

# Cooperative Approaches



#18. January 2024



**Children  
and Youth  
At-Risk**

*"The only path offering humanity hope for a better future is one of cooperation and partnership."*

Kofi Annan



Cooperative Approaches, a quarterly journal, is published free of charge in digital format by the Association for the Promotion of Cooperative Approaches (APAC). APAC's mission is to promote cooperative approaches in key areas of social life: youth and adult education, social action, organizational management, economy and culture, citizen participation, international solidarity.

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## EDITORIAL

# Children & Young People At-Risk

By Roland DAVAL

There are 2.3 billion children (under 18) in the world, almost a third of the world's population.

According to a recent report published in 2023 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, 1.46 billion children under the age of 15 are deprived of social protection measures which is an increase of children concerned by 50 million between 2016 and 2020. Failure to provide children with adequate social protection exposes them to poverty, disease, school failure and poor nutrition, as well as increasing the risks of child marriage and child labor.

According to the same report, children are twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty - surviving on less than \$1.9 a day - a situation that affects 356 million children. Every day around the world, 35,000 children under the age of 5 die as a result of their living conditions. and 2.6 million before the age of 6 months.



According to the ILO, 152 million children are forced to work. Half of them are involved in dangerous activities while others sold into slavery.

Cécile Coudriou, President of Amnesty International France, points out that "Children are not spared from violence in the world

either: 420 million children today live in war zones, and 250,000 of them, aged 6-18, are child soldiers, involved in some 30 conflicts around the world. 28 million children have had to leave their countries, sometimes alone due to family separation.

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Throughout the world, according to statistics published in 2021 by UNICEF, 261,000 children are incarcerated, leaving them in a highly vulnerable situation. In some countries, 90% of children in prison are awaiting trial without the means to defend themselves.

In France, the Observatoire National de la Protection de l'Enfance (ONPE) reports annually to the government and parliament on the latest child protection data available. The report published in February 2022, with key figures as at December 31, 2020, includes the following key data:

The number of minors receiving at least one benefit or under the child protection system is estimated at 308,000 for the whole of France (excluding Mayotte), representing a rate of 21.4 per thousand minors.

The number of young adults under child protection is estimated at 32,160 for the whole of France, representing 13.2 per thousand of young people aged 18 to 21. This number, up by 30% between 2019 and 2020, continues a trend that began in 2017. In 2020, 102,678 new minors were referred to juvenile court judges.

In 2020, the security forces recorded 39,433 minors as victims of sexual violence, nearly 31,600 (80%) of them girls. For almost three out of 10 victims, the abuse took place within the family.

Police and gendarmerie services recorded 63,883 victims of physical violence.

In 2022, a report published by the "Droit d'enfance" foundation indicated that 43,202 minors had been reported missing in France. 95% of police reports concern runaways, most of them committed by minors over the age of 15 (63.1%). The main reason for running away remains parent-child conflict. However, the majority of runaways have a positive outcome.

Faced with this situation, which we can only consider unacceptable in the world we live in - thanks to Michel Seyrat for his "Coup de gueule" - in this issue we present you with reporting that goes beyond public policies and actions implemented by public actors and initiatives carried out in France and in other countries - Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Senegal, United States - by actors of civil society, mainly associations.

As activists and promoters of cooperative approaches, in these interviews we wanted to take a particular look at the place given to children and young people, as well as their families, in building or rebuilding their future.

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this latest issue of Cooperative Approaches.





## A WORLD CHALLENGE

# The International Convention on the Rights of the Child

By Roland DAVAL



The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC), also known as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989, a date now celebrated as the International Day for the Rights of the Child. It came into force on September 2, 1990.

The Convention has now been ratified by 197 countries, and sets out the fundamental rights of children. It should be emphasized that the United States and Somalia have only signed this convention, which is merely a political commitment, but does not imply its implementation. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

## History

It was not until the 20th century that texts encompassing all children's rights were adopted.

The first such text, a Declaration of the Rights of the Child, was drafted

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in 1923 and adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations.

After the Second World War, a new Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted on November 20, 1959 by the United Nations (UN), but, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved in 1948, it had only a moral scope.

In 1978, Poland, inspired by the ideas of pediatrician Janusz Korczak<sup>1</sup>, proposed a binding draft Convention on the Rights of the Child to the United Nations. The UN Commission on Human Rights then set up a special working group to prepare the convention.

## Content of the Convention

The Convention defines a child as, "Every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier".

It is based on four principles:

1. Non-discrimination.
2. Best interests of the child.
3. The right to life, survival and development.
4. Respect for the child's opinion on all matters concerning their interests.

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1. Janusz Korczak était un pédagogue qui, dans le cadre d'une pédagogie coopérative, avait organisé l'orphelinat pour enfants qu'il dirigeait comme une véritable république d'enfants. Les enfants étaient associés aux décisions et à l'évaluation. Janusz Korczak est un véritable héros de la pédagogie, il a accompagné ses enfants et est mort avec eux à Auschwitz.

It endows children with a set of rights:

- Civil: right to life, non-discrimination, right to a name and nationality, access to justice.
- Economic: right to an adequate standard of living, social security.
- Political: right to hold opinions and express them, to be protected against ill-treatment and deprivation of restricted freedom.
- Social: the right to be fed, cared for by doctors and protected against all forms of exploitation and, in the event of war, the prohibition of military duty before the age of 15.
- Cultural: right to education with primary education free and compulsory for all and to have access to appropriate information and leisure.

## Legal scope

The ICRC is binding on ratifying states, which are responsible for ensuring that children's rights are respected.

A supervisory body, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, based in Geneva, is responsible for monitoring the proper application by States of the CRC and its protocols. It is made up of independent international experts.

Every five years, States submit a report on their national situation with regard to children's rights. The Committee examines and comments on the reports, then issues its conclusions and recommendations to States. Non-governmental organizations and institutions may also submit reports. However, in the event of a rights violation, the Committee has no power of sanction. If countries fail to honor their commitments, the Committee can publish reports denouncing the violations committed, but cannot oblige them to implement its decisions.





## YOUTH AT RISK AND DELINQUENCY IN THE US

# Cooperative Approaches to Prevention & Resiliency

By Larry CHILDS

In the North Atlantic, cold coastal New England waters are home to the tastiest lobsters in the world. To catch them requires a trap. Cleverly designed in 1809 by Ebenezer Thorndike of Swampscott, Massachusetts, lobsters are lured through a narrow net passage with the aid of irresistible fishy bait. Though easy to enter, escape proves far more difficult, almost impossible. Similarly, young people in the US also find that getting into trouble is far easier than getting out. Yet once out of trouble not repeating the pattern, falling back in, is also very challenging. Recidivism rates, meaning repeat offenses for those in the US criminal justice system, are quite high. What's worse, rather than being trapped like the lobster by one simple time honored contraption, the human pitfalls are numerous in design, very often disguised and constantly evolving.



### Teen Traps

As with the lobster trap, 'teen trap' counterparts attract and tantalize with a psychology specific to the developing teenage brain which is especially impressionable and susceptible. Their bait ranges from salty or sugary junk food, alcohol and drugs to the adrenaline pumping effects of vandalism,

theft, selling drugs and forbidden sex. A common thread is rebellion informed by the widespread appeal for young people in rejecting the authority of older adults who, all too often, over-reach their authority. Adults can seem to young people as contrary and alien as another species!

