

# NewsFromTheStreets

STORIES WRITTEN BY CHILDREN WHO ARE CURRENTLY LIVING ON THE STREETS OR WERE FORMERLY LIVING ON THE STREETS IN JINJA, UGANDA.

12<sup>th</sup> April 2016 marks the sixth annual **International Day for Street Children**. The day gives the millions of street-connected children around the world chance to speak out so that their rights cannot be ignored!

## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR STREET CHILDREN!

I had minimal understanding about myself when I spent most of the time by myself on the street. I only knew one of my names and one each for parent's name. I had no idea of my birthday, age, rights and origin since on street; I gained escaping skills mostly from community. I experienced fellow street children being tortured and arrested.

**Luka, 14**



### STORIES, POETRY, FUN

In this exclusive issue you will find personal stories and experiences of children who have lived and worked on the streets of Jinja, Uganda. The special theme for this year is **"Identity & Community."**

The newspaper sections are as follows:

- **General stories and comments, pp. 2 – 3**
- **Identity stories, poems and comments, pp. 4 – 6**
- **Community stories, poems and comments, pp. 7 – 9**
- **Crosswords & Fun, pp. 10 – 12**

*"Life on the streets was so difficult. I faced a lot of problems: torture, hunger, misery. I used to sleep hungry because no one could cater for me. I lived a misery life, which forced me to lose all the hope I had."*

**Read Faima's full story on page 3**

All the photos in this newspaper were taken by children living on the streets of Jinja to show the streets from their perspective.



## STOLEN CATTLE AND THE CRUEL MAN

I was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1998 in a place called Moroto.

My father died in 2000 in a battlefield. When he died they stole all cattle we had. Because we were too many, my mother could not take care of us and she decided to give us out to relatives. I was given to my cousin sister who was coming to Jinja. I stayed with her for four years until she got married to a cruel man.

He did not used to like us in his house.

That is why I left and them alone and I started my life on the street of Jinja.

From there I stayed on the street for 2 years until I was helped by an organisation. Now I am studying and so are my brothers.

**Michael, 18**

## ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF BOYS AND GIRLS



I am going to talk about boys and girls at home. Girls they are used to helping parents at home, while boys they tend to disobey them.

If you ask, why do so many children leave their home, they will tell you that they left

their homes because there is abuse and neglect of both girls and boys. Girls are good at obeying their parents even when abuse and neglect are present.

Abuse and neglect are bad because they destroy children's rights at home. Parents should take care of their children and provide them with food, clothes and shelter.

**Miriam, 13**



## GIRLS AND BOYS ON THE STREET

How are their lives different?

**The street boys** they steal food.  
**The street girls** they collect rotten tomatoes, carrots and mangos.  
**The street boys** they collect scrap metal, sometimes the **street girls** help them.  
**The street boys** they fight.

**The street girls** they abuse people.  
**The street boys** they take drugs.  
**The street girls** they do not get a job.  
**The street boys** they get a job.  
**The street girls** they don't have discipline.

**Miriam, 14**





## HOW MY FATHER DISSAPPOINTED ME AND MY BROTHER

**When** I came to street I could work for people in exchange for some food. It was good because I could give the money I earned to my father who would save them for me. With that money I could have started my own small business. But one day my father told me that he did not get any support from his parents and therefore, as his son I have to work hard to earn some small money to start on my own. It was after my father's words that I came back to the street.

I started cleaning tents and chairs and I was

working so hard in order to get some money. After some time I even managed to rent a house for myself and leave the street completely. I would often go to the church to be prayed for. Second reason why I decided to start my own life was due to the fact that I was discriminated because my mother was not at home.

My job was not well-paid but at one point they stopped paying us completely. I remember one day when I was hungry. My brother and I



decided to go to my father's work, in order to get something to eat. When we reached my father's workplace, he blasted and abused us saying he had not been taking care of us for long time and that we should find our own way to get food. We were so upset about what he had said and soon we decided to

move away. Neither did he support us, nor helped us to solve our problems. My brother and I went to the market where we were kindly given some free food only because the local people knew me.

