

THE "CHILD" SYSTEM MANUAL

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

Home and Parents:

- Revalidate the information that the child provides with that of the parents. Often, a child gives incorrect information on the family, not out of dishonesty, but because of reasons that can be traced with psychology. A child sometimes paints a horrible picture of his family to solicit your sympathy. There are those who claim that they are orphans, even when they are not. Many children "murder" their parents in their thoughts because of earlier bad experiences. Then again, many children will tell the truth about their home life and the parents will lie.
- Courteously introduce yourself to the parents. Do not display an air of authority, nor create an impression that you are blaming the parents for the plight of their children. They too are often victims of poverty, and are mostly simple souls.
- "When the parents are doing something, or are out of the house doing their work, do not disturb them. Just talk to them and state your reason for being there, how you met their child, and that you want to talk to them again at a time convenient to them.
- After the first visit, always make a follow-up visit. Try to be more personal, carrying the conversation from the superficial towards the real or essential. Be guided by your own inner light, your own authenticity, and your good will for their child.
- During home visits, avoid the following:
 - promising the parents any material or financial help.*
 - blaming the parents for the plight of their children and moralizing on their behaviour.*
 - giving unsolicited advice.*
 - making yourself an example of good behaviour.*
 - being carried away by the emotions of a parent; if he or she begins to cry, let him or her, but try to keep yourself calm, so that you can direct the conversation.*
- After you have won the confidence and trust of the parents, gradually convince them to meet other parents in the locality. Start a sharing group among them to discuss simple issues concerning the plight of the street children. Again, do not create the impression that you are blaming them. Your main concern at this point is raising the consciousness of the parents. Once they have become more aware, they will be more willing to respond.

Families of most street children are highly mobile; they move from one area to another. This makes follow-up work difficult. One way of maintaining contact with the children is establishing a network of volunteers who will be on the look-out for new faces in their area, and who will be coordinating with a central body on the progress of children that you might return home.