

REPPER

RESEAU D'ÉCHANGE DE PROJETS ET DE PROGRAMMES EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS DE LA RUE

No.13 September 2001

Many associations looking after street children use agricultural work as a teaching tool. In their view, this provides them with the means, not only to get the children off the street, but also to give them back the sense of the natural rhythms of life through that of the seasons, the sense of responsibility through the growth or otherwise of crops they have, or have not, forgotten to water, the development or the demise of a pet animal in the child's care. It also provides an illiterate child with the means to learn a trade, to earn a living, to return to the village, to strive against the rural exodus.

*Here then, from letters we have received, is an inventory of the achievements and problems encountered. In a future bulletin we shall set out some experiences, among the most longstanding, that provide us, with hindsight, with the means of ascertaining what best to avoid and what best to do. We look forward with impatience to hearing from you your experiences and your reactions. **Martine Berge-Simemel.***

AGRICULTURE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROBLEMS

We can say briefly that there are two ways of using agriculture with children:

- 1) Some, using kitchen gardens or farmyards in centres, consider it as a means of teaching children to look after their own resources.
- 2) Others set up ambitious, long-term, projects consisting of a scholastic curriculum on food agriculture and a training centre for agricultural farming. The resulting farm or agricultural holding is thus the place to learn a trade.

I/ Gardens or farmyards as peripheral activities of a centre

Kitchen gardens or chicken runs, even relatively small- In Jogelonys (The Children of St John - Lithuania), ones, are a great success with children. The work theyafter the kitchen garden (fruit trees and vegetables), and do and the results they obtain are very important forfollowing discussion with the children, it was decided to them: they water and see how everything grows! Thecreate a chicken run.

idea of making them responsible is fundamental:

- In Bukavu (Adejeda-Congo) a "rotating animal loan"
- In Passi (Association Caméleon-Philippines): The girlshas been set up: four females and a male are "loaned" to do gardening (flowers and vegetables) and arethe child who starts up this activity and who must return responsible for a plot of land and/or a farmyard animal. them so that they may be given to other children.

The childrens' apprenticeship in the complete process ofthe children (partially) or reinvested in other cultivations gardening or chicken and rabbit rearing is thus hands-(as, for instance, in Lubumbashi-Congo).

on. Given, in general, the paucity of material means, it isIt should be noted that these agricultural activities the children and the members of the associations, andinvolve only fruit and vegetables and small farmyard not professionals, who build the necessary structuresanimals since sizeable and solid structures are needed to (outbuildings, chicken runs ...). raise cattle.

The products are intended for consumption at the centres or for sale. Money from the sales may be given to

II/ Agricultural farms

All the structures of this nature described to us have the common aim of reintegrating the child into the agricultural life of the country by providing the child with the means of acquiring the know-how to find work. Returning to the village with the means of earning a livelihood is the ultimate goal. ("In Africa, one may have forgotten one's family, but never one's land" says Innocent G. Gbetegan; "Carry out useful projects the roots of which are in the village", says Nicole Payelle in "School for Life", in respect of Tokombéré College). All these initiatives take into account the agricultural realities of the region and the mentalities of the country. • We may cite among the farm-school projects for underprivileged children and adolescents:

- The agricultural exploitation at Mulemba (Angola) helps to improve the diet of the children at the home, to participate financially in the costs of the exploitation, and to offer training for the youths with the prospect of work.
- The farm-school at Bukavu run by the ADEJEDA Association (Congo) wishes to promote the rearing of farmyard animals and cattle as training for a trade.
- The Bahay Kalikasan (Virlianie-Philippines) hopes to help in reintegrating adolescents no longer attending school. It is also a nature discovery centre and a holiday centre for street children.
- The CEFAAM (Centre for agricultural, trade and household training) at Mahitsy (Madagascar): 90 pupils on three-year courses, of whom 60 are

boarders. Every year, 20 young people set themselves up in the region. The letter from ZOMA speaks of "an amazing kitchen garden".

The Nanban farm at Madurai (Southern India) where they grow coconut palms and palm trees (for the coconuts and the palms), at the feet of which grow various plants, and rear 46 milch cows, the milk from whom is sold, and pigs for meat. This production is a definite source of income, and the farm is a training centre for young volunteers and a holiday centre for street children.

The Centre at Shongai in Porto Novo (Benin) is an extremely solid and impressive organization. We shall have more to say in future on this farm school which offers a two-year training course to girls and boys (entry by examination): from training in agricultural techniques to commercialization. A specific twelve-month training scheme is available for unschooled young people. The parents of the young people in the twelve-month training programme must undertake to find them a plot of land. This is the creation of a real network of inter-aid for young and old (coordination, visits).

The Kalyani farm (70 kms from Calcutta - Project of Don Bosco Ashalayam) offers apprenticeship in these same agricultural techniques. The young people save up, during their training, to invest one third of their revenue in the purchase of an acre of land.

The last two structures (Shongai and Ashalayam) ensure an efficient follow up for a real start in the world of work: seeking financial aid, recycling sessions, bulletins on technical innovations for Shongai; subventions from Ashalayam for the purchase of land so that they can live off their own produce. We intend to devote a REPPER bulletin to these enterprises to highlight the rich and varied experience of these achievements.

Specialities may be mentioned: two farms (Kalyani and Shongai) have fishfarming facilities and the farm at Bahay (Virlianie) cultivation in greenhouses.

As well, of course, as these farms created for the reintegration of street children, there are training projects for all children. Alongside the teaching of agricultural trades properly speaking and techniques for obtaining better yields, there is also training in agri-food transformation (transformation and preservation of products), at the Baba Simon College in Tokombéré (Cameroun), for example, or the CEFOTAM in Madagascar.

Stress is laid on the intellectual and physical training of the children. The directors hope to see these young people create little units for the transformation of agricultural products (bakery, delicatessen, jam and juice production). One of the students calls this training for a "livelihood".

III/ First evaluation

The successes are real. It is interesting to see that the girls at Shongai are particularly interested in the cultivation of mushrooms. The Centre at Mulemba is thinking of going into partnership with a French NGO to make training available for all children, whether schooled or illiterate.

From the point of view of production, it is vital to perfect techniques for the transformation and preservation of fruit such as mangos, guavas, bananas and papayas which are abundant for a few months then perish for lack of means to preserve them (regular source of income, as mentioned by both Kalyani and Tokombéré). Resource management is the basis for the development of these regions which often have to cope with deficiency diseases and periods of famine.

Problems encountered

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