

# ABSTRACT

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.” — Dalai Lama XIV.

It is a fact that children should have the right to basic necessities such as food, access to education, access to health care facilities and shelter. Advocates for Human Rights such as UNICEF, UNHCR and other non-governmental organisations have come to favour a family placement approach for abandoned, homeless and orphaned children over institutionalisation of children in large orphanages and shelters. Researchers have noted that homeless children require to be reintegrated into society by establishing parent-child relations and/ or having access to education or job placements. Proposals for their care include providing them with a shelter

to live in, health care treatment and access to vocational training institutes that will assist them with the skills to re-enter society. For the young children especially, design of the shelter as a built form can greatly assist the child gain confidence and develop as wholesome individuals. Orphanages when designed with the child specifically in mind, can be successful towards the reintegration of a homeless child into society. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Kenya. Although some children living on the streets of Nairobi have families, a number of them are abandoned, orphaned or run away from their homes due to abuse. With over 60,000 homeless children recorded living on the streets of Nairobi, the children are rounded up in remand centres and this approach has been unsuccessful towards the reintegration of the children into society. SOS Children's Villages in Kenya have taken the family based care approach which starts to take into account not only the physical shelter of the child, but the positive effect of providing the otherwise homeless, orphaned and abandoned children, with a family and home.

Selected study parameters are adapted from the work of Brink, an architect on assignment under UNICEF, who has done extensive research towards the reintegration of a homeless child into society. This information is further expanded using other authors and the published work of researchers such as Strauven F., Coleman N., and the work of humanitarian organisations such as UNICEF and UNHCR. The parameters of this study are limited to: context,

planning and organisation of the orphan- age, 'The growing Child' - scale of the users and age and gender appropriate activities, quality of outdoor areas and physical comfort of the users. Two case studies were selected for research, The SOS Children's Village in Buru Buru, Nairobi, and The SOS Children's Village in Tadjoura, Djibouti.

Findings from literature review are compared against data from the case studies so as to gauge the performance of study parameters. In the case of 'The Growing Child', findings point towards living spaces with floor to ceiling heights to the child's height, stepping of thresholds, furniture and fixtures to the child's anthropomet- rics and a selection of a suitable colour palette that dictate the emotions of the child and resultant behaviour, and clear circulation and way finding with clear visual access to the administration or o ice buildings. Physical comfort of the children needs to be considered by conscientious design of the windows to allow for plenty of natural lighting and ventilation. The spaces should be insulated from noise. Planning of the built form should encourage intermingling of the children and sta . Outdoor spaces should be provided and designed flexibly to allow for play and an array of activities for the children to partake.

Based on the research findings, the author draws recommendations that can be adopted when designing living spaces for abandoned, homeless and orphaned chil- dren towards their healthy development and reintegration into society. Recommendations for future research are also outlined, opening doors for expansion of the study subject in future research undertakings.