



CHILDREN WHO LIVE OR WORK ON THE STREETS

THE IDEA

Many thousands of children live or work on the streets. Even those children who have little contact with their home or a school have close contacts with other children. Most children look for comfort and support from their friends. Children can help to strengthen and build good relationships in their families and in the community. They can learn to respect one another and learn ways of improving their own health and that of others.

Karanja's mother left home. His father's new 'wife' moved in. She was unkind to Karanja and he ran away to the city. He made a new home with some friends in a bus shelter. He would go to the rubbish tip with them each day to search through it for food and anything which he could sell.



After a week or so his skin became whitish and his head covered with sores. In a short time all the friends he stayed with had a skin disease. Other children showed them the way to a special shelter where they were able to get help.



Karanja stayed at the shelter for some months. It gave him somewhere to sleep and a few hours of classes each day. One day he found his younger brother with some older boys on the street. He didn't want his brother to live on the streets so he decided to take him back to their village where they both stayed on. They lived with their grandmother and helped her with her vegetable garden after school.



REMEMBER

***No two children are the same.
Every single child who live and works on the
streets needs to be treated as an individual.***

Where and how these activities have been used

This Activity Sheet has been used with projects for children who live or work on the streets in Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa and Uganda, among others. It has helped people working with the children to see how health topics can be 'vehicles' for basic literacy and numeracy skills. Children who live and work on the streets are often suspicious of adults. It is therefore important to get the children involved in devising ways to reach their friends with essential health information. In one project in Romania, school-going children said, 'It is only us children who can help the street children. Adults don't care for them and don't understand them. But we children can talk together. We can help them.' Child-to-Child have developed a reader, **Who Killed Danny?** about a group of children coping with life on the streets.

Understanding life on the streets

For most children life on the streets is tiring and difficult. Many children have to combine work at home, school, and in the street, and they enjoy few comforts. Many children do not like the discipline of school, and together with the many other pressures on their time it is easy for them to drop out, and difficult for them to return. Some poor families depend on the children to help get a little extra money.

When they live or work on the street, children face a variety of dangers such as harassment, brutality, diseases, road accidents, and harsh treatment by the police or other adults in the community. To protect themselves children often form groups. A group may have its own territory, rules, language, behaviour, dress, hierarchy and games. The children may share food, stories, money, medicine and work. They may offer one another friendship, solidarity and support.

A group of children often has a leader and sometimes an adult protector. The leaders often exploit the children and teach them about the bad side of street life. They persuade children to engage in petty theft, drug or solvent abuse and sex work. But the leaders can also offer security and support:

'He helps me out with the police.'

'When he has money, he takes us to see the football.'

Understanding children who live or work on the streets

There are many reasons why children live or work on the streets. Poverty, split families, violence at home or parents' deaths are the main ones. Children who live or work on the streets:

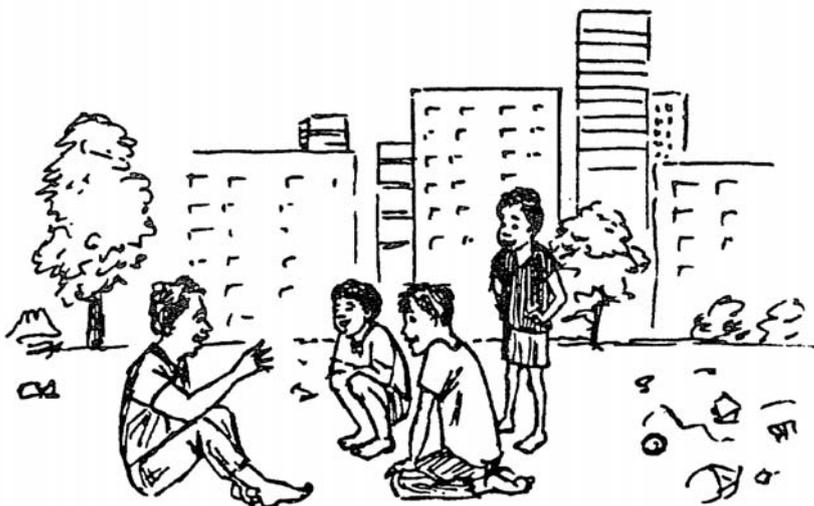
- may have no home.
- may not want to live at home.
- may be sent out of the home by their parents to sell things or to beg.
- may be trying to help their families get money.