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## Promotive factors

A wide body of research demonstrates how promotive factors like a healthy relationship with even just one trusting adult - parent, relative, teacher or friend - helps young people become more resistant to temptations leading to delinquency. These factors can also help with readiness to be rescued, and with self-agency for finding their own way back to safety. A key element in these relationships, as researched by CASEL, is modeling resilience and direct instruction of positive social norms, social skills and emotional intelligence. These capacities can better assure that a diversion towards trouble can become less of a set-back and more of a learning experience. An important lesson can be an increasing ability to better recognize, handle and resist future negative influences and temptation..

## The social impact

Demographics relative to wealth and class play a role in determining who is disproportionately affected with low income youth as more vulnerable. They often lack sufficient adult support and other resources to keep them from slipping. The disparities are so wide that in some urban settings all low income youth are considered at-risk. At the same time wealth is by no means a panacea. A high percentage of youth from middle



and higher income households, across geographies and demographics, are also vulnerable. This became especially evident through the opioid epidemic which has plagued the country for more than a decade.

The social impacts of widespread disaffected youth are enormous and insufficiently recognized. Economic research by the Federal Reserve demonstrates how delinquency can cost millions over the course of a life-time due to prison-time, recidivism and low wage occupational opportunities and choices. The wider impact on splintered families and communities has led to serious social degradation. If it were not for youth disaffection as almost equally endemic to countries all around the world, the crisis would have caused the US to fall further in its global preeminence..

## Boys and Girls

Gender also features prominently as an influencing factor. Today boys generally out-number girls among those more deprived of opportunity, but this wasn't always the case. Historically in the US a powerful patriarchy favored boys in most areas of society from education to business. To address this inequity national legislation passed in 1972. It was called 'Title 9' and provided funding to assure girls received equal and even better opportunities in schools and athletics. Fast forward to the present, US girls now out-perform boys in most academic metrics. Perhaps now a rescue plan or equalizer for boys is needed?

On this question of boys Michael Thompson, an internationally renowned psychologist and author specializing in the development of boys, has advanced a compelling case for the need to place much more attention on educational programs and interventions aligned with developmental needs of boys. He has helped awaken the nation to the fact that schools are typically designed more around the developmental characteristics and preferences of girls than those of boys. For instance girls are by nature a little less physically active and disruptive than boys and thereby favored by teachers and more patient when required to sit for long periods.

Especially troubling, and a consequence of boys feeling bored and disaffected by traditional



schools, is how criminal gangs and terror networks target young men. Lacking prospects for attaining success and meaning in life, boys are attracted by the sense of belonging, purpose and power that such illicit enterprises offer. They might rationalize, 'Since society has cast me out through mediocre schooling, poor job prospects and therefore no way to support a family and marry - why not accept this criminal alternative?' Since many experience an encounter with the 'dark side' - meaning having previously fallen into one or more of the smaller substance abuse or petty criminal traps mentioned earlier - the decision to accept a bigger criminal invitation with greater potential rewards, can be irresistible.

### Cooperative approaches supporting resilience

- Drawing these young men away from a well designed 'teen trap' is as tricky as is preventing them from falling in to begin with. Most risk prevention and recovery strategies prescribe some form of program which apply group-based, cooperative learning. Such programs often cultivate meaningful and positive alternatives with a sense of belonging - one that offers opportunities for elevating one's authentic voice, exercising appropriate levels of control and authority and meaningful connections with others.

Cooperative and collaborative learning are inherent in these healthier, more positive communities. These are places

where one cultivates social skills required for becoming resistant to those forces which lure young men back to unhealthy behaviors. Hundreds of effective programs, many experiential, active and focused on group experiences with ample reflection, have proven effective at lowering recidivism. The Wilderness School of CT, integrating methods of Outward Bound and Project Adventure among others, is one such program which emphasizes cooperation as described above and in the context of an 'adventure group process'. Read more about it in the sidebar.

Conclusion: Hopes for a future with more social harmony, health outcomes and environmental sustainability rely on improving future prospects for young men at risk and those already on their destructive path. Effective prevention and recovery services and programs generally involve learning and behavior change based in some form of cooperative, social group pedagogy and process. Unless we place much greater attention to embracing and guiding these boys and young men, they will continue to turn their backs on societies across the globe to their own and our peril.



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## Program profile: The Wilderness School

### Overview

The Wilderness School (WS) is a program of the State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families (DCF). Founded in 1974, the Wilderness School is a positive youth development program for young people ages 13-21. It serves as an enrichment program for young people looking to make positive changes. For many young people, the Wilderness School may serve as a prevention or intervention service. The Wilderness School programs are an enhancement to the work of social service agencies in Connecticut and are available to the community at large.

The Wilderness School is licensed by the State's Office of Early Childhood as a youth camp.

### Programming

Wilderness School programming is unique in nature and function. Courses are group-oriented, strengths-based, and reflective. Ultimately, each expedition, short course, and activity is "Challenge by Choice."

Wilderness School courses involve the intentional use of cooperative games, problem solving initiatives, challenges, and adventure activities, most often in an outdoor setting. Courses are used to promote social skills, enhance self-concept and competence, and foster group cohesion.



Wilderness Schools' programming is provided on a continuum of challenges and difficulty and is designed to serve participants who demonstrate various levels of strengths and capacities

Wilderness School offers an array of courses and programs to meet various participant needs that consider duration of programming (from 1 to 20 days), proximity to roads and amenities vs. wilderness, intensity of activities, and facilitator to participant ratios.

Activities may involve rock climbing, hiking, canoeing, ropes/challenge courses, service projects, wilderness camping, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and winter-camping. Additionally, the program may facilitate mindfulness and reflective activities, therapeutic art activities, and team building activities and challenges.

Research - Studies have documented the Wilderness School's positive impact upon the self-esteem, increased locus of control (personal responsibility), and interpersonal skill enhancement of adolescents attending the program. Traditionally, the Wilderness School has also sought to emphasize the development of values such as cooperation, compassion, and responsibility among our student population. In addition, WS is currently partnered with the Outdoor Behavioral Health Council, a leader in the field of research, to further establish an evidence-based practice.



# Street Children in Madagascar

## The Manda Association

By Ralison Andriamandrato - Chairman of the Board of Directors

### The situation

Madagascar has all the characteristics of a fragile, almost failed state. Although it has not experienced war or major natural disasters, the country has grown steadily poorer since independence, punctuated by recurrent political crises. In sixty years, GDP per capita has fallen by 40%. More than 80% of the working population is in the informal sector. Unemployment, and above all underemployment, is very high.

Street children are a highly visible social phenomenon, reflecting the precariousness and vulnerability of many Malagasy families. The national statistics reporting system, which functions very poorly in a general environment of under-administration, does not allow for accurate measurement and mapping of the phenomenon.

One of the most recent studies, carried out by Unicef and piloted by the Ministry of Population, Social



Protection and the Advancement of Women in

2017, counted around 2,430 children living on the streets in Antananarivo, the capital. This figure, probably underestimated, has certainly risen significantly since then, due in particular to the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Malagasy economy and society.

