



India uncovered - looking beyond the statistics Christmas Appeal update – see how you are helping to change lives Modern slavery and street children – our new report explores the links





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*All children's names in the magazine have been changed to protect their identities

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WELCOME

Hello and a warm welcome to the latest issue of Street Life, your Toybox magazine.

Here at Toybox, our wonderful supporters are so important to us. Without your generosity, time and action, the updates and work we are able to share with you simply would not be possible.

The beginnings of a new year can offer the chance for us to reflect on all that we have managed to achieve during the past year. As I think back to the highlights from Toybox's last financial year, the thing that I am genuinely most excited about is the 28 children we got off the streets, who were successfully integrated back into their families.

Now I appreciate that 28 does not seem a huge number, but the other day I was picking my son up from school and as the school bell rang, a full class raced past me, intent on getting home – 28 children racing home. I was struck by the thought that with your help, Toybox supported a full class of children to run home.

In addition to this, with your support we were able to work alongside 14,269 children in seven countries (the equivalent to Bath's rugby club stadium full of children) to have a better life and more promising future.

I hope this issue gives you an insight into the lives of the children you are helping and what it's been possible to achieve with your support. Thank you so much for your interest and support of our work. I hope you enjoy the magazine.

Yours,

Lynne Morris CEO



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OUR NEW PROJECT WITH STREET Children in Sierra Leone

Toybox are incredibly excited to introduce you to our new work in Sierra Leone. This new project aims to make education available to children who are living and working on the streets around Freetown, while also supporting caregivers and the wider community to help them understand how they can play their part in allowing children to access their rights.

Toybox's International **Programmes Director AI** Richardson says, "With an estimated 50,000 children living or working on the streets, there is so much need in Sierra Leone. Some children lost one or both parents due to the war and then Ebola, while others have been brought to the capital by relatives under the promise of getting an education but instead they are expected to work on the streets. Toybox and our partner, St George Foundation Sierra Leone, have been designing a new project with the children and community members. We are very excited that the project will enable children to be able to attend school, some for the very first time." Keep an eye on our supporter magazine over the coming months for further updates and reports on how this new project develops.

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THOUSANDS OF Central American Migrants Seek Refuge in the United States

Central America hit the international news once again last year with reports of a migrant caravan travelling over 4,000 miles from Honduras and through Central America to the US-Mexico border.

The caravan, made up of more than 7,000 people from Honduras. El Salvador and Guatemala, reached the border at the end of November, with around 3,000 more expected in the following months. Many are young families, fleeing the relentless gang violence in their home countries in search of a safer place to bring up their children. There are also a huge number of unaccompanied minors, seeking refuge with extended family members who have already settled in the United States.

Tougher sanctions on migration in the US have left many apprehended at the border while they await decisions on their cases. If their claims are turned down, they face the long journey back home where, in countries with some of the highest homicide rates in the world, the situation shows little sign of improving. Toybox's partners in these countries are monitoring this situation closely as, for many who have given up their homes but are forced to return, life on the streets becomes one of their only options.

A BIG THANK You to our Amazing toybox Fundraisers

Fancy baking up a storm in aid of Toybox? Or pounding the streets of London to help street children around the world? Some of our incredible supporters have taken up the challenge this year to help us do just that. Amber, aged 9. held a craft sale which raised a fantastic £70. Amber says, "I was at a festival when someone from Toybox

screwed up a ten-pound note, rubbed it in the dirt and explained that it was still worth the same. They then used this example to explain about children on the streets. This really got to me and I've been raising money ever since."

Amy in Cornwall decided that instead of receiving birthday presents this year she would ask for donations to Toybox. This raised an amazing £237, helping to give unregistered children a truly life-changing gift – their birth certificates. Together, those who have fundraised in aid of Toybox this year have helped to raise over £8,500!

We're so excited to launch our new online fundraising pages, packed with hints, tips and ideas on how to make your fundraising for Toybox a success. So. whether you, your church. school or place of work would like to get involved visit www.toybox.org.uk/fundraise to find out more!





Team Toybox is thrilled to be heading back to Wychwood Festival again this June for another weekend of fun, music and food as the festival celebrates its 15th birthday!

