

# REPPER

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

N° 19

september 04

*The next meeting of REPPER will be held on*

**16 October (10 am to 5pm)**

12, rue de Martignac, Paris 7

(metro "Assemblée Nationale")

*in presence of*

**BROTHER JAMES, guest of honour,**

*President and founder of the Nanban Foundation  
of Madurai, India*

## **Learning to Fly ( L'ENVOL)**

*In recent letters received, mention has often been made of the difficulties met when the moment comes for children who have grown-up and must leave our homes and hostels, to take care of themselves, very often by themselves. At such times attention is required to ensure that the adolescent does not become discouraged in face of the difficulties. There are many risks of not getting off to a good start. How do we prepare for it? What can be done to maintain support?*

*Share with us your experiences, your knowledge, your understandings and your thoughts on the subject: Learning to Fly (L'Envol) which will permit us to collect and circularize this information, and which could be so useful to many.*

## **Extracts from the minutes of a meeting of the Virlanie Foundation Manila, (Philippines).**

**The Philippines are facing times of chronic distress, distress still more severe in rural areas. The “black” economy, so-called “unofficial”, represents 30 to 40% of GNP. Education is based on the American system. Educational costs are very high, though some public universities exist. Only 2,4% of families have grants for higher education of which 0,5% of these are from the poor.**

**In the Philippines there are more than 200 schools for professional training of which 140 are private. The others are public and offer an alternative to universities and other forms of higher education. They are in close touch with employers and offer a temporary staff facility to the newly-qualified students.**

**Many NGOs offer training activities to develop and teach the simpler trades (cooking, sewing, metalwork, carpentry, computer keyboards.) Many of the ventures are of excellent quality but they are not always structured to relate to the need of social and professional insertion. An analysis and assessment of results is required.**

### **The questions facing Virlanie.**

**We have noticed that the adolescents and the young adults stay in the Foundation without thought of preparing for their future. Over the years they have become dependent and this dependence is accentuated by: the difficulty to find work, inappropriate training, lack of technical knowledge, few opportunities to meet the outside world and, above all, insufficient motivation, little self-confidence and difficulty in assuming responsibility. Such attitudes are due to past, often dramatic, experiences and the label they have “street children”.**

**Until now Virlanie has concentrated its efforts on managing the urgencies and had not really considered the needs of children when they leave. For youngsters themselves, their stay in the Foundation has no fixed or final term. Once they have left, contacts become rare and evaluation of success-rates difficult.**

**In an effort to correct this situation, Virlanie has given much thought and effort to a programme aimed at helping those who and when they leave the Foundation, it's called “L'envol” (“Learning to Fly”). Subjects dealt with through lectures and discussion groups include, the development of personality, stimulating interest and motivation, choice of a profession, techniques in job-search. Each teacher has received an appropriate training and a network of information and resources put in place. An up-dating procedure has been developed.**

**The programme concerns 55 children aged 15+ yrs. and consists of three stages over a four-year period:**

### **1. Personal development**

**-groups of 15 to 30 children led by a teacher and a psychologist study subjects like, how to develop self-confidence; resolving conflicts; relationships in love; leadership; managing time. Each child attends at least one work-group in the year. Work-groups permit each child to express himself, give the essential facts, underline principles and values. The accent is always on the future outside Virilanie, the importance of having ambitions with short and medium term objectives. Teachers can see the children in a new context, and the children meet someone from outside the Foundation.**

**-once a fortnight meetings are organised between two groups of 10 youngsters from two different hostels. Meetings are based on the importance of sharing experiences, discussion and expression of personal opinions. The aim is to develop inquisitive minds, self-confidence, individual initiatives, a sense of responsibility, duty and team spirit. The children are requested to present themselves to each other, to explore interests and tastes, to discuss themes such as friendship or sport, write a newspaper article, create a team game, organise an outing etc. Talking about oneself is often difficult, developing a team-spirit and group-membership is easier.**

**-educational and cultural outings, on themes such as Art or History, are organised and financed from time to time, sometimes by the children themselves. These develop team-spirit, and strengthen the individual and cultural capacities.**

**-a 5 day camp for 50 children (virtually all the group) was organised thanks to the initiative of 14 of them. They fixed the camp rules and regulations, attributed the children to their sub-groups with the job responsibilities, and made the list of items required. In a preparatory meeting each sub-group chose their name, their cry for assembly, contents of the camp newspaper, etc. This camp was for all, teachers and helpers included, a remarkably successful event in the programme.**

### **2. Advising on Orientation**

**-Two conferences (15 participants at a time, led by professionals) are organised concerning the choices made for careers and the aptitudes of each student for his choice. From there they begin to understand that the choice of a profession raises questions on the cost of training, the future availability work, ones intellectual**

capacity and the physical and emotional implications. Thus can be ascertained the choice made, the reasons (or absence thereof) for this choice,, those who have no idea of what to do, those who change their choice every month, those who copy the choice of friends. Students learn that it's not sufficient just to say "I want to be a nurse" or "a teacher", on the contrary.....