Children affected by HIV and AIDS

In communities affected by HIV and AIDS, many children are orphaned or are unable to cope with the situation at home. Many of these children end up living on the streets, even very young children. Coping with the stress and trauma of their experiences, these children find guardians they trust and are happy to live with. If they do return home, make sure that the children are linked up with local community groups, or faith groups, who can offer them support and monitor their well-being.

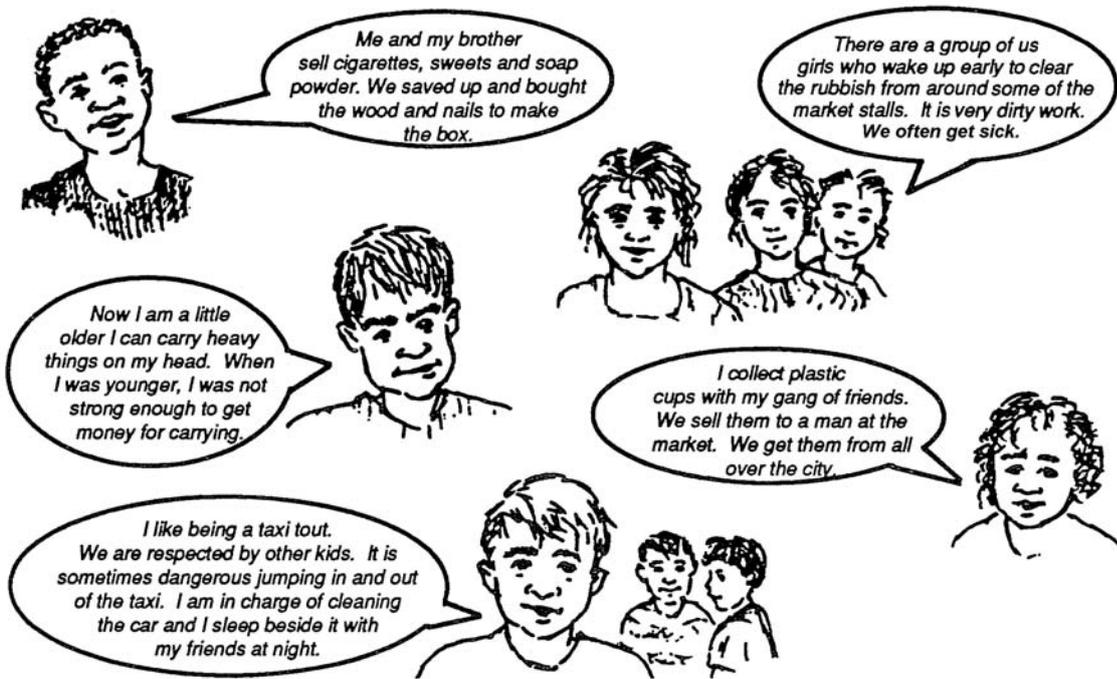
'He advises me to be serious at home and in school.'

'When I'm sick, he sympathises and buys me medicine.'



Matra (13 years) 'I usually sleep at the bus station with my younger sister and some other friends. Sometimes we go home. I cannot sleep for long. Everywhere it is dangerous ... especially for girls.'

Ahmed (10 years) 'Around six o'clock we go and sit in the park, talk about films, explain or describe some of the films that we've watched, or just talk generally about funny, funny things and laugh.'



