

**“I WANT TO
BECOME A GOOD
TEACHER.”**

 **STREET LIFE | ISSUE 18**

See the difference you're making to street children across the world

 **TOYBOX**
Changing the world
for street children

HELLO!

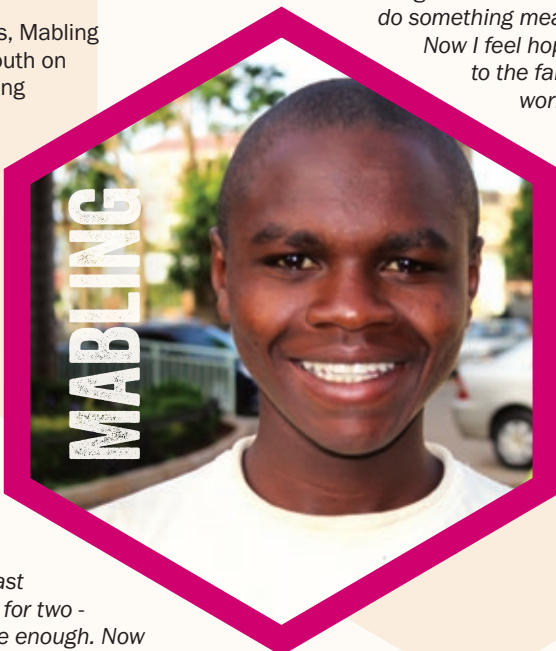
A very warm welcome to your latest issue of Street Life.

Extending extraordinary kindness during times of turbulence

It's not often that I am lost for words, but this summer I was left deeply humbled by the outpouring of kindness shown in response to our recent cost of living appeal. You truly understand the immense pressure that street children across the world are facing right now. Your support at this time represents a belief in the power of collective action – and for this I am so grateful. To date the appeal has raised £60,484. With your generosity, we can support street children like 17-year-old Mabling who has been affected by the rising cost of living in Nairobi, Kenya.

For the past 10 years, Mabling has lived hand-to-mouth on the streets, scavenging scrap to sell. Yet in recent months, it has become increasingly challenging for him to earn enough for even the most basic essentials. Mabling told our partner, PKL,

“Right now there are so many people who are collecting plastics and metals, not just street boys. In the past you could go around for two - three hours and have enough. Now I wake up at around 4.30am to go and



collect. You can work until midday and still not have enough. There are also many fights over territory – people get beaten up badly if they are seen in other people's areas. Things are way harder. You can no longer go to the dumpsite to scavenge because the managers at the site are only allowing specific people there. Now we mostly depend on going around the community to collect scrap and there's not usually much. These days it's very hard to find scrap metals - plastics and cartons are more common. They are bought at a lower price, so we are making less money.”

With your help, we can support initiatives like the urban farm project which is protecting children and young people like Mabling from some of the extreme challenges associated with the rising cost of living, such as hunger and malnutrition. Through the project, children are growing healthy and nutritious food, and have a safe place to spend their time, away from the dangers of the street. Mabling explains, *“My eyes were opened after coming to the project, that's when I realised the life I was living was not the best and I needed to do something meaningful with my life.*

Now I feel hopeful. I enjoy going to the farm – it feels good to work there. People are calm and there is less conflict.”

Thank you so much for supporting children like Mabling as they try to navigate the daily stresses and strains of life on the streets.

Bringing hope to the children of La Terminal

You may remember earlier this year that we introduced you to a new project based in La Terminal, a huge market in Guatemala City. The project, run by Toybox local partner Puerta de Esperanza has been providing a safe space for children to learn and experience some of the joys of childhood, away from the threats and dangers associated with the market. Following a successful pilot, I am pleased to share that through your ongoing support, the work with Puerta de Esperanza has recently been extended.

The project already has some exciting plans for the coming months and will continue to focus on supporting working children and teenagers with their education. Alongside this, parents and caregivers will be supported with parenting skills, to help strengthen family relations and reduce the likelihood of children leaving home for the streets. Families will also be given support and guidance to help them navigate the systems and processes required to obtain their ID documents and access healthcare. Thank you for bringing hope and opportunities to the children of La Terminal.