After eating I went back to my workplace, although there was not money. I kept on waiting there because they were the only people I had. I took them as my new family. It's up until now that I am still trying in my life to pursuit my plan to getting a good job that sustains me and my brother.

**Bashiris, 16**



## MY LOVE FOR EDUCATION GAVE ME HOPE

**I was** once a street kid. I ended up on the street due to separation of my parents. After they got divorced my father married another woman who would treat us like slaves. So I left home and I moved to the streets.

Life on the streets was so difficult. I faced a lot of problems: torture, hunger, misery. I used to sleep hungry because no one could cater for me. I lived a misery life, which forced

me to lose all the hope I had.

When I was on the streets I used to admire school-going children because among the hopes I had, education was number one. My life came back when an organisation took me back home. My parents were advised on how to show parental love and care to their children, they were explained the disadvantages of irresponsible handling of children as well as the

advantages of education in this country. I was provided with school materials and was taken back to school. After this life change all my hopes revived; I have just completed my PLE (Primary Leaving Examination) last year in 2015.

The love I had for education is indescribable! I fought tooth and nails and I managed to get 14 aggregates, which I think is a solid foundation of my education in the future.

My humble request is just to be able to continue with my education in high school. I am a very determined student because I love education and I need to uplift the background of my family.

I promised myself to utilise well the provided support and I conclude by thanking the organisation for the support they have given to me.

**Faima, 13**

# Identity

**"Memories are the architecture of our identity."**

Unknown author

What if you never had the chance to know your real name, exact date or place of birth? The following section about identity gives children the opportunity to express their feelings and share ideas about what identity on and off the streets means to them.

## WHY I CHANGED MY NAME

When I was on street in Kampala I begged for food. Now I am ashamed that is why I changed my name. Another reason why I changed my name is that I did not want to be taken to Moroto by the police. These days I live well, no begging and picking leftovers on the street.

Moses, 9

## WHEN I PRETENDED TO BE MY FRIEND TO GET FOOD

When I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in a primary school my parents did not use to give me food for lunch. I was so hungry.

One day I decided to pretend to be my friend Adam in order to get food from school. Later, Adam realised I ate his lunch and we started to fight. The class mentors took us to the teachers. I told them I was hungry and that is why I had eaten the food. Adam was given another plate of food and we became friends again.

I would not do it again but I learnt that parents should provide food for their children no matter what.

Denis, 13

## HOW YOU GET AN ID AND THE GOOD AND BAD THINGS ABOUT IT

There are several reasons why identity is important in human life. These include:

- ♥ Identity is necessary in order to know yourself, where you come from, your face, village or district. It also help other people to know who you are.
- ♥ National ID card is good for identification if you are Ugandan or if you come from another country.
- ♥ In case of accident it makes other people identify you and where you come from.
- ♥ If you are lost, it is easy to find you as quickly as possible.
- ♥ ID cards are important during years of election. They are also helpful when coming across police and arrests.

Kizito, 17





# Identity

## IF I HAD THE CHANCE...

I was on the street for one year and I faced a lot of problems. I was arrested by the police; people would abuse me, beat me or accuse me of stealing their properties. All that only because we, children living on the street, are seen to be dirty and stinky. At the police station, officers would ask for my name and I just looked at them because I was not sure about my true identity. Was it the one my father gave me or the one my maternal grand mother is telling me? Back at home we are not given any birth certificate or baptism card to solve this dilemma.

If I had the chance I would call upon the government and tell organisations working with street children to arrange a radio program at least every week to raise awareness of the public, and especially the parents, about the importance of acquiring a birth certificate for their children.

If I had the chance I would tell all parents that their children are innocent and they should not be punished because of a couple is having marital problems. Even after a divorce or separation, children should not be neglected. It's the parent's responsibility to provide food, clothing, shelter, and school fees for their children.

In conclusion, the government and the public should address most of the reasons why a vast number of street children are nowadays rampant. Amongst these is for example child labor, lack of school fees, physical abuse especially by stepmothers and stepfathers, or lack of food, clothing and shelter. The government should also prevent this from happening at the first place.

**Duncan, 16**



## WHO AM I

**Who am I?**

You say I am a street kid.

**No**, I say I am a leader.

**Who am I?**

You say I am jiggers.

