

Summary report of the Retrak project

Retrak is a UK based charity that works with street children in Africa to give them an alternative to life on the street. Retrak works with the children as individuals, considering their own hopes and circumstances, to enable them to take their place back in the community and, where possible, within their own families.

Retrak works in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda helping thousands of children to move off the streets and back into their communities.

The charity approached PBE for advice on demonstrating their value for money, in order to make the case for working with street children to the donor community and the policy organisations in the governments of the countries in which they work.

PBE matched independent development economist Jennifer Sharpley with Retrak. She reviewed Retrak's current data, focussing in particular on the classification of cost information, as well as key articles on value for money and aid effectiveness for UK NGOs. Her report contained advice on how Retrak could improve their current framework and database for reporting their finances, activities and results, which should also help them to improve on the calculation and presentation of unit cost information. Once Retrak have had the opportunity to develop and embed the revised framework, we hope to be able to build on this with further advice on data requirements for measuring and valuing their outcomes

Diarmuid O'Neill, Chief Executive of Retrak, said of the project: "It was really helpful working with PBE. In an ever increasing competitive environment with limited resources an organisation, no matter how worthy the cause, has to demonstrate value for money and being cost effective. PBE helped us to begin to understand both these areas and their impact on our work with much greater clarity. Working with PBE also gave us confidence that we were on the right track in our approach and more importantly enabled us to put a plan of action together to reach the results we needed to

achieve in areas where we were weak or had challenges. We look forward to the continuing this project with PBE in the future and would recommend their services.”

Economist Jennifer Sharpley summed up her experience: “It was a pleasure to work with PBE and Retrak to analyse the cost information available on their activities to support street children to move off the streets and back into their communities in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. An overall framework for Retrak’s regional activities, and a more detailed classification of their cost information, would enable Retrak to demonstrate their value for money and cost effectiveness to the donor community. The literature search on UK NGOs and aid effectiveness provided me with new insights into NGOs and the application of development economics at the micro level. I look forward to working with PBE in future on this project and other projects and recommend their services to other economists.”