

STREET KIDS' CASE BRIEF

Issue

Have you ever felt pity for your living conditions? ever felt hopelessly helpless for no one really cares about your condition? or maybe, ever been at that bliss close to losing meaning to your own life? If yes, then you were living the life of many young children in my country today, Rwanda.

Reference from [UNICEF](#) May, 2021 report, it is estimated that there are about 7,000 street children around the country while close to 300,000 live in families where a minor is the head of the household.

In big cities like Kigali, Rubavu, and Musanze among others, it is even worse, since around 3000 of them are young girls aged below 15 years.

In fact, the 7000 in Rwanda have endlessly suffered a life without a hope for a better tomorrow, but just struggles for survival; no school, no clothes, no sanitariums or even other essentials of life like shelter.

In this analysis, I will use the records of Street Bridge Foundation, *a newly formed non-governmental youth led initiative mandated to addressing the street kids' challenges*, and as well as the City of Kigali as a case study to explore a plethora of long term sustainable and non-retributive solutions to addressing the issue in concern; while protecting the interests of all the problem stakeholders as well.

Analysis

In **2015**, President Paul Kagame raised alarm upon the issue. Undoubtedly, the city authorities together with the security officials responded by detaining them (street kids), and taking them to transit centres among other cruel techniques of '*cleaning the streets*', a famous slogan in those days. However, it still yielded nothing at the end of the day, since the trend still increased by **23% per annum till today**.

With that failure, Non-governmental organisations like UNICEF, Save The Children, and many more others were invited to engage the issue but all in vain.

For instance, at Groupe Scholaire Nyanza, *a primary and lower secondary school at Nyanza-Kicukiro*, more than 200 street kids were waived school tuition fees by MINEDUC. But surprisingly enough, these kids would go study, then after school, return back to the

streets for company and shelter; a standard that's not long term sustainable, since around 80% of them eventually dropped out back to the streets again.

What does this mean? It portrays to us that despite the government's and other non-governmental organisations' efforts to address the issue in concern, the problem was, and is still persistent, since only its symptoms are looked unto, but it causes ignored.

In fact, the question shouldn't be whether we are losing our future generations on the streets or not, but rather, why they are going there. This calls for a fastidious attention on the realm cause of the issue, not the effects of the issue.

Come to think of it, many street kids have families, and while taking a decision to leave their families and go to the street should be seen as a strong psychological decision, it's still our role as the future change makers to highlight the conscious reasons behind that decision.

According to the Street Bridge Foundation's report in December 2021; Erick Sebagabo was examined why he was on the street but responded by stressing on domestic problems; His mom was a prostitute, and his father was a drunker, a combination of every night beatings and autrocities that he wouldn't sustain. There was no food at home, no clothes, in fact, no life at all, since none of his parents were willing to sustain one. Come to think of it, Erick's story is similar to many other street kids like him. It shades light to us that, even though school tuition was to be paid, it doesn't stop the domestic violence, hunger and other family problems which a kid is seeking refuge from.

Proposal

From our four community-based projects done so far, Street Bride Foundation has gone a significant step in providing a long and sustainable solution to addressing the issue.

We have embarked to not only solve the symptoms, but also the very core causes of the problem. We engage Street Kids at the grass root level of the street, they share their own side of the stories, we show them love, empathy, care and even belonging; but also go an extra mile to connecting with their parents, family or even guardians at home.

We share with them constructive ideas, highlight the cause of the issue, and even mandate helping the kid with the direct responsibility and consent of his or her parents.

In most cases, while parents are willing to work with us in the development and transformational journey of the kid, they are sometimes affected by household unsound finance. But through collection campaigns and fundraising events, we hope to expand and set up some small revenue streams for them, like small shops, some animals to rare etc.

With that source of income, we believe they will be able to sustain life at home, food security, and even help us to help the kid in his or her next journey of transformation.

But as a foundation, that's not enough. We do believe that that kid still needs your help, guidance and even company through the trajectory of change. Thus, we take an extra mile to make regular follow ups so as to highlight the degree of impact, and how further to help the kid develop in life.

In some special cases, kids aren't able to go back home. It is our role then, to struggle with getting host families to help adopt the kid, and further support him or her in life.

However, for now, the impacts observed are still very small scale since the foundation's economy is unsound without any source of revenue, but mere high school students who make its composition.

With a sound and stable source of revenue, we believe the impacts will be magnified from helping just twenty kids a year, to maybe one thousand, or even more.

Further Questions

This analysis only covers the causes of increasing trends of street kids and associated social ills, along with the possible alternatives as referred from the report by Street Bridge Foundation. However, there are additional components not thoroughly explored in this paper that require further study, care, and fastidious attention:

Gender based violence: While this analysis examines more of the outer surface family problems like prostitution, alcoholism and finance that make kids join to the streets, it should also be noted that to a significant magnitude, gender based violence of young girls either by their parents or elders family members can also fuel their thoughts to joining streets.

This however, is less attended to, as it raises little or even no alarm at all; just like the street kids who are raped, or subjected to other forms of gender based violence as well.

Drug abuse: Most street kids, if not all of them, usually find comfort in drugs. You will find them from morning to evening collecting valuable items like scrap, thrown charcoal etc. The picked items are then sold to the market sellers at an extra cheap cost, and the little penny got is taken into drugs like Kush, Cigar, and even glue.

Although it is justified that these are to make them less concentrated on their life struggles, it should be noted that it instead kills them slowly rather than healing them.

Additionally to weakening their immune systems, it even affects their transformational compatibility in a drug free society. But I believe the people selling those drugs are more dangerous than the drugs themselves.

Involvement of the state. The proposal part of this analysis focuses on the role played by the Street Bridge Foundation. However, the foundation alone can't manage the whole thing, free of state partnership and cooperation. With the state involvement: Rwanda National Police, National Institute of Statistics, MINICOFIN etc, We think it would help Street Bridge and maybe, other organisations with similar motives to emerge, get access to information, man power, financial resources and even other tools necessary for grown and sustainable innovative solutions to addressing the issue in concern.