**No**, I say I am a doctor.

**Who am I?**

You say I am stupid.

**No**, I am a teacher.

**Who am I?**

You say I am a murderer.

**No**, I am peaceful.

**Who am I?**

You say I am a fool.

**No**, I am knowledgeable.

**Who am I?**

You say I am a chapatti.

**No**, I am a human being.

**Who am I?**

You say I am motherless.

**No**, I am someone who respects my elders.

**Who am I?**

You say I am shabby.

**No**, I am beautiful.

**Who am I?**

Who am I?

Who am I?

I am a child.

Show me love.

Group Poem written by a  
**group of 10 children**

# Identity

## IDENTITY, IDENTITY, IDENTITY

### Oh Identity.

You own everyone's brain.  
You make people mistake others.  
People behave like animals  
because of you.  
Who are you really.

### Oh Identity.

You make people in power panic  
Because of their bad acts.  
They mistake ordinary people to  
be inspectors.

### Oh Identity.

Why don't you reveal yourself at  
once.  
Please, Identity, have mercy on us.

Poem by **Faith, 16**

Remember, all the photos in this newspaper were taken by children living on the streets of Jinja, to show the streets from their perspective.



## FULL TIME ON THE STREET

I was born in 2000, in Kibuku district, Uganda.

I left the home because of my stepmother and now I am on the street full time. I am not happy to be on the street because I want to go home and go to school. For that I need your help. It is harder to get help when you become older, they see you as a man not a child.

**William, 16**

## NO STEALING, NO SMOKING

When I was on street I used to sleep near the Babez bar. One day I fall sick, vomiting on the street and that day I went back to Masese.

I never knew my family name, my birthday or even how old I was. In the street I was a thief, I used to smoke and steal. Now I know my name, age and birthday and I live a very good life - no stealing, no smoking.

**Michael, 14**

## TRUE OR FALSE?

I became homeless when I was very young and my knowledge about my identity was very poor.

Whilst on the street I had no idea about my birthday, I only knew my family. It took me long to find out the day and year I was born. My parents eventually told me that I was born on Tuesday, the 20th June 1999.

I still don't know if it is true or false.

**John, 11**

# Community

"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ~ African proverb

"It takes a village to raise a child." ~ African proverb

How do the local communities look at children living on the streets of Jinja?

How do they treat them and see their identity?

And what are the children's memories regarding behaviour of the community members?

## COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY

### COMMUNITY COMMUNITY COMMUNITY

Am this way lonely and am so frightened due to your response towards me, you forced me to change my name and status, you also forced everyone around me to hate me not only doing that but also giving me sleepless nights.  
Heee!!!! Have mercy on me.

### COMMUNITY COMMUNITY COMMUNITY

How merciless you are you mistreat me whenever you see me, you chase me all night whenever I sleep your home's verandas, you have no sign of love to me because you also employ people to arrest me yet I am innocent.  
Heee!!!! Have mercy on me.

### COMMUNITY COMMUNITY COMMUNITY

How merciless you are? You make me live restless life due to your response towards me. You see me as a burden to you indeed you do not even help me at all, when I ask you help you laugh at me instead of helping me.  
Heee!!!! Have mercy on me the street kid.

Poem by **Baihye, 14**



# Community

Children were asked "How the community sees the children on the streets and how they treat them?"

Here are their answers...

People give us food on the street. We fetch water for them and they give us food. They give us clothes on the street. They take us to prison. They work with the police to do this. They **insult us** that we are street children. They **call us thieves** on the street. They **call us people with mental illness**.

Sadamu, 17

From my experience the community sees us as a **source of cheap labor** for dirty and difficult jobs, such as taking smelly rubbish or carrying heavy boxes, regardless our age. I was **beaten and abused** by many people, including some members of my community.

Peter, 15

When I lived on the street people would **see me as a thief**. Most of the community members **don't take time to find out why we are homeless** but assumed that we are thieves, thugs, beggars, drunken addicts and notorious children. They only used to give me challenging jobs like carrying heavy boxes, taking smelly rubbish to the pit and pay me almost nothing.

My advice to the community members is, **please know us more and try to help when you can**. Don't torture us.