-Two factory (or work place) visits are made to discover the environment of an office, store or manufacture, how it is managed, the guidelines and regulations, recruitment methods. You could imagine the children were on a visit to a museum, and not in a place where they could work! They are always interested by the remarks of employees concerning their work. Sometimes if they don't know what they want to do they have a firm idea of what they do not want to do!

- Individual advice on the choice of a career is given. To begin with it was necessary to explore what were the possibilities on offer from universities and various professions, and then to create an information booklet, listing the various courses, for use by the staff and their pupils.

-The results of this work have been very encouraging although the pupils lack enthusiasm. It's been a first useful step to prepare them for looking for a job, draw up a "Personal Information sheet" and prepare for interviews.

- Part-time work permits a student to finance part of the cost of training; but first it's necessary to evaluate with the student his capacity to manage both work and studies. Care is taken to ensure the students don't give up their studies in the opening months on the grounds that they are already earning money.

### **3.Starting work**

- Most frequently finding a job is achieved by networking ones relationships. It's important to choose a college or university which places the pupil after qualification. It's useful to make a list of possible employers, build a network of partners, who can help in offers for employment in trades such as sewing, electricity, hair-dressing, catering and cookery – areas in which it's hard to find work.

- It is important to follow and help pupils during at least the first six months of their new work-experience. Help to face the difficulties and avoid failure in the first months. Building a good foundation goes by stages –obstacles include, facing new responsibilities; the emotional difficulty of living on your own; accepting the discipline imposed in the work-place. Girls for

example, will often find a boyfriend, falsely believing that this provides security, only to end up pregnant have a baby and to lose their employment .

-Evaluation of the starting of work is important to its success, and to do this it's necessary to remain in contact with the pupils. Sponsorships are one form that the relationship may take. An adult ex-pupil can sponsor a student during his programme and his start in earning his living. Keeping records of all this is useful for future evaluation of results. Email : [virlanie@vasia.com](mailto:virlanie@vasia.com)

## **Témoignage d'ASHALAYAM, Calcutta (India)**

“The most important thing is that the youngsters fix a goal, an objective(...) It's by our relationship with and knowledge of our children that we can help them choose and train for work adapted to their likes and abilities (...) Finding ones way implies following a training period with one of the employers known to Ashalayam ( Caretakers and protection, high class pastries, a clothing shop, an hotel). During this training period the adolescent will make his first contacts with the working world and gain experience in how to cope, before launching off independently.

Once they have found their way, some return to set up a trade and live near their families, others find work through advertisements or in companies partnered with Ashalayam. Because we believe in the importance of behaviour and job-competence we ask future employers, during interviews, to give no undue favours to children simply because they were “street-children”. There is little to fear in this direction, generally speaking our children are more competent than others of their age simply because they have learnt on the streets how to cope and adapt to changing circumstances. On leaving the hostel our children keep the money they have saved during their training and with various odd-jobs. In the absence of family support, the association can complete the sum for the purchase of a small piece of land, or for building a house or setting up a trade. Over ten months, 15 “big boys” have left, one is a tailor, another works in a shop for air-conditioning, another is a baker, another a deliveryman, etc.

So many lives put on track, so many futures (nearly) secured.....a discreet surveillance is often required!! One of our supervisors visits each young adult when they start up in business. Most of them are proud of their achievements, though they have difficulty in adapting to a new life outside the hostel and in assuming responsibility. The role of giving advice, help and moral support is very important. Once these difficulties overcome, old pupils love to return and relate their experiences to the “governing fathers” and the new-boys in the hostel. Christmas day is a great occasion for

reunions – the old-boys accompanied by wife and children reunite in a family gathering at Ashalayam.”

