

Struggling to Survive

Children Living Alone on the
Streets in Tanzania and Kenya

Strategic Response

We **fight** for children
living on the streets

children RAILWAY
Fighting for street children



Introduction

Railway Children is an International NGO working in Tanzania, Kenya, India and the UK. Our principle aim is to create and enable sustainable change for children who have run away or been forced to leave their homes and find themselves living on the streets.

Railway Children Africa has been working in partnership with local agencies in Kenya and Tanzania since January 2006. The work undertaken by these agencies is fantastic and many children who were living on the streets now have positive family relationships, are able to attend school or can support themselves economically as a result of their work. However, despite the services available at our partners and many other agencies across the region, a significant number of children remain and still arrive on the streets every day.

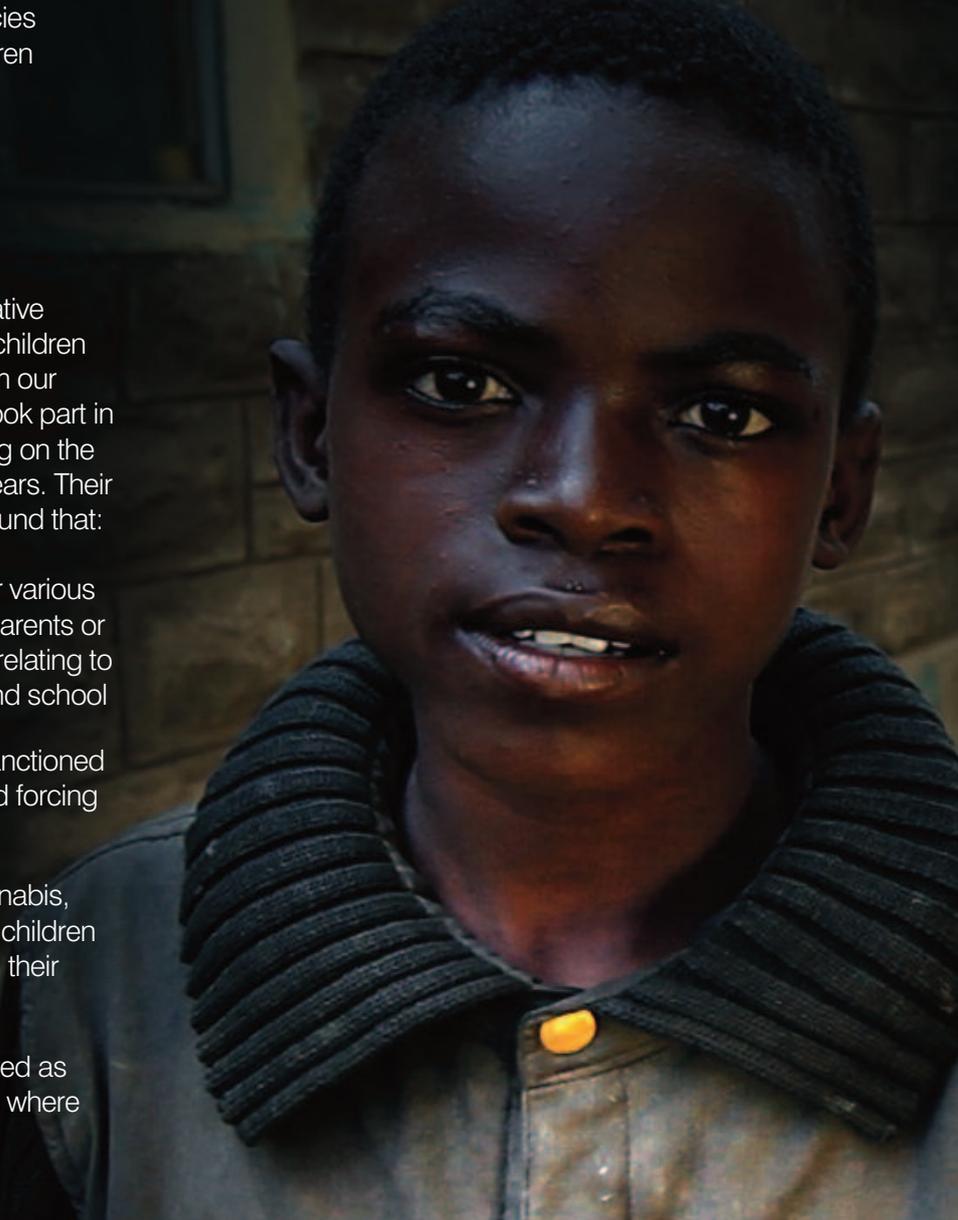
'Struggling to Survive' - Research Findings

Railway Children Africa commissioned a qualitative research study to further our understanding of children on the streets in Tanzania and Kenya and inform our strategy for the region. All of the children who took part in our research had spent at least four weeks living on the streets and some had lived on the streets for years. Their stories are compelling and traumatic and we found that:

- Children come to and live on the streets for various reasons, including – poverty, conflict with parents or carers, parental or carer death and issues relating to their school or lack of opportunities to attend school
- Extreme violence against children, often sanctioned by teachers and parents is widespread and forcing children to run away from home to survive
- There is high levels of dependence on cannabis, petrol, cocaine, alcohol and glue amongst children living on the streets as they try to cope with their trauma whilst surviving on the streets
- Many children living on the streets are treated as criminals and put in prison cells with adults where they face sexual abuse and exploitation

- Existing services struggle to meet the needs of the most traumatised children, leaving these children trapped in poverty and exploitation as they battle to survive street life.