For the fifth year in a row, we will be joining up with the brilliant team at Wychwood to be the Partner of Conscience for the event and are already planning what we can bring to the party.

As 15th birthday celebrations take place across the festival site, we will be sharing a little more about our birth registration work, which is currently helping street children across Latin America to have their own birthdays to celebrate each year. We're going to be asking festivalgoers to take a stand for the invisible street children by adding their fingerprints to our festival mural – in exactly the same way that street children use their fingerprints to 'sign' their birth certificates.

Wychwood is the UK's Premier Family Music Festival and returns to Cheltenham Racecourse this year from 31st May - 2nd June. Over the weekend, there will be more than 100 acts covering a range of music genres from indie and folk to world and rock across three fantastic stages. There are also activities for the whole family including a Children's Literature Festival, comedy sets and crafty workshops which are sure to add to the weekend's entertainment. Top that off with delicious food from all around the world. a great selection of Wychwood ales and the legendary Wychwood Festival Headphone Disco and that's the first weekend of your summer sorted!

To read more about the Wychwood Festival and to see some of the incredible acts who will be performing, visit www.wychwoodfestival.com



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CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2018:

Our fingertips are something we so often take for granted. They enable us to achieve our dreams and aspirations, whether this is by learning how to hold a pen in school, by typing up our CV or by signing our name on the dotted line as we get married.

Toybox's 2018 Christmas Appeal shone a light on another way that fingertips are helping to achieve perhaps the most important dream in Latin America... They are allowing street children to gain their official identities by signing their birth certificates. One fingertip, with that unique print, is all it takes to open up a whole new world of opportunities for children who are so often ignored, abused, invisible and abandoned.

Birth registration has been a key part of what we do for over 5 years now and once again, we have been blown away by the support that this appeal has received from you, our brilliant, committed and passionate supporters. At the time of going to print, you have helped raise over £190,000 for this work in Guatemala, El Salvador and Bolivia. Wow... just wow! Thank you!

In the last year alone, you have helped us to register over 1,500 children in Latin America and the total number of children registered since we began our registration work is now over 5,000. That's 5,000 children who are able to see their futures positively and dream big, all thanks to your generosity at Christmas.

Children like 11 year old Pablo in Bolivia, who has just applied for a place at the Real Madrid Foundation to get one step closer to his dream of being a professional football player. Children like Reina in El Salvador, 7, who now goes to school with her friends instead of having to work with her mum.

ving to work with her mum. Children like Leo whose 17th birthday has just marked ten years of him being on the streets in Guatemala, but who now wants to use his official existence to do good and help other children in his situation to get off the streets sooner. And finally, children like Marjorie, 2 months, who will never know what it is like not

to have her birth certificate because

your support is enabling parents to be educated and midwives to be trained so that one day, every child will be able to access this basic human right.

It is just amazing to see the donations arriving at the office and then to hear about the direct impact that your support is having. Do keep an eye out for future stories in your Toybox communications and on our social media channels for more updates about children whose lives are being changed by your generosity.

Your £32 and a single fingerprint can give a street child a whole new life. The one-off registration of a child can have lifelong impact, so if you would like to make a donation to help another street child receive their birth certificate, please visit www.toybox.org.uk/fingertips or call

01908 360080 to give £32 today.

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One of those common factors is poverty. The everyday realities of life in poverty pushes children towards earning an income – and this will often be in slavery like conditions. In addition, a lack of access to education increases the vulnerability of children to both becoming connected with the streets and modern slavery. Nine year old Amulya is one of the children we met during the development of this report.

AMULYA'S STORY

POVERTY

Amulya lives in Delhi with her parents and three younger siblings. Her father works as a labourer, where his work pattern is irregular and a steady income is unreliable. Amulya's mother is a housewife and Amulya was responsible for helping her with daily chores as well as caring for her siblings. Amulya was also often sent out to collect discarded coal and wood from along the railway tracks for fuel.