Accessible education on the streets of Kathmandu

Inside this issue of Street Life, we share an update from one of our education projects in Nepal. Life on the streets for a child is challenging and unpredictable and formal



schooling is often completely unobtainable. Interacting with teachers or local authorities can be scary and many children will assume education isn't for them. So, imagine the surprise and intrigue children in Kathmandu must have felt earlier this year when they saw a huge 400kg school on wheels make its way towards them on the pavement! I am really excited by the new Mobile School tool, which is making education accessible to children on the streets. I particularly enjoyed seeing photos from the launch event – which you can see inside. They are so colourful and joyful and really embody a sense of possibility. The project is instilling a sense of self-confidence and hope for a better future for these children and young people and I for one am really excited to see how this project develops further in the coming months.

Yours,

Lynne Morris OBE
Toybox CEO



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BRINGING SCHOOL TO THE STREETS OF KATHMANDU

Back in March, Toybox began trialling a new educational tool in Nepal's capital Kathmandu. The Mobile School - a set of interactive blackboards on wheels, was incorporated into the Road to Education project, to help reach more street children lacking access to traditional educational settings.

The Mobile School, developed by Mobile School Belgium and run by Toybox's local partner SathSath, focuses on providing non-formal education as well as helping street children integrate into the mainstream education system. Bishnu, an Educator at the project (pictured right, in the cream and red shirt) explains, "Our goal is to support the children to become literate and able to enrol at school. In the beginning everyone (including the project staff!) were very excited by the Mobile School - the children would ask, 'What is this? Why are you bringing it? Will you bring it every day? Do we need to pay for it?' In the squatter and slum areas where we work the level of education is mixed - some of the children go to school every day, some children will have dropped out of school, while others have never been. The project normally runs sessions three times a week and is currently supporting children aged from six to 18."

By bringing education directly to the city streets and meeting children where they are, the project team are supporting and engaging with even more street children. Another significant advantage of the Mobile School tool is its adaptability. Unlike conventional schools, which are fixed in one location, this mobile 'classroom

on wheels' is brought to different disadvantaged areas of the city, where it can adapt the lessons and curriculum to suit local needs. The tool also helps to bridge the existing educational gap, giving marginalised street children the opportunity to gain essential knowledge, confidence and skills they may otherwise not receive. Bishnu explains, "There are 200 panels on the Mobile School that we can select from - before the sessions, the team change the panels according to the needs and interests of the children. We usually teach children through pictures and games and cover topics like child rights, life skills, maths, culture, science and the Nepali language."

While the Mobile School has the potential to revolutionise access to education for street children, Bishnu shared that the team have encountered some challenges during the early start-up phase of the project. "Although all of the boards and resources are weatherproof, we have had to postpone planned sessions when the rain has been too heavy to meet with the children. In addition, we are not always able to see the

children we expected, due to the transient nature of street children, who often roam around during the day."

To make the sessions as accessible as possible, the mobile school sessions are delivered in public spaces in the community, where street children often go. However, due to this openness, lessons can be interrupted by other local people. The Mobile School is also very heavy so requires a lot of people power to move it.



Despite the initial teething issues, the project has seen a promising start and is already seeing significant take-up. It's clear there is a real appetite for learning amongst the children, as Bishnu explains, "Sometimes even though they are very small, the children try to help pull the classroom into position - we don't allow them though as it is so heavy and only trained volunteers or staff can do it. When heavy rainfall postponed sessions, children turned up at our learning centre - they don't care about the challenges - they just want to be engaged in the mobile school!"

SONEEYA

Eight-year-old Soneeya (pictured left with her friends and below) lives with her mother and two sisters in Kathmandu. As the eldest child, Soneeya is often left in charge of caring for her younger sisters while her mother works washing dishes at a local hotel.



“EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO MAKE YOU SUCCESSFUL”

She has been attending the Mobile School for the past five months. She explains, "Before I came to the project I used to spend most of the time on the street playing different types of games with my friends and sisters. Since attending the project I've learned new things - like counting, how to tell the time on the clock, how to stay neat and clean and the importance of hand washing before eating. I feel happy as I've got new friends, learned new things and love everyone at the Mobile School!"

This newfound opportunity has given Soneeya the chance to learn - fostering a love for education and a desire to pursue her dreams. "Now I have the opportunity to play freely. Sometimes I go to the Learning Centre to play different games. My message to other street children is simple: please go to school, make a lot of friends, because education is the key to make you successful and friends are important to share everything."

To read more stories go to www.toybox.org/stories



PRAY WITH US

In Kenya, street children are often discriminated against as though they are breaking the law. They are regularly treated with violence and contempt by state authorities and members of the public. Children are often arrested simply for being on the street. Here Toybox Programme Manager for Africa and Asia, Smita Khanijow, explains more about the current situation.

