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**TANGAZA COLLEGE**  
**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL MINISTRY,**  
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**AFRICA.**

**FACT FINDING REPORT**  
**ON;**  
**STREET BOYS REHABILITATION CENTRES**  
**OF**  
**DON BOSCO BOYS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We cannot deny the social problems that are prevalent today everywhere in the world, whether they are in the northern hemisphere or the southern part. One such problem in our continent is the increasing number of street children.

Children are confronted by the situation that are beyond their strength that lead them to street life. Some of the causes to their situation are: hunger, diseases, poverty, war, harsh weather conditions and displacement. In Kenya only there are about 60 thousands of street children roaming streets. At the same time there are 260 governmental and non-governmental organisations involving themselves with different objectives, in an attempt to address this problem.

There are organisations that are showing their mercy by helping these children, NGOs and church organisations. Many of Catholic church activities have entered into the struggle against crisis of street children. They are involving themselves in rehabilitation programs or by giving food and clothes.

Salesians are among the good Samaritans who give possible means (structure) to the street children to improve their lives and help to form the future of these children. The Salesians of Don Bosco are a religious Institute in the Roman Catholic Church catering for the education of the youth, especially the poor and abandoned. They came to East Africa that is, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in 1980. They identified as a social problem, thousands of children struggling for survival. The children were forced to leave their homes and their dear ones due to one reason or the other. The spirit of Don Bosco could not close the door and eyes to this social need. Since Salesians are allocated to the youth through their charism their close contacts and loving hearts have been invested in the life of hundred of children.

This paper reflects on the street children rehabilitation centres of Bosco Boys that are run by Salesians sheltered under the umbrella of Catholic Church of Kenya. My concern in this essay is more about the background of Bosco Boys, the objectives, the activities of the project and the strategies of project including my recommendation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 BACKGROUND: NATURE OF THE PROJECT

In this section, I focus on the regulations and constitutions of the Salesians, that is, the charism, of the Salesian of Don Bosco. After Don Bosco had began his work among the youth who were flocking to the city of Turin, Italy in 1841, he realised that this noble work for the children in great need could end with his death. On the advice of many well-wishers and friends, he founded in 1869 a Catholic organisation called the Salesian society (later renamed Salesians of Don Bosco). This shows how the concern for youth came about. Salesians have their own charism where they instruct themselves according to the wishes of Don Bosco. Charism is a gift that empowers them to perform their duty. It is a basic call that is given to their founder to render and to accomplish youth ministry.

Their charism is based on their rule of Life especially, numbers 1, 2, 14, and 15. These points touch strictly on the life of youngsters in the ways of spiritual, physical and intellectual needs to be met. The Salesians are still spreading their Charism by working with thousands of young people all over the world in about 120 countries.

First of all, their Charism itself presents this aspect of youth ministry namely, to serve “I have promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys” (cf. RI.n.1), so as to bring these services into its fullness. Since their Charism is offering them this chance, they are applying their gift and energy so as to bring particular contributions to promoting the youth. Such promotion can liberate the youngsters from roaming around cities and engaging themselves in acts of violence and injustice. The presence of Salesians in Kenya brought joy for hundreds of street children. Though the Salesians came to East Africa in 1980, the work for the street children, could only begin in 1990. They have three centres for street children, all with similar goals. The weekend contacts of those days have grown into a full time work for these children.

#### 1.0 Bosco Boys Centres

Bosco Boys are children who were once or are still in the streets of Nairobi, but want to change their lives. They called them Bosco Boys after the name of the founder.

Today there are three centres in the city of Nairobi for the children first, is Bosco Boys, Kariua, near Global Cinema Roundabout on Kipande Road, in the heart of the city. It was founded in 1990. The second centre Bosco Boys Langata, was founded in 1994. The third centre, Bosco Boys Kuwinda slums, is still under construction.

### Bosco Boys Kariua.

Boys admitted to these centres are strictly only those who had been in the streets. Most of them had been in Juvenile Prison of Kabete. From the court they take them to their reception at Kariua. It is evident now they that most of the boys came from slum areas in and around Nairobi. When they take them from the street, they have to inform the court to get them through the laws of Kenya for the sake of security. When a boy expresses the wish to quit street life, he comes voluntarily to the reception centre Bosco Boys - Kariua, where he is provided with food, accommodation, education and medical care. From the street, this is the first stage with normal life where they are introduced to the rhythm of the centre. The centre is constructed in a very simple way and made from iron sheets. On the street, the boys have nothing at all. When they enter into the reception centre of Kariua, they accessible to the basic needs, namely,; shelter, clothes, blanket, mattresses and bed to keep them warm with good food. Today, there are about 70 children in that centre, 40 out of the 70 attending the primary schools of Murang'a and Parklands. The rest are given coaching in English, Kiswahili, Mathematics, Home Science and Moral Science in the centre. This centre guides the boys to realise who they are and how to be good because they are fed, counselled, shown love and taught how to be good citizens without necessarily going to the street.

### **Policy**

Kariua is a home to welcome the children from the prison or from the court. It opens its facilities for the children from the street who have no place to go.