When our partner in Delhi, CHETNA, saw Amulya undertaking this dangerous task they started a conversation with Amulya's mother about her school attendance. She told them that she didn't go to school. The CHETNA team said that they could help the family with Amulya's school admission. At first her mother was very reluctant as she said there would be no one to help look after the other children or do the chores. But the team persisted. They met with both parents and explained the importance of education and how it could help break the cycle of poverty the family had faced for generations. The family soon agreed and as a result Amulya now regularly attends both school and a Toybox-supported education club.

Amulya is just one of the children that Toybox has been able to support, who is now much less vulnerable to becoming connected with the street or involved in modern slavery. Our work in India has also shown how increasing the availability of flexible and informal education, through initiatives such as catch up classes, mobile schools and vocational training, can reduce the exposure of children to the patterns of exploitation.

DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION

Children escape to the streets to avoid discrimination, but when they arrive on the streets, even more discrimination faces them. Discrimination can be both direct and indirect – a key example of this is birth registration. Many registration systems require parents to pay fees, identify a fixed address, name both parents or other inflexible requirements that stigmatise and exclude vulnerable families. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the fact that a child without a birth certificate is also likely to have limited access to education, healthcare and social protection measures.

Discrimination and exclusion are also significant drivers towards modern slavery. Those who are more likely to become engaged in exploitative labour are socially and economically vulnerable and may come from socially excluded communities.

Here at Toybox, we are helping to tackle the discrimination and exclusion faced by street children through our projects, such as our birth registration programme in Guatemala. One of the young boys we have been able to support through the registration process told us, "Now I have my birth certificate, I don't have to work with my dad in the lime pits making bricks. I can go to school, like my friends in my village." Armed with his birth certificate, this young boy is also now significantly less likely to be forced into exploitative labour, or slavery like working conditions, and this is incredibly encouraging.

SO MUCH MORE THAT CAN BE DONE

Throughout our report, we identify a number of additional common features of modern slavery and street connectedness and highlight how these issues should not be seen in isolation. There is so much more than can be done to reduce the vulnerability of children to exploitation and addressing these issues in combination will bring the best possible outcomes for vulnerable children. You can read the full report and all of our recommendations at:

www.toybox.org.uk/modernslavery

THE LINKS BETWEEN MODERN SLAVERY AND STREET CHILDREN

> It is a struggle to comprehend that in 2019, over 40 million people are living or working in slavery-like conditions somewhere in the world. Even more devastating is that at least ten million of these are children, whether this is because they have been trafficked, sexually exploited, forced into child labour or early marriage, or coerced to work for armed gangs.

> > In this article, Toybox's AI Richardson shares some of the findings from our recently published report; Slavery and the Streets, which explores the links between modern slavery and street children.

COMMON CAUSES

During the development of this publication, our research and discussions with our partners on the ground who work on a daily basis with street children identified that there are common causes of both modern slavery and street children. The factors pushing children into street situations are frequently the same as those that expose children to slavery-like exploitation.

- AN OUTREACH WORKER

As many of you will remember, Toybox recently started funding a new project in Kathmandu, Nepal. 25 year old Bijay works for our local partner, Sath Sath, as a street outreach worker for the new Bridge Project, which supports street children to gain an education. As a former street child himself, Bijay really understands the specific experiences and challenges facing the children that he now works alongside and supports.

When Bijay was nine years old, his father sent him to live with his aunt in Kathmandu where he was enrolled at a local school so that he could further his education. Bijay was really excited by this opportunity and happy to be joining a good school in the capital. But after just a few months, Bijay's fortunes took a turn for the worse. One afternoon after finishing school, Bijay visited a temple with some of his school friends. However, being unfamiliar with the area, he soon became lost amongst the busy crowds. As he was still so new to the city, Bijay did not know how to get back to his aunt's house or how to explain to anyone where she lived. Left with no other alternative, Bijay decided to sleep near the temple for the night. Days passed and Bijay was still unable to recall any details of where his aunt

lived or how to get back to her house so he began to beg for food and money to get by on the streets.

Over the coming months Bijay began to make friends with some of the older street children who showed him how they collected scrap to earn money. By the age of 15, Bijay was making a living on the streets by collecting scrap as well as washing up at a local restaurant.



