

## Kenya—Sunshine Rehabilitation report back

Our Ropeholder in Kenya is a Christian organisation, Footsteps. Although they are involved in many projects, the one specifically supported by Rope is the Sunshine Street Rehabilitation Centre, based in Naivasha. This amazing home for street boys is run by a reverend and his wife, who go out on the local streets and befriends boys who have run away from home as a result of abuse, neglect, poverty, hunger, family breakdown or even the death of their parents. They invite the boys to live at Sunshine where they receive clothes, shoes, a bed, food, education and most importantly, love and hope.



Currently there are 115 boys registered at Sunshine. This year 7 boys sat their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Exams, performing well. 12 boys sat their Primary Education exams, with 4 going on to high school and the rest joining vocational training courses. At the end of last year, Edwin became the first Sunshine boy to complete college training, achieving a diploma in Procurement, Supply and Chain Management at Nairobi Aviation College.

Many of the boys from the centre are not only representing their schools on various sports teams, some have also become prefects. Going from the streets to positions of leadership is a testament to the effectiveness of Sunshine's rehabilitation work, as the boys grasp the opportunity to change their life for the better with both hands.



One story which emphasises the hardships faced by Kenyan children is that of Isiah, whose parents both died when he was very young. At first he lived with his grandparents, but after his grandfather passed away he was sent to work in a quarry. There, he spent his days crushing stones with a hammer in exchange for the equivalent of 30 pence per day. He was just 7 years old. This back-breaking work drove him to run away, sleeping rough at night and collecting scrap metal by day to sell for food. Fortunately, one day he met the pastor from Sunshine, who invited him to come and stay there. Now aged 17 and doing well at school, he has ambitions to become a civil engineer. Of his days at Sunshine, Isiah says: *"When I came to Sunshine, I was very happy. I slept very well, so I decided to stay. Here I have many friends and life is better than on the streets."*

Social services in Kenya are limited and the police force are ill-equipped to deal with the problems faced by the boys. The centre addresses these problems by starting with the provision of safe shelter. Thereafter, their priorities are ensuring the boys have decent food, are given access to the education system and also proper care and counselling. The opportunities provided by Sunshine support the boys, allowing many of them to find jobs—something which would be unimaginable if they were still on the streets.

The rescue of Maingi shows the importance of Sunshine's work. Maingi was referred to the centre by local children's services. Forced onto the streets due to poverty at home, he was found guilty of stealing to make ends meet and spent 4 years in borstal. His sick grandmother was unable to provide for him after his release so he went back on the streets. Fortunately Sunshine was able to rescue him at the beginning of the year. Maingi is now back at school and the centre is also assisting his grandmother, whose health has greatly improved.



With many going on to find employment after education, the transformation of the boys is long term. Felix was rescued from the streets by Sunshine in 2004. After undertaking a welding and fabrication course at a polytechnic, he has now gained a permanent job as a welder at the same institution.

The boys at Sunshine continue to thrive, joining in the spiritual and social life of the community, and the centre plans to implement a mentoring programme whereby older boys will guide younger ones. The future looks bright for everyone at Sunshine.