- They do not allow any boy to stay at Kariua more than a year. Within this time the boys are to be either rehabilitated in their families or sent to the Bosco Boys of Langata.
- One teacher is responsible to keep the Bio-datas and records of the boys staying at Kariua.
- A boy can be settled at his home anytime of the year.
- Only orphans and destitutes are taken to Bosco Boys of Langata.

### **Nature**

- To love and render all possible help to the boys at Kariua.
- The staff counsel the boys and try to discover the background of each boy.
- Each teacher is given certain number of boys to follow more closely and to learn about their background.
- All the boys receive non-formal education: Moral education, Classes on hygiene and cleanliness, Lessons in good manners and Medical care.

Christian love and guidance are given by all the staff. Many life-changing experiences have been witnessed since the program started and Kariua centre prepares them for the second step.

### **Bosco Boys Langata Centre**

This centre is situated on Langata Road. The centre is run by three Salesian priests and two volunteers from Netherlands. The centre staff is really motivated and is trying to uplift these children through counselling which is a great step in their caring for these destitute souls.

The children at Bosco Boys in Langata centre are number 77. Of these, 70 are attending the primary schools of St Mary's Karen and Ngong Forest. All these children had been brought from the Bosco Boys Home at Kariua. Those who cannot attend the primary schools are given special lessons as they undergo rehabilitation process. The mission staff and volunteers show to these young people how to open their eyes to a brighter future. The good

thing is that the street boys sometimes recover from street behaviour and show hope for a better future.

After school hours, they share the household chance or they enjoy themselves in games, traditional dance and other games including general cleanliness. The boys are fully involved in all these activities.

### Boys who are attending the school in 1998

In January 1998 they managed to get admission for more boys. Today they are sponsoring 136 boys in their studies and 112 of these are in the different primary schools of St. Mary's Karen, Ngong Forest, Murang'a Road and Parklands. Five boys got admission to Don Bosco Boys' Town to learn a trade which will help them in the future. For the first time, they are able to sent one of the boys to a secondary school. Peter Wagusu is studying at Don Bosco Secondary School, Embu. They have send ten children to Mama Ngina Children's Home and five to Rescue Dada Home because they are too small to fit into their system. When they are older, they are thinking of bringing them back to the centre.

The staff have prepared a program for the children in order to keep them busy and to follow them well. This program helps the children in reforming from their street behaviour. The staff members are always happy that God is helping them to take care of the children. They are following the model of Don Bosco to love the boys and to work for the greater glory of God

## 1.2 ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT

The project aim is to make the poor and abandoned children holy Christians and good citizens by being an instrument of God's love, care, hope and protection to them. These children do not understand themselves nor understand the society. In order to accomplish the said aim, the Salesians are helping the children and they play a great role in the transmission of social values to the children by means of religious education, moral education and cultural education. These are the areas that the staff members are stressing on.



### 1.2.1 ACTION

#### Religious Education

- Daily Eucharistic celebration.
- Daily rosary.
- Making awareness of the presence of God.
- Catechism lessons.
- Participation in liturgical services.
- Learning the prayers.
- Reading and studying the Bible.
- Good night talks (story in good manners).

#### Moral Education

- Instruction in moral values.
- Healthy relationship with one another.
- Talks on moral problems.
- Organising seminars.
- Getting video cassette on moral themes e.g. on cleanliness, drugs and alcohol.
- Imparting moral values through skits.

#### Physical Education

- Daily manual work.
- Daily games.
- Conducting matches.
- Sports day.
- Physical exercises.

#### Academic Education

- Following the curriculum of the primary school.
- Technical training.

- Agricultural training.

### Cultural Education

- Inviting specialist to share on cultural traditions and values.
- Preparing cultural dances and songs etc.
- Encourage the children to cherish the traditional values.
- Monthly family circle (get-together).

### 1.2.2 Work Specification

#### **Liturgy**

In charge of the liturgy follows the sacristy and preparing for the mass. Preparing of services list and decorations in the church is the work of the boys. What impressed me a lot is that the boys led the prayers. They take care of special preparation for liturgy of Sundays and Feast Days.

#### **Social Services**

As far as social services are concerned, the boys themselves volunteer for services apart from helping others. The major services are keeping the house and cleaning the surroundings, social work in the slum and care of manual work tools.

#### **Marian Group**

Part of their activity is to promote devotion to Mary so that they take the responsibility of solemnising Marian Days like Saturday and Feast Days. Therefore, they organise special rosaries and Marian programs.

#### **Sport Groups**

These services are for the whole community to help by organising games and preparing the ground. They also help the group dividing in teams.

### **Good Samaritan**

The boys take care of the sick in the community as well as show friendliness to all, taking care of new comers admitted to centre. This group takes care or help small boys in bathing and washing their clothes as part of their responsibilities.

### **Cheerful Groups**

The group entertains the community so as to promote happiness in the community. Celebration of birthdays and national feast days are well organised by the cheerful group. These are amongst the individual activities in Bosco Boys community. These activities are underlined by the staff members because they liberate the children technically, physically, morally, psychologically and intellectually.