These children face multiple risks and violations of their rights from violence, mistreatment, sexual abuse and various addictions to exclusion from school, stigmatization, marginalization

and discrimination. They are often considered a priori as delinquents, or beggars by the population and the authorities, and are victims of harassment, arbitrary arrests and even police violence. Despite acquiring a kind of immunity through natural selection, they are exposed to a wide range of health problems, with no social security coverage. Early pregnancies are very common.

Other risks they face include :

- Malnutrition, which affects their physical and cognitive growth, and makes them more vulnerable to infection and disease.
- Economic exploitation, which forces them to work in dangerous or degrading conditions, often for little or no pay.
- Lack of legal identity, which prevents them from accessing essential public services such as schooling or health care, or any public assistance.
- No schooling, which keeps them in a cycle of poverty and exclusion.
- The loss of family and social ties, which deprives them of the emotional and moral support they need to develop harmoniously.

Faced with these seeming insurmountable problems, communities are powerless and very often just given up.

A number of players, including non-governmental organizations and local or faith-based associations, are working to find solutions to protect and reintegrate these children.

These initiatives are developing networks for greater coherence, synergy and complementarity, as well as launching advocacy and lobbying campaigns on behalf of street children and families.

In Antananarivo, for example, the PFSCE (Plateforme de la Société Civile pour l'Enfance) has been set up, bringing together over 50 associations. Or the SANDRATRA project, run by Apprentis d'Auteuil Océan Indien and brings together four local organizations.

## MANDA and its objectives

MANDA is a Malagasy association set up in 1999 in a working-class, densely populated district of Antananarivo, Madagascar's overcrowded capital. Apolitical, secular and non-profit, it operates without discrimination as to sex, race or religion.

With the support of various partners, MANDA has set the following mission:

- To provide help, assistance and support to street children.
- To provide them with appropriate schooling and education.
- To help them learn and practice a trade.

More generally, to carry out any action that can improve living conditions, empowerment, participation and social and civic responsibility.

Every year, just over 300 children aged 4 to 18 are accompanied by a team of around 30 permanent educators, supported by a number of volunteers, including international solidarity volunteers. Around half of these children are accommodated in MANDA's four centers. The other half are sent to various schools or external training centers, while benefiting from close accompaniment and support.

## Actions and methods implemented

From its four centers, MANDA provides the following with the help of external service providers or other partners:

### *1. Comprehensive care for children, differentiated and adapted to each case:*

- Support in obtaining administrative files (birth certificate, national identity card, etc.).
- Medical care in the infirmary or referral to public health facilities.
- Daily diet and hygiene practices.
- Housing accommodations.



Sandranta, Madagascar: care and school integration

## 2. *Appropriate support and education/training:*

- Intensive one-year remedial schooling to enable pre-adolescents or teenagers to take the official elementary school certificate exam.
- Literacy training.
- Preschool classes.
- Enrolment in public or private schools. Sending children to outside schools is backed up by daily support (help with homework, meals, various socio-educational activities).
- Various training courses in hygiene, reproductive health, environmental management, etc.
- Socio-educational activities: library, dance, circus, crafts, travel, swimming, soccer, etc.

- Education in civic responsibility and citizenship.

## 3. *Vocational guidance and training to enhance employability and gradual integration into the workplace:*

- Crafts (wood and aluminum carpentry, weaving, sewing, mechanics, construction.), hotels, IT, small livestock farming, urban agriculture with work placements.
- French language courses.

## 4. *Socio-economic support for families:*

- Home visits.
- Social assistance and support for the creation and development of income-

generating activities.

- Organization of capacity-building training courses.
- Parental education.

Well aware of the scope, complexity and difficulties of the mission it has set, as well as its limitations, since its creation Manda has developed a strategy based on partnership and the search for those who would join as subsidiaries, aiming to :

Maintain a watchful and reflective eye for opportunities to advance public policy advocacy.

Not replace the State, but contribute as much as possible to strengthening the public services of a State that is more than fragile.

To be concerned with synergy, complementarity and coherence of actions, to enable mutual reinforcement of capacities.

Manda was one of the founding associations of the Plateforme de la Société Civile pour l'Enfance (PFSCE) and joined the SANDRATRA collective.



## STREET CHILDREN IN BOBO-DIOULASSO, BURKINA FASO

# The TIE Association

By Lassina KONATE, Coordinateur



Neighborhood house of the TIE association in Bobo-Dioulasso

Street children are children who live and manage to survive on the streets. They can be found in markets, at the railway station and yard, the slaughter houses, along the Houet Marigot River and so on.

These children are left to fend for themselves without a home, and

generally get by through petty theft and begging. They are exposed to the sun, to disease, and some are at risk of imprisonment. Many of these children come from Koranic schools, or are victims of migration, or come from destitute families. What they lack is an educational and protective presence to help

them get off the streets.

This is how the TIE association came into being on June 1, 1995, with the aim of contributing to the well-being of the population through the protection and promotion of the rights of vulnerable social groups, including street children.



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## The TIE association

TIE is a Burkinabe association committed to the protection, defense and promotion of children's rights. Its main mission is to offer protection and rehabilitation services to particularly vulnerable children: street children and young people, boys and girls, talibé children<sup>1</sup>, minors in conflict with the law, children and young people who are victims of trafficking and other forms of violence, children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Often they are Burkinabe children returning from risky migration attempts to other countries in the sub-region.

Founded June 1, 1995 and officially recognized on October 10, 1996, TIE has now been in existence for over twenty-five years, and is a benchmark in the Hauts-Bassins and Cascades regions in particular, and in Burkina Faso in general. We work in the field of psychological and social work providing support for street children, girl domestic helpers, minors in prostitution, child victims of violence and exploitation, and children in challenging migration situations.

It operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Women, National Solidarity, the Family and Humanitarian Action, with which it has a cooperation agreement.



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## General objectives

- Ensure the protection of children and women in difficulty, internally displaced persons, children and young people living on the streets or on the move, and children and people in migration escaping from all forms of violence.
- Provide humanitarian assistance to these vulnerable groups and individuals.

## Specific objectives

- Contribute to the family reintegration and socio-economic inclusion of these vulnerable groups and individuals.
- Protect these populations from violence such as trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, and any other violence likely to harm the physical, psychological or sexual integrity of the targets.
- Support victims of violence through psychosocial, psychological and legal care, and promote their socio-economic and cultural integration.
- Strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households and communities in the face of conflict or crisis, natural disasters and scourges affecting children and women in particular.
- Provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced

populations, refugees or vulnerable migrants.

- Strengthen collaboration with other partners or humanitarian agencies pursuing the same objectives.
- Promote family reintegration and socio-economic integration of children in particularly difficult circumstances.
- Prevent juvenile delinquency.
- Combat drug addiction.
- Combat child trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- Support victims of sexual and other forms of violence by providing psychological, legal and socio-economic assistance.
- Promote the development of children in difficulty through positive socio-cultural activities.
- Raise awareness of STDs/ AIDS and other public health related scourges.
- Strengthen collaboration with other partners pursuing the same objectives.

## The association's activities

With regard to street children, several activities are carried out to help them reintegrate into society:

- Street outings (night and day) every Tuesday and Thursday.

