

## EDITORIAL

### ASSESSMENT AND CHANGES

First of all: happy new year to everyone, much success with the children, great and small joys for all of you, young and older, here's what we wish you for 2007.

If the end of a year is incentive to take stocks, the beginning of the next one is favorable for good resolutions and change of habits.

**The assessment of the website claims more than 80 000 visitors during 2006.** There were 45 600 in 2005 and 25 400 in 2004. This result makes us part of the leader group of the websites devoted to street children.

We greatly hope this increase to mean more awareness of the public concerning street children. Nevertheless and before all, this site is the one of the members of the REPPER network; it is made out of their experiences, and their comments. We hope it will be a help they can refer to.

The **first change**, foreseen long ago, is the transfer of the website management. It had been done by Repper multimedia based in Macon, and it's now up to Repper based in Paris, whose end product consists of reports and the site contents. Thank you to all Macon's team and especially to Brigitte, their active secretary. For you, readers, no change, just an e-mail address which becomes [REPER@street-children.com](mailto:REPER@street-children.com).

So there's no longer but one REPPER. But what does that acronym mean? Réseau d'échanges, des projets et des programmes pour les enfants des rues. It's a bit long and the words Projects and Programs haven't got the same meaning for all, since they even lose the dictionary meaning. Let's make it more simple, clearer, the **second change** is the suggestion to simply write **REPER**, i.e. **Réseau d'échanges Pour les Enfants des Rues** (Exchange Network for Street Children), so only one REPER with only one P.

Finally, what doesn't and won't ever change is our passionate interest for all you can do out in the field and you generously share with us through your messages.

Thanks to all of you.

Martine BERGE

Arnaud CHEVALIER  
Webmaster



### Which relationships with the children's families?

All the associations meet this crucial and delicate problem for the child. For him, despite what it may appear, his family is essential, even though he escaped from it. Thinking of seeing them again, joining them or simply that the educators are going to meet his parents, prompts strong emotions in himself, sometimes so strong that he is frightened and goes back on the street. All cases are different, there are no ready made recipe, no right or wrong answers.

Therefore, organizations have very different positions regarding this matter. Many of them think the natural place for a child to live in is his family, and that it's better for him to live within a "bad" family rather than in a "good" children's home. So, they endeavor to reunite them.

It's also said that since there's a non-stop growing number of children in the streets, it's mere illusion to believe enough facilities could be created to accommodate them. Indeed, these structures are very expensive (rents, staff and various helps). With the same amount of money, more children can be

helped by bringing them back home and paying a kind of monthly family allowance to the mother, the use of which is watched over (school fees, health care, food and clothing).

Of course it depends on the relationships the child had with his family and the reasons why he has left them. Cases are very different whether the child runs away after a big mischief and fears to be punished, or he is a beaten child, sometimes tortured, who runs away from his step-father or step-mother. He can be a child who dreams to find a job in town to send money to his family and help them to survive, or a child declared sorcerer who is thrown out because he brings a so-called bad luck. He may also be a voluntarily abandoned child, not to have to feed him any longer because of a too long starvation period.

There's also the child who has enjoyed the freedom found in the street and that he refuses to lose, despite insecurity, fears and the sufferings he has to face. It's out of the question for this child to come back home or even to go to a children's home.

**So what can be done?** Here are some testimonies we've already received:

"Some organizations have been established in countries where the political situation is very tense-, and where insecurity, violence or sometimes war, don't allow them to get in touch with the families who live in remote villages from which children have run

Other organizations try hard to contact and meet the families living in town. **POMME CANELLE in Nepal** writes : "We always try to contact the families and make them visit the homes and shelters if they wish to do it. But some of them have simply given up and don't seem to be interested in what may happen to their children. Others are relieved to see their children looked after and taken in hand instead of sleeping outside.

*Few are the parents who, after being contacted, wish their child could come back to his family place.* In all cases, although family re-union is used to be

away. We can just expect better days and expect opportunities to get information."