### **DAILY PROGRAM TO BE FOLLOWED**

5.45 am	Rising
6.00	Morning Prayer, house jobs and bathing
6.30	Breakfast
6.50	Dressing with uniforms.
7.00	Departure to the school.
5.00 PM	Games.
5.45	Tea
6.00	Work
6.00	Bathing
7.00	Study
8.00	Supper
8.45	Night prayers

This program keeps them busy and cares for both the mental and physical well being of the children. Through this program and activities, the boys are introduced to communal activities such as music, education, meal preparation and sports that help them to develop

entirely. Sometimes they behave as they are in the street but the project gives them a sense of discipline and responsibility since it has a positive ground. For instance, Fr. Henerry helps them with the knowledge of agriculture, how to cultivate, He encourages them to grow vegetables, flowers and other types of crops in order to widen their mind. I strongly believe that it can help them to change their behaviour and attitudes towards themselves and the whole society.

In January 1997 the staff sent 67 boys to various primary schools. These are who remained in the centres. At the end of the school year only 57 had persevered. I believe that it is a sign of great success. Below is the list of the third term results of most of the children who attended the primary schools.

Name	School	Standard	Position	Total student
Daniel	Ng. Forest	One	5	37
Daniel	Ng. Forest	Two	1	43
Jacob	Ng. Forest	Two	7	45
Peter	Ng. Forest	Three	2	45
Mbugua	Ng. Forest	Three	3	46
Hassan	Ng. Forest	Four	2	42
Kamau	Ng. Forest	Four	4	47
Mwangi	Ng. Forest	Five	4	33
Sebastian	St. Mary's	One	1	47
Robert	St. Mary's	Six	2	47
Geofrey	St. Mary's	Seven	10	49
Isaac	Muran'ga Rd	Four	7	32
Jimna	Muran'ga Rd	Four	1	32
Kevin	Parklands	Three	1	36
K. Maina	Parklands	Five	1	23

This is a good sign in the life of the boys, it encourages the staff to continue the task properly so that the boys may meet their future life in a society.

### 1.3 ADMINISTRATION

One of the important things in running a project is to have well-organised staff. The achievements of the project depends so much on the motivation of the staff members. I realised that Bosco Boys centres and staff members involve themselves with joy in responsibilities. I would dare to say that they are aware of their main responsibilities to transmit God's love to the poor and abandoned children because as I saw they are creative and responsible in their work. It is good also to mention the names of the staff members.

They are

Fr. Babu Augustine SDB	(Director)
Fr. John Peter SDB	(Ass. Director)
Fr. Henry Juszcyk SDB	(Administrator)
Mr Paul Snoeren	(Salesian co-operator)
Mrs. Cora Olsthoorn	(Salesian Co-operator)

These are the staff members and there are also three teachers. Salesians are giving chances to their candidates to the postulancy to have experience of at least one year. The candidates are helping children at every moment of the day and each one has his own group to lead and guide so that they can follow the boys closely. They participate as follows:

Study hall .....	Bro. Paul
Meals time.....	Bro. Antony
Bath time .....	All the Brothers
Work time .....	All the Brothers
Dormitory .....	All the Brothers
Assisting house jobs..	Bro. Emmanuel
Taking care of animals and toilets ...	Bro. Vincent

There are some sisters also helping the boys on Saturdays with washing clothes, singing practice and catechises. Somehow, these are who participate in running of the project even though all Salesians at large are Fathers, Brothers and Sisters are more concerned about the centres. The working areas of the staff include the following:

- 1 Teaching
2. Collecting bio-data of the boys.
3. Each member following closely certain number of boys.
4. Medical care.
5. Discipline.
6. Food.
7. Responsibilities towards each class.
8. Monthly meetings.
9. Evaluating.
10. Counselling.
11. Looking for financial help from local and foreign sources.

#### 1.4 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the project is to take care for the street children. This is done by assisting the children financially for school fees and to make the poor and abandoned ones holy and good citizens by being an instrument of God's Love, care, hope, and protection. In short, the project's objectives are:

- a: to take care of the destitute, giving them love and kindness.
- b. to provide them education/ trade.
- c: trying to change their behaviour.

d: giving the boys hope for the future. The aim is to give them the real figure of life through the program. The specific activities provided by the centre help them to develop a positive attitude towards life and to form in them Christian values in order to rehabilitate them so that they can feel part of the society. The Salesians are directing their full energy towards these children as their Charism clearly suggests them to the concern for the youth. Time to

time they organise youth week and youth seminars where they talk to the youth about their useful period to show them the love of Christ through practical involvement.

Rehabilitation centres for the children is meant to give them residential care. It is the first step to look for an alternative. In the centres, their goal is to offer the best possible to these destitute by providing education, medical care and possible facilities. There are regulations to guide them to meet their objectives. All efforts of good wishers inspire them to have a vision on their ways of changing the life and moulding the children. They prevent the children from going to the street again and this is part of the objectives.

My experience with the Salesians helped me a lot to know their Charism and Don Bosco's lifestyle. He was one who dared to love young people and who had spent his life for the youth of his time. Hence the Salesians spirituality is very much centred on this preferential love for the youth. It seems to me that all Salesians are called to love youngsters especially the poor and destitute as their priority taking Don Bosco as their model. Giving a trade is also the wish of the founder. Accordingly, in the centres, they give this chance to the boys in this way, the boys have the opportunity to learn a trade of their choice as a support for their future life. This is done as long as boys are happy with that.

