

Learning by Ear 2009  
Children's rights and working for peace series  
Episode No. 04: Street children  
Author: Sam Olukoya (Nigeria)

**Learning by Ear 2009  
Children's Rights Series  
04 Street children**

**Topic:** Street children and the dangers they face

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	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>IN/OUTRO</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>Unimportant</b>	
<b>Narrator</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>Ca. 25</b>	
<b>Princess Joel</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>English</b>

## **LbE Soundtrack**

### **INTRO:**

Hello everybody and welcome to the fourth episode of our Deutsche Welle Learning by Ear series about children's rights and working for peace. Today, we're meeting Princess Joel, a street child.

There are no precise figures for the number of children roaming the streets of the planet. But it is estimated that there are between 40 and 60 million – and half of them are in Africa.

Princess spent a year begging in Lagos, the biggest city in Nigeria. The city's streets are notorious for being extremely dangerous for adults and even more so for children. People are mugged, attacked and sometimes even killed in broad daylight -- every day. Princess has faced this violence since she was 13. Then she was rescued by an NGO. Today she's going to tell us the story of her lost childhood.

## **Report**

**Narrator:**

Princess Joel was born in a small village 600 kilometers south-east of Lagos. At the age of 13, she decided she wanted to escape the poverty of the countryside to join her relatives in the big city. She remembers the shock she got, when she saw the chaos of Lagos and its 15 million inhabitants:

**1. Atmo** Lagos street scene (same sound for O-tone 6)

**2. Princess vehicles**

When I first came to Lagos, I was so surprised I saw everywhere. I am asking my mommy my mother about the place and she said this is Lagos. I told her it's a large city. In Lagos, the cars and trucks were over speeding, they were driving dangerously and there were many vehicles. On my first day in the city, I was afraid of the cars and trucks.

**Narrator:**

Princess needed several days to find her bearings in the city's labyrinths and to realize the city was not Eldorado! Her relatives, who were too poor to feed the family, sent her out to beg. Princess discovered with horror what it meant to roam the streets of one of the most dangerous cities in Africa.

### **3. Princess bus**

Any day there is traffic jam; that is when they rob, that is when they shoot guns. Whenever they start shooting, I would be afraid of the gun. I used to see the police and armed robbers firing at each other. Sometimes I would be inside a bus, and they will be shooting, and I will jump out from the window of the bus. In the process of escaping I will sustain injuries. If you can not escape from the door of the vehicle you have to jump from the window.

#### **Narrator:**

Sleeping on the streets in cardboard boxes, also meant facing criminals with no scruples about taking it out on children. Princess was assaulted several times. And she was often robbed of the money she had made by begging.

### **4. Princess gangs**

Sometimes street gangs will harass me and collect the money from me. They will then run away. They must have seen me begging for money, they will then collect the plastic bag containing the money and run away. I will normally shout and people will come around and I will tell them that I have been robbed. They will then give me some money that I can use to take a bus. I am always afraid that the street gangs could kill me. They could stab me before collecting the money. I have seen them stab people in the past that is why I am always scared.

**Narrator:**

Street children are often abused -- subjected to beatings, racketeering, and prostitution. Princess was lucky that she escaped this fate but she quickly realized that her life hung by a thread in this extremely violent city. She witnessed several chilling scenes:

**5. Princess people dying**

While on the street, I saw robbers killing people. I saw lots of terrible things. If you are a thief and you are caught, they will set you ablaze. In the mornings I normally see corpses. A girl lying dead, they will come and take them away. I saw ladies, men dying. I saw thieves being set ablaze. Sometimes I see children crossing the road. Vehicles will knock them down and they will die.

**Narrator:**

Faced with this omnipresent violence, Princess started regretting the calm, security and innocence she had left behind in her childhood village:

**6. Princess village**

Because I am a little girl, I felt it was safer in the village than in Lagos. On the streets of Lagos, these are the kinds of dangers I faced on the streets. People could steal me, people could rape me, people could kidnap me, people could sell me, these are some of the dangers on the streets.

**Narrator:**

Despite everything, Princess still managed to avoid the worst. She found some help and comfort from some good people she met on her way:

**7. Princess danger**

Sometimes while on the street, people call me that I should follow them home, but I will say no because some other people used to advise me that I should not follow them because they are ritual killers, some of them may want to debase young girls. When I move around, some of those I met always tell me that I should be careful. Because I am a young girl people are normally scared that I am in danger.

**Narrator:**

One day, Princess was begging with her sister and they were taken to NAPTIP, a Nigerian agency dedicated to combatting human trafficking.

**8. Princess NAPTIP**

One day we were out begging for alms, while we were doing this on the street, some government workers saw me and my sister in the streets. They then interrogated us, they then said they will hand us over to the government. They then put us in a van and took us to NAPTIP.

**Narrator:**

Princess and her sister spent three months at NAPTIP before finding new accommodation, thanks to a religious mission, the TREM.

**9. Princess TREM**

I now live in TREM Rehoboth Home in Lagos. The Home is owned by the Redeemed Evangelical Mission. The home is a charity home for ladies and children who need assistance. The home is taking care of our feeding, our clothing, and even medicals, so life in the home is different from life in the street.

**Narrator:**

Since she's been in this new environment, Princess has started living again. She has found new bearings and made new friends. This is a first victory because it's not easy to make contacts and trust other people when one has witnessed scenes of violence as Princess has. But that's what the home is for -- to teach young people to learn how to live in a community again.

**10. Atmo pots+ Princess**

In the home we share our work. On Sundays, it is my turn to wash the plates and the pots and that is what I am doing now.

## 11. Atmo church

### **Narrator:**

Sunday is also a day of prayer for Princess. It's her favorite day of the week.

## 12. Princess Sunday

On Sunday, they take us to the headquarters of the Redeemed Evangelical Mission. I attend the young people's church.

## 13. Atmo school

### **Narrator:**

It is difficult for former street children to reintegrate completely into society. Sometimes they are plagued by their traumas even in adulthood. But the Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges states to guarantee these children, like all others, access to education and to give them the chance to find a place in society. In theory, at least. However, in practice, these states face huge economic and social problems and rarely consider street children a real priority.

### **13. Atmo school**

#### **Narrator:**

TREM also gives educational support. Princess has regained hope since she started going to a local school in a suburb of Ketu. She now believes in her future. She thinks one day she'll be able to make her dream become reality:

#### **14. Princess actress**

I want to become an actress because in the films I watch, I saw them speaking English in a manner I loved. I love the way they act, the way they act, the way they walk, that is why I want to become an actress.

I am happy that I have left the street. I am in the home now. This will enable me to become what I want to be in future. This would not have been possible if I was in the streets.

If I become an actress it will be easier for me to help my parents than begging in the streets.

#### **End music**

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## **OUTRO:**

That was a report written by Sam Olukoya. And that's all from Learning by Ear for today. You can listen again to the programs that have already been broadcast by Deutsche Welle by visiting our website at: [www.dw-world.de/lbe](http://www.dw-world.de/lbe)

Thanks for listening and don't forget to tune in next time!

<b>Music</b>
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