The stories children told us clearly highlight how children on the streets exist on the margins of society. The routine nature of the violent and sexual assault of street children by responsible adults is dehumanising and unjustified. This study underlines the urgent need for a co-ordinated response that supports better child protection measures and more efficient use of resources to meet the needs of vulnerable children at home and living on the streets.





Railway Children Africa Strategy

Our research 'Struggling to Survive' outlines a compelling case and calls to action and our strategic response seeks to address the key findings of the report:

The Research calls for protocols to be developed between the Police, Social Welfare, Children's Departments and local CSOs that clearly defines appropriate responses to children and youths living on the streets and how each agency will work together to best understand and meet their needs.

Railway Children Africa will facilitate linkages and collaboration between key actors working with children on the streets to enable an effective city wide response. Our expected outcome is that by 2014 contact with all children is achieved within two days of their arrival to the streets, and multi agency care plans that allow children and families to receive specialised services will exist for at least 20% of the annual cases in any one city.

Current Progress Railway Children is facilitating the development of a partnership between organisations working in Mwanza, Tanzania. We are supporting partners who work directly with street children to develop their practice in street and family work and to link their programmes together to achieve higher impact and less duplication in managing children's cases. The partnership is inventing new systems to manage and measure collaborative efforts for street children and increasingly is including local government authorities in the process.

The Research states that therapeutic interventions are developed for children and their families that recognise the traumatic impact of violence and poor quality relationships between the child and caregiver.

Railway Children Africa will work with partners to enable the development of therapeutic family based work for reintegrated children and for children at risk of going to the streets, including the provision of opportunities for educational and economic development. Our expected outcome for this work is for at least 80% of the children reintegrated to still be at home and in education 12 months after they have returned to the family and community.

Current Progress Railway Children is a partner of the International coalition 'Safe Families Safe Children' that promotes a framework for therapeutic family based work as a way of changing life outcomes for children and families affected by violence. We work in partnership with the Mexican organisation, Juconi, to incorporate this approach into our programmes of our East African Partners. Currently we are supporting a pilot in Nairobi that is working intensively with twelve families for two years, aiming to increase the quality of family relationships and care and to turn around problematic behaviours and coping strategies that currently hinder families from providing their children with a safe and nurturing environment.

The Research outlines key recommendations at the national policy level in Tanzania and Kenya. The Government of Tanzania has already taken important steps to develop a national response plan for street children and in Kenya the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children now exists.

Railway Children Africa will continuously promote the inclusion of street children into national and local plans and policies through engaging with key policy makers and forums. We will support local authorities in implementing children's legislation relevant to street children through facilitating co-ordinated city wide responses that include government departments, CSOs and key actors and agencies.

Current Progress Railway Children Africa is currently promoting inclusion of street children into the renewed Tanzanian National Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children. In Mwanza we are developing co-ordinated street outreach and up-scaling collaboration with local authorities, alongside identifying start points for the implementation of the Law of the Child Act in our partners direct work with children.

Summary and Call for Action

Children find themselves coming to the streets due to a diversity of traumatic and tragic events in their lives. Once on the street they are exposed to extreme levels of violence and trauma that further damages their well-being and development. Existing services struggle to meet the needs of the most traumatised children and Railway Children Africa is working to develop adequate and effective services that meets the needs of these children. We believe these services need to be family based and therapeutic in nature and pull together all existing services into a co-ordinated response.

Policy Makers: We encourage you to take into account the special needs of children on the streets in national programmes and strategies that affect children.

Local Agencies: We encourage you to start working closely together with other actors in your area and co-ordinate your outreach efforts and responses for children living on the streets.

Citizens: If you would like to help children on the streets in your area we urge you to make contact first with your local authorities and CSOs who are reaching out to these children on a regular basis

Funders and Budget Holders: We urge you to recognise the need for a significant increase in resources and workforce allocated to long term and intense family based interventions.

Railway Children
1 The Commons
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 1EG
UK

+44 (0)1270 757596

Registered Charity Number: 1058991

Railway Children Africa
P.O. Box 138
Mwanza
Tanzania

+255 (0)685 22 74 84

Company No: 77698
NGO compliance No: 1381

www.railwaychildren.org.uk

RAILWAY
children
Fighting for street children