## 1.5 STRATEGIES OF THE CENTRES

### 1.5.1 SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

The third centre, Bosco Boys - Kuwinda, is under construction on a 13 acre plot. When this centre is ready, Salesians will be able to assist to rehabilitate as many more boys as possible. This centre is situated in a good site of rehabilitation, far away from the temptations of the city centre. They will have quarterly camps, where the children from all their centres would be coming together. During the camp, it is their custom to have competitions, educational talks, outings and sports together with some useful classes. They are also looking for a plot in the city. With these, they can accommodate the children who are at Kariua, since the present place is not very conducive to their education.

### 1.5.2 LONG TERM STRATEGIES

The project is helping the boys up to the secondary school. They are in the process of getting sponsors to help get the highest level of the Kenyan education. Many boys who passed through their centres are still under their care. One of their plans for the future is continue helping them until they start to get something for their life. In some cases, they are assisted either financial assistance to the family or in one of their centre as a worker.

To some extent, this element mentioned in the background of this work. Here I would like to highlight the strategies of the staff, including educational system of Don Bosco that is still the goal of Bosco Boys centres. As I said, they are trying to form good citizens as well as good Christians. Spirituality is the centrality of Christian formation to the children, to lead them to live good life. This time there are 20 boys who are baptised and for the future they will put more effort without forcing them. Most of the time, they respect the feeling or willingness of the boys to meet their future plan. Today, they are thinking of other aspects that can be stressed more in the centres than ever for example, matters concerning development, environment and justice issues. They learnt that some boys have somehow experienced many issues in the centre of the city and that they know a lot about what is good and bad. If they accept, they will put themselves where they fit. For instance, social interaction is very difficult for them because of what they have experienced in the past yet this is very important in giving them the reality of life in the world. Human development and empowerment facilities are promised by the donors apart from daily bread. It is planned to meet their social well being; it could be a clear sign that will provide them to know their potential and growth as children. Once they are given the emotional support and opportunities to improve their lives, it is up to them to make crucial decisions for their life.

### 1.6 FINANCIAL SITUATION

The financial situation of the project was not clear for me to go through the detail. I will just give a brief report on my part. The financial support of the centres are coming from Rome. The money is provided by the institute and they have foreign and local donors. Apparently, most of the donations are local. People help in various ways in the work for these



children. Some people even volunteer themselves to teach the children in understanding the Salesian management.

People supply them with food items such as maize, beans, sugar, rice, bread, milk and stationary. I would better say, there is no limit to the ways in which people can help them. They can as well get shoes and clothing from factories. Of course they are grateful for God's providence and the interest and commitment of many benefactors and friends. Some of the clubs and names of friends who give hands for running the project are Ladies' Auxiliary of Nairobi Central, sponsoring the studies of some of these boys; Mr and Mrs Manoji Shah donated 300 sets of school uniforms for all the Bosco Boy's; Lions Club of Nairobi Centre, Malta Trust, Child Life Trust and Action in Focus are some of the institutes and friends that help the project willingly with concern for the well being of the street children.

The project has not meet with financial difficulties during the past years. It has been able to met all its activities with the administration, besides the help of donors and the local Church. They managed to help families in the slums and met extraordinary expenditures such as the construction of Kuwinda the third centre on about 150-200 Boys-capacity building. In 1995, His Eminence Maurice Cardinal Otunga, Archbishop of Nairobi, gave them a 13-acre plot of land at Kuwinda to construct a home for the Bosco Boys. European Community came forward to help 50% of the costs and others contribute for this construction. In short, these projects exist only by the donations of good wishers.

Here, I would like to explain how they sponsor the boys for school. As everything revolves around money, if there is no money, no activity can be undertaken at all. They sponsor the studies of about 118 children, and 112 of the children in primary schools and the rest in the Embu Secondary School and Don Bosco Boys' Town. The education system of Kenya is well aware that the cost of students attending the schools are quite high and this has affected especially those who are studying in secondary schools. Below is a break down of the expenses for a school- going boy:

**For 1998:**

1. Admission fees	K. sh 300/-
2. School development fund	K. sh 2500/-
3. For city council	K. sh 280/-
4. For three terms fees (3 x 300)	K. sh 900/-
5. Uniforms	K. sh 1400/-
6. School shoe	K. sh 750/-
7. School bag	K. sh 350/-
8. Text books and exercise books	K. sh 2500/-
9. Stationery	K. sh 600/-
10. Tuition fees (9 months x 150)	K. sh 1350/-

**TOTAL****K. sh 10930/-**

These are the averages school expenses for school -going boys, but there is a slight variation of each school. And this is only for one boy.

**Number of students = 118 x Total cost of a student**

$$118 \times 10936 = \text{Ksh/= } \underline{1,290,448/\text{year}}$$

Somehow this is to show only the school expenditure excluding food, medicine, clothes, workers salary and other expenses.

