

THE RESULT

For children, a reduction in the need to resort to street life will mean:

- fewer children coming in contact with the law;
- fewer children dropping out of school;
- fewer children working on the streets;
- reduced risk of child sexual exploitation;
- a general improvement in family relationships within high risk, low income groups;
- improved social development for adolescents during this difficult phase of childhood.

For Turkey, reduced numbers of children resorting to street life will mean:

- improved standards of child care and protection for all children;
- an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty in which so many families are trapped;
- a general improvement in social service provision.

FOR SPONSORS

Sponsoring districts or municipalities to help get children off the streets will generate a great deal of good will and also strengthen links with local authorities.

Recreational facilities to prevent children resorting to street life will require uniforms and equipment — an ideal place for branding. The display of corporate social responsibility will be excellent public relations.

Corporate sponsorship of events and interventions protecting some of the most vulnerable children will stimulate public awareness and improve the sponsor's standing as an agent of positive social change.



BUDGET (US dollars)

Total:	1,650,000
Istanbul:	300,000
Other cities (each):	150,000

Children Living and Working on the Streets

Breaking the cycle of urban poverty and exclusion



THE SITUATION

At least 42,000 children are estimated to be living or working on the streets in Turkey — although unofficial estimates range as high as 80,000. Most if not all of these children come from socially excluded, migrant families who moved to the cities in search of a better standard of living that few municipalities were in fact able to provide.

The phenomenon of their increasing numbers is perhaps the most visible example of children responding to the effects of widespread poverty. Many of these children attend school somewhat sporadically but they primarily work on the streets and their education takes second place. While the street is very much a part of their lives they still live with their families and their experience of poverty is very much rooted in the family situation.

A smaller number of children who resort to street life will have much weaker ties with their homes and families. Worn out by the insecurity and conflict that often typifies relationships within impoverished and excluded families, these children will have broken their connection with home, family and the educational system.

Available services for children living on the street in most cities focus on the provision of temporary housing; rehabilitating children from substance abuse; returning them to their families or discouraging families from sending their children to work on the streets in the first place. In some cases, community organisations as well as municipal governments take on this role.

THE SOLUTION

The reasons why children resort to street life should be addressed through practical and permanent solutions that help families and children avoid the problem at the outset:

- parents and children need training, skills and knowledge to improve family communication;
- the children's right to have their health, education and development needs met should be protected by families and service providers;
- adolescents need real alternatives to street life such as stimulating sports, recreation and educational activities;
- more coordination is needed to prevent children slipping through gaps in existing services.

In the event that any child should be unable to avoid resorting to street life:

- temporary shelter, health, nutrition and outreach interventions with families should be coordinated so that they complement one another;
- the process of reintegrating the child with his or her family should be attempted at the earliest opportunity if possible;
- all interventions should be monitored for effectiveness so that they do not become temporary solutions.

THE ACTIVITIES

Strategic action plans need to be developed between stakeholders in the priority cities of İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Antalya, Diyarbakır, Adana, Mersin, Bursa, Erzurum and Gaziantep where the problem of children resorting to street life is most acute:

- the general public needs to be persuaded that children living or working on the street are not a threat but that they are *under* threat;
- media support needs to be enlisted to clarify the social ramifications of the issue;
- house-to-house visits will promote services for families of children at risk;
- parenting education will be provided in early childhood development and communication skills with adolescents;
- low income families will be encouraged to apply for the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme to help replace lost earnings when their children stop working on the street;
- *Haydi Kızlar Okula!* girls' education campaigners will work with families to ensure primary school enrollment and attendance;
- more sports and recreational activities for families in disadvantaged urban areas will be promoted.

Although there is much interest and policy support for alleviating the problem at the central and local government levels, the resources of social services agencies are already strained and additional sources of funding will have to be found within the private sector.