

# TRAINEES AND VOLUNTEERS

## PREAMBLE...

Several associations have told us about the difficulties they have encountered recently with the trainees and volunteers who have come to help them. Some associations have had to send them back on the first plane available. Others have had to face a campaign of vilification created by such trainees or volunteers to their donors. We have already discussed questions on the status of trainees or volunteers (contracts, insurance, and salaries) in report no. 12. We will therefore remind you of some principles and precautions to be taken to avoid misunderstandings and disappointments.



**Trainees, volunteers are both a source of wealth for all** (personal awareness, triggering off new vocations, bringing in new talent, a fresh look at the association, support for the association after return but, unfortunately, **a burden if the stay goes badly.**

More and more frequently young people wish to be useful during a stay of a few weeks during their holidays. Higher education institutions request their students to take charity internships abroad. Some of these candidates, unconsciously or not, seek to combine humanitarian activities with intelligent tourism. It also happens that some associations, eager to earn some money, accept the students as **paying**

**guests** which creates resentment on their part as they feel the association is after their money.

**In most cases the ignorance of the problems is equal to the enthusiasm of the students.** Sometimes the shock they receive and the subsequent tactless or even violent reactions can cause serious misunderstandings. Children, always extremely sensitive to changes in atmosphere and attitudes, could well be perturbed. The permanent local staff could also feel ill at ease. Without being catastrophic, the atmosphere creates a disturbance which nobody needs.

**"Blind" departures should be avoided so as to not discourage both parties.**

**The trainee should be warned that, before his arrival that, for a stay of two to five weeks, he cannot be responsible for a real project.** His stay, at the most, will allow him to observe, to discover a different culture, to take his landmarks and to integrate the local team, and then to decide if he wishes to return for a longer stay. This would mean a stay for 6 weeks to 6 months and would allow him to carry out a 'real' project. A stay for 6 months to 2 years would qualify him to undertake responsibilities within the association and to take on specific tasks. All the trainees could report on their internship and participate actively in the work of the association and to support its work from home. If such an association does not exist, he could create one.

**An association should take into account the number of trainees,** their length of stay and, bearing in mind these last two factors, the turnover required. The turnover should not be too high as this complicates staffing and could well unsettle the children who would see different people coming and going all the time. A high number of trainees (20% of the permanent staff), even for a short period, could well become a heavy burden on the association as well as create problems between the trainees and the permanent staff.

## ➤ SELECTION AND INFORMATION

How to sort out requests so as to eliminate those candidates who are incompetent or have serious psychological problems?

Before signing a contract **it is advisable to organise a meeting between the candidate and a psychologist** so as to obtain information on the maturity of the candidate, his stability, his independence, his adaptation capacities, his acceptance of differences, his respect for others as well to detect such negative motivations (running away from his problems at home or serious personal problems to be settled, health).

**Detailed information must be given to the candidate** (if possible by someone working in the field) **on the living conditions, the work, the climate, the food.** Some countries have a destabilizing effect on people from the West. The candidate has to be asked to closely respect the host country. Any attitude of superiority, impulsiveness or anger is very much frowned upon and will hurt both the children and the adults.



Several associations such as Ashalayam, Caméléon or Verlanie have prepared guide books containing precise and practical information which they send to each candidate before his departure. They give information such as:

- **the country** (its culture, local habits, religion)
- **the association** (its activities and its organisation)
- **preparation before departure** (clothes, medicines, administrative steps to be taken, budget)
- **the living conditions** (accommodation, internal rules, transport; holidays and weekends)
- **the final report** (to given at the end of the stay).

The candidates are warned not establish a special relationship with one particular child. This, when the trainee leaves, would cause deep sorrow for the child who would feel abandoned once more. The second reason is that it the other children might become jealous.

## ➤ TRAINEE OR VOLUNTEER: DEFINITION

**The trainee or the paying guest** pays for his travel and his living expenses and he receives no payment. He pays his own insurance (health, accident, repatriation, theft, etc.). The length of his stay does not exceed a few months.

**A volunteer** is partially supported by the association (or a sister association) and receives a salary. His stay may last several years (up to 6 years). Attention : insurance differs according to the length of stay.

## ➤ THE CONTRACT

**The contract must be clear. It must be written and signed. It must specify the rights and duties of each party** and, whenever possible, be accompanied by a trainees' or volunteers' guide.

**Certain formalities have to be carried out** by the employer association (the agreement of the French government if the trainee is French). This assures that the volunteer is medically ensured. The association alone is fully responsible for the volunteer, including all legal costs in case of damage due to the negligence of the trainee.