**CHAPTER TWO****2.0 THE ROOT CAUSES OF STREET LIFE****2.1 RURAL TO URBAN MOVEMENT**

In Kenya, people have foster motivation for rural-urban migration because urban economy concentrates all economic activities in towns and cities and the desire of the people in the rural area is to get more income. For many, this desire can hardly be fulfilled in their rural areas. However, Nairobi City cannot provide the higher income and gainful employment for most of those who want it. Nairobi is becoming a concentrated point for centres of

poverty. Poverty drives the children to the street. Their basic needs are not there. Lack of food, school fees and encompasses displacement, weather condition and ethnic clashes are major causes. On the side of the parents, it is very difficult to send their children to school because of the high school fees. The economic situation of the family affects the children to drop out from school. If there is no school for the children there is street to earn coins and garbage bins are there to get food.

## 2.2 UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment contributes a lot for street life, Parents move to the town because they know that all the facilities for the children and for themselves such as education, good style of life, clean water and electricity as well as technology are there. But there is no work. They survive for a certain period of time and after expending the money they earned they look for other means of work for the survival of the entire family. Even to get a job, they have to spent money well over months before they get it. The result then, without money and without job the only means is to encourage the children to survive by their own means.

There are long delays in getting work. Even those who get employment, for instance in the factory, day labour and many areas of work, people face the problem of underpayment. If they do not get enough for themselves and the children, it is impossible for the children to continue their studies. Consequently, they drop out school. The children seem to be cleverer than their parents because they take momentary action and they can become mere beggars, even stealing and transporting good. Money appears to be the back-bone to everything, a source that every success and future life seems to be based on. Whatever the work of an individual, the reason is merely to earn money; it is a share for building up of one's country.

Parents could hardly get money for the education of the children. However, people still face the problem of unemployment. Unemployment brings for many people, frustrations and despair. In short, I would say that lack of school fees generates a school drop-out and it affects both the education level. Poor quality of education means unemployment or lack of money which generates street people.

In Kenya, many young boys and girls prefer to stay in town. They come to town perceiving the high hopes of their parents and families but they find the door closed to the kind of job that they expect as a reward for so much effort and sacrifices. This situation entangles boys and girls preventing them from reaching their goal. It is also a hindrance and frustrations in their life. I believe that this is a situation leading them to difficulties in their life that they are obliged by the situation to be street boys and girls. Circumstances force people to street life. Inside they have anger. Most of the time, crimes and evils of street children are caused by their inner frustrations even though this is the only way of earning a living. This experience influences them to their every day life. The influences come in as they search for their daily bread. The consequences are psychological, economic and moral tensions. Young people who leave school are very many but the aspirations of the secondary school leavers are more caused by economic situations of the families and frustration. Even if they stayed in rural areas the chances open to them are often not as they want or as they like. Sometimes they risk their traditional values in life because of the pressure that comes from outside and inside their traditional ways of living, yet they are not prepared for these. However, in the years ahead, the youngsters participate more fully in the life of entire nation but are not adequately prepared for such future.

### 2.3 POVERTY

In Nairobi, most of the children are flocking in the streets because of the growth of family needs. In most cases children are encouraged by the family at the expense of their education as long as the family members agree with their children to go out to the street. It is clear that poverty has entrenched deeply among many families in Nairobi city. Children then, venture into activities. Sometimes they would earn themselves and their families for the sake of survival. Poverty is a world-wide problem. However, it is a hindrance to develop entire families. It also prevents protection and family needs. The rising cost of living and shortage of basic necessities encourages people to go to the street and in despairs. For instance, the majority of residents of Nairobi are renters, and most structures are let on a room by room bases with most households occupying a single room. Even though the rooms are not

comfortable and enough for the family, they fail to pay the rent. The owner pushes the family out of doors because what they want is money. So, people cannot stay inside the house since they are unable to pay the rent. As I have heard from the children, they said that they do not have place to sleep therefore, veranda or sheds of trees are becoming their shelter. These two places are where they can move, sleep, eat, relax and associate with people.

## 2.4 ETHNICISM

Kenya is still in need to overcome many of inner negative ethnic feelings that run deep in many tribes. Of course this is a great challenge for the whole of Africa. Ethnicity is one of the evils that creates problems among a good number of Kenyan citizens. It is one of the causes of street life in Kenya. The 1992 ethnic clashes led to an increased number of destitute in urban centres in the country. These clashes uprooted many families from the Rift Valley. Some victims who could not get accommodation in their original homes stayed in the street. Street was the only place for people to stay as refugees where they could scavenge for food as they schemed out survival tactics. I would say that ethnicity affects the whole nation in many aspects, such as hindering development, creating violence, displacement of people expressed in the insecurity of the minority and the unease of the majority. Therefore the streets of Nairobi swell up to the top of the level every day with street boys and girls. As S. Keller rightfully observed

“People are victimised because they belong to a different ethnic group, than those exercising power. These people either differ politically or religiously from the ruling majority and in the process, they suffer at the hands of majority”.<sup>1</sup>

During the clashes, were making people suffer, worsening the situation by grabbing land where the poor families have situated. As far as I know in Africa, whatever ethnic clashes occur, the poor families are the first to suffer and contribute to the population of street life.

