

EDITO

Training Welfare workers

According to the information we've received, the training of welfare workers is often haphazard and when it is not haphazard it doesn't always correspond with the problems of the street. How to develop this training, how to recruit welfare workers and give them the professional recognition required in their current, often precarious, situation? Such are the questions we raise and with your comments and experience we want to discuss. We've already met some welfare workers and had their comments and ideas, which are reported herein as a starting point for debate. Let's have your views and opinions please.

Martine Berge

\*\*\*\*\* IT'S YOUR CHOICE! \*\*\*\*

Below are some suggestions for themes of thought for our future Newsletters:

- Children and schooling, various solutions, advantages and disadvantages of each.
- Sponsorship, a source of finance not without inconvenience
- Building a network: its uses and difficulties in the start-up stage

Your reactions please!

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WELFARE WORK A JOB UNLIKE OTHERS.

*The viewpoint of a welfare worker*

*We met with Alexandre G. who has worked in Rio, Brazil and also Calcutta, India. He gladly tells of his experience. We report below his comments.*

*What conclusions do you draw from your experience?*

There is not one single, simple answer to questions raised in a job in which those responsible, and the children in their care, react differently according to their temperaments and the context of a variety of situations. In Brazil, for example, violence is such that at any moment anything can happen; a dispute between children can degenerate quickly and become a stand-up battle with bricks flying in all directions. Death threats are made if the welfare worker intervenes; drugs play havoc with all the usual limits of social behaviour.

The dangers to welfare workers are very real. In India, even in Calcutta where misery is immense, the danger is less; there is not the same high level of excessive conduct. But in both cases the risk is that he feels completely over-whelmed and his efforts like a drop of water in an ocean of difficulties. His feeling of inadequacy can be so strong, the distress so unbearable that he can crack up and lose his confidence

*How then does one survive?*

There is no magic formula, but to help you can adopt some simple rules and attitudes. First of all, don't expect a success-rate of 100%. Secondly, stand back from the situation so as not to remain too long in the area of stress.

Emotional relationships are a source of stress for a welfare worker. Moreover, children immediately detect its' presence and exploit it to their advantage.

When a child decides to leave life on the streets, he relies on the welfare worker who has persuaded him to do so. This bond should of course be maintained throughout the period in which there is a risk that the child may return to the streets, but little by little the bond must be replaced by other things. Sometimes the child will panic at the care and attention he receives, he can't accept it for fear that he will lose it and be abandoned. He may then react with violence against his carer, taking the initiative to end the relationship.

To keep a cool head, to remain in control one must put a name on events so that they can be analysed. Try to find the reason why the child took to the street : one young girl found in a railway station at Howrah was there simply because of a bad note for school-work, her parents were so glad to have her back. Remember the successes: family reunions do occur, reintegration in the community also. Sometimes things can come right quickly, in a few hours, in a few days. A good nights sleep, a bath and clean clothes can work wonders. The child is transformed, he smiles again. But there are also those who return to the streets, once, twice, ten times over – never be discouraged!

*What is a welfare worker's job?*

A welfare worker has many tasks, requiring a variety of aptitudes. There's the work on the streets to make contact with the children, listening with attention and tact, organisation of games and sport, teaching, advice on career opportunities and how to earn a living.

A welfare worker who has come from the streets himself will know how to convince other children to leave the streets, but will he be able to fulfil the other functions? He is a model for his children, he gives example, he should question himself as to the adequacy of his offer to children. In a family the parents give example, a complete role model including a trade – what has the welfare worker to offer?

In the institution in which I work, each of us has a particular function according to his ability. Sometimes a moment of reflection will help to understand the work of the others in the team, for if a child goes back to the street, particularly if this occurs frequently, the welfare worker who made the initial contact can become discouraged and ask questions as to the quality of teaching disposed by his colleagues. Getting a child to decide to leave the street is one thing, getting him to accept the rules of communal life in a hostel is another. Welfare workers working together need to meet regularly for individual expression and discussion.

A welfare worker who has known his pupil from infancy can do a better job than one who has a new class each year. Exchanges between workers in other associations for periods of a few weeks, or even a day, are very beneficial; permitting the sharing of ideas and refreshing one's knowledge. After some 10 years of experience, a welfare worker will be ready for other activities in the group, for example professional training for newly-enlisted workers.

