

# Kenyan Pastor Opens Arms to Nairobi's 20,000 Street Children

*Most of Peter Musau's care for the city's homeless kids—many of them stricken with AIDS—has come out of his own pocket*

Peter Musau has planted churches and served as a pastor in Nairobi, Kenya, for more than 25 years, but recently his heart has been broken at the sight of street children in this African city. Although he has limited resources, he wants to help the kids nobody else wants.

"I've seen people come and begin weeping because they see these kids fighting over a little piece of chicken on a bone they find in the garbage," Musau told Charisma. "They are like dogs. It's a story that you really need to see. I've seen them fight and cut each other with knives. They don't care."

Boys and girls from age 4 to their teens roam around the city at night, often stealing to get food or money. They sniff glue at night and sleep all day, usually in public parks, Musau said. Under Kenyan law, these children can be arrested for vagrancy because they are homeless, according to a Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project report.

More than 40,000 street children live in Kenya. More than 20,000 of them are in Nairobi, the report states. Children interviewed by the organization said they were forced to pay bribes to local police to avoid arrest, or sexually assaulted to avoid arrest or to be released from custody. Random police brutality is routine treatment for the street kids.

“A lot of them die young,” Musau said.

The ones who don't die often wind up involved in prostitution, contracting AIDS, or being sent to the brutal Kenyan jail system where they are put in filthy, overcrowded cells with no toilet or bedding and little food or water. It's a tragic situation that has captured Musau's heart.

“Instead of bringing kids up for jail, why not bring them up and open their eyes to the light of Jesus?” Musau said.

The 60-year-old Kenyan pastor said he received the Lord when he stood at the edge of a tent revival meeting in Nairobi, smoking a cigarette and very skeptical of what he was hearing. He responded to the altar call, though, and was deeply touched by the Lord.

Musau shared the gospel with his family, who now are all saved. His father, who initially cursed him for becoming a Christian, embraced the Lord and began to pastor. He is still pastoring today at age 92.

Musau first pastored and planted churches in the country but then began ministry work in Nairobi. It was there he started seeing little faces cropping up on the edges of tents or other ministry sites.

“You can't cross a street without seeing many of them,” he said. “They've never been to school, they don't know Jesus, and they grow up to be notorious thieves.”

Musau had such compassion for the street kids that he rented a

house and worked with 10 of them for a period of about one year. Eventually, he had to stop his work.

“I couldn’t handle them because they have so many needs,” he said, “and I couldn’t meet those needs.”

Already experiencing his own financial problems, Musau could not pay the bills to keep the home open.

Musau tried to raise funds in Kenya but found little success among the poor churches there. He traveled to the United States last spring and tried in vain to raise awareness and support.

There is no government help for homeless children in Kenya. Although there are other Christian ministries working with homeless kids there, they can only help a small percentage of them. Musau wants to provide food and clothing, an education, employment skills and, above all else, he wants to give them Christ.

“My dream is that they may grow up to know the Lord,” he said.

**-Richard Daigle**