## ➤ EXTRACT FROM A REFLECTION APPEARING IN ONE REPORT

*In reports no. 21 and 22, devoted to the training of educators, the focus was on the professionalization of this "profession like no others". The idea being that the teacher is not only a 'charitable person' whose dedication responds to the needs of the child. Certainly food and care are essential, but to educate and train a child cannot be improvised. Goodwill is not enough. Education cannot be improvised even if, sometimes, one has to improvise in an urgent situation.*

Stefan Vanistendael, of the **BICE, Geneva**, highly enriched this paragraph by sending us this comment:

"It is true that good intentions are not enough and it is necessary to have good professionals. But it is equally true that just professionalism is not enough either. You need humane professionals. (...) The human being is enriched partly through meetings with professionals and partly with other people. The humane qualities of these meetings are vital.

They exceed very technical professionalism. In this sense, and in some contexts, **a well thought-out voluntary service, well structured and well integrated into the professional world can contribute much to the quality of the work.** Insofar as the volunteer can engage in a relationship which is functional, humane and free – "You interest me because you are a human being and not because I have to help you as that is part of my job". **Such a volunteer is complementary to the professional commitment and not there as cheap means of replacing paid staff. Sometimes the volunteer is better placed than the professional to do certain things as, for example, voluntary prison visitors.**

# NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

## ➤ LATIN AMERICA

**AMAR**, Sao Paulo de Bahia, **BRAZIL** informs us that they have contacts with about 130 young people. About twenty of them live, with the support of AMAR, in small groups in houses that they run themselves under the direction of a young person over 18 years old. About thirty children who had never been to school are literate and prepared to enter a State school where they will be followed and supported by AMAR. 24 youths were trained in 2007 in craftsmanship and manufacturing and now sell their goods on the beaches or in the streets. The capoeira is always successful and the masked theatre, opened this year, helps many of the youngsters from the psychological point of view. Finally 10 young people left the association to live "worthy and dignified" lives. They remain in contact with AMAR. A request has been made for official recognition of the association as 'public utility' which, when accorded, will mark a turning point in the life of the association next year.

**E-mail** : pierredemou@hotmail.com

**ENFANTS DU RIO, PERU**, has made a short film showing the activities of the association. It was prepared by 6 children and volunteers. About ten children attend the association every afternoon. They can have showers, wash their clothes and participate in the different workshops (music, cookery, pottery, theatre, school exercises, etc.) but as there are many thefts the building has to be closed for several days running. Hostels house children at night. The educators (Peruvians or volunteers from France) increase their nightly rounds of the streets and under bridges as well as visiting children in prison once a week. The use of drugs and prostitution is on the increase. They also visit families to facilitate reinsertion of the children.

**Site** : [www.enfantsdurio.org](http://www.enfantsdurio.org)

The **CARITAS HOSTEL SAINT ANTOINE**, Port-au-Prince, **HAÏTI** seeks to reinsert children into their homes as well as socially. One of the children was keeping his entire family by washing the windscreens of cars before going to the hostel. His father has accepted that he entered the hostel and attended school despite the lack of income the boy provided.

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

**CASA TAIGURA**, Sao Paulo, **BRAZIL** now possesses three hostels for children with 60 beds in all. The over 18 year olds have a separate hostel. A film is under preparation entitled "The Country of Krack".

**E-mail** : [dfresnot@fibratam.com.br](mailto:dfresnot@fibratam.com.br)

## ➤ AFRICA



**EDR** (Enfants Des Rues), Pointe Noire, **CONGO** Brazzaville, a newcomer to REPER - founded in 2005. It supports the education and training of 183 children at Pointe Noire and a further 68 in Dalisie and Owanda. The association seeks the return of the child into the family whenever possible. This is done by 2 teams, each comprising a psychologist a social worker and 2 educators. Economic support is given to very poor families.

**E-mail** : [edrpn@club-internet.fr](mailto:edrpn@club-internet.fr)

**ADED** (Appui au Développement de l'Enfant en Détresse), Bujumbura, Burundi, looks after almost 800 former "child soldiers". Demobilized, they are very hard to identify as well as their place of origin. 572 attend school. They all receive food, play sports and are cared for as well as receiving both individual and collective psychological treatment.

**E-mail** : [septmutgil@yahoo.com](mailto:septmutgil@yahoo.com)

**SOS MINEURS EN PRISON**, Conakry, **GUINEA**, houses 55 minors just out from police detention or from the street. The hostel has virtually become an alternative to prison for about 80 under aged young people who are fed, housed, dressed and sent to school. They also benefit from psychological treatment and support when they return to their families.