- Individual and/or group interviews.
- Socio-educational talks to change behavior while offering recreational and social-cultural outings.
- Psychological consultations, awakening, behavioral stabilization and socialization activities.
- Physical and creative activities such as vegetable gardening, drawing, painting, etc..
- Literacy training.
- Renewal of family ties and family accompaniment.
- Placement in institutions such as training centers and apprenticeship workshops.
- Raising public awareness of children in difficulty.
- Case conferences
- Strengthening partnership frameworks

## Main partnerships

TIE has developed a number of partnerships and projects for the protection and socio-economic reintegration of street children.

The association has been part of the Bobo Child Protection Network (RPE) since 2014. It acts as coordinator of the Groupe Régional de Travail pour la Protection de l'Enfant (GRTPE).2021.

In September 2020, TIE set up the Cadre de Concertation et d'Action des Associations de Protection



Map of Burkina Faso, with the Hauts-Bassins region in the south-west.

des Enfants et Jeunes en Situation de rue in the Hauts-Bassins region. This framework brings together nine child protection organizations: CACEMAR, CAFI, ASOFB, AEJTB, Havre du Bon Pasteur, CDE -BF502, Den KANU, MY Hope and TIE.

The association is currently involved with this collaborative and other coordinated initiatives. We are hopeful that partnerships will continue to increase the efficacy of our work.



## THE COLIBRI ASSOCIATION

# Living Environments for Children At-Risk

Interview with Caroline LE GAC by Roland DAVAL and Dominique BENARD



Caroline LE GAC

### Introducing Caroline

- Hello Caroline, thank you for agreeing to this interview. Could you first introduce yourself?

- Hello, my name is Caroline LE GAC, I'm a psychologist by training, I was previously national delegate for Education, Pedagogy and Activities with the Scouts et Guides of France. Today I'm head of the skills and capacities department which covers human resources, training and pedagogy at the association "Le Colibri".

### History of the project

- The association Le Colibri takes in young people in need of child protection. What is the origin of this association?

- It was in 2013 that Jérôme Aucordier came up with the idea of creating a place to live and welcome young people in difficulty, using the Scouting method. Supported by Gilles-Vermot Desroches, former President of the Scouts et Guides de France, and Marc Chabant, former commissioner and national delegate, the project for a place to live progressed and was finalized with the help of a team of volunteers (Anne Siegel, Kareen Monier, Florence Bertrand, Joséphine Dubois, Jérémy Méthivier and Aurélien Varnoux). Finally, the association Le Colibri was created in 2017 and opened its first home and living space at the Scouts and Guides of France training and activity center in Jambville, Yvelines.

- In supporting this project, the



Scouts and Guides were reviving a deep-rooted scouting tradition.

- Yes, very early on, as early as 1936, Scout associations in France turned their attention to so-called "delinquent" young people at the request of the public authorities, with a conviction that the method could be more successful with these young people than in traditional placements. The first Scout-inspired home for troubled youth, the Ker Goat center, was set up in Brittany in 1940. After the Second World War, French Scouting's initiatives for the protection of children and young people sentenced under the 1945 decree gained momentum. Many educators were Scouts, and social workers were Guides.



The national leaders of the Scouts de France, the Eclaireurs Unionistes de France and the Eclaireurs de France, Jacques Astruc, Jacques Rey and Henri Joubrel, played an active part in the creation of the Association Nationale d'Educateurs de Jeunes Inadaptés (ANEJI), which provided a structure for special education.

## Colibri today

- So, Caroline, can you tell us a little more about the Colibri project and where the association stands today?

- What's special about Colibri is that it welcomes children and young people, aged 5 to 21, experiencing complex situations. Their lives have been full of pitfalls, and they've lived through many different institutions. Our aim is first and foremost to calm them down, to ensure that there are fewer disruptions in their lives, and to support them and their personal or professional initiatives for the older ones. These are young people who, when coming out of child protection, don't have as many resources to rely on as others. We try to ensure that they can increase their social capital, meaning increase the number of people they can call on in times of need. We also strive to establish positive contact with the families, so if there is a return to the family at some point, it goes as smoothly as possible.

- You welcome them into a living environment. What is a Colibri home?

- It's a large house with bedrooms for the children and communal rooms where they can live together on a daily basis. Each "lieu de vie" welcomes around 7 young people in a given age bracket: 5 to 10, 6 to 12, 12 to 15, 15 to 18 and over. Each home is managed by an interdisciplinary team comprised of a home manager, five permanent educators who work in shifts for 3 to 5 consecutive days and share the life of the youngsters, day and night included, a part-time housekeeper, and a psychologist who is on site 3 days a week to monitor the children and provide clinical support to the educators. To be considered a living environment, a minimum of 72 hours of learning experience is required. The educator puts the children to bed and is there when they wake up. It's really important for us that young people have this kind of stable reference point.

## Development

- You started in 2017 with a living space in Jambville, where are you now? How many facilities does the association manage?

- In 2020, we opened two new living quarters, and today we have 14: 5 in the Ile-de-France region, 2 in Brittany (Finistère), 3 in the Grand-Est region (Haute-Marne), 3 in the Pays de la Loire region (Maine et Loire) and 1 in the Hauts de France region (Somme). We accommodate around 90 young people altogether.

- That's extremely rapid growth! Is there strong demand?

- Yes, demand is very strong. What



Colibri Abbeville. Photo O. Ouadah

you need to know is that every time a reception center is created, it's because the department of child welfare (Aide Sociale à l'Enfance) has requested it. It's not the Colibri Association that takes the initiative to create a new living space, it's the other way around. Once contacted it's a rapid development process though we've turned down a lot of requests as well since we need to be sufficiently organized and equipped to support new facilities as well as those that are already set up. Our development process is well thought-out. For instance we have chosen to set up several centers in the same area, so that a wealth of resources is created for pooling resources and child activities across the centers. We have also set up regional managers to oversee the teams at several sites. When you're well established



Photo Marie-Louise Gaspard

in a region, you can also build much more effective partnerships with entities beyond the home rather than each having to develop its own partnership network. It's the regional director who makes contact with care partners, child welfare agencies, etc. A solid regional network is essential.

## Financing

- How were you able to finance this rapid expansion?

- The entire network of living facilities and part of the head office are financed by Aide Sociale à l'Enfance, on the basis of a daily fee negotiated with the département. However, funding from the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance only comes into play once the home has been opened and young people have been taken in. So the whole of the

preceding phase - preparing for the opening of the home, recruiting the team, etc. requires special funding. Similarly, ongoing in-house staff training is not funded by the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance. We appeal to private philanthropy and are supported by several foundations and companies: Fondation Bettancourt-Schueller, Fondation Pierre Bellon, Fondation Daniel et Martine Raze, Noiret Patrimoine are a few. We couldn't function properly without this support.

- Is this how you finance the purchase and equip living spaces?

- For the time being, for all the living quarters we've opened, the SCI Partenaire managed by the Scouts et Guides de France buys the houses by taking out loans, and the association pays a rental fee to the SGDF. This is the main model. We're also in the process of setting up a SCI so that we can continue the effort ourselves to pursue our development. We're also thinking about other models with other partners capable of renting us houses.

## The educational method

- Let's talk a little about pedagogy. You say you use the Scout method to educate young people. How does this work in practice?