#### **OPDE Burundi – Bujumbura**

E-mail: [opde.burundi@opde.org](mailto:opde.burundi@opde.org)

Website : [www.opde.org](http://www.opde.org)

considered the best thing, our experience leads us to conclude that *attempts to re-unite families are seldom achieved in the child's interest[ if there's no] long term support (...). It seems obvious that children who don't personally express the wish to come back to their family and who are forced back home, stay but a very short time at home, and quickly go back to the street. What's more they run away from the shelters and/ or the charity which has organized this re-union."*

E-mail: [contact@pommecannelle.org](mailto:contact@pommecannelle.org)

Website : [www.pommecannelle.org](http://www.pommecannelle.org)

Some organizations succeed in building up close relationships with the surrounding community of the families where the children come from. In that case it's worth talking to them. The community is a witness of everyone's behavior, including the children's behaviour back at home the parent's behaviour as well. The community watches out and can act in case of big difficulties. It is also the

community who suggested to **NANBAN in Madurai in India**, to train some youths to bakery work, on the account of youth unemployment, the lack of bakeries in the area and since these teenagers can have access to this activity.

E-mail: [james@nanbanindia.org](mailto:james@nanbanindia.org)

Website : [www.nanbanindia.org](http://www.nanbanindia.org)



A study issued by **FONDATION SOLIDARITE DES HOMMES (FSH) in Bukavu DRC**, about getting the children back home, claims that "when a family has been identified and can be reached, a mediation becomes possible, visits can occur in both directions (families to children 's place of living and children to families), and then the odds of re-habilitation get higher.

These visits have different goals, which can make the family aware or the mediation between the child and his family or the assessment of the situation of the child in his family:

When a family wishes to be reunited with their child, we can consider a part of the goal has been reached. For example, a mother who had negotiated for a long time with an armed group for her

daughter's liberation tried everything she could to reintegrate her when she came back; one of her aunts who had realized her niece capabilities, has wished to get back in touch with her again and the family bonds could be restored.

Thanks to visits we can appreciate the family's living conditions and their capacities to meet the child's needs and the possible discriminations within the family: when a child feels he is considered in the same way as the other children, his re-habilitation will be stronger. A discrimination will lead to a new runaway, for example if he is exploited. Or, if he brings home an individual re-insertion kit, the other children will be jealous."

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

**AMAR, from Salvador de Bahia in Brazil** asks: what can I do when a mother known as a prostitute, drug addict and alcoholic comes to the shelter to take her child back?

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

**What can I do** (pretty rare case) if parents come to take back home a child who ran away and that one refuses to follow them?

**KROUSAR THMEY from Cambodia** writes: "In this country a lot of families live in a great material and moral poverty. Parents have other priorities than children's education, and unable to assume their role, many parents abandon them, or children decide on their own to leave their family."

**We are expecting your opinion about this issue, we hope a lot of you will write about this problem you all face, one day or another. One's experience may be useful to others ! Even if it turned out to be a failure!**



## **NEWS FROM THE NETWORK**

- **ASHALAYAM in Calcutta, India**, 21 year old organization, have assessed their organization and their results for two weeks, helped by 3 outer experts, all their managing staff and the children. The final report is under way, but this inquiry already allows a clearer view.

Ashalayam opened up a small school for 35 children deprived of schooling, living in a very destitute area in the suburbs of Calcutta. This initiative, truly welcome by the community, is coming along with the new law forbidding to hire under- fourteens. It is a new step towards the possibility for a child to live a "normal" childhood.

The 30 rugby players from Ashalayam were hosted during two weeks by Pomme Canelle in Katmandu, Nepal. They have been accompanied on the Himalayan slopes for one week by 25 youths from Pomme Canelle. This trek in the mountains was an opportunity for numerous cultural exchanges and will remain unforgettable in these young citizens' memory..

This program was funded by Air France Foundation.

A camping week was organized for 25 children who endlessly live and take drugs in the station of Calcutta. Psychologists, policemen, station state workers and social workers offered in turn entertainments, games and advice. At the end of the camp, some children decided to join back their family, others went to detox centers.

E-mail: [dbasha@cal2.vsdnl.net.in](mailto:dbasha@cal2.vsdnl.net.in)

- **AFEA in Nantes, France**, will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2007. About 50 000 children have received their help during this period. They are now 1500 members who enable AFEA to support three associations designed with the same concept: Snehasadan in Mombay they keep helping, and which remains the mother house, and Ashram and Navajyothi in Mombay and Goa. Most of the managing staff come from Snehassadan. More than 500 children can enjoy a daily family life in 22 child centers. All the complementary information can be found on a new website: [www.afea-sneha.org](http://www.afea-sneha.org).
- **ENFANTS DE LA RUE in Madagascar** sent us a copy of a letter they published in the Malagasy newspapers, addressed to the future president of the Republic, by a score of children on the anniversary date of the promulgation of the Child Rights. In this twelve point letter they recall their rights and their needs by interpreting them through their own experience. Too long for this newsletter, it will appear on our website to make you share this very unusual piece of literature.