It was at this time that Bijay first met one of our partner's street outreach workers. Initially, Bijay was not at all interested in receiving any help or support, but over time he started to build a good rapport with the street outreach workers who told him about a drop in centre that was open to children who were living or working on the streets. He recalls that it took time for him to realise that he wanted to move away from the streets and continue his life on a different path.

With the guidance and support of the project workers, Bijay was finally able to piece together enough information to help him to trace his aunt and uncle. Fortunately they were still living in the same area. Despite this incredible turn of events, he then sadly found out that his father had passed away shortly after he had been sent to Kathmandu and that his mother had subsequently remarried. Despite this set back, Bijay was still determined that



When asked what inspires him in his work, Bijay explains how he was unable to continue with his schooling when he ended up on the streets. As a result, he is now determined that no child should be excluded from school. He speaks openly about the challenges he faces today; the children he works alongside are so used to street living that they are not used to regularly going to school so Bijay has to spend a lot of time out on the streets making sure that they are attending. Bijay explains how it can be difficult to meet and talk with the parents of the children he supports they are often not available during the day and many of them struggle with alcohol dependency issues.

Despite the Bridge Project being less than a year old, it is undoubtedly already having a positive impact on the lives of street children living in Nepal's capital and the project is already seeing some encouraging results.



In a notoriously dangerous district of Guatemala City called La Mina, children and young people meet together at a Toybox-supported project to learn new skills to help them earn a living safely whilst they are still on the streets. Street Life Editor, Gerry Walker, Investigates.

Set within a deep valley, the community of La Mina is made up of makeshift slum dwellings, made from old tyres, plastic and iron sheets, rope and anything else that can be found on the rubbish dump. Homes balance precariously on the side of the valley in an area which is susceptible to landslides. After a particularly heavy landslide destroyed many of the houses in the area a few years ago, a Toybox-funded community shelter was built and it is in this building that 15 - 20 street children come together each week for Performance Skills workshops.

The project is run by one of Toybox's local partners in Guatemala City. Over the last 25 years that Toybox has been working with street children, we have learned that it often takes time and patience to help children to get off and stay off the streets. Activities like the Performance Skills workshops offer our partner staff the perfect opportunity to start building the relationships that make this possible, in a safe, non-threatening environment.

Our partner explains that many of the children who attend the workshops have often come from chaotic family backgrounds. With limited options available to them, children often resort to begging, stealing or other criminal activity to get by on the streets. At the workshops, young people learn a variety of performance skills such as choreography, singing, circus skills and mime. They then use these new skills to perform on the streets in return for money from passersby and this is why these workshops are so vital; these new skills offer a legitimate and legal alternative for young people to be able to earn an income so that they can survive.

As well as learning new skills, the sessions also focus on teaching children and young people values such as trust, friendship, respect and honesty. They also learn about their rights - to be free from abuse, to be listened to, to go to school, and to have hope for the future. The sessions offer a much needed form of escapism for these young people from the harsh reality of life on the streets. During the sessions they are essentially able to take on the role of someone else and momentarily forget the challenges they face in their everyday lives.

Unsurprisingly, many of the young people who attend the sessions struggle with solvent abuse as a means to forget or numb the pain of living on the streets and the experiences they have faced in the past. But what is incredibly encouraging to hear is that the sessions are a solvent free zone – none of the participants take or consume anything during the sessions. It is clear that they have real respect for the support they are receiving at the workshops and this is largely due to the relationships that the project staff have built with those who attend.

At the sessions, the young people are given a snack and a drink. This may seem insignificant, but for these children who spend their time on the streets often wondering where there next meal will come from, this is hugely important and greatly valued.

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Project worker Hugo has been running the Performance Skills workshops for several years and says, **"These sessions bring me so much joy. So often we see these young people in incredibly difficult situations as they try to navigate living on the streets**, **but when they come here, they become like children again. They can forget their troubles and just enjoy expressing themselves. Many of them are so talented and it is nice to give them the opportunity to explore their God-given worth in this way."**

KOF

20 year old Kofi has been living on the streets for over ten years. He has been involved in drugs and petty crime to survive in the past. At the workshops, he has learned circus skills and now earns money by attending children's parties as a clown and juggling at traffic lights. Kofi now has enough money to support his young daughter and hopes that one day he will be able to leave the streets for good.