- The idea is to bring the Scout method to life on a daily basis. That's not necessarily the case in scouting, where it's lived out in short meetings with young people.

We try to live it 7 days a week, 24 hours a day: using the 8 elements of the Scout method, which are interdependent and enable specific positions and quality of support.

- I notice that in your adaptation of the Scout Method, you emphasize the symbolic framework with the story of the Hummingbird. Could you explain a little more what this is all about?

- Yes, we use the Amerindian tale of the hummingbird (see box), which talks about resilience, and the young people we take on understand this very well: Faced with all the problems that beset them and the difficulties they are still experiencing, they can have the impression that they are powerless and that it's better to rely on others. But the hummingbird tells them not to give up hope, but to do their part to change things and take control of their lives. When a young person is welcomed into one of our facilities, they hear this tale and receive an entirely green wooden hummingbird, which they are invited to hang in the symbolic tree representing the facility. The hummingbird's appearance will change throughout the stay, as the young person formulates personal goals for progress and achieves them with the help of the educators.

- So, through this symbolic framework, you place the young person at the center of the educational process. They are the subject of the educational

process, no longer just the object of assistance.

- Exactly! We set up a dynamic of personal progression that is not decided authoritatively by the adult, but is based on progressive personal development objectives decided by the young person in dialogue with the adult. Each young person has a personal progress logbook, which presents three stages:

1 "Settling in": on arrival at the home, each young person is invited to take the time to get to know the people who will be welcoming them, to understand how the house works, to find their bearings, and to prepare to "take on their share" of community life and their own development. This is the moment when they receive a progress book and hummingbird.

2. "I spread my wings": the young person discovers the 5 areas of development proposed: "I live with energy" (physical development); "I live with ideas and projects" (intellectual development); "I live with values" (moral development); "I live with others" (social development); "I live with emotions" (emotional development). Based on their desires and needs, they choose one of these areas and, with the help of his educator, set first goals for progress. Each success will be celebrated and marked by a new colored border to stick on the hummingbird's wing.

3. "I'm taking flight": when the



Colibri Abbeville. Photo O. Ouadah

time comes to leave the living quarters, the young person is invited to look back at all the ground covered since the first day: the difficulties encountered, how they were handled, the discoveries and progress he has made, and of course the friendships made. From there, we help them project themselves into the future, to achieve a new stage in their lives.

- This progression is aimed at all areas of development, based on personal objectives. Your aim is to make young people the first actors in their own development. But Scouting's pedagogy is also cooperative. Does the small number of young people welcomed into a living environment limit too much the richness of interactions between young people and their ability to help each others' progress?

- The small number of young

people welcomed is linked to the need to offer each young person a secure environment where they feel recognized and welcomed individually, without the risk of being lost in a large group. Most of the young people we take in have experienced traumatic events, which means they are not really capable of cooperating in a large group.

- Are you able to involve young people in decision-making and assessing their conditions?

- Yes, it's an educational element that we insist on a lot. Every week, a council meeting enables young people to express their views on the collective experience and on the assessing of activities. They are called upon to decide on the rules of collective life and to make choices concerning future activities. Young people are asked to participate: to take part in community life, to





The Colibri personal notebook. Photo Marie-Louise Gaspard

take part in the project, and they do so of their own free will. They can refuse. There's this dimension of freedom, and they can choose to follow the values we propose.

- This is what enables you to prevent "supervisors" from stifling the expression of young people and their capacity for initiative.

- Yes, in fact, the number of adults involved in the living environment needs to be put into perspective. Not all are there full-time. The educators work in shifts, and most of the time there are only two of them on site at any one time. The housekeeper only works part-time, and the psychologist is only present three days a week.

- Scouting places great emphasis on two main areas of activity: life in nature and community involvement. How do you experience these two critical elements of the Scouting

method?

- We do a lot of nature-based discovery and outdoor activities through outings such as camping. This is essential for the physical, emotional and intellectual development of young people. Previously, most of them lived without any opportunity to establish a real relationship with the natural environment. We also place great emphasis on interaction with the local community. We don't want our young people to be confined to their living quarters which is why many are enrolled in local sports clubs or cultural associations. We strive to ensure that the home has a continuous relationship with the community and is well integrated into it. Young people regularly take part in community service activities as well.

- In your documents, you talk about moral development yet not spiritual

development, as is often the case in Scouting. Does this mean that the Colibri association is non-denominational and secular, unlike the Scouts et Guides de France?

- Yes, absolutely. This is imperative, given that the young people we take in are entrusted to us by the governments' Aide Sociale à l'Enfance, without any choice on the part of the families or the young people themselves.

## The impact of Colibri

- Have you measured the impact of your actions on young people?

- That was our aim from the outset. We set up a small team to analyze Colibri's impact on young people. They developed indicators that showed a positive impact: the number of runaways, the number of months they stayed at Colibri compared with previous placements where there were more break-ups. But starting this year, we've been working with an outside firm, Kimso, which specializes in analyzing educational impact, particularly in the field of child protection. This has enabled us to obtain much more detailed and objective data. In June 2023, the Kimso firm submitted a social impact assessment report highlighting some very positive results. For example :

### *Concerning the educational environment :*

- the homes, located in the countryside, foster a family atmosphere.



- The welcome phase at Colibri is crucial to ensuring that young people feel comfortable and at home thereafter.
- The long-term nature of the program fosters a sense of stability and security.
- Support methods are different from those offered in other facilities such that group living creates bonds between young people
- Rules foster involvement and autonomy among young people
- Teams provide local, tailor-made support for each young person
- The teams are always available

#### *Concerning the results achieved :*

- The majority of our young people feel safe at Colibri, and feel supported and helped by our teams. They have developed bonds of trust both inside and outside Colibri. A large proportion of the young people are involved in everyday tasks at Colibri.
- Most are discovering new activities (especially sports and outdoor activities) and improving their self-esteem while at Colibri.
- Almost all young people continue or resume their studies after arriving at Colibri.
- The majority of young people recognize their successes,



Colibri Abbeville. Photo O. Ouadah

which are regularly celebrated by the Colibri teams, and take pride in them.

- Some young people feel they have grown and matured at Le Colibri, notably through several key stages: understanding one's past, expressing emotions, self-confidence.
- The teams perceive that most of the youngsters have improved their group behavior. Some of the young people have made positive progress in managing their relationships with their families.
- The vast majority of young people have developed a personal or professional project since coming to Colibri, and have gained in their sense of autonomy. They have personal goals and plans for the future they hope to achieve.

Based on this analysis, we hope to be able to improve our educational approach and move forward.

### **Challenges encountered**

- Your results are impressive, but what are the main challenges you face?
- Our method is working well, but we're receiving more and more especially difficult young people. We take on all kinds of profiles: young people who behave violently, young people who are under psychiatric care, and young people with severe mental handicaps. We have become aware of the need to maintain a certain balance within a given group. When the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance asks us to take in a young person, we don't have any precise criteria for refusal, but we do ask ourselves: "Will this young person be able to live in this type of environment? Will we

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be able to support them, both in relation to the other young people and given the professionals and care partners available in the area? The "place de vie et d'accueil" is not a suitable format for all young people. For some, it's too large a group. Some need to be in a foster family with a very small number of people and an even stronger educational reference. For others, on the other hand, it's too small: they feel constantly watched. In the case of young people with severe disabilities, we sometimes feel we would benefit from the support of professionals better trained to deal with these issues. So, we're going to try to open up our thinking a little, to get away from the situation in the home, where emotions can run very high when we realize that we can't meet all young people's needs. We're going to think about this situation at the association level so as to find the best possible alternative.

