

EDITO...

REPPER will soon be ten!

Anniversaries, especially in round figures, often incite reflection on past achievements and good resolutions for the future.

300 associations receive our newsletter.

Our core founder members are faithful supporters and each year new members join us. There are also those who silently are lost, we don't know the reasons why but we fear it is that the association has folded-up through lack of finance.

For us it's extremely exciting to follow your projects, so widely dispersed, to discover that your preoccupations are shared elsewhere even though separated by thousands of miles. It is also hugely encouraging to see the devotion of teachers to their children. Confronted by difficulties in an often-thankless task, unknown to fellow citizens, a teachers success depends on his or her patience, attentiveness, abnegation and incite. It is with a great feeling of pride that we report their work to make it known to our readers.

To be useful, we think that we could dispatch as future occasions require, written summaries on matters concerning your preoccupations, or flashes of information on subjects in the news. We think it could be beneficial to send news or information at more frequent if irregular intervals and curtail the quarterly newsletters. We will be glad to have your suggestions and reactions to this project, after all what we publish should reply to your needs.

Meanwhile, with a new presentation of the Newsletter, a theme for thought: "Resilience".

Martine Berge.

TEN YEARS LATER :

LOOKING BACK ON OUR ORIGINS !

In March 1995 CONSTRUIRE was invited to participate in an international congress, taking place in Refisque (Senegal), organized for those responsible for dealing with the care of street-children.

On the last day of the meeting some of the participants expressed the wish to have a Newsletter on subjects of common interest. I proposed that CONSTRUIRE, of which I am the founder member, should perform this job and it's financing.

Françoise Bompard published the first REPPER bulletin in 1995 and continued to do so until her death in 1998, and then by Martine Berge-Simeneil.

Thus CONSTRUIRE is editor of the REPPER bulletin since the start.

But who then is CONSTRUIRE?

Help to build the future – such has been our goal since our start in 1964. We had several activities, amongst which was: a home for lepers made of cheap but solid geo-concrete; the financing of teaching programs for the irrigation of rice fields, and the making of small loans to those recovering from sickness. To-day CONSTRUIRE helps to manage and finance projects in Senegal: in Kaolack – a counseling center and a hostel for street-children, in Koutal we're building a center (again in geo-concrete) for the care of seriously handicapped victims of leprosy. A project is under consideration, to create a center to train young street-children in the use of geo-concrete, and thus facilitate their re-integration in a working community.

Christian BOMPARD

***** TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE ! *****

Here are some themes about which we might write :

- Training for teachers, is it available everywhere? Is it sufficient? Of what does it consist ? How can it be improved ?
 - Schooling, their different forms, advantages and inconveniences.
 - Forming a network, objectives, and start-up problems
- ... We are waiting for your suggestions !

WHAT IS RESILIENCE ?

To the great joy of those looking after them, certain street-children have an astonishing capacity to recover quickly from past traumas. Staff responsible has noticed that this capacity does not depend either on age, nor sex, nor the type of trauma sustained.

From whence then comes this capacity to resist shocks, to have a beneficial reaction that helps them to rebound and make a new start? Certain will say that it's a question of nature, of temperament or of individual aptitudes. Others who are psychologists, sociologists, or pedagogues will say that each of us has this capacity and that it can be enhanced and developed. Such specialists (the first to study the subject during the "eighties" were Anglo-Saxons) have called it "resilience"- a word borrowed from the vocabulary of physicists when recognising the quality of some metals to resist shock and to return to the

original shape after a blow, as for example some car bonnets.

All of us at one time or another have had to call on our capacity of resilience after meeting difficulties, after a failure of some kind, or the loss of a loved-one. We are all more or less resilient and so it is with children too.

How then can we help in the development of this potential? Many articles have been published on this topic and some are mentioned below (they are too many to enumerate in full) The only objective of this presentation is to arouse your interest to read such articles whose subject matter is at the centre of your preoccupations and the practical application of which can be determinant for the children in your care.