*What's your definition of a "welfare worker"*

To be an educationalist is first of all to like children and to go in search of them when they are in need. It's a personal commitment which alone will help to make the necessary contact, to get the message across. But one must also know how to stand back, lift one's head up from the track, make the right choice. It's being conscious of the risks to one's own life and to that of the children who we meet. It also requires a good dose of modesty in one's undertakings.

## SOME IDEAS FOR CONSIDERTION

*There was a debate on the subject of "training welfare workers" at a forum in Agen. Here below, from notes taken on this occasion are a some of the ideas expressed and exchanged (please excuse any misunderstandings that may have occurred in writing this summary)*

### **Vincent CHOPARD ( 12 years in Madagascar)**

Before deciding on the appropriate training for welfare workers, and in order to adapt this training to local conditions we discussed with the doctors, nurses and psychologists with who they are in frequent contact . We wanted to make the link between practical experience and theory, before putting in place the tools to be used.

A training programme was decided. Some 20 associations followed the course, at various levels, during one year. First "Learn to Learn". Then for those who already had experience and knowledge in their localities, some appropriate training such as "relationships and dealings with the local authorities". Finally, for the managers, a specially devised session covering administrative subjects (personnel management, required cultures etc).

Some judges and policemen also attended the course, making an important contribution to the combined effort in which all participated.

The welfare workers who are themselves ex-street children know the words and language used by street children, but above all it is important to have faith in the children, to have no pre-conceived ideas as to what street-life is like. For street children this life is what they know, every day it's theirs. Go to the heart of the problem, the real need, paying constant attention to the offer made and what the child says he needs.)

### **Abdou ODIANY, The Bayti Foundation, Casablanca, Morocco.**

Official training is the responsibility of the Ministry, but after the theory it's in the practice that one learns to deal with real problems. The everyday difficulties met need new answers and another approach, all adding to one's experience. Those who work in welfare must be adults with self conviction.

It is necessary to adapt to each local situation. Changes in location, help to develop ones ability to assess, to open ones horizons, to share and exchange ideas, to improve daily duties – this is how one understands the way things go. All children are different, there are no predetermined solutions to their problems.

You have to learn how to approach a child because he has met so many unpleasant adults ( perverts for example) that he has become afraid of them and where possible avoids them. Once the contact has been made with a child, he must be personally implicated in the choice of the next meeting. Suggest a time, when he is free to choose to come or not to come. If he doesn't turn up discuss it with him on a subsequent occasion, and so on. Sharing events with children is also part of the job – preparing a meal, being present during a police round-up to watch how the child reacts. You have to listen carefully to what he says, sometimes an indication that he is ready for change can be detected in his words "I'm fed up, I've had enough..." Respect and company are required but don't show personal feelings and emotions. The welfare worker is to some extent the manager of the way things go on the streets, he knows the shop-keepers, the police, the rivalry and relationships between the various clans, and so he can intervene. Sometimes it is dangerous, you need to be very careful.

### **Edwin de BOEVE, Dynamo International, Belgium.**

Few official training courses are adapted to the needs. For the most part they are devised by technocrats and their design is far from the practical requirements on the street where innovation is constantly required. Adapting theory to practice is always necessary. Ready-made answers don't fit.

The welfare worker in the street is a privileged witness, he needs to be able to describe the problems he meets to his colleagues (police, nurses, those from other associations...). The strategy needs to be both local and international, we should start a network and maintain a multinational register of street-workers.

Guidelines on teaching standards and content will soon be available on the Internet. We should work towards a professionalism in our work with an internationally recognised label. Our welfare workers also have a role to play in the communication of these ideas.

## EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

*Many are the Professional Training schemes for welfare workers, already in use. The guiding principles and the methods vary. Some examples are described in the following text. Let us have feed-back on your own schemes, your objectives, and the ways in which we might help.*

Organiser, date and place of professional development	Objectives and subject matter
<p>VIRLANIE 1 Mola St La Paz Village 1076 MANILLE PHILIPPINES <a href="mailto:virlanie@vasia.com">virlanie@vasia.com</a></p>	<p>Independent consultants help Virlanie co-ordinate programmes and stimulate the action of foster-parents. Exchange of welfare workers between Virlanie and Ashalayam( Calcutta) during one month.</p>
<p>Catholic action for street children PO Box 709 MADINA ACCRA GHANA <a href="mailto:ficcas@ighmail.com">ficcas@ighmail.com</a></p>	<p>Working party organised by C.A.S. and the "Soeurs de la Charité" to inform on the new methods used in helping street children and to train welfare workers. Reflection on the work in the streets, on the special requirements of individuals and how to organise the work. Such basic questions as "Why am I here?" " In what conditions?" " Where do the children come from?" "How many are they?" "What have we to offer?" To do a good job, a unified approach by all the teachers is necessary. If each has a different method, the children will be confused and the message they receive will be incoherent. A simple teaching syllabus, which all teachers can use irrespective of their own academic level, is required.</p>
<p>Sub-region of Great lakes: Burundi, RDC, Rwanda Organised by OPDE ( "Oeuvre humanitaire pour la Protection et Développement de l'Enfant en difficulté") BP 5777 BUJUMBURA- BURUNBDI <a href="mailto:opde@cbinf.com">opde@cbinf.com</a></p> <p>from 30 November to 2 December 2004 57 welfare workers present</p> <p>from 18 to 21 January 2005-07-18 45 welfare workers - ex street children 10 welfare workers specialised in re-insertion and family re-unification</p>	<p>Topic: <i>Street children , facing their future.</i> This seminar was organised on the theme of "how to improve the job of welfare workers, given the multiple problems they face."</p> <p>Particular emphasis was given to the need for the teacher to participate, but also to listen attentively to the children and to establish a atmosphere of confidence. The excellent level of sharing, was a force which helped to methodically consider the problems facing the many different children in the region of the "Great Lakes".</p> <p>Topic: <i>Unite and work together for the improvement of our rights.</i> The aim of this seminar was to get children and welfare workers to join together as responsible participants in their return to social and economic activity. To encourage the teachers to define and record the requirements of this objective. Initiate the children in the concept of managing pocket money, small loans and work planning. To decide the action plan for year 2005/6, fix the specific objectives, the required results and performance indicators.</p>

<p>July 2005 – project awaiting finance</p> <p>November 2005</p>	<p>Seminar for welfare workers on the communal approach.</p> <p>Seminar for welfare workers on Activities with wages: planning, starting-up, control and evaluation.</p>
<p>Dynamo International Rue de l'Etoile 22 8-1180 BRUSSELS BELGIUM <a href="mailto:Dynamo-int@travail-de-rue.net">Dynamo-int@travail-de-rue.net</a></p>	<p>Réseau international de travailleurs sociaux de rue. Partant d'une recherche-action, Dynamo international initie et coordonne des plates-formes de discussion pour travailleurs sociaux de rue répartis dans différentes parties du monde.</p> <p>Véritable réseau de solidarité, ce projet permet l'échange de pratiques, l'information, la formation, la réflexion, le décloisonnement et la prise de paroles des acteurs de terrain.</p>
<p>CCFD Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Développement 4 rue Jean Lantier 75001 PARIS France</p>	<p>The training for teachers is crucial to success in the way things go and to attaining the levels of competence necessary for the job. The basic training is supplied in-house by the manager. Later, the teachers will follow courses on organising activities or on administrative management. There are some sessions organised nationally, some exchanges with other NGO's, and some long-term courses.</p> <p>The CCFD arranges meetings with partner associations, training sessions of a practical nature, and on how to make contact with children in difficulty.</p>
<p>ENDAOI 44 rue Rainandriamampandry Ambodrona Antananarivo MADAGASIKARA endaoi@simiro.mg Indian Ocean training session 2004 (see report below)</p>	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal enhancement</li> <li>• Psychology</li> <li>• The street without children : child/parent links. Descendants / influence.</li> <li>• Activity / Pedagogy</li> <li>• The role of the welfare worker</li> <li>• Making contact</li> </ul> <p>The content matter of courses should not be too rigid in order to adapt to the requirements of the pupils. Active participation and debate should be encouraged</p>