- Do you find it difficult to recruit the professionals you need?

- No, but our main problem is high staff turnover. On average, our teams are stable for no more than a year and a half. Our goal is to increase this to two and a half years. We need to create a solid, stable core to ensure the success of each home. The start-up phase is a little difficult, because you have to set up the project and the method, and at the same time deal with the difficulties of the young people you welcome.

- You ask the educators to make

a very strong commitment, in particular by sharing the young people's lives 24 hours a day...

- Yes, and we've noticed that today's training for these special educators isn't always well suited to supporting young people in complex situations. We're even wondering whether, in the future, we shouldn't offer training leading to a diploma or certificate. For the moment, we're just beginning to think about that.

- Can you give an example of the lack of training for specialized educators in relation to your project and the needs of educational support in living environments?

- Well, for example, when it comes to the training for daily life, the fact of being in a living environment creates particularities in the work situation. For instance, the permanent staff member works in the children's home, sleeps in the workplace, and then wake up in the morning with the kids. Sometimes a slip occurs: the educator may say to themselves, "It's a bit my home too, so I'm not at work." That's something we always have to watch out for. It's a situation that's still very difficult for people coming out of training. In fact, they're more into the abstract, the intellectual so you think things, you write them down... but it's more difficult to actually live out the relationship and the link with young people. At Colibri, we're not afraid to say that we need to create bonds of attachment with young people. And this often comes up against

what these special educators have learned. Even today, people still talk about "professional distance", about being a technician of relationships. At Le Colibri, this is not possible, as the young people's backgrounds often clash with those of the permanent staff who work with them. I remember an 8-year-old girl who had been in 80 placements before arriving at Colibri. The issue of emotional deprivation and its impact on a child's development isn't something we learn only through study. Because we're in child protection, there's also a lot about a child's normal development that is put aside by educators. I often find myself saying to them: "But you're dealing with teenagers. It's normal for a teenager to oppose the frameworks and rules of life!"

Training won't solve all the problems, which is why we place so much emphasis on supporting professionals. That's why we have a psychologist on site three days a week. Of course, the psychologist is there for the youngsters, but above all he's there to help the educators take a step back from the situations they're dealing with, to provide them with the clinical elements they need to better apprehend the situations.

It's not all rosy and pretty, but when we put the project and the method in place, in a very short space of time we can see that the young person's behavior changes completely, and they become fully involved in the living environment. It's quite magical. We measure

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our success in particular when professionals from the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance note that some young people have been with us for one or two years, whereas no other institution was able to keep them for more than 3 months.

- Thank you Caroline for this fascinating testimonial. Our congratulations to your team for this wonderful project, and our best wishes for its development and success.



Photo Colibri. MarieLouise-Gaspard



## HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRISON

# So every child grows up with dignity

Interview with Kevin MONIER, Deputy Director, by Roland DAVAL

### The birth of the association

In 2009, H       and David MULLER, special educators and international solidarity volunteers in Madagascar, visited a prison re-education center housing around a hundred children aged 8 to 18. Faced with difficult living conditions and a lack of care, they decided to set up a social project involving educational support, vocational training and educational activities.

The work is carried out in partnership with the Madagascar Ministry of Justice, and benefits from the recognition and financial support of international donors principally the French Embassy, European Union, and UNICEF. From the outset, the fight against acts contrary to the Rights of the Child had become an essential aspect of the interventions.

Gradually, living conditions have improved such that the children and young people are benefiting



H       and David Muller

from care that is more respectful of their human dignity.

From this initial experience, and given the usefulness of the interventions carried out in the field, "Grandir Dignemen" was born in June 2010.

Gradually, the association

expanded its activities and stepped up its interventions in Madagascar, then in France (since 2015) and Niger (since 2016). In France the association was awarded the Republic's Human Rights Prize.

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## Key findings and challenges

According to the latest statistics published in November 2021 by UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund, while worldwide since the start of the Covid 19 health crisis, more than 45,000 children have been released from detention and returned to an appropriate alternative, 261,000 children still remain detained.

Throughout the world, children are incarcerated and find themselves in very vulnerable situations: lack of food, lack of care, and lack of access to education. are the principle problems. In some countries, 90% of children in prison are awaiting trial yet without having the financial means to defend themselves. In addition to these disgraceful conditions, there are many cases of abuse and torture.

For Grandir Dignement, it is essential to act on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, that of applying and enforcing these rights and guaranteeing respect for the dignity of every child in prison.

To this end, and taking into account the specific contexts of each international and French intervention environment, Grandir Dignement works in three main areas,

Grandir Dignement focuses on three priority areas:

### 1. *Remobilizing young people*

This is a cross-cutting theme that can be applied in prisons as alternatives to incarceration and other post-judicial measures. The aim is to enable young people to take charge of their own life and initiatives that take them forward. It's about enabling young people to regain control, establish more autonomy, and to better understand and interact within their social environments (family, school, neighborhood).

### 2. *Combating violence and abuse in prisons*

We need to take action to bring about change, even if it's utopian to expect violence to disappear. Civil society, in its rightful place, needs to be mobilized as an outside eye. We, or it, must help break down the punishing isolation these young people experience and pass on information about alternatives to the relevant authorities.

### 3. *Promoting young people's self-expression*

This means offering young people opportunities to express themselves, so they regain confidence in the wider society and become empowered. Gathering their opinions has an impact on their lives. On this theme in France, for example, there is the annual children's consultation organized by the Défenseur des Droits (defender of rights).

## Values that guide action

All staff and volunteers who work for Grandir Dignement are called upon to show respect and develop a caring attitude, both in their relations with young people and with adults.

They share the values to which the association attaches great importance: respect for the equal rights of all, fraternity, solidarity with people in difficulty and, in particular, the four humanitarian principles as defined by the European Union:

- ***The principle of humanity***, which means that a solution must be found to human suffering wherever it occurs, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable.
- ***The principle of independence***, which means that humanitarian objectives must be detached from economic, military or other objectives.
- ***The principle of impartiality***, which means that humanitarian aid must be granted solely on the basis of need, without discrimination.
- ***The principle of neutrality***, which means that humanitarian aid must not favor any side in armed or other conflicts.

## Membership of the Don Bosco Social Action Network

All employees and volunteers working at Grandir Dignement, whatever their function, are called upon to develop a position inspired by the Salesian pedagogy of John Bosco, in particular by adopting the ethical charter of the Réseau Don Bosco Action Sociale to which the association belongs.

An observation by the Réseau Don Bosco Action Sociale

*"Today, too few responsibilities are entrusted to young people. In fact, our reflection is as follows: How can we lead young people towards active citizenship if we don't know how to educate them to take such responsibility? In our country, where young people are too often associated with delinquency, unemployment and risky behavior, where they no longer see the point of getting involved in community affairs, where they sometimes give in to the siren calls of terrorist groups because our society gives them the impression that they have no place or role to play... what do we actually have to offer them?"*

All those involved with Grandir Dignement can take part in training courses with other local players. We can also support associated teams by organizing and leading discussion sessions.



