INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR STREET CHILDREN 2019: COMMIT TO EQUALITY

Dear Sir / madam

As you may be aware, 12th April is International Day for Street Children. That is why I am writing to you, as a representative of the Government, to Commit to Equality for street children.

Committing to equality for street children means recognising that street children have rights, just like all other children, and reflecting that in law and policy. In 2017 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child published expert guidance explaining what steps governments must take to protect the rights of street children under international human rights law. Our country has committed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and it is now time for our Government to stand up and publicly commit to real equality for society’s most marginalised children.

Following the United Nations’ expert guidance, these three actions would be significant steps towards ensuring equality for street children:

1. **Stop criminalising children for being on the streets**
   ‘Status offences’ are laws that make it illegal for children to spend time on the streets and punish them for things they do to survive. Common examples include laws against begging, loitering and street trading. By removing these discriminatory laws from the books and offering support instead of punishment, we can help street children to turn their lives around.

2. **Put an end to police round-ups**
   Street children live, work, play and socialise in public places, so it is very important that the police respect their right to access these spaces. The police should not harass street children or arbitrarily remove them from the streets. Our authorities need guidance and training to help them maintain public order in a way that respects street children’s rights.

3. **Give every child a legal identity**
   It is easy to take legal identity documents, like birth certificates and ID cards, for granted. However, without proof of identity, street children can be prevented from accessing basic services like education, healthcare and justice. Birth registration should be free, simple and quick, and children who have not yet been registered or who have nowhere to keep a physical identity document safe should be helped to access basic services and protection.

We, alongside our partners at the international network Consortium for Street Children, are happy to provide support and expertise to help you take these important steps towards equality for street children. Please do not hesitate to contact us or the Consortium for Street Children on info@streetchildren.org to discuss how we can best collaborate.

I hope you will take this opportunity to showcase our country’s commitment to protecting all children and giving them the future they deserve. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,