

Children in street situations can be found in every country of the world. Not necessarily referred to the same way everywhere, they are more or less visible. First and foremost, these children are victims of a system that fails to protect them. **Like all other children, they have rights.**

CONTEXT

Children in street situations exist on every continent, but their realities may differ from country to country. Increasingly, **destitute families** are forced to live on the streets with their children. Today, more than **160 million child work worldwide**, often in dangerous conditions. This phenomenon is most prevalent in **Latin America** and is rising sharply in **sub-Saharan Africa**.

In **Central Africa**, thousands of children in street situations are children **accused of witchcraft**. Blamed by pastors or their families for their families' misfortunes, they are abandoned or flee of their homes.

In **Europe**, children who have **dropped out of school**, are **poor** or are **migrants** may wander or hang out in the street for a time.

Who are the children in street situations?

The term "children in street situations" encompasses **several realities** experienced by children:

- Sleeping on the street and having no contact with their family;
- Living on the street with their family ;
- Alternating between the street and shelters;
- Working or spending most of the time on the street and going home at night.

For these girls and boys - each one different - the street plays a central role in their daily lives and shapes their identities.

According to UNICEF in 2005, there are **at least 100 million children in street situations** worldwide. However, because they move around frequently and are out of the reach of social services, these children are not **included in official statistics**.

THE ISSUE : non-respect of fundamental rights

Children in street situations are **deprived of their basic rights**, including shelter, sufficient food and access to free health care and education. Many of them cannot access these rights because they lack official identity papers: **51 million births worldwide are not registered every year**.

On the street, boys and girls are prey to **sexual assault and exploitation**. More and more **young girls** have no choice but to resort to prostitution and are thus particularly exposed to sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

"I was born on the street and live on the street; my whole childhood was spent on the street. When I slept on the street, I was raped. That happened to me when I was 14 years old," relates a young girl in Antananarivo, where the number of children in street situations is estimated at over 23,000.

Children in street situations are often **victims of the legal systems** that are supposed to protect them. Being homeless, lacking identity papers, engaging in survival behaviours such as begging or vagrancy are grounds for **discrimination and repression** in many countries. The very negative perception of these children by a society that stigmatizes them plays a key role in their discriminatory treatment.

OUR CONVICTION

We are convinced that **children are the future of our societies and that each child has resources and knowledge** whatever their difficulties.

OUR COMMITMENT

We are committed to **giving a voice to children in street situations, protecting** them and **supporting** them in achieving their life goals. The Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International (FAAI) and its international partners are working to ensure their rights are respected and that other children do not end up one day on the street.

OUR DEMANDS

In line with General Comment No. 21* of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, **we recommend that States adopt comprehensive strategies** aimed at the prevention, protection and reintegration of children in street situations and **allocate the necessary resources** to this purpose:

Respect them, protect them

- **Fight discrimination and violence** against children just because they live on the street.
- **Raise public awareness** of the rights of children in street situations.

Listen to them and give them access to their rights

- Ensure that **children in street situations** have **access to all their rights**, including housing, adequate food, an identity and access to free health care and education, etc.
- Provide a supportive environment for children **to be heard** and **participate fully in the decisions** that affect them.

Support families and civil society

- **Help parents** and families ensure the necessary living conditions for their children's development to **prevent street situations** and as a condition for their reintegration into the family when appropriate.
- **Work closely with associations** to develop appropriate solutions and **support them** in their mission to protect and integrate children in street situations.

LET'S MOBILIZE !

*Adopted in 2017 by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, this text aims to guide States towards the appropriate protection of children in street situations.

Based in Geneva, the **Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International (FAAI)** is committed, in Switzerland and internationally, to the **education and integration of young people in difficulty**, in partnership with local actors who share the same goals. Supporting children in street situations is at the heart of our mission. The FAAI **advocates for the rights** of these children with **United Nations organizations in Geneva**.