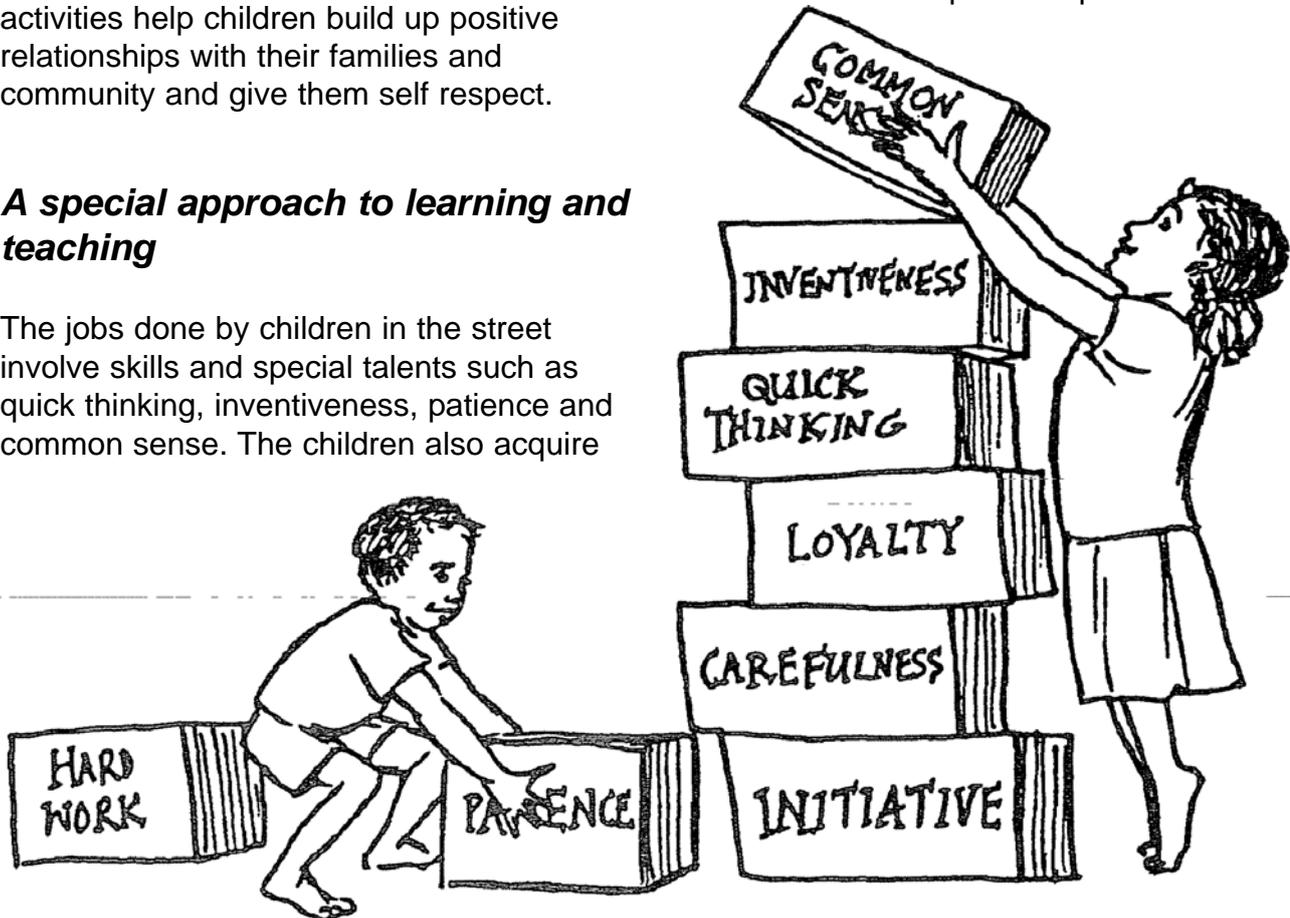
Helping children who live or work on the street

Special activities to help children who live or work on the streets can take place in the community, at home, at school or at a special project base. It is best if the activities help children build up positive relationships with their families and community and give them self respect.

some life skills, such as problem solving, but they still need support to develop the skills to cope with their lives. The strong attachments which children can form help them learn about loyalty and solidarity. Children and other people who want to help must build on these positive qualities.

A special approach to learning and teaching

The jobs done by children in the street involve skills and special talents such as quick thinking, inventiveness, patience and common sense. The children also acquire



Most children who live or work on the streets would welcome educational activities which allow them to earn at the same time. As the children are so independent, they need to be actively involved in planning activities. Let children suggest what they would like to do and help them to make choices. Help them learn to listen to each other, value other people's ideas and solve problems.