Post-custody support

## The association's missions and actions

Grandir Dignement currently operates in three countries: Madagascar, Niger and France.

### Madagascar

#### Actions in prisons

These actions involved some 1,000 children in 2022.

The association works in two areas:

- Support applying a holistic approach, i.e. covering all needs: hygiene and nutrition, socio-judicial, socio-professional, leisure activities.
- Combating violence under an agreement signed with the Ministry of Justice.

These actions are carried out in 6 localities

#### Alternatives to detention

These involve probation, with support from social workers prior to sentencing, to better inform judicial decisions. In 2022, 220 new children were supported using these measures.



Alternatives to detention

## Post-judicial actions

- Service d'Insertion en Milieu Ouvert (SIMO): This is a 6-month program which is more individually customized than detention and designed to extend the work already started.
- Espace AV'NIR: Espace AV'NIR was identified at the time of its creation as a day-care center for children leaving detention. Regular visits to the center by these young people provides better support and established routines that promote reintegration, build self-confidence and limit recidivism.

## Advocacy

- Engaging dialogue with the Ministry of Justice and judicial institutions. This involves work on legislation, promotion of alternative measures, and alerting them to especially difficult situations.
- Raising awareness among the general public, neighborhood leaders, etc., of the major issues involved in criminal justice for children, emphasizing that incarceration



is not the only solution.

- Inviting young people to become the 'bearers of their own plea' as young actors (e.g. by putting on a show).

### Organization and fundraising

- An office in Antananarivo employs 10 people in charge of the administration, logistics, finance and legal affairs. On each site, multidisciplinary social services teams are comprised of 5 to 6 people.
- The annual budget is around 500,000 euros, with financial contributions from UNICEF, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the UEFA Foundation (soccer) and the Région Grand Est. The Scottish foundation Mary's Meals provides food donations.



Training in metallurgy. Dosso, Niger

## Niger

Grandir Dignement operates in 5 localities: Niamey, Zinder, Tahoua, Maradi and Dosso.

969 children in conflict with the law were accompanied by Grandir Dignement teams in 2022 in the 5 regional and 19 departmental prisons covered by the association's activities.

Interventions are carried out along the same three lines as in Madagascar: prison environment, alternative to incarceration ('extra muros'/outside the walls) and advocacy. Alternative measures are carried out within the framework of Placement Educatif en Milieu Ouvert (PEMO).

It's worth noting that the Nigerien government has more social workers than in Madagascar, particularly when it comes to alternatives to incarceration and detention. Similarly, there are more local associations working to help children in conflict with the law.

On the other hand, the association faces major security challenges when it comes to the movement of its teams. Following the recent coup d'état, activities and teams have been scaled back.

Grandir Dignement employs 30 people and has an annual budget of around 300,000 euros, financed by AFD, UNICEF and the Mary's Meals Foundation.

## France

In France, Grandir Dignement is not currently involved in alternative measures. Rather these are handled by the Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse (PJJ).

### Actions in prisons

These involve socio-educational and fun activities, particularly on citizenship issues, to encourage exchanges and verbal expression, and thus help people gain confidence in their ability to express themselves. Solidarity actions are also implemented, for example there was the creation of pictogram panels introducing the issue of children's rights to young people with disabilities.

For 2022, 89 interventions were carried out at the Metz Queuleu juvenile detention center, involving 15 different young people.

The association has been approached by the Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse (Youth Judicial Protection Service), to carry out civic and citizenship activities in the juvenile section of Épinal prison in 2022.

Since 2021, Grandir Dignement has been active every Thursday afternoon at the juvenile section of the Fleury-Mérogis prison (91). This commitment was strengthened in 2022, thanks to closer links with the Educational Department of the Young Offenders' Centre at the prison.

The association is also involved in activities during the school vacations at the Quiévrechain juvenile prison on the Belgian border.

### **Actions extra muros**

This is an adapted civil service program for minors leaving detention or in trouble with the law, enabling them to participate in solidarity actions with professional and social integration ideally resulting at the end of their service. Young people leaving the Aide Sociale à l'Enfance (ASE) system are also welcomed as are those referred by the PJJ and the ASE who are welcomed for 6 months on a 24-hour weekly basis. The actions implemented concern local solidarity and citizenship through debates and dialogue for development of critical thinking skills.



**Adapted civic service**

Since 2021, on the advice of the director of PJJ 54, a "modules" approach has been used to accommodate occasional volunteers in the same civic service activities.

### **Community service**

Even if it's not a voluntary action on their part, young people are welcomed into permaculture gardens. The reception area is open to anyone between the ages of 16 and 25 who is in a vulnerable situation. Anyone in need can contact the association and be unconditionally welcomed into a friendly environment. The center is open 5 days a week. Young people can pick up basic necessities, chat, use the kitchen or relax. A digital space is also available. In 2022, 15 young people were welcomed at the drop-in center: 6 at the Metz branch and 9 in Nancy. The young people are supported by other young people who are also volunteers and not professional educators.

### **Organization and funding**

The association's office in France is based in Nancy. A branch office operates in Metz and, since 2023, a branch office has been

open in Strasbourg. Work is regularly carried out in pairs with an educator and socio-cultural professional. The annual budget is around 250,000 euros.

Grandir Dignement is not an accredited association, and therefore does not receive funding under the "prix de journée" scheme, but is also not subject to injunctions.

It receives funding from the Région Grand Est, and since 2021 from the Ministry of Justice for Nancy and Metz via the PJJ inter-regional directorate.

Funding is also provided by departmental councils for ASE, the European Union (including FSE+), the Civic Service Agency and foundations (Fondation de France, Fondation CARITAS), and other foundations or endowment funds.

## **For a forward-looking vision**

With financial support from Agence Française de Développement (AFD) - Fonds de Renforcement Institutionnel et Organisationnel (FRIO) des ONG, Grandir Dignement was able to benefit from the support of consultants for 8 months in 2022-2023.

The consultation focused on two main areas:

1. Consolidating the head office to ensure better monitoring of delegations,
2. and developing the strategy and methods for expanding

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into other countries by putting in place strategic tools for three distinct approaches:

- Presence in different localities with more human-sized delegations and by developing links with local associations.
- From the outset, identification of a supportive partner along with technical support in the area of socio-judicial expertise for children in conflict with the law.
- Development of a consultancy/expertise function with a longer-term vision, by organizing training courses, conferences and seminars. The aim is to share the expertise acquired by Grandir Dignement. This third approach is planned for the longer term.



Awareness-raising and advocacy



**A PROJECT OF THE KEMPERSTICHTING FOUNDATION**

# Literacy and the integration of deaf children

**Interview with Mr Jan DE BOSCH KEMPER by Patrick GALLAUD**

**PG:**

Hello Jan, can you tell us a little about the path that led you to the creation of this program?

**JBK:**

At the age of 28, I left Amsterdam to join UNESCO via a program for young professionals designed to familiarize them with the organization. I can divide my service at UNESCO into three periods, all spent in Africa.