ANNUAL REVIEW ROUND UP

Toybox's CEO Lynne Morris shares her highlights from the last financial year.

I know I am getting old when yet another year seems to have just whizzed past! What a busy year it has been for Toybox, but each day we have been held up by your lovely letters, prayers, and naturally the wonderful financial support you give.

This year I am delighted to be able to tell you that thanks to your support we have worked with **14,269** children in **7** countries. **Each minute of the day, somewhere in the world a Toybox partner is working with a street child because of your generous support.**

Income increased by **6.5%** and we merged with an organisation called Action for Street Kids. The merger was designed to reach more street children in a more cost effective and efficient way and we have now started to work in Sierra Leone and Nepal because of this partnership. Every year we set ourselves some challenging targets and I am pleased to say that most of them were achieved. Where we did not accomplish all we wanted, I can promise you we learned a lot on how to be better next time. You can read all about these in our Annual Report and Financial Statements which can be found on our website: www.toybox.org.uk/ourfinances

It is a great report and if you have time – do read it with a cup of tea or coffee!

People often say to me it must be wonderful to work for an organisation like Toybox. It is. It's wonderful to meet children whose lives have changed completely because of Toybox and it is wonderful to represent you when I meet these amazing, fun, kind children who are determined to make the world a better place for themselves and their peers.

Thank you so much for all your support over the year. Without you, the work we do would simply not be possible.

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CHILDREN

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INDIA UNCOVERED: LOOKING BEYOND THE STATISTICS

There are around 51,000 children on the streets in Delhi. An estimated 87% are working children. Toybox's Philanthropic Giving Executive Emilie Hunter investigates.

When I first read the statistics above, I couldn't help feeling overwhelmed, these are staggeringly high numbers and given the transient nature of street children's lives, the number of children in hidden and illegal labour and the fact that many street and working children in India are unregistered and effectively invisible, other estimations are even higher. It is almost impossible to know for sure and easy to begin to feel hopeless.

During my trip to India with Toybox last August I had the privilege of meeting some of the children whose stories go far beyond statistics like these and who offer hope, even when it can feel like there is none.

On our first day as we travelled to visit a Toyboxsupported education club that is part of the Street to School project in West Delhi, the reality of what 51,000 children on the streets could look like hit me. There were children everywhere. Families huddled together in huts lining the pavements whilst others slept out in the open. without shelter. As we stopped at a traffic signal, children leapt from their makeshift homes beneath the flyovers and darted between cars, tapping on windows. Some were trying to sell small items like sweets and flags ahead of the upcoming Independence Day. Others simply placed their hands to their lips, gesturing 'I'm hungry.' Once the traffic signal changed and cars began to move they ran back to safety, some successful in earning a few rupees - most not.

Street vending or begging at traffic signals is one of the most common and noticeable forms of child labour in India. Another is rag-picking.

One in five working children in India is involved in the rag-picking trade. These children make a living through gathering discarded items on roads and railway tracks or by sifting through dumpsites in the hope of finding items such as plastic water bottles, tin cans and broken glass - anything that can be bartered or sold. In a country where hundreds of millions live in poverty, little is wasted and everything has a value to someone. Whilst it is illegal for children to work in this way and the police occasionally harass or even arrest those they catch doing so, ragpicking is largely unregulated and authorities tend to turn a blind eye. Aside from the risk of harassment and abuse from the police as well as other adults on the streets, children who work in rag-picking often suffer cuts and infections as well more serious health implications including respiratory disease, tuberculosis and sexual assault.

The community we visited on our first morning in Delhi is in the heart of one of the city's largest rag-picking areas. In a park across from a market where vendors sell rags and used items of clothing, 20 - 30 children

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gather each morning and afternoon to take part in the education club. Here, they receive remedial support including help with homework and reading. It is a safe space where they are given the opportunity to play games, build friendships and simply enjoy being children – away from the realities of work and street life.

Most of the children attending this education club have been part of the Street to School project since 2016. Before the project many had never attended school. Out of the children interviewed at the beginning to take part, the majority said they worked to survive and support their families. One of these children is Shivali.