A good teacher will help children solve their own difficulties – not provide them with answers.

All activities should be relevant, even when the children plan to use their education as a way out of street life: reading material can come from everyday things like road signs, shop signs or newspapers; mathematics can be based on marketing skills.

Time spent on activities should be short and full of action.

Those working with these children need to respect, appreciate and encourage them. Non-formal educators need to work in a flexible and creative way. People who have experienced difficulties in their own childhood often make sympathetic educators.

Talk to adults who are important to the children, for instance their leaders or protectors. These adults may be both protecting and exploiting the children. Getting the cooperation and assistance of those closest to the children will be the best way to help them.

Children will need space to move, play, laugh and dance.

Activities

In the community

People in the community need to understand that it is not the children's fault when they live or work on the streets. Instead of blaming the children and treating them as thieves and pests, people need to take positive steps, both to help the children living or working on the streets, and to prevent more children joining them.

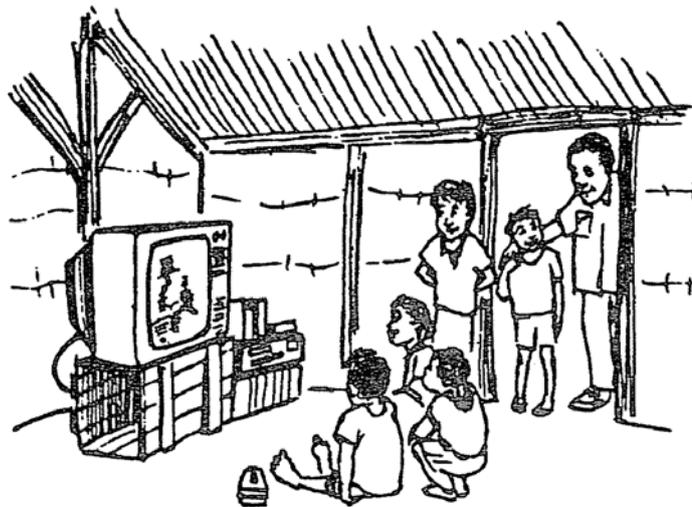
The following ideas for activities in the community have come from different parts of the world. They have helped children build links with people in the community.

- Community leaders have organised a place for children to meet together. Here the children sing, dance, and play games. In some communities, special 'after school clubs' are set up for children whose parents both work. They enjoy doing activities with their friends in a place where they feel cared for and protected.
- Young people have organised a place where children buy a cheap ticket to watch films. The 'video shed' is a place where children make contact with people and groups who can help them with education, health or sports activities.
- Artisans have provided children with useful training. They help to build children's self confidence and develop positive attitudes.
- Health workers have organised workshops. Children who live or work in the streets know that health is important: illness makes them miserable and prevents them from earning money. The most common diseases for children who live or work on the street are skin diseases, stomach aches, diarrhoea and pneumonia. Children may also need help to overcome addictions.

CHILD-TO-CHILD TRUST

- Scout groups have organised literacy clubs, recreational games, and health and environment projects for parents and children. These joint activities help restore fragile relationships between children and adults in the community.