Martine Berge.

1) DEFINITIONS, AREAS FOR THOUGHT ...

Why do some children have fewer problems in spite of all their daily difficulties? **Stefen VANISTENDAEL**¹ says that the observation of resilient children shows that they have certain aspects of character, which help them to react in a positive manner. For example being proud of oneself, having dignity, finding a meaning in life, knowing your identity are all part of the interior forces which help children build a sound future. "Instead of studying the weaknesses, the failures and methods to compensate them, we begin with detecting our strengths and how to put them into practice. Instead of analysing problems and finding ready-made solutions, we diagnose the needs and the attributes of each individual, family or community, which we try to mobilise (.....) to our advantage."

The leaflet entitled "**Resilience or the realism of Hope**" ("**La résilience ou la réalisme de l'espérance**") endeavours to explain this perspective and defines resilience as : the capacity of a person or a social system to live and develop positively in spite of difficulties in life and to so do in a manner which is ethically acceptable. Of course social norms vary considerably with the local conditions. **A. Osborn**² reminds us "resilience is neither the law of the jungle nor survival at any cost".

Stefan VANISTENDAEL suggests some ways to build up resilience:

<p>1. <u>Accept the child as he is, as a person in his own right.</u> This means unconditional acceptance of his behaviour. " <i>If I managed to pull through it's only because one day I met a teacher who really believed in me.</i>"</p>	<p>3. <u>Let him experiment</u> using certain techniques in a variety of local situations (how to make contacts, how to get help, how to stay calm under strain, etc.) to prove that one's attitude can influence the outcome of events.</p>
<p>2. <u>Help the child to find a meaning in life.</u> Help him to discover using simple methods (such as a game; a sport; artistic expression; responsibility for a small garden plot, or animal or another person) the structures and existence of order, beauty and responsibility.</p>	<p>4. <u>Developing his self respect</u> from the above-mentioned techniques but also by encouragement, constructive criticism and by setting attainable objectives.</p>
<p>5. <u>Developing his sense of humour,</u></p>	

¹ Stefan VANISTENDAL, sociologist and demographer, is Assistant General Secretary and has responsibility for the Research and Development division of BICE (Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance) He is the author of numerous works including " La Résilience ou la Réalisme de l'espérance" and "Résilience et Spiritualité" from which you will find herein many quotations

² "What is the value of the concept of resilience for policy and intervention" a presentation by A.OSBORN at the international gathering on the theme of the resilience of children and families, organised by BICE in 1993 in New York.

2) RESILIENCE AS PRACTICED BY NANBAN...

The **NANBAN** Foundation, founded by Brother James in Mandurai (India) has for the past 10 years put into practice the development of resilience. Its activities are not merely based on the material needs of its' children but also the spiritual and psychological needs, respect being paid to their religious and cultural traditions. NANBAN is a REPPER member since many years and its activities often mention in our newsletters.

The work undertaken by NANBAN is based on belief in "resilience" and inspired by the following principles:

↪ An approach centred on the child and supported by the community:

NANBAN tries to help children by getting them to participate in their environment and not by extracting them from it. The family and the community in which the child lives are his best safeguards.

Attitudes and the observations of friends determine a child's self-confidence. Shrugging a shoulder, derisive smiles can be devastating; a welcoming hand-up can do a world of good.

Families and the community in general around NANBAN, are called upon to organise themselves in support-groups which can analyse and solve group problems. Nearly 1500 persons support and share together, worries and achievements (including the education of their children), through the numerous "clubs" they have formed.

Backing up all this is a network of social carers, who are required to accept unconditionally that each child is a person in his own right and capable of active participation in the work of his group.

↪ The sensitivity and awareness of professional staff.

NANBAN organises training sessions for those who meet children in a professional capacity (police, social workers, teachers etc.) in order to make them aware of the needs and rights of each child.