In the early years, I joined the Regional Educational Building Institute for Africa in Khartoum. The aim of the missions I led was to help countries draw up criteria for school construction and design planning tools. In 1973, I continued my services as a UNESCO expert in Cameroon, where I assisted the Government in setting up a school building office in the planning division with the Ministry of National Education.



My second period of service began in February 1978 as a planning architect at the Regional Office for Education in Africa in Dakar (BREDA). I carried out assignments in almost every country south of the Sahara. Our team of BREDA architects also had to develop a few prototype buildings to demonstrate the

potential for use of local materials. At the 1990 World Conference on Education in Jomtien, Thailand, UNESCO launched an appeal to promote access to education for all. Following this call, I developed a project called "The Literacy Caravan", which criss-crossed Africa organizing "fairs" to promote



teaching materials. At the same time, I also set up Educational Resource Centers (ERCs) in the Sahel, built and run with the cooperation of civil society and in particular Clubs for UNESCO. These were literacy and post-literacy centers open to all.

Finally, in the 80s and 90s, the third period of my involvement was marked by emergency assistance in the context of civil war that ravaged Africa, particularly in Somalia and Liberia.

In 2001, after 32 years of service with UNESCO, I decided to remain on the continent, as my existence was strongly linked to

education and culture, and had taken root in Africa. I then set up the Kemperstichting Foundation, based in the Netherlands, with members of my family and a few friends and some of my own savings, whose main mission is to support local initiatives in the Sahel countries. This is the framework supporting the program for deaf children in Senegal.

**PG:** One of your foundation's objectives is to finance and run a literacy and integration project for deaf children in Senegal. Can you tell us more about why you decided to launch this program?

**JBK:** When I was eight months old, I was struck down by meningitis. In addition to a few other minor problems, I became deaf in my right ear. As a child with a disability, I received my basic education in four different schools with four different educational systems. Thanks to the sustained commitment of my parents and teachers, I was able to succeed in my studies. With this in mind, I decided to devote part of my time to promoting education for all deaf children. I do this in support of parents and friends in local communities who organize themselves into "Associations for the Deaf".

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**PG:** Jan, can you tell us more about the organization and operation of this program?

**JBK:** It all starts with parents and friends of the deaf who decide to organize themselves locally into an association with a view to providing deaf children with an education and integrating them with dignity into society. They set up a local "foyer de sourds" (home for the deaf) bringing together between eight and 15 children from the locality.

The Foundation's role is to support and assist this initiative. The "Associations of Parents and Friends of the Deaf" must then hire a "monitor" - we could call him or her a teacher or trainer whose job is to teach sign language and help the children become literate. To do this, they will have had to follow an intensive six-week training course built around eight thematic modules with the training financed by the foundation.

**PG:** You're a firm believer in "Small Is Beautiful", and you're very reserved when it comes to administrative apparatus, be it state or civil society. So we're a little surprised to see that it's an Amsterdam-based foundation that manages these local initiatives.

**JBK:** Of course, I'm always very attached to local realities and very suspicious of big institutions. Precisely, the foundation works locally through a Senegalese association, the Association des amis des Centres de ressources éducationnelles (AMCRE). I have already spoken to you about the



Educational Resource Centers, whose mission has expanded over time to include the education of the deaf. Gathered within the AMCR, they are the ones who will help identify the deaf locally and set up local associations. They also work with local craftsmen and producers to identify potential trades for the deaf. AMCRE also has a role in monitoring the quality of courses.

**PG:** This description doesn't mention the possible role of local or national authorities.

**JBK:** First of all, it should be mentioned that in 2016 the Kemperstichting Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding with the Secretariat of State for Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages with a view to better articulating all the actions carried out for the Education and Integration of the Deaf in Senegal. In addition, at the local level, a natural cooperation

is established, for example, between the homes of the deaf and elementary schools. We have several cases where elementary schools have welcomed deaf hostels. It is noteworthy that locally, businesses often hire these young people from the homes when they finish their studies. The diagram I've given you clearly shows how this project is organized at the local level with local players.

**PG:** Finally, Jan, can you give us some figures?

**JBK:** The program to support deaf children began in 2003. It currently involves 365 deaf children in 21 homes. These homes are managed by the parents of the children concerned. 42 monitors are in charge of teaching these children. At present, there are several requests for the creation of new centers, and we would like to eventually help a few thousand children.



IN A BAD MOOD

# Mercy for children

By Michel SEYRAT

The 22nd chapter of the Bible's Genesis has always irritated me, the one in which Abraham, patriarch of monotheistic believers, prepares to sacrifice his first-born son, Isaac. I know that biblical scholars, rabbis, pastors, clerics and theologians will scoff at my feelings, pointing out my ignorance and demonstrating how I haven't understood a thing. Duly noted. But for me, this chapter remains symbolic of the cruelties inflicted on children by adults armed with good reasons, and sacralizes the idea that a child is the possession of omnipotent parents.

Abraham is an old man, he could show a little reasonable moderation, but no, a first-born, like everything else that is first, must be sacrificed to God, no question or discussion. And so the sacrificial procession of father, son, servants and donkey carrying the wood for the pyre split by the father himself begins. Approaching the place of sacrifice, Abraham instructs his son to carry the wood, while he carries the



The sacrifice of Abraham by Laurent de LA HYRE

fire and the knife. Isaac, already learned and curious, was surprised that no lamb was available for the sacrifice. "God will provide," replied his father. And everything goes according to plan: pyre erected, child tied up, knife about to slit the throat... when an Angel cries out

to Abraham to stop the execution, assuring him that as a reward for his unshakeable faith, he will be showered with divine blessings.

For me, this story evokes many of the misfortunes experienced by children around the world and throughout history. How many

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adults immolate children on the altar of their passions for an ideology, a providential man, a deleterious illusion? How many Isaac's are devastated by the image of parents ready to sacrifice everything to their fanaticism?

It's always in the name of a god that those in power sacrifice their children: girls locked up in the name of a divine message, the intransigence of the money god, the omnipotence of dictators, the god of armies and conquests who has no use for wandering, lost and mutilated children, ethnic delusions that sort, exclude and separate, spiritual domination that satisfies its sexual pleasure on tetanized children, and come what may... Who among them still hears the voice of the Angel who stops the knife of massacre?!

It has taken centuries and centuries to recognize that children are human beings in their own right, with inalienable rights. Yet they remain the first victims of greedy potentates, implacable thugs, capturing economies, forgotten miseries and climatic catastrophes! So, megalopolis suburbs fill with wandering kids, refugee camps trap thousands of children playing in the dust, lost villages are populated by children mutilated by buried mines, and armed kids play war with live ammunition!

And what do we do - or rather, what don't we do - when, in all the world's most opulent cities, children are still living without fire



A woman holds her child in front of Russian soldiers in Mariupol. Back in March 2022, the UN drew attention to the risk of forced adoption of Ukrainian children. Photo AFP.

or shelter? Is it really an insoluble problem when we can walk on the Moon and scratch the stars?

Gentlemen of the world, please have pity on children! Sacrificing the future will never be an act of faith, neglecting children will always be an act of barbarism.



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# Living environments

Abuse

At-risk teenagers



Child Protection

Children's rights

Delinquency

Education

Disability

Family