

Rescue and Rehabilitation Model for Children in the Streets of Meru Town, Kenya

Project Description and Components:

Phase I – Outreach

Target 400 children and families in the street monthly.

The project begins with outreach, but it is also a constant component of the project. Social workers headquartered out of the MCK (Methodist Church Kenya) Meru Children's Home will be trained specifically to go into the streets to make contact with and give aid to homeless children, assisted by Rotarians and church members. The objective is to build trust with the children through non-intrusive methods. This lays the foundation for creating the necessary relationships needed for the success of the project. It is the purpose of this venture to establish a long term, successful model for the rescue and rehabilitation of street children, so it can move from the Makutano area of Meru to other areas of Meru and throughout Kenya.

Street children tend not to trust adults; hence the importance of taking care of their most basic needs, as well as providing games, non-formal educational activities, first aid, etc. The program is designed to not make their lives on the street easier, but instead encourage them slowly, through contact and trust, to make the decision to move off the streets.

The Outreach Team's patient and consistent contact has been found to be the most effective measure used worldwide to get children off the streets and back into mainstream society. It is time consuming and often laborious, but crucial to the final successful results.

The Outreach Team will begin to assess the needs of the individual children and provide counseling, basic health care, non-formal education (including a mobile library and mobile school), games and sports. They will begin to teach life-skills, awareness of HIV/AIDS, drugs (including glue), reproductive health, STDs, road safety, hygiene and child rights. The team will be on the streets for the children both day and early night, as well as over weekends and during holiday periods.

Budget

Training and support for social workers	\$1,500
Mobile School and library (books and supplies)	\$500
Sports and game equipment	\$200
First aid and emergency health care	\$100
Drug/glue detox	
Housing	\$200
Food	\$100
Medications and treatment	\$100
One meal provided each day	\$3,000
<u>Emergency housing</u>	<u>\$200</u>
Sub-total: \$5,900	

Phase II – Drop-In Center

Target 100 children each meeting day.

The second phase of the project is the opening of a Drop-In Center. This is a day center offering more activities with more structure. This stage will bridge the gap between life on the streets and life back home or in the residential center. (The MCK Meru Children's Home is presently retooling to provide long term care and recovery to children coming off the streets and who do not have family or a home to which to return. This will become the primary purpose and task of the Children's Home.) In the Drop-In Center, rules and consequences will be made by the children and they are free to come and go as they wish. Emergency medical care will be available.

The center will not immediately offer residence except in emergency situations. Too many projects have failed by opening a residential center as an instinctive measure to serve the desperate needs of the children. Street children have developed numerous methods of survival on the streets; they are generally very well organized and astute. They, as well as the center staff, need to work out and respect the boundaries and rules that will become more and more a part of their lives as they re-enter society. The methodical and patient work done in these first two phases will ensure the longevity of their stay at the center or at home and thus, a more secure future.

Peer support and care groups will be set up for the children and will meet on a weekly basis. They will be given the opportunity to wash and bathe, have their hair cut, receive a nourishing meal, one on one counseling, basic medical care, and clothes, shoes and toiletries.

The program will be conducted in a safe and conducive environment, allowing for learning, counseling, and bonding with the staff and one another. They will be able to participate in a variety of activities such as sports, art, crafts, relational talks, guidance, music and drama. Children who are assessed ready will be placed in primary, secondary and technical schools

This program is relational in nature. An environment of openness and honesty will enable the needs and fears of the children to be fully recognized and then, addressed accordingly.

Budget

Training and support for social workers	\$1,500
Medical and hygienic supplies	\$100
Game and sports equipment	\$200
Teaching supplies for hygiene, life skills, literacy, etc.	\$100
Create a library for children's literacy development	\$500
Emergency housing	\$200
School tuition aid, fees, supplies and uniforms	\$16,000
Polytechnic tuition aid, fees, supplies, uniforms and testing	\$5,000
<u>Clothes for job interviews</u>	<u>\$200</u>

Sub-total: \$23,800

Phase III – Case Management

The re-integration team works to place the children back into their families, the school system and the workplace. The team initially works with the child to define their family history. At the same time, visits with the family help identify and alleviate the problems that led to the child becoming homeless. Finally, the child is reintegrated in the most appropriate setting (direct family, extended family, guardianship, Children's Home,

independent life). The team follows up on each child regularly in close collaboration with governmental agencies. A case file will be developed and updated as interaction with the child occurs. This will be done from Phase II onward. The program is designed to find solutions and ways to ensure sustainable family life and stop the problems that led to the child's homelessness.

Those graduating from technical school will be provided tools of the trade to set up a small business. These will be on a loan or installment basis.

Note: The MCK Meru Children's Home has faithfully served the needs of orphans and other children and their families for many years. As the children are assessed in Phases I and II, the goal will be re-establish them with their families, however, when unable to so, the Children's Home will provide them a loving, long term place to live and family to live with. Many of the expenses of the home are covered through international and the community donations, however, with the new direction of the home to serve children coming off the streets, additional expenses will be incurred. The street children project will focus on long term sustainability through fostering the following initiatives with the older children and with the families of the children: subsistent farming – growing maize and beans, Income generating projects such as livestock, farming, maize milling, chicken rearing, etc. the returns from which will go toward sustaining the project. Also, sponsorship of individual children will be encouraged and managed by the social workers, Children's Home staff and by Rotarian's at both ends of this project. Grapevine Rotarians will make at least two site visits to help oversee and coordinate the effort and to ensure accountability.

Budget

Training and support of social workers	\$1,500
Stipend for children housed at the Children's Home (25 children)	\$10,000
Income development (sewing machines, computers, hairdressing supplies, animals, tools, etc.)	<u>\$8,500</u>
Sub-total:	\$20,000

Phase IV – Awareness and Prevention

This overall effort will target families, community leaders, local and international agencies and NGOs, church group and Rotary clubs locally and internationally to build awareness of child homelessness in order to reduce the inflow of children to the streets.

A major effort will be made by Rotarians and churches to encourage sponsorships for individual children to ease the ongoing financial burden and to ensure sustainability.

Budget

Awareness events for target groups	\$1,200
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<u>Publish and print brochures</u>	<u>\$200</u>
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Sub-total:	\$1,400
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Total: \$50,000

This project will create the initial effort needed to run the program for several years. It will take at least 100 children off of the streets and place them back with their families or into other safe environs. It will get younger children back in school and older children in technical schools and into the workplace and it will help families to become self-sufficient by also encouraging them to develop small businesses and/or to develop employable skills.

The stability of the ongoing church effort and the creation of a community organization made of all local and international partners including Rotary clubs at both ends, local agencies, church groups, NGOs, etc. will ensure the sustainability of the program in Meru. Our Global Grant Scholar, Marcelo Ostria, will serve as a consultant on every phase of this project and his studies at Oxford University into ways to alleviate childhood poverty should help improve the outcomes in Meru and it is hoped that this project will result in a model that can be used in other areas of Kenya and in other parts of the world.