Moses, 14

When I was on the street I was treated badly by the people around me, they used to abuse me and beat me up. I had nowhere to sleep, if only my toe touched their veranda, they **chased me away**. I used to get food from the trash and if I was lucky I was **given some leftovers**. People used to call us thieves all the time.

Joseph, 16

Some community members care about us; however most of the **people don't care**. They have negativity about us all the time. They give us very difficult jobs and almost pay us nothing; they abuse us and call us "*wasted sperms*". Supermarket owner see us as thieves and instruct their askaris to chase us and beat us.

James, 17



## LIFE AROUND THE BAR

I spent most of my nights around a Bar while on street of Jinja. The workers of the bar used to chase us all the time.

The community used to come and beat us while we were sleeping in the night. After that they would arrest us and take us to the police station.

Drunken people would also abuse us and sometimes even beat us up. People treated us badly and we were abused in many different ways.

**George, 14**



## CHILDREN ON THE STREET ARE ALSO HUMAN BEINGS

In most cases, people see children on the streets as if they were nothing, yet they are also human beings. There are very important people in the Ugandan society who were once street children themselves. For example, Eddy Kenzo, who is a famous music star celebrity in Uganda, used to be a street child. Below is a story my friend who became very successful overcoming his background.

This child, he is called Bogere, stayed on the street for quite a long time. When he got the chance to be picked by an organisation and taken back to school, he was able to score 9 aggregates in his PLE (Primary Leaving Examination). This was a great achievement for someone who used to be a street kid and yet, nobody expected that from him.

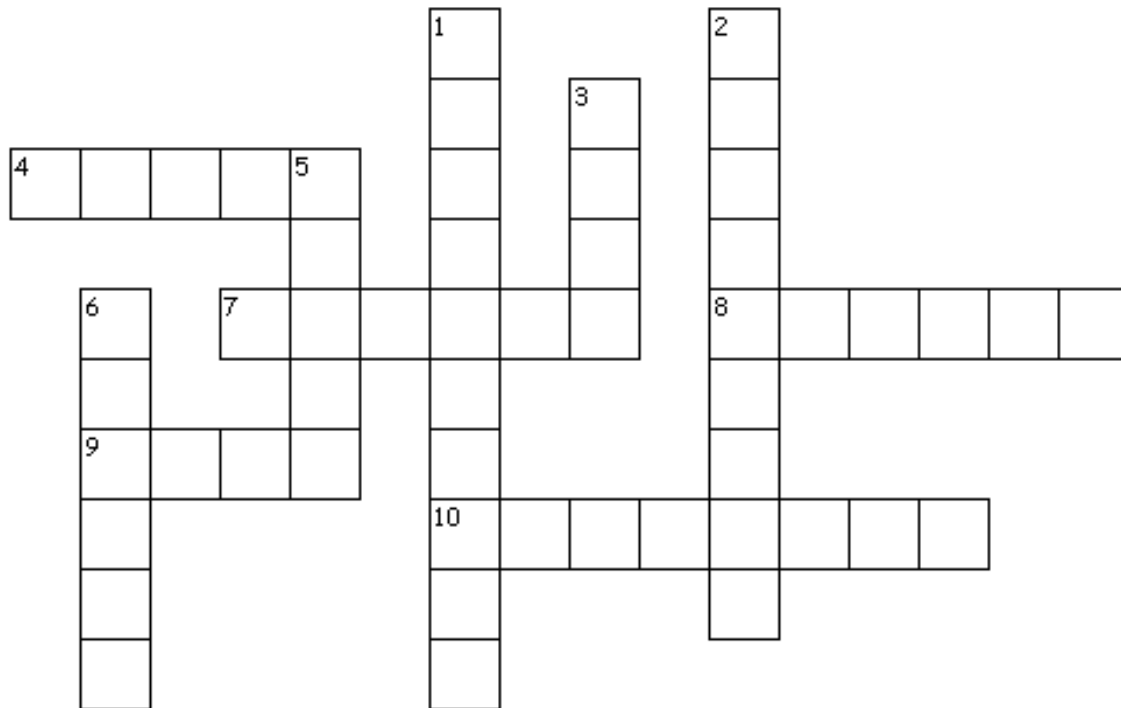


*"When I was on the street I would pick up plastic and scrap metal and would never think I could have any future. It was cold at nights; they took us often to prison without committing a crime. When I entered the school I did not expect to get first grade. I did. And I felt so happy to get it! Now I see the future to be bright."* Bogere, 14

Despite the drastic change and trauma street children have to live through, they can become very important people in their communities.