*In the four months since inauguration most of the activities planned for the new Ashna Nayan hostel have commenced. Sanjay, serene and smiling, although only 17 yrs old, manages with skill students of the carpentry section. He joined our hostel in 2001, after having lived for one year in the Howra railway station, learnt the techniques of the woodworking and now knows enough to teach the basics to other students. Sanjay, little by little, is getting used to filling in the attendance sheets, over-seeing each individual's work and the planning for the week ahead, thanks to the attentions of his former teacher. Responsibility doesn't frighten this young teacher who is also President of the Asha youth-club and assistant coach of the Asha rugby team....*

*Four of our girls in the sewing and knitting section now master the production of coats, trousers and socks. When their training is complete they will be allowed to use the hostels' equipment, for a modest fee and for their own profit. Later the equipment becomes their own property and they can become completely independent. Site: [www.ashalayam.org](http://www.ashalayam.org)*

### **Centre Notre Dame de Clairvaux, Madagascar.**

"We call it the "Apollo 15 experiment" because there are 15 young members. It's a very special programme, lasting a full year and concerning children, older than the others, in serious trouble, sometimes with prison sentences. They take care of themselves, do their own shopping, cooking, and the rest..... with the help of a special supervisor".

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### **SNEHASADAN in Bombay, India**

"The passage from childhood to adult life is always a difficult time, more so for the girls than it is for the boys, as Indian society does not like women to lead independent lives, and not all girls find the ideal husband at the age of 20 yrs! Snehasadan rented a one-room apartment for use by three girls with good situations but the experiment had to be quickly curtailed as this way of living was not accepted by the local community. Such unmarried, financially independent, young ladies now live in an Hostel for Young Female Workers, often run by nuns."

### **Centre Carrefour in Kigali, Rwanda**

*The Centre Carrefour has made a study of the situation of ex-street children, we quote the following extracts.*

The study covers some 200 youngsters. Although they have not necessarily completed primary education, even less secondary education, street

children get along economically quite well through a multitude of often precarious jobs and situations. A list of different activities shows how inventive they are and what a sense of opportunity they have to adapt to a fluctuating and fragile market, lacking structure.

At the head of the list, 23 youngsters live by “occasional services” such as car-wash, carpet cleaning, loading or unloading lorries. 20 are tailors who work way with machinery which is often being bought from the hostel where they learnt their trade. 15 are carpenters and sell to order, tables, chairs, stools, benches etc. There are also 6 mechanics, 12 bicycle repairers, 10 solderers, 8 cultivators, 6 street vendors, 5 hairdressers, 4 soldiers, 1 nurse etc.

The market rules and relationships are complex : who you know, the networks, family relationships all play an essential part (...) The effects of social and political domination, dependence and inter-dependence, prolong and reinterpret traditional structures of families, clans, religions and politics.

The various professional training courses followed by students, ex-street children, have been very beneficial. They possess a trade and can exercise this trade, thus to find a place where they belong and symbolically re-integrate.

But the “unofficial” sector provides numerous activities which are independent of both the modern and the traditionally rural sectors. It is thriving and provides a lot of jobs. Street children know this sector well and integrate it with ease, knowing how to use a mixture of trickery, calculated guesses, friendly contacts and other dodges to get on in life. The question is raised to know if the Centres that deal with these children take into account these outlets and prepare their children in consequence? If a child has already integrated the “unofficial” sector and his Centre is aware of it, should not the Centre keep in contact with the child and help him through his difficulties? Should not our projects, prepare in priority for trades and services in the “unofficial” sector?

A comparison of the monthly incomes of the children in our sample shows that there is not a great difference between their monthly incomes with those employed in the administration. The only difference is in the security of their job. The different trades learnt allow them to gain a living without being dishonest. What they spend is similar to that spent by those with lower-incomes living in Kigali and not to those who are marginal. They give 20% of their revenues to their family, generally very poor.

A majority of those in our sample, in spite of having received a professional training, tell us that they are unemployed. It would appear essential that our Centres analyse the job-market before orientating children to one profession or another. In addition to the training, help with insertion is

necessary. A line worth consideration would be the creation of “trade nurseries”.

Statistics showed that 26% of the children gave first place for satisfaction to the teaching and training they had received. When a Centre accepts to train a child, it should first ascertain that the child is ready and willing to learn. Is it possible to know if he really wants to learn? If the Centre pays all the cost of training, what part should be reimbursed by the parents? The personal relationship with students, does it not encourage parents to shirk their responsibilities?

The children in the sample also spoke of a lack in the continuation of relationships once they leave the Centre. There was no follow-up to know if the child had integrated socially. The follow-up should check that the training fits in with the work that is being done, and it should make recommendations to improve and adapt to requirements. The principle behind projects should be to insure that the Centres are the place where children are prepared and motivated for the future, with programmes adapted to individual requirements to achieve a successful reinsertion, not forgetting higher levels of scholarship for those who are capable. The programmes don't necessarily have to be formal as most of the children have past the stage of formal schooling, they require a practical training enabling them to reintegrate their community. Email : [carref@rwandatell.rwanda1.com](mailto:carref@rwandatell.rwanda1.com)

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