

THE "CHILD" SYSTEM MANUAL

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

Security And Confidence

A percentage of children will freely tell you about themselves. These are usually the children who have not spent too much time on the streets. Those who are more reserved have probably been on the street longer, and have had bad experiences at home. Make sure the children feel comfortable with you. Remember that these children have usually run away from their family and home. The reasons behind a young child taking such a drastic step are sometimes traumatic. You will find that the majority of street children have been dealt a harsh hand (or even a stick or belt) at home, by either their own parents, or by some uncle or, in many cases the step-father. Be very affectionate and lend an attentive ear to their stories.

Keep in mind that they also may have done something in the home to warrant such extreme treatment, perhaps stolen some money, sold some of the household items, or may have missed school to go to the cinema. They may "forget" to tell you this side. They may also exaggerate the story to elicit your sympathy. Be sympathetic, but realistic. They are the ones who are suffering at the moment, even if it may be their own fault originally.

To Take or Not to Take

It is best that the children you contact on the streets are left to find their own way to your "CHILD" Rescue Centre in general, except in the case of the seriously ill. However, in the beginning you may want to escort a few children with you to the centre, after you have met them a few times. You will find that very few children will agree to go with you anywhere on the first or second meeting. Do not become surprised or demoralised by this. Expect it. If you leave them to find their own way, when they do arrive you know that they have some desire to be cared for. of course, there may be the odd case in which a child (usually an older boy or two together) comes to see what can be stolen, or what free benefits he can get, but such cases will stand out for all to see. If you do decide to take a few children, and can convince them to come with you, then be ready to spend a lot of time with them. If you decide to let them come alone, then the children who first come to your centre must be given the same attention. These will become Your "core" children. They will steadily take up as much responsibility as you give them, and will then go out to bring other children to you.

Discipline

In the initial stages, be relaxed and allow some innocent mischief. Gradually intensify the discipline, but do it in a friendly way. Take the erring children to one side, and, with your arm around their shoulder, explain to them their mistakes. Ask them whether they think what they have done is good or bad. Always make graphic comparisons between life on the streets and life in your "CHILD" Centre. Explain each and every problem you face with the children in full detail, and then ask them what they feel. Always try to get a confirmation from them about what is right and wrong. This way they are teaching themselves, under your guidance. If the children feel safe and in a loving environment, discipline will not be a problem. Organise a merit system, and give prizes to the best behaved children, or those who do extra services in the Centre. Play a lot of games with them and interact as an older brother or sister would. Be extremely attentive to the children's health. They may not tell you they are suffering. You must learn to recognise for yourself what is ailing them.

"Addiction" To Freedom

As most street children have been without guidance, some for many years, they have developed a mentality of survival that includes total freedom and variety. This freedom for them, is just like the addiction of drug or drink for an addict. The children become totally and hopelessly "hooked" on freedom, and must be weaned away from this very carefully. The most important feature of any programme that intends to help them is to provide, within a single area, as many varied activities as possible, which are all educational in nature, without seeming so.

You will go far in the field of street child rescue if you follow only these simple guidelines!