**Blessing, 17**

# Crossword & Fun



## Across

4. District in Uganda.
7. Opposite of "Past".
8. Country called "The pearl of Africa".
9. Place where people sleep, gather with family, where they can feel safe and comfortable.
10. Feeling and knowledge of who you are.

## Down

1. Opposite of "Equality".
2. People around you.
3. Feeling when you really like somebody.
5. Treating other people badly.
6. Place where children go to learn new things.



# Word Search & Fun

Can you find all the words?

E D U C A T I O N T D L R Y C  
 Q I Q F C Q V E S E N R V G I  
 H F U X J Z G W Y E V D Z C T  
 H K M Z M L J F C R M Q Z K Y  
 I A X X E Z Y C M T F Y G S C  
 Y T P C Z G T Y X S R K V G E  
 R D T P Q A X C H U I P K M J  
 R T L X I K A P T A E R O L I  
 K L O V E N R D D P N H L B C  
 T E S U Y C E Y W A D P M X P  
 T R O P P U S S T Y S F N P V  
 L O K P O F Q M S E I K Q F N  
 I S L J M P D Q S S F P Z Q G  
 D D I F R S C O Y H S A A O J  
 V W S B N W V P G S Q N S Y P

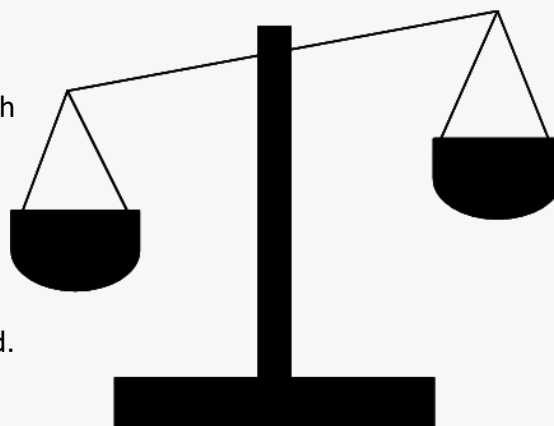
EDUCATION  
 FRIENDS  
 HAPPINESS  
 HOME  
 LOVE  
 NEGLECT  
 SAFETY  
 STREET  
 SUPPORT

## GOOD & BAD CHARACTERISTICS OF STREET CHILDREN

*Do you agree with Pius? Would you add something more?*

### Bad Characteristics

- Due to taking drugs they argue a lot.
- They throw stones to each other and fight.
- They abuse elders.
- They sometimes rape women.
- They steal people's properties, including food.
- They go to film halls to watch movies and do gambling for money a lot.
- They nickname each other 'dog'.



*"They are just children like any other children." Pius, 14*

### Good Characteristics

- ♥ They help one another.
- ♥ They don't argue with each other if they are friends.
- ♥ They always care for each other in bad times.
- ♥ Children who don't take drugs are liked.
- ♥ They protect each other in danger.
- ♥ They are innocent and should not be blamed for everything.
- ♥ They are hard working.

# Thank you for reading

# NewsFromTheStreets

This newspaper was written by:

Jinja's incredibly talented young street journalists, poets and story-tellers.

We work with these incredible young people every day and could offer even more opportunities to them with **your support**.

Please consider **joining us** in supporting children to leave the streets of Jinja and fulfil their potential.

Support and Love Via Education International (S.A.L.V.E.): [www.salveinternational.org](http://www.salveinternational.org)

Kisoboka: <http://ngo.kisoboka.nl/>

Jinja Connection: <http://ugandastreetkids.org/jinja-connection/>

Jeremiah House: <http://ugandastreetkids.org/the-sanctuary/>

GI ASCO: <http://gitrust.org.uk/>

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