

# THE "CHILD" SYSTEM MANUAL

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

### **Group Therapy And Counselling**

- Ask the children what their idea of a group is; and if they join one, what their expectations are. Usually, they will cite practical things like money, food, and clothing - let them verbalize their needs. Sift through them later on. Make a mental note of deeper problems.
- If a sick child comes to you, accompany him or her to a health centre near his place or work. If possible, bring along a group of street children. In this activity, you are already introducing to the children the availability of health services.
- Organise the children into a group - particularly a discussion group - to serve as a vehicle for ventilation of their problems and the exploration of solutions. Children who have been in the streets for a while often come up with simple and practical ideas about solving their problems.
- A street educator has much to learn from the street children. Life in the streets is the best teacher. The materials from which an educator draws are right there in the streets - uncollected garbage, violence, indifference, as well as order, responsibility and concern. The children's environment is full of eloquent messages. Make sure you understand them all.
- Work with the children on a small project which will bear immediate results. As the children see something concrete from their collective effort, they will be encouraged to start other activities. You can help devise a communication system to prevent undue arrests.
- Always complete an activity with a collective reflection where each child is given the chance to draw an insight from what he/she had experienced. Try to make each one listen to one another. If a child makes a particularly enlightening statement, praise him/her; but make it a point to comment on each one's insight.
- Respond immediately to urgent needs like giving food to a hungry child, treating a wound, settling a fight, sending a child to a health centre etc. Do this together with the children so that they can realise the importance of collective action.
- In every activity, a natural leader normally emerges. Observe those with natural leadership qualities; develop their attitudes and skills through simple street activities. Neutralize the "toughies" who may surface as "gang" leaders, through role-playing and role analysis. Make the children understand that gangs are not necessary. Friendship and sharing are the name of the game.
- Integrate value education in your street activities especially in simple games. Join in with the games and make them fun by making mistakes and creating laughter. Don't be a sour-face. Be a child for a while.
- If possible, keep a record of your experiences every day. Take note of what the children say, their reflection on their own personal situation. You can use their insights in emphasizing certain lessons later on. Also, use the document during the sharing sessions with other street educators and child organisers. These titbits of experience are sources of learning for everyone involved with street children.

### **Contact With Family**

- Always ask permission from the child if you want to get in touch with his or her parents, or visit the home. This is a sign of respect for the child. The aim is always to return the children to their home if it is a tenable situation. Be careful. Do not be in a rush to return the child home prematurely. You may be responsible for something serious happening to him /her. Children have died as a result of beatings from their relatives after returning home!