**E-mail** : [sos\\_mineurs@yahoo.fr](mailto:sos_mineurs@yahoo.fr)

**LES ENFANTS SURVIVANTS - CONGO**, Nyarugusu, **TANZANIA**, works for the child survivors of the wars. Poverty in the families (when they still exist) is such that they can hardly provide food for themselves. In 2007, E.S-Congo undertook the schooling of 156 children and hopes to double that number in 2008. In addition, over 1000 children have benefited from health and hygiene training. There is a camp

where 45 "peace teachers" have been trained to teach others to live in peace together. Over 25 adolescent mothers have profited from 'micro loans' to start up a trade and thus enable them to avoid prostitution.

**E-mail** : [biloasphilibert@yahoo.com](mailto:biloasphilibert@yahoo.com)

## ➤ ASIA



**AFGHANISTAN DEMAIN**. Owing to the increasing impoverishment of the population, the association takes preventive action with mothers to stop the children from going on to the streets. Its educators look after 630 children.

**E-mail** : [ad.paris@freesurf.fr](mailto:ad.paris@freesurf.fr)

**POMME CANNELLE, NEPAL**, created in 2001, now takes care of 1500 children through its various programmes. Educators go on rounds every day and night and solve or settle the children's urgent problems (health, support, information) and distribute food vouchers (13000 in 2006). Activities such as collective expression, personal development, are proposed on the streets. Play activities, computers, drawing, singing, dancing are proposed in a special centre. An accelerated educational programme allows

children to attend schools or training centres where the children continue to receive support from the association. A coordination committee gathers services common to several programmes to examine the aims and ensure the effectiveness of the programmes.

**E-mail** : [www.pommecannelle.org](http://www.pommecannelle.org)

**NANBAN, INDIA**, has been chosen as the focal point for the National Network for the Search of Missing Children. Search notices and photos are immediately transmitted over the internet to all other centres thus speeding up the required research and, therefore, reducing the time a child wanders in the streets. The government has officially recognized the training centre for car mechanics created by Nanban. Young girls have prepared an exhibition in the Ghandi museum in Madurai.

They have taken the photographs themselves of subjects such as children, mothers, nature and temples.

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

**CAMELEON, Iloilo, PHILIPPINES** s'est trouvé une marraine aux Philippines found a patron in the Philippines – KC Concepcion, a singer and actress well known in her country. She has promised, after her first visit to the reception centres, to return and become involved in the activities for children. The circus is a fantastic tool for the reinsertion of the children. The work, for four years, with the Zanzibar Circus has become a real therapy for the children, requiring physical effort and challenge.

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

## ➤ FRANCE

**AMIS DE LA FAMILIA, INDIA**, is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The foundation stones have already been laid for the construction of a day nursery for babies (up to now only available to children from 3 to 7 years old) and to extend the school buildings to create a new class each year right up to the top form. The school will be open every day and be free of charge for poor families. The funds collected from the more wealthy families will be used to cover the costs of the Amis de la Familia.

**E-mail :**  
brigitte.de-la-passardiere@lip6.fr

**ENFANCE-BENIN**, is a new association working in the Ouémé region of Benin. Assistance is provided to children in great difficulty as well as schooling and professional training. A centre is being created to receive 90 children, both girls and boys. It should open in 2008.

**E-mail :**  
josette.lhommeau@laposte.net

**LEO AVIGNON** in France, which supports a nursery for babies in MALI received a couple of musicians in the nursery which houses handicapped children. At first the children, somewhat surprised, looked at the guitar with curiosity.

Then one of them started to sing and very quickly all the children copied him. They loved to feel the vibrations when they touched the body of the guitar. It was surprising to see one little hemiplegic girl open her handicapped hand to touch the guitar.

**Site :** [www.orphelin-handicape-mali.org](http://www.orphelin-handicape-mali.org)

### RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS OF REPER

**AMAR** regrets that the REPER bulletins do not discuss substantive issues such as, for example, "We help children as their parents would do, but what should be done to stop them from being permanently assisted all their lives? Or, yet again: punishment? Can we educate without foreseeing rewards and punishment? There is no mention of the pitfalls, disappointments and doubts on substantive issues."

**E-mail :** pierredemou@hotmail.com

L'**AILE** tells us: "It is a curious but fundamental characteristic of associations that even their best members remain individualists, unaware that others can help them in their own actions and approaches to problems. Everyone keeps their noses to the ground, just to avoid potholes."

**E-mail :** am.abo@wanadoo.fr

**Friends of REPER, what do you say? We look forward to your reactions and your comments.**

## REPER

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

Telefax : 33 (0) 1 47 22 71 73

E-mail : [REPER@enfants-des-rues.com](mailto:REPER@enfants-des-rues.com)

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