In 2022, Kenya enacted the Children's Act, which gave priority to family-based alternative care as opposed to the institutionalisation of children in Children's Homes. However, due to a lack of awareness about the legal provisions under this Act and widespread discrimination, children connected with the streets continue to be illegally detained and kept in detention until their court hearings.

The minimum age of Criminal Responsibility in Kenya is eight years old and the first point of contact in the Justice System for a child offender is the police station. Police stations lack Child Protection Units that are supposed to keep the children safe. As a result, most children in the Justice System end up being locked in the adult cells, which lack the basic facilities such as beds, bedding or toilets. This leads to the children being exposed to diseases and they are also at high risk of becoming victims of violence or sexual violence from adults in the cells or from the officers.

Toybox's local partner PKL are working to address this issue by representing children in conflict with the law. The team reaches out to children in remand homes, police stations and street outreach referrals and they also organise sessions with the Child Protection Unit members. However, there are several challenges to this work at the community level, including a lack of understanding and awareness of the legal system. There is also a lack of space and infrastructure to support the needs of young people in remand homes and no aftercare is given to children after their release. Similarly, at the government level there is no resource to create awareness about the new legal provisions.

Please join us in praying for wisdom, strength and discernment for our partner PKL, as they work through these issues at a local level. We also pray that the Children's Act gets implemented in spirit and that all children who lack protection and care get the support they desperately need.



REFLECTION

Roz Elliott is Toybox's Programme Manager for Latin America. Here she shares a reflection from a recent project visit to Bolivia.

I meet the project team for the first time in the late afternoon. A warm wind whips around the park as a group of young people play an intense game of football. At one side, a cluster of children crouch on the ground, concentrating intently on the paper and crayons in front of them. Jimena, the Citizenship Project Co-ordinator, walks over with a broad smile.

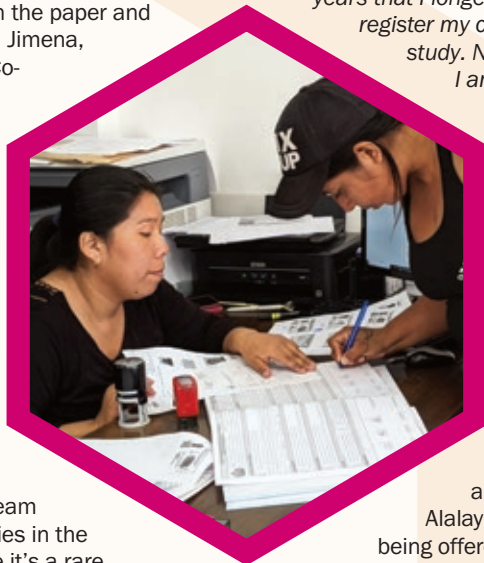
The Citizenship Project got underway three months ago in the sprawling city of Santa Cruz, helping children, young people, and adults in street situations to access their birth certificates and identity documents.

Each week the project team meet children and families in the city's central park. While it's a rare opportunity for them to relax and forget their daily challenges, these activities help to build trust, and enable the team to collect the detailed personal information needed to support the complex process of gaining an official identity.

I speak to Yoselin, a bubbly young mother in her late 20s. She's eager to share her excitement that the very next day, she will finally be receiving her birth certificate. Her children have never been to school because Yoselin could not register their births without her own ID documents. She tells me that her 11-year-old daughter said to her, *"Mama, I really want to go to school. Even if they make fun of me because I'm old, I really want to go."*

The next morning, we meet Yoselin and her father outside SERECI, the registry office. The Director for the Santa Cruz region welcomes Yoselin warmly. The process is complicated, but we watch as Yoselin's father signs to confirm her as his daughter - an emotional moment for her. She waits for several hours at the office as the documents are processed. Later the SERECI staff confirm that she has her birth certificate and is now officially a Bolivian citizen.

"It's a miracle, I never thought I could have my birth certificate and my identity card, it was 28 years that I longed to have it. Now I can register my children and they can study. Now I am somebody and I am very happy." – Yoselin.



Later, a young woman called Clara approaches us while we're chatting with two boys on a street corner where they wash car windscreens for a living. She's pushing a buggy with a baby and a toddler squished side by side. She's heard

about Toybox partner, Alalay and the opportunity being offered to get ID documents and asks for our help. It's another complicated case of generations without ID documents. She tells us that her mother does not have any ID either – she had been paralysed by a stroke and is unable to go out. David, one of the project staff, takes careful note and the team share their contact details to follow up with Clara the very next day. They are ready for the next challenge to ensure they support as many children and families as possible exercise their right to an identity, name and future.