↪ Counselling

NANBAN attaches great importance to listening to its children, hearing and understanding what they express, and considering them as responsible and competent for their development as individuals. This implies a certain sensitivity by those who listen, both to what is said and also what cannot be said. This means that the child must share his thoughts, but first that he must be induced to sharing them. It also implies the developing of good child-to-child relationships to make a positive contribution to community life.

↪ Consolidating a child's potential: "resilience"

Based on the results of experiment and experience NANBAN has selected the following activities to develop their resilience:

1. Find a meaning to life, based on a child's own religion and beliefs. All the many religions of India are present at NANBAN.	3. Build up a child's self-confidence by encouragement and by giving them responsibilities.
2. Through games, sport, artistic expression, competitions etc. develop a child's personal abilities to show that at least to some extent he is master of his destiny.	4. Developing a sense of humour (avoiding sarcasm; learning to laugh without mockery.)

SOME PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

- Helpers working in the streets take heed not to make suggestions to the children as soon as they meet them. They wait until some confidence has been established and little by little the child will speak of some difficulty he wants to resolve (for example, how to heal a wound). Ways in which to help can then be suggested, which the child will decide to adopt or not to adopt. The decision must come from the child who expresses his own will.
- To facilitate the work of specialised street-helpers it is suggested that they detect the particularities of character and capacities which resilient children have; and then to try to implant these characteristics in other children living in similar circumstances.
- NANBAN organises several types of competition; all have clearly defined and obtainable objectives, constructive criticism is offered and success is applauded. (Example: speeches made on different subjects, sports competitions open to local children)
- Group meetings in presence of an adult can help to awaken interests. Begin a debate, based on a story or an article read in common from the press, will spark off discussion on attitudes and the validity, or absence thereof, of behaviour. It matters not if the interest is in chemistry, geography, first aid or what ever, the aim is to relate this knowledge to events in daily life, to express their ideas. The group operates as would an investigating commission, lead by a competent adult, who neither fixes the agenda nor dominates the debate, who is there only to encourage expression and conclusion on the subject discussed. A child feels free to express his personal opinion to the other participants. Such exercises develop the capacity to reason and communicate rationally, reinforce their ability to debate, to form judgement, and develop tolerance, humour and the community spirit.
- "Clubs" have been created by the children for themselves, self-directed and self-promoted which give them a responsibility and an opportunity to exchange ideas with respect for each other's point of view.

An appeal from BICE (Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance) :

" Tell us about your experience, what's been useful to you and how you put it to practice. Give us any good examples of resilience. Tell us how you detected, developed and mobilised resilience. What discoveries you made in this field and above all how it helps children. In advance our thanks for the time you spend to share with others your experience in this area."

BICE, R&D department, 11rue de Cornavin, CH1201 Geneva, Switzerland.

3) EXTRACTS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Half a dozen young adults, aged between 16 and 24 yrs. were invited to participate in a meeting of The International Institute of Child Resilience and Family. Laura J. HILTON writes about their work in the magazine Children Worldwide, The Family and Child Resilience, vol. 21. N° 1-94, published by BICE. Some important passages concerning street-children are summarised below.

" These children didn't know what resilience is, but after discussion with them they recognised it's presence in their lives and personalities".

They believe that the dominating factor in getting help is the meeting with a key person, in who they can have confidence, and who will listen to their problems. " I'd like to believe in miracles, all one needs is a bit of luck, to be in the right place and meet someone who becomes a friend. That can change your life." (...)

During the discussions we noticed that these resilient children had some common factors to their characters: they expressed themselves well, they resolved problems themselves, faced up to difficulties and had positive outlooks. Moreover they all knew what they wanted to become in life; they got on well together and what was more important, they could analyse their misfortunes and draw the necessary conclusions.

All agreed on the importance of a loving and caring family. No teacher, no other adult could take the place of a parent in his or her life. They underlined the role model of a parent for a child *"If they had been an example for me, it's possible that I would have made more effort"*. Certain aspects of parenthood are contra-examples revealed in discussion *"If I don't get help now, I could become that father from whom his child hides in a corner when his father returns home in the evening."*

These children explained that they didn't get the help they needed during their schooling. They said how beneficial a word of encouragement could be, how important to have someone who believes in you:

"They said I could become someone, that I wasn't so bad. They changed my life".

