

Street Children in Ethiopia Need Shelter – Not Getting It

From VOA Learning English, welcome to AS IT IS!

Hello, I'm Steve Ember.

Today on our program, we learn that life is not so sweet for sugar farmers in Nigeria, and of the need for shelter for street children in Ethiopia.

And, we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the German composer Richard Strauss. He was born on this date in 1864, and while he could not have known it at the time, he wrote a very notable piece of film music.

MUSIC: "Also sprach Zarathustra"

Zero-gravity meals, anyone?

First off, Christopher Cruise tells us about street children in Ethiopia. They believe that their most basic need – for a roof over their heads – is not being met.

Shelter is among the many things that street children in Ethiopia wish for. But a study shows that local nongovernmental organizations and community groups rarely offer what the street children want. Azeb Adefrsew is a researcher with Save the Children, the international aid group that did the study. The researcher says the limited services provided by local NGOs do not match what the children see as their greatest needs.

“The children said that their major problem was shelter. But the street children organizations were providing, of course, mainly food and other items -- clothing and so on.”

Save the Children talked with children living on the streets in five major cities, three regional towns and eight rural villages across Ethiopia. The children discussed many subjects, including their needs, health and risks they face. There are about 30,000 street children in Ethiopia. About 17,000 of them live in the capital, Addis Ababa. More than half of the children do not have access to shelter or enough food.

They survive mostly on what they receive from shining shoes, selling small items to passersby and appealing to strangers for help.

The street children face health threats. Research shows that about 30 percent are seriously sick, but most do not have any kind of treatment available. About 40 percent of the children may have been forced to have sex. The children believe that having shelter will reduce these kinds of risks.

GOAL Ethiopia is a group that helps street children receive services. These include psychological support, non-formal education and guidance about how to move back into their communities. Kedir Ahmed of GOAL Ethiopia says providing a shelter is not the best way to help street kids.

"No organization can afford to provide all these services for the children. What we try to do is to do that rehabilitation support while street children are still on the street."

GOAL used to provide shelter for street children. But the organization found that this discouraged the children from re-entering their own communities. In most cases, they had left home because of poverty. They found that shelters were often better places to live than their family homes.

I'm Christopher Cruise.

You are listening to "As It Is" from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.

Life Not So Sweet for Nigerian Sugar Farmers

Farmers in northern Nigeria say their land could be some of the most productive for sugar in West Africa. But they say that productivity is wasted without big local buyers. Karen Leggett has our story.

The Nigerian government has a new plan designed to help the local industry. For now, farmers sell sugar cane as snacks on the street while the country imports 97 percent of the sugar it uses.

Mallam Usman Abdu Gubuci has five hectares of land. He describes himself as one of the sugar farming "giants" in his area. He says his part of northern Nigeria could be a major supplier of sugar to West Africa. But he says farmers no longer even bother to grow sugar that can be refined.

"There is special sugar cane for that sugar, which we were introduced with. But when we planted it, no buyer. In other words, no industry to buy."

Instead, he says, all of his product goes to local markets, and people drink sugar water from the sugar cane stalks. And while these stalks do sell, he says, it is not a business that can grow.

Last fall, the Nigerian government introduced a plan to decrease sugar imports and boost Nigerian production. The plan includes increasing taxes on imported sugar and giving tax breaks to anyone who wants to invest in local sugar refinement. It also calls for no import duties on machinery used for processing sugar.

Hajiya Bilkisu Mohammed heads the Association of Women Farmers in northern Nigeria. She says part of the reason local farmers cannot sell sugar for refining is that factories in this part of Nigeria face continual electrical shortages. The factories depend on costly power generators.

Saidu Usman Gwambe is a sugar cane farmer. He says his land could be very profitable, but he is not sure how much longer he can wait for a government rescue. I'm Karen Leggett.

Birthday Anniversary of a Great Composer

MUSIC: "Don Juan" by Richard Strauss

It's "As It Is" from VOA Learning English, Steve Ember here with a few words about – and some famous notes from – a great man of music.



German composer Richard Strauss was born on June eleventh, 1864. He wrote many vibrant and romantic orchestral compositions, like "Don Juan," many famous operas, including probably his masterpiece "Der Rosenkavalier."

Richard Strauss at age 74, photographed in his garden at his country home at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, in 1938

MUSIC: "Also Sprach Zarathustra" by Richard Strauss.

But it's probably accurate to say that even those who don't follow opera or classical music *do* at least know Richard Strauss' music from this famous opening to a symphonic poem he composed in 1896.

It was called "Also Sprach Zarathustra" ("Thus Spake Zarathustra"), and it was based on writings by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

When he wrote the powerful opening fanfare for large orchestra and organ, Strauss could not have known he was writing a theme for a major motion picture. In 1968, 72 years after the music was written, Director Stanley Kubrick selected those opening notes to launch his epic forward-looking film "2001, a Space Odyssey."

MUSIC: Waltzes from "Der Rosenkavalier"

And speaking of waltzes, we'll leave you with the waltz sequence from Richard Strauss' opera "Der Rosenkavalier." By the way, Strauss *did* write some intentional film music, for a 1925 film version of "Rosenkavalier."

And that's our program for today. Remember - for the latest world news, join us at the top of the hour Universal Time for VOA News on radio and here on our web site. I'm Steve Ember. Thanks for being with us.