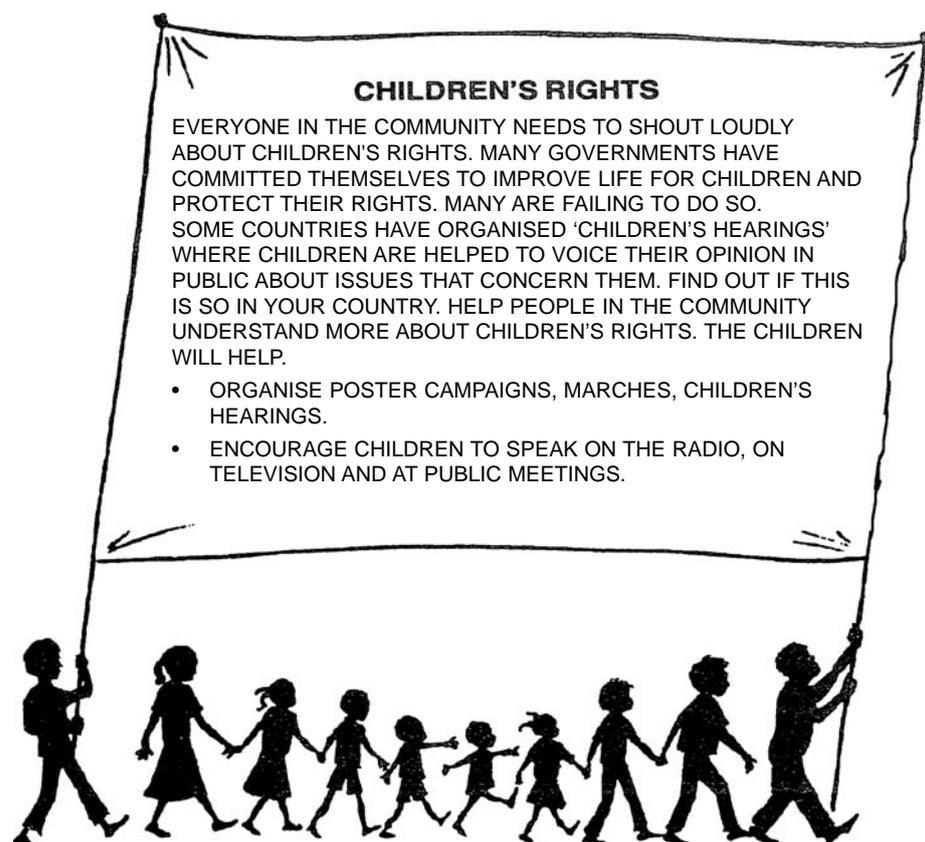
- Children have organised sports and games. Sports activities help strengthen the children's sense of discipline and earn them respect. They can bring children from different parts of a community together. Children take pride in these activities. They help to run the activities, and raise the money to keep them going. For example, getting a uniform for a sports team helps children to feel a sense of belonging.



Issues on Child Protection

Schools and other organisations need to take all possible steps to protect the children involved in their activities. They need to develop and use **child protection policy** as a basis for training and for agreeing responsibilities and procedures. Children and young people also need to know their right to be free and protected from abuse. Discuss the issues with them, talking about how they can identify risks and help to keep themselves and others safe. Ensure that they have identified a trusted adult to whom they can talk confidentially about any fears or actual cases of abuse.

Groups of children participate in short workshops on health and then help to spread health messages to their friends.



Activities at school

In a school where children are proud of the role they can play in helping one another, in spreading health messages to the community and in taking responsibility for their own environment, there will be fewer difficulties with drop-outs and vandalism.

Special activities in the classroom or at school can do a lot to help children who may be thinking about leaving home or school. Children in school can be made more aware of the dangers of street life. They can help to organise and run special activities for out-of-school children. They can encourage drop-outs to return to school.



- Child-to-Child health activities link classroom activities with those in the community and home. These activities help to build children's confidence and make them feel useful and respected.
- Children who have faced the difficulties of life away from home and school can talk to other children about their experiences. Together they can write stories and songs, and draw posters which can be used to raise awareness in the community. Concerts, competitions, exhibitions, parents' days and open days all help the community to become closer and develop a better understanding of the needs of the school and its children.
- In some schools special Child-to-Child committees have been set up. They include the head teacher, other teachers and senior pupils. The committees can plan ways to help vulnerable children in the school and the community.

The committees can help to run special 'catch-up clubs', to find children who have dropped out, and encourage them to return to school without shame. Children in the top primary classes can become the 'catch-up club' teachers or peer educators and help other children to catch up with school work they have missed.

- Sports activities can involve children who do not go to school. They can be included in teams, or be invited to train or play regularly with school-going children.

Activities at home

Poverty and ill health can lead to many tensions in a child's home. Parents and other children at home can try to help each other understand the reasons behind these difficulties, and try to work out their problems in a positive way.

In our story, Karanja learned that escaping from his home for a life on the streets was not going to solve his family's problems.