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<sup>1</sup> S.K. Keller, *Uprooting and Social Change*. Newdelhi: Menahas Book service, 1975. p.4.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1 THE ROLES OF SALESIANS**

The Church is called to missionary life in the world and the church has a mission to accomplish. This commitment is to proclaim the Good News of Christ for all humanity. To nurture the people of God and seek to transform the unjust structure of the society by being called to minister the people is its task. The Church is compelled to respond to the social crises of street children. Street children crises remain a great challenge to the Church and it is up to the Church to develop its pastoral methodology to help these children. The Catholic church has a role not only of providing emergency assistance but also of being fully involved in the social problem that emerges in Nairobi city.

The challenge is to give street children material, moral, spiritual, intellectual support and to work on the root causes of street children and of course to denounce situations that promote people to the street life. Street children challenge the Church to address issues of child care and to reach up to the grass root causes for this problem of children. The challenge to the Church is to work and create environments that respect and promote human rights, encourages people to participate in economic, social and political life of the people. Whatever comes and by any means our church should ensure that the security of every street child is uphold and it should promote and encourage co-operation between the state and the community.

Street children are often forgotten and they lack whatever is right to them. It seems that the children neglect their rights. Indeed, it is not neglecting but it is a matter of power. Therefore, their silence promotes the Church to play a great role to speak on their behalf since they have no power and economic resistance in a society. Unless the Church voice out, their voice as children cannot be heard. When it comes to powerlessness of human person, the church involvement is very important as it becomes the source to support their cause. The Church bears witness in action of understanding to avoid crisis of our time. As Henry Okulliu noted:

“The church has a duty to bear witness, in humanity in its understanding of the will of God for man in an organised society. For that reason it dare not assume a passive, indifferent or neutral attitude towards crucial political and social issues of our time. It must uphold righteousness, champion the oppressed and declare the sovereignty of institutions of man”.<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Henry Okullu calls the Church to respond positively to the social issues in our present world as Salesians are trying to do. Salesians are part of the Church and their response to the social problem of today is appreciated. As they deal with street children they are still encouraging the Church to open many centres for the street children because it seems to me that they know well that children are not only the present but above all the future of humanity.

“It is thus necessary to help young people to overcome the obstacles thwarting their development, illiteracy, idleness, hunger, drug”.<sup>3</sup>

The Church must play a role in a society through Salesians and transform the life of street children to the realities of humanity as much as possible. Salesians are a good example in the Church because of their initiatives or movements towards the life of many young people. These creative movements of Salesians community motives and give courage to all who believe in the salvation of Christ Jesus. Their initiative gives structure to the destitute children for the future and this is how Salesians work out their duty in a society. St. John Bosco received his vocation as a young boy and his prayers helps many people to follow his Charism. John Bosco community of Langata tries their best to love the children according to the Charism that God has designed for them to bring the values of the Gospel in to the powerless children of Nairobi.

As they empower the children in order to achieve the objectives of the centre. They create new vision and maintain the structure of the children that was affected by the circumstances. The contribution of Salesians to the liberation of hundreds of children from

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Okullu, *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development*: Nairobi Oxford press.1984, p.71.

<sup>3</sup> New People. *The Synod is over! The Synod has Just Begun*. Nairobi, Kenya. December 1995. pp. 39.

evils and suffering in the society it shows us how the church fights for justice and people's liberation.

### 3.2 PUBLIC AWARENESS

Street children cry for help and out of the harsh circumstances they are exposed to in street life. Their greatest cry is that the society tends to neglect them and the feeling of exploitation by the society is hurting them. That is why they find hard to cope with the society. The society failed to draw the children in the midst of the society. The whole nation should unite to help the children in forming them in order to achieve a sense of personal identity and self-acceptance that can make them good citizen and able people. For the children, it is not easy to come out from their unplanned lifestyle unless the society assists in forming their lives because their future seems to me in great danger in the area of sexuality, social interaction and personal identity.

For this crisis, we all must work together. It is momentary call for attention, especially by Government, churches and NGOs have to take action where they can to have their rights to bring life and their dignity as human person. I believe that there is a need for government intervention in order to protect the rights of all children of Nairobi city to the advantage of the entire Kenyan citizens. In fact, children are too young to pass under the umbrella of street life. If these children are not taken care of, it will be harmful for the society and for themselves as a whole. As I said in previous chapter, these children are the future Kenyan leaders. The Kiswahili have a proverb that runs like this; "Mwana umleavyo, ndivyo akuavyo", which means a child grows up as you bring him up. This proverb has a truth because if we bring them up in the right way it will give them the right structure for the future. Even in Bosco centres, the boys are well followed so that this experience will give them a good culture that can provide them a good life for themselves. In Ethiopia the Guragei tribe have a saying that goes: "Sub te subbu sub yiher", meaning, people are made people through other people. Behind the proverb lay the whole wisdom of "Humanness". Children experience their own worth and the worth of others by living with others in communion. Bosco Boys centres have access for these humanness. Street children need these wonderful change in their life. It is important to accept



them in the society and be recognised by the society so that they can achieve and inherit their source of happiness. As I mentioned in the proverb of Ethiopian people “Sub” (human) shows that it embraces positive values of the African cultures such as sharing, participation, solidarity, respect and discipline so that it reflects on concern for each other. Since street children are part of the society, there is need to share with them by encouraging them by being more human. As I mentioned above, in Africa we have cultural values that are bases of the community in relationships where we respect all human beings.

