are exposed to different diseases. World Health Organization studies show that street children suffer from health problems ranging from cholera to tuberculosis and anemia, and that they are exposed to a variety of toxic substances, both in their food and in the environment around them.

Street Children are obviously not educated. Because of this, they don't have the same opportunities as other children. Seen as marginals, street youth are often victims of discrimination. Generally, adults have prejudices that stigmatize them as "street children". It is often difficult for these children to reintegrate into society. All street children are, to varying degrees, traumatized. Often this is from the experiences that led them to the streets then compounded by their experiences of living on the streets. Hunger, violence and disease are ever present. Many street children lose their lives on the streets from disease, violence, being hit by cars, or from police brutality, sometimes in the form of death squads. The mental, social and emotional growth of children are affected by their nomadic lifestyles and the way in which they are chastised by authorities who constantly expel them from their temporary homes such as doorways. Street children lack security, protection, and hope, and continue to face a deep-rooted negative stigma about homelessness. And, more than anything else, they lack love. These children are often treated as the rubbish of society.

As I.C.M, we believe that every child deserves a home that will ensure their nutrition, shelter and education needs are met, to enable them to develop physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. To have a future that we can all be proud of, we must ensure that our vulnerable children are accorded the same opportunities, liberties and privileges that we enjoy and often take for granted.

## *Street Children in Kenya (Pictures)*



We cannot stand by as our dear young ones are robbed of their childhood. Street children should be rescued, rehabilitated & reintegrated into mainstream society. I.C.M has now become the orphanage that is a rescue centre for many street children, that no child in the garbage dumps of this nation may ever lack where to go!