## Training courses organised by Auteuil International

The French NGO "Auteuil International" organises since 2000 together with its' partners, ( notably REEJER in Kinshasa) training courses for welfare workers amongst street-children. The sessions have 3 main objectives:

- 1).the academic level in itself : contribute to improve professional competence of those working on the streets.
- 2).a south / south co-operation : encouraging associations in the southern hemisphere to meet and to form a network or partnership to exchange ideas and competence.
- 3).a north /south co-operation : encouraging associations in the north and in the south to meet and collaborate

<p><b>An increased need for professionalism.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Developing the job of the welfare worker in function of the increased need ( numbers of street-children)</li> <li>. Required levels of professionalism, the fundamental requirements for welfare workers</li> <li>. The large turn-over of welfare workers. Insufficient pay, professional training requests, the risk factor attached to the job.</li> <li>. Absence of recognised qualifications and diplomas inside the countries concerned.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A training in 3 phases.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. first, a course during 1 week for professional training and development of welfare workers ( major headings – professional deontology ; getting to know the child; facts about street-children; tools and techniques for helping; family mediation; helping the child throughout his project; getting things moving, etc.)</li> <li>. secondly, following-up in the field the teaching dispensed during schooling</li> <li>. thirdly, a second teaching course of a more profound nature (the content of which is under discussion)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Some numbers.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. 7 training courses organised since 2000</li> <li>. 9 training courses planned through 2005/2006 ( 2 in process)</li> <li>. 30 to 40 pupils per course</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key points in the training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. a training based on the principal qualities of welfare workers.</li> <li>. documentation supplied includes – reports, exercises, auto-evaluation tables</li> <li>. a training which provides the tools necessary for the job of welfare workers</li> <li>. a mixed tutorial team ( 2 French and 2 African).</li> <li>. a diploma, by Auteuil International when the course is successfully completed</li> </ul>
<p><u>Some additional hints</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• . <i>In questions of teaching, don't work alone!</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Look out for institutions in the same field of activity and compare methods and experiences</li> <li>➤ Be professional, team work pays!</li> </ul> </li> <li>• . <i>Remember it's a real job!</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improvisation is not recommended, call in those who have the know-how</li> <li>➤ Welfare workers should be independent of the institution for which they work, where possible also employ trainee workers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• . <i>Training should have the backing and support of the institution's manager</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ management should also get involved in training</li> </ul> </li> <li>• . <i>Make the right choice of public</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ don't mix welfare workers and managers in the same class</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

*Some welfare workers who have followed training classes relate their impressions. Below, are the comments of a welfare worker from Madagascar. ( see ENDAOI p.5)*

### **Rivo, Enda Indian ocean**

" The course was a good occasion to study the theory of what I have practiced in my daily work over the past years amongst children in difficulty. It was also the occasion to discuss and talk about what is done elsewhere.

Professional training for welfare workers is very important, there is no such specialised school in Madagascar for the time-being; proper professional training should replace the amateur approach.

One thing I learnt from the course, which remains with me today, was to discover new techniques in arousing response to social and cultural questions, the method used to do this, is a sort of educational tool which can be used to awaken interest, creativity and facilitate re-insertion. Knowing how to accompany a child through his routine and his problems is a major asset to any welfare worker, the course helped me in this respect in my relationship with children.

I fully recommend this training to all who are really sure of their choice to become welfare workers. Too often workers, after a job here and a job there, believe they already know all of how to care for children, whilst in fact they are ignorant of many essential aspects such as those mentioned above.

The training I received has also given me more confidence in the way I do my work and has helped me to avoid some of the pitfalls, thanks to being able to refer to others for advice. I was able to compare the my way of doing things with the ways used by others in the group, it's a useful procedure that has become, for me, a regular source of ideas.

Using the assumptions based on the theory and the strategies I have learnt during the course, I am able to put my new know-how into practice.

I chose to follow this course because the practical experience in my work needed to be strengthened by conceptual theory.

## ***NEWS FROM OUR NETWORK***

### **C.A.S. (Ghana)**

"After 12 years of work on the streets, we now meet the second generation of children – those born on the street (...) It's difficult to know how to help these children who have severe behavioural problems and different requirements to those of the previous generation. To those who need particularly intense care and understanding we suggest a stay in our Hopeland centre, where we have a farm. We will make an appropriate study of their needs and devise a specific programme to be implemented by two welfare workers specially engaged for this work.