E-mail: [vanassagn@wanadoo.mg](mailto:vanassagn@wanadoo.mg)

- **ENDA TIERS-MONDE JEUNESSE ACTION in Dakar, Senegal** sent us a booklet entitled "a training course for small business" full of information about commerce, market research, sale price fixing, operational cost, work schedule, ...

Very clear with plenty of illustrations, this small guide may be a very interesting help for beginners who want to start up a small business. It was originally created by young workers in Lima, Peru who had sent it to AJT in Dakar who translated it in French and had it published. For more detail: [jeuda@enda.sn](mailto:jeuda@enda.sn).

- **STAR OF HOPE in Moscow, Russia**

After being evicted from the center of Moscow by the authorities who wanted to "clean" the town, Star of Hope first took shelter in the suburbs from where they had to leave hurriedly for the same reasons. They then settled in a small house built on a pitch of land bought by Alexander Ogorodnikov fifty kilometers from Moscow. They keep being harassed, since they had to suffer an arson last month. The brick house didn't give and still shelters thirty children and young prostitutes, pregnant or already mothers. Their conditions of life remain very hard. Catering is managed by a Tchechni refugee woman, and only a few volunteers randomly support Alexander for supervising the youths.

E-mail: [mercy@redline.ru](mailto:mercy@redline.ru)

- **MAKWE FET in Dakar, Senegal**, are very happy of the recent stay of two French trainees. The children consider their presence as an interest from the outside world and that makes them very moved. Besides, they tell us about the hardships caused by the arrival of children coming from nearby countries: Mali, Mauritania, Guinea, because it's complicated and expensive to organize their coming back home.

E-mail: [emma\\_sarr@hotmail.com](mailto:emma_sarr@hotmail.com)

- **ORPER in Kinshasa DRC**, tells us that since children lack words to express the true sufferings they endured, they were offered a series of artistic activities to enable them to express themselves. They can practice drawing, painting and ceramic. Jocelyne recently drew a tiny little girl, alone and weeping in the middle of the street. Zorbi didn't ask her who it was.

E-mail: [orzibi@yahoo.fr](mailto:orzibi@yahoo.fr)



- **AMAR in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil**, have defined their 2007 objectives: a book: "Street kid, you're loved" will be published in 2007 and will present the educational method adopted to help youth rehabilitation. A lot of texts written by the children themselves tell about their life and hopes. Besides, a place must be found to build the child Home, a third team of educators must be set up, an effort is to be made to encourage children to go to school, and finally the benefits from the crafts will be devoted to the workshops and the training of vendors.

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

- **CAS in Accra, Ghana**, keep studying the street children living conditions. 21 000 children were numbered living in the streets of the capital city, among them 7500 young mothers under 20. They come from all parts of the country, do 15 or so small jobs and sleep quite everywhere. What the children said was constantly compared with what reliable adults living in the same area could say. Many of them are

between 7 and 16 and were born in the street. Most of those who visit the CAS are either too old to attend state schools or too young to start any training. The study about children's health, made in 2000 and 2003, ended up by the edition of a user's booklet for children, concerning personal hygiene, food, Aids and drugs

The partner organizations of this study were offered a number of copies of this booklet .

After having tested it, CAS hopes to be able to print more copies for other organizations that would find it interesting. CAS set up a computer room with 13 PCs, 8 of them being connected to the internet. Two teachers offer one-hour lesson each in the morning and in the afternoon. Children are so eager to attend them that they had to set up the following rule : during the first thirty minutes, children do some exercises or educational games and they are free to choose their favorite game during the second part of the hour. Some of these games, adapted for the illiterate or for those who can't handle the mouse, enable these children to develop their logic thought process. The older children have got an e-mail address to communicate with "the outer world".

E-mail: [ficas@ighmail.com](mailto:ficas@ighmail.com)

- **AMIS DE LA FAMILIA in Shikarpur, India**, have welcome abandoned children since 1978. Since then, hundreds of children have been brought up in host families. They attend a school already hosting 132 children from nursery school to the end of primary level; a new level is offered each year.  
44, rue de Charenton - 75010 Paris - FRANCE



## REPER

110, avenue du Roule – 92200 NEUILLY-sur-SEINE

Téléfax: 33 (0) 1 47 22 71 73 – E-mail: [REPER@street-children.com](mailto:REPER@street-children.com)

Website: [www.enfants-des-rues.com](http://www.enfants-des-rues.com) or [www.street-children.com](http://www.street-children.com)