

# The Bottom Line

An investment in Scouting is an Investment in the Future

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## 10 Years on - the Scouts were the only ones to stay with me ...

One day, in 1993, young Peter Kariuki was going about his “normal” routine on the streets of Nairobi. With a bottle of glue at his mouth, barefoot, tattered clothes, and not having had a bath for as long as he could remember. His life was a constant struggle to put a bite in his mouth - intimidating pedestrians to get a coin, vandalising vehicles in the parking lots to make a quick sale, scavenging through heaps of rotting garbage – and not an easy struggle at that.

But, on that day in 1993, Peter and a few of his mates had luck on their side, when four Scouts approached them.

In what was, for them, a rare gesture of warmth and friendliness, the Scouts struck up a conversation and invited Peter and his gang for a meal in nearby Muthurwa Primary School, in a slum area adjacent to Nairobi City.



*An article which appeared in a recent edition of the Economist has this photograph of street children ... two of Peter's successors in the extension programme.*

*Note the Scout badge on the sweater of the kid on the right. (photo: Reuters)*

After the meal, the boys went back to the streets, but often waited for their “appointment” with the Scouts. Trust between these two groups of young people grew, and soon Peter and the gang accepted not only to come for the meals in the school, but also to stay overnight in the school compound and to take a bath from the school taps.

Peter's life would never be the same again. First, he had met real friends - he could now count on them for a meal, a bath, and a shelter in which to lay his head, but more importantly, he could rely on them not to judge him, just to kick football, to joke together, to get along.

Soon, when the Scouts proposed that he should re-unite with his family, he readily accepted, and led them through the narrow alleys of a shanty in the slum valley adjacent to Nairobi city where his grandmother lived. She was the only relative he knew.

With time, Peter expressed a desire to go to school, like all the children he had seen in Muthurwa Primary School where he was getting his meals.

Luckily, Kenya Scouts Association's Extension Scouting Programme had started sponsoring rehabilitated street children to school thanks to a few volunteers who provided the much-needed support.

Peter was enrolled in Muthurwa Primary School. His desire and determination to read and rescue himself from the

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gutter drove him successfully through his primary education. Right from the beginning in 1993, Peter had joined Scouting, first as an 'extension Scout' with his fellow street friends, and later as part of the Scout Unit in Muthurwa Primary School.

When it was time to join secondary school after successfully completing the primary level, it was the late Regional Director for the Africa Scout Region, Kiraithe Nyaga who got him a school in Eastern Kenya.

Peter's life history is filled with ever-growing hope for a better tomorrow. When he joined Kiriani Secondary School, he brought with him the knowledge and desire to start a Scout unit, as Scouting did not exist in that school.

And so Peter started up the troop in his new school and like a mirror reflection of his own life, Scouting in Kiriani Secondary School is becoming stronger and popular by the day. There are currently 30 Scouts in the school. In the year 2000, Peter's Scout troop made it to the Kenya Scouts National Super Scout Competitions and emerged 4<sup>th</sup> overall winners.

Peter's experience in Scouting is not just local. In 1996, he was part of the Kenyan contingent that attended a jamboree in Australia.

Ten years on, Peter's grandmother is still with him, but he claims that it is Scouting which has stayed with him through the most difficult times. Peter is now looking forward to finalising his secondary education and maybe even going to university – "This would never have been possible were it not for Scouting ..."

There are many young Scouts who can tell a similar story to Peter's, thanks to Kenya Scouts' Extension Programme. Through this programme KSA is reaching out to children in the streets, in slums and other difficult circumstances with a hope for a better life

There are more than 60,000 street children in Nairobi city, and more in other towns in the country. So far, the Kenya Scouts has enrolled about 1,200 scouts in the extensions programme. About 450 street Scouts have been reunited with their families.

This is not charity says Lydiah, Programme officer with the Nairobi Regional Office – the Kenya Scouts involved in this programme are working there because they want to make a difference in this world. They do it by making friends, by selling what they do best in Scouting ... and do they make a difference? Well, says Lydiah, look at Peter's face and tell me what you think!

**The World Scout Foundation helps the growth and development of Scouting worldwide by providing the financial support for the World Organization of the Scout Movement.**

**Some priorities include: Improving child health. Helping marginalized youth. Actively protecting nature and the environment. Assisting in the development of Scouting in newly emerging countries. Helping Scouts address community needs in developing and industrialized countries.**

World Scout Foundation

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