Shivali worked as a rag-picker and helped her mother at the market to sell rags and bits of cloth she found. She explains she didn't enjoy this work but had no choice but to help. "The hardest thing was getting up very early in the morning (sometimes as early 1am) and working all day, then repeating this the day after and the day after that," she tells us. She is ten years old.

Life for Shivali is very different now. After joining the project she was enrolled into a local school where she has been attending for the last three years and is now in class five. She tells us her favourite thing about school is studying and playing and that she loves Maths. She no longer has to help her mother at the market and instead comes to the education club every day which makes her very happy. When she grows up she wants to be a teacher so that she can help other children achieve their dreams.

Findings from an evaluation of the Street to School project in West Delhi earlier this year showed that when children are given the chance to go to school and attend the education clubs, their participation in dangerous labour significantly reduces. This evaluation found the number of children working in the beginning of the project (85%) has now decreased to just 7%. This is just amazing.

Later in the week we visited a community in North-East Delhi where a new Street to School project has just begun. On the edge of a huge rubbish dump, another group of children eagerly await the start of the morning education club. Most of the children here range from six to 14 years old and have never had the chance to go to school

before. Some work as rag-pickers, others beg and sell at traffic lights, some help out at home or work with their parents at markets. They are incredibly shy and less confident than the children at the education club in West Delhi however when we ask what they all want to be when they grow up, they erupt with excitement. Teacher! Engineer! Doctor! They shout. One girl, Jyoti, who works cutting loose threads from new pairs of jeans so they are ready to be sold, tells us she dreams of getting her qualifications and becoming a policewoman.

Witnessing the difference that the Street to School project has made to children in West Delhi's lives filled me with hope for the futures of these new children who are just beginning their journey away from the streets. Over the next three years, the Street to School project in North-East Delhi will support a further 500 children like Shivali and Jyoti to go to school, get an education and build a safer and more hopeful life for themselves in the future - where their dreams have a chance to be realised.

Statistics taken from the Save the Children report- Surviving the Streets

REFLECTION: OFFERING OUR SHOES

If you have ever called the Toybox office, there's a good chance you will have spoken to Jenny Baker from our Supporter Care team. As our longest serving member of staff, Jenny's been working for Toybox for over 15 years! Here, she shares a reflection with us.

There's a saying that you shouldn't judge a person until you have walked a mile in their shoes. For us, this may just be a gentle reminder to look at all sides of a situation before deciding what's right and wrong – to give the other person the benefit of the doubt.

But when we think about the children on the streets Toybox works with, how can we truly 'walk a mile in their shoes'? Can we truly picture what their lives are like, their situations? Could we cope with living where they live, amongst the constant dangers and difficulties?

Yet that is what it takes for a child's life to be turned around. Our street outreach teams go where the children live, accept them as they are, show them that they care. Then slowly, very slowly, the children learn to trust and accept the help that is being offered.

These outreach workers are not the first to embrace the idea of incarnational care. After all, that's exactly what God did. Jesus came and lived among us. He went among the lost and hurt; he welcome people from all walks of life, from the learned to the little child, from the teachers to the tax collectors. He came to show that God cared for everyone, not just those whom society considered to be important or special. He came so that everyone may have life, and life in its fullest.

Washing feet in Jesus' day was common practice. After all, most people walked everywhere either in sandals or barefoot. It was considered a mark of hospitality to provide water for washing and refreshment. But it was also considered to be the work of a servant, this washing off the day's grime and muck, which is why Jesus caused such a stir when he washed his disciples' feet.

What does this mean for the children with whom we work? Unless someone goes and washes their feet, brushes their hair and tends to their wounds, how will they know that they too are worthy? By providing this basic care, the street outreach teams are doing so much more than serving children, they are showing them that they too are important.

For us at Toybox, our work is not just about walking a mile in someone's shoes, it's about offering our shoes so that they, too, can learn what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes - for good.

To find out more about the vital work of the street outreach teams visit www.toybox.org.uk/our-work/projects



Visit www.toybox.org.uk/childambassador

Alternatively, feel free to give Abbey a call on **01908 360080** to learn more. Together we can change the world for street children.