The children learn what we teach, but they don't appreciate the concepts we want them to retain. For example, both the boys and the girls are very aware of the dangers of the sexual transmission of Aids, none-the-less they continue in prostitution. The increase in the number of children practicing prostitution is alarming(...). Simply explaining the danger, doesn't change their behaviour. They exchange information between themselves, and we count on this individual exchange, but it doesn't seem to be doing much good.

Not infrequently children come to our centre because they have heard of us from former pupils; some even pay their own bus fare to come to the centre for care. This simplifies the job for our welfare workers. We think it is not insignificant that we find children in the morning waiting on the doorstep before we open. E-mail : [ficcas@iqhmail.com](mailto:ficcas@iqhmail.com)

**ASHALAYAM, Calcutta, India** celebrates it's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year! Father Mathew-George who has been with us since 2004 succeeds Father Mathew in the direction of Ashalayam. The institution has 600 children in it's full-time care and a follows up on a further 3000 outside. A free telephone line for children lost or in distress is available in some 60 towns throughout the country. Ashalayam is in charge of the line in Calcutta and each month receives some 1500 calls! Each month, thanks to this service free of charge, some 25 children are thus re-united with their families. E-mail : [dbasha@cal2.vsnl.net.in](mailto:dbasha@cal2.vsnl.net.in)

**AFGHANISTAN DEMAIN** has opened a third day-centre for some 120 children aged from 6 to 12 yrs and two classes for both girls and boys aged 12 to 15 yrs. In all, Afghanistan Demain has taken in and educated 348 children. This year 19 out of 20 girls from our institution, passed the examination to enter public schools.

E-mail : [afghanistan-demain@hotmail.com](mailto:afghanistan-demain@hotmail.com)

**LES AMIS DE PERE GUEZOU** in Tamil Nadu, India write to tell us about the huge task to help the surviving victims of the tsunami. After the initial emergency measures the authorities were slow to decide just how to continue. Death and loss of property was the case for all populations along the coast ( farming communities, small businesses and many other activities),and not alone the fishermen who were the only victims to receive help in the emergency stage. Help is necessary, for the morale and material needs of victims but especially the poor, who have become even poorer, the children with nothing to do but wander lost in the chaos, those who are handicapped or aged. Some of the projects under construction include, shelters to plan the reconstruction, medical and psychological care units, centres for apprenticeship in boat-building. E-mail : [fquezou@yahoo.com](mailto:fquezou@yahoo.com)

Le Centre NYAMPINGA, Butare, Rwanda has had some problems following default by its financiers. Things appear to be back in order, and the 30 girls in care in the hostel and some 70 others outside continue their training ( bike-repairs, woodwork, soldering). BP 420 Butare.

**POINT D'ECOUTE, Giseny, Rwanda** with the support of UNICEF and SOS Enfants de France, makes a daily identification of the children on the streets. 120 new arrivals on the streets during 2004 have thus been identified and of them 78 were re-united with their families with an 80% success rate.172 children, in their schools or families, are given regular care to make sure that their problems don't grow out of control before it's too late. Information on HIV and Aids is given and competitions are organised in the primary schools to see how much has been understood. E-mail : [alkaberx@yahoo.fr](mailto:alkaberx@yahoo.fr)

**FRANCE HAITI PARTAGE** has, since 2002, a small loan system: 60 such loans have already been made. Repayable over 12 months by weekly instalments, with interest at 2% p.a.; all loans due have been repaid and there is no delay on the repayment of the others. A centre for urgent care of girls in difficulty exists to supply some temporary security ( a few days or weeks) whilst seeking a longer term solution. The renting of bedrooms, 2 or 3 children per room, is a growing trend and a good solution for street children provided they are at least 14 yrs old and with a certain degree of maturity so as not to be rejected by fellow-citizens. Having a "place of one's own" is the first step to security and independence. The Institution signs the lease for a year, the child is required to contribute 10% of the agreed rent. A welfare worker makes sure all goes well and sorts out the problems, whilst continuing his role as a teacher. E mail : [assoc.fhp@wanadoo.fr](mailto:assoc.fhp@wanadoo.fr)

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