

THE "CHILD" SYSTEM MANUAL

Comprehensive Help for International Little Destitutes {A manual for those working with street children.}

Mobilizing Community Resources

- Tap available resources in your community: local officials, teachers, other professionals, businessmen, religious groups and students. In your advocacy sessions, make use of visual aids like posters, sound slides, brochures, and video. In every dialogue with a community, get the people's commitment to respond to street children within the community.
- Invite street children to community assemblies and let him talk about his experiences in the streets. You can organise street children into a theatre group which can dramatize the case of street children to various audiences.
- Coordinate with local radio stations and local newspapers, and ask them to give you air time and space to disseminate information on street children. You can ask children to give testimony on radio if they want to. Do NOT put pressure on them.
- The children should not be frequently be put "on display". Invite small groups in the community to go with you to the streets to have a direct experience of a street child's life. End their "exposure" with a group reflection..
- When you solicit funds from the public for activities that benefit street children (school uniforms and supplies, capital for income-generating projects, medical assistance), be sure that they receive regular news about the children, new projects and reports on expenditure. Audit your accounts and send the auditor's report to your donors. You will see the difference! People like to know where their hard-earned money goes.

Time to get going

Establishing Your Credentials - Finding Out Where

A little walk-about in your city will give you a basic idea of where the children congregate. Usually, in India, they can be found on and around the railway station platforms, at bus stands and near busy shopping and office areas. Go to these places, and sit for some time. You will soon meet some street children.

Introduction

A smile goes a long way; a funny face will also help. Most people look at street children with disgust. Try to make the child smile back at you. Once you have made contact with the child's mind, quietly ask his/her name. They will probably tell you a nickname. Immediately tell them your name, and then ask where they are from. Try to notice something about the child's appearance that you can discuss with him/her. Especially look for some sign of infection that needs attention. You will probably find something. (always carry some medical aid with you) Ask them if the infection hurts, and whether they would like it to feel better. Wash the wound carefully at a nearby clean water source, and then disinfect and dress it lightly. Always ask if there is any other problem they have with their health, and then lead on to other problems. You now have their friendship and attention.

Information

Try to find out as much as possible about the children on the first meeting, but do not push them too hard for information. Make sure the children understand that you are sitting with them because you want to, and not because you have been told to. Street children are forced to withdraw inside themselves by circumstances. They are extremely open and frank with their fellow peers on the street, but have developed serious problems speaking with adults. A little childish activity or manner of speaking with them, on your part will, in most cases, break down this barrier... slowly. Do not expect too much on the first encounter.