- If a child is being bad tempered and aggressive at home, other children and adults can try to find out what is wrong (children are often better at doing this). Try to think of things the child can do for the rest of the family which will make him or her feel important and useful.
- Parents whose children have a happy home and school life can teach them to care for and respect children who are worse off. If a child of a relation, perhaps an orphan, is brought into a family, s/he should be treated with as much respect as the other children.
- Children can make toys to sell or for playing dolls with younger children: footballs, juggling balls, toy cars, toy bicycles, etc. Parents and others in the community can make scraps available and encourage toy-making projects.



- Children often find elderly people easy to talk to. They can often form important friendships. Elderly people enjoy talking to children and telling them stories which teach them about their culture and traditions. This helps to build a child's sense of belonging to a family and a community.

At a special project base

A special project for children living or working on the streets can be a useful 'go-between' for the children, their families, schools and the community. It is unhelpful for projects to provide special short-term services which separate the children from people in the community who can give them the long-term support they need.

- Projects can link crafts people with children to teach them income-generating skills: soap making, market gardening, poultry keeping. Children can help to find people they like to help them.
- Children, parents and guardians, teachers, employers, and community members can use the project base to discuss problems with a project worker.
- Children and project workers can work together to make contact with their families and start rebuilding family relationships.
- Children who have budgeting skills can help less-experienced children learn to save and plan. The project can offer a system for recording and keeping money safely.
- Projects can organise special recreation programmes (sports, music, drama, crafts) which also include children living at home and going to school.



- Children are good at expressing themselves through theatre, music and dance. Some street children earn their living through street performances such as puppet shows, acrobatics and juggling, singing and bands. Performances help to make communities aware of the needs of these children in a way that also earns the children respect. Projects can help and encourage the children to do this.

Follow-up

Children can find out how many children dropped out of school before, during and after the special activities were introduced to help prevent drop-outs.

Children can try to find out what has happened to children who dropped out of their class.

Children can find out what other children learned when they went to a health workshop, a games club or a literacy class.

Children can find out what the peer educators and their students are doing at the 'catch-up clubs'. They can find out from the school teachers how the 'catch-up clubs' have helped the students and the peer educators and what the problems are.

Children can find out about the attitudes of community members towards children living and working on the street before and after a special 'awareness campaign'.



CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN AN INSTITUTION

THE IDEA

Institutions are often good at providing children with their basic needs but they sometimes separate them from the rest of the community. It is best, whenever possible, that children remain living in their communities, supported by adults. Children from families in the community can help children in institutions feel they are part of that community. Children in institutions can help each other.

Living in an institution

Children live in institutions for many different reasons. One or more parents may have died; they may have become separated from their family; or abandoned, or sent to the institution because they have no home to go to; perhaps they have lived on the streets. Institutions have many names such as 'orphanages', 'children's homes' and 'children's centres'.

Some children may choose to live in an institution; others will not want to be there. Children in institutions may be angry or aggressive. They may behave in this way because they feel sad, afraid or worthless.

Institutions can give children shelter, food, clothing, education, health care, and time and space to play. There is often good discipline and good hygiene. Good institutions will try to create a healthy, happy atmosphere.

A child's life in an institution is different from life outside. There may be few informal opportunities for children to meet people with different interests and jobs.

Children usually learn about their culture and values from the family. The ability and strength of family members give children a sense of control over their lives. In an institution, these feelings can be neglected.

Institutions can be safe and secure places for children because they have a regular routine. They should provide variety and new experiences and develop creativity and confidence.

Children develop through:

- New experiences (meeting people, seeing different things happening, looking after others).
- Living with people who love them and love each other.
- Having time and space to play and think.
- Learning that they can do things for themselves and others and act in a responsible way.
- Having trusted adults they can talk with.

Where and how these activities have been used

This Activity Sheet has been used in workshops in Ethiopia and Uganda. It helped participants to explore the idea of institutions as places which do not separate children from the community, but which help children to develop a sense of 'connection' with the community and with children living with their families in that community. In Romania, the health messengers of Bucharest have an 'action group' called the 'Hot Heart Line'. Among a number of other activities, the messengers make regular visits to younger children in institutions or in hospitals. They also join up with children from institutions for their 'summer camp' holidays.



Children need help to understand and take part in everyday community life. This helps to develop their confidence and sense of belonging.

A good institution will try