The part played by friends or the existence of a role model, is of great importance: *"There can be things about which I can't speak. If I hear a friend who speaks of the same problem and is not mocked by his friends then I know that I too can speak about it and be understood."* Another added: *I can join a group of friends and speak to him or her without worrying about what they think. I know they will support me"*. The role of a friend is irreplaceable, he knows what it is like, he understands the problem and what's more one can speak without fear of punishment or blame.

The main points coming from the discussions with these young adults concern the importance of listening and setting an example. Listening seems to be the key to rebuilding confidence and reducing stress. It's important too that the instructor is kind and shows that he understands. *"It's so important that you really understand what we say because you can make things change. You can tell other adults to listen to us and make them understand the way we live."*

4) SOME QUOTATIONS...

Boris Cyrulnik³ has, over several years, developed the concept of resilience in France. He writes, "the notion of resilience is one which tries to understand how a blow can be absorbed, provoke various reactions and even a rebound (...). In fact resilience knits together a thousand factors, some being more effective than others. The way one feels about oneself seems to be a dominant factor in one's aptitude for resilience.

He underlines the importance of the circle in which the child lives: "It's in the child's surroundings that the most important factors of resilience will be found (...), such factors strengthen a child's self-protection and also offer outlets of expression for his well-being.

Concerning the importance of the environment, "what the child registers is of course real, when the pain is unbearable, when the child sees in the eyes of his neighbour a look that he interprets as *"I am the one on who he looks with disgust for he knows I was born out of rape"* (...). For a child who doesn't yet know who he really is, nor what he's worth, such a look is discouraging beyond words (...) The best way, which can also be a fairly quick one, for a child's rehabilitation comes when he's able to feel differently about his trauma. When once he can speak of it, describe it, think on it, it is then that begins the control of those over-flowing emotions which came with the shock."

Tell the secret: "All disappointments are bearable if they are shared (...) to talk about oneself is not easy. Emotional expressions are important: they make links with those who listen; they bridge the gaps, as if the speaker says, "up until now I've talked about the transparent parts of myself, the most sociable side. From now on, telling you my full story, I ask that I be loved for what I am." (...)

In conclusion, we quote the author's definition of resilience:

"Resilience is more than resistance, it's also learning to live"

³ Boris CYRULNIK, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and ethologist has published several works on the subject of resilience. "Un merveilleux malheur" contains several pages concerning street-children, from which we have chosen, and unfortunately limited to, the above extracts.

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Stefan VANISTENDAEL, *Résilience et Spiritualité*, (53 pages) edited and distributed by BICE(Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance) 70, Boulevard Magenta, 75010 PARIS. Price 8€ published in French and Spanish (English translation in preparation)

CLARIFICATION OF CURRENT CONFUSION OF NAMES

Because there is frequent confusion between REPPER, REPPER MULTIMEDIAS and ESPPER we hope the following clarification will be useful.

REPPER is a network, founded and managed by CONSTRUIRE since 1995 whose object is the exchange of educational information between its members. It's members consist of associations which adhere to the educational principles defined in the Rufisque Charter. *See adress below.*

REPPER MULTIMÉDIA, , founded in 1998, and association governed by the French law of 1901. The association maintains a web site for associations and the public at large, giving information on the condition of street-children throughout the world, and providing a register of the majority of organizations working to help such children.
13, rue de Crewe 71000 Mâcon – tel. : 33 (0)3 85 40 94 62 – www.enfants-des-rues.com

ESPPER, founded in 2001 is also an association governed by the French law of 1901. Its object is to help those organizations working for the reinsertion of street-children, to improve efficiency and to represent such organizations wherever necessary. Its members share the philosophy of the Espper Charter, largely inspired by the Rufisque Charter.

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