Most of the time street children are rejected by the society, we do not give them their rights and respects. We do not like to share, to integrate and to see them as our brothers and sisters because they are poor. These can deny the centre of our humanness and it cannot give us opportunity to create space for them as a person to be themselves. All of us must have a feelings of responsibility and look forward for the future of the children of Nairobi. As a matter of fact, when we see street children, first we see them as dirty, thief and criminal but that is the way they survive. In short, we have a responsibility in particular the families to offer to the children the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity that can restore their confidence and lead them to find their personal, cultural and religious identity. In most culture, children are seen as innocent human beings whose power is not adequate for any challenges. Parents, neighbours, villagers and elders are supposed to care, love and protect the children. The community is the one which forms the children to make them stand by themselves, encourages and supports them for solid formation since the beginning. It is still like a taboo in my culture to let children roam around is shameful to parents. This situation has been keeping the whole families together so that the children develop their intellectual capability and grow with the realities of surroundings.

### 3.3 NGOs, CHURCHES AND GOVERNMENT.

It seems to me that the number of street children continues day by day. At the same time there are 260 groups of NGOs that are at work. I presume that some progress has been done in action from 1997 in Nairobi. However, we know that there is much more to be done. It is a great frustration not to be able to collaborate and to be committed. Since there are 260

registered NGOs, I would say that there is lack of net-working. Is lack of realising that “unity is strength”. There are 39 rehabilitation centres for 27, 278 street children but the number of street children is estimated over 60,000 in Nairobi. This is very big number. How many NGOs are committed in a way that help at least to reduce the number of street children ? Whenever there have been social problems the society has to respond together. But little has been done. Net-working is very important and co-ordinated effort of the society can bring change for the deprived, oppressed and neglected street children of Nairobi City. Togetherness should be a system to increase efficiency for all even though it is very challenging and demanding to work together because when people are in a group situation, they tend to be less responsible.

#### - GOVERNMENT

Street children problem needs to be taken seriously because the efforts undertaken by the Gov't prove that much can be done. The task is to empower the institutions facilitates and the approaches to look at the sparking needs, administration and financial supporting services must be facilitate. If all movements joint together to face the problem, it may bring solutions to an end. Gov't can do many things in a short time if it takes action and wants to care for the needs of children This requires an international approach at least to make global effort for the urgent needs. The Gov't must work hard and give instructions to the security polices how to orient children towards structures and capable of convincing them in order that they may feel still part of the society.

#### - CHURCHES

Church understood well that children need growth, development, care, love and affection because many church Institutes are trying for the best. For instance Don Bosco community is functioning under the umbrella of Catholic church and it is wonderful example for all of us. The Salesians are aware of the problem and they are fighting with it, they have in mind that children are essential and they do not want to see them exposed to the conditions that are dangerous to the child life and growth. I have seen that in the city centre the children are playing the role of an adult in early ages.

For the church might be good to involve ministers to deal with aspects and situations of the society which are complex. In other words the church must balance and not to stick some where like only spiritual services but to deal with social problems might be good and it is needed. It is true that most religious institutions are not open for social challenges of today, in most part of the world unless we tackle social dimension it will not be so easy to bring the Good News of the Lord. It is advisable to integrate our service with Gospel values.

The Good "Shepherd" image is to care, readiness and concern and solidarity to transform suffering in to joy and hope. This is exactly what is taking place in Bosco centres and these centres are a place for moulding and directing the "lost boy's" so as to enable the children of God to be valid citizens of their countries. As far as I know about these projects, it is well integrated the social aspects of the world. It is a sign of sharing witnesses with children who undergo sufferings. Surely these children lack model of parents such as play, health care, discipline, shelter and love. Don Bosco's work is still continues to be parental model. These destitute children even though no one offer to a child that can compared to what parents can offer but we have to try our best. The effort of the church is seen in many ways and in deferent Institutes through the work of ministers of the church that merits the "Kingdom of God".

We all called to show our solidarity towards children as Salesians do and in whatever we can and wherever it may be, we still have chances to give hand where possible. The society should move fast and we do not need to seat until the problem knock our door. When I talked to some boys in town they expressed deep sorrow by saying:

"we street children are unlucky because we are exposed to violence, health hazards, bad manners, sexual transmitted disease and drug exploitation by others".<sup>4</sup>

They do not have the power to come out from all these hazardous unless we pull them out of this danger. There are many possibilities to help these children for example, to talk to them, referring them to the centres, return home and giving them bread, clothes but not money otherwise they may use it for glue. One of the most important thing is also we conscientise the

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<sup>4</sup> J. Mwnagi Interview June 20th 1998.

society, public awareness, schools and churches where we can have some respects. As I read in the convention of the right of child says that:

“The children have the right to protection, the use of narcotic and Psychotropic drugs and from being involved in their production or distribution”.<sup>5</sup>

This is fact that we cannot deny the rights of children so that we do not need to abuse them and blame them. Let us support each other especially the church, Gov't and NGOs. We christian are challenged by this crisis, let us show our commitment towards the little one at least “A glass of water”. These can bring the dreams to become true and let us dream together not individual so that we may find lasting solutions because if we work as a team we are bound to support each other and encourage the children to find a solution to their problem. The first step can be change of attitudes towards street children because one boy told me that the people see him as useless and inferior, we have to see them as a children of God.

### 3.4 POSITIVE EFFORTS

My experience in the project is very positive and I appreciate the organisation even though there are some points to be improved. The good thing is that they aimed towards the overall growth of the street children, through promoting their potentiality. There is no problem in the project to settle happily the children. It has been practised to assist each youngster as he lands at any of the centres and to cope with life.

As far as the centres are concerned, it impressed me a lot when I involved myself fully. Seeing the staff members, I participate in teaching good manners and giving lessons of home science as well as mathematics. It is interesting to see the effort of the staff members helping the children with resources that can assist them in their future life. The remarkable efforts that encourages for all society at large is promoting an intensive follow up and in qualifying the unqualified when they find child is ready to enter Langata centre. The community of Langata is always ready to avail all the facilities. The organisation have good a understanding of technical aspects of the project and it is quiet well. For instance, they give chance to develop

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*Convention of the Right of the Child.* General Assembly of the United Nation On 20th November 1989

skills even though it is not simple to get into the target because the children are basically spoiled on the street in away difficult to understand them, they acquire new culture and life style. Therefore, it is difficult to ensure the target but I am sure that as time goes on they might get in the target. In two months times I have seen reasonable changes on the side of the children that means initiatives of the salesians are fruitful especially their approaches and close follow up.

### 3.5 WEAKNESS OF THE PROJECT

My suggestion is that they need to accept the opinion of each staff member at every stages has to be taken in consideration. I can say that when they give a chance to their candidates, they should have sufficient knowledge about the children. The first week of my experience was very tough because the methodology is based on Salesians way of aspiration or educational system. In order to facilitate their approach it is preferable to give orientation for newly staff members. As I saw, it is not so easy to work with street children especially for young people like me that's why I am commenting. Unless the staff members organise themselves well, the children can not make progress or the child cannot make positive decision for change.

### CONCLUSION

The number of street children is becoming scaring to the nation and we all have a chance to do something at all levels. First of all, parents are the first to take action since children are a reflection of their parents and society. The whole community is bound to care and provide for children needs and welfare. All children have the right to grow in health physically, mentally and socially so that they can enjoy their childhood. When we care for them, it is not favour but it is responsibility to humanity.

The future of children should not be taken for granted because the children are future leaders, teachers, doctors and responsible for the entire nation. Always, we have to take into consideration all aspects of future of the nation. We need to have a joint effort to set up structures, getting together in spirit of oneness. Therefore, to handle the problem effectively, I

believe that rehabilitating and giving a chance for these youngsters to live in the society with dignity and self worth are remarkable stages for them.

What are the  
recommendations?

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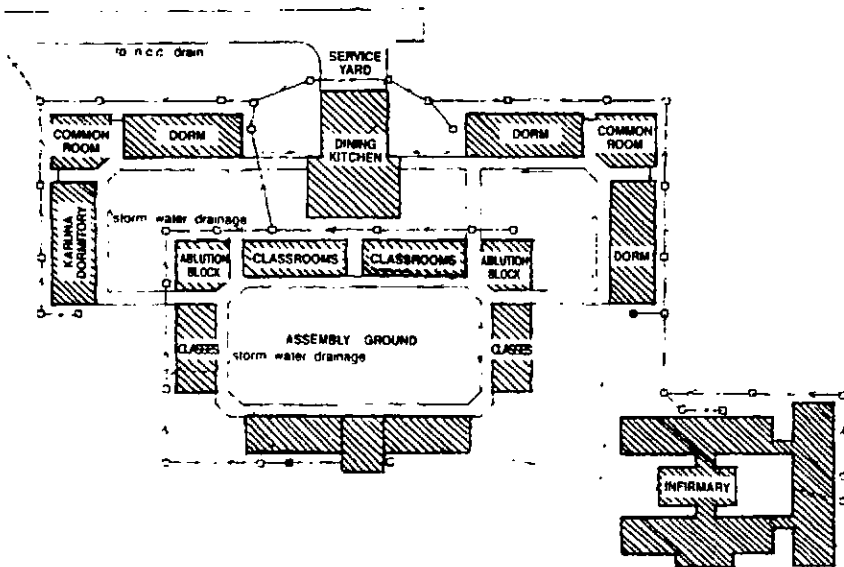
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## APPENDIX NO.1

## BOSCO BOYS KUWINDA CONSTRUCTION AND SITE PLAN.



*Bosco Boys - Kuwinda*



## APPENDIX NO.2

## SCHOOL GOING BOYS OF ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL.



*The School going boys of St. Mary's primary school. Kato 1998.*

APPENDIX NO. 3  
THE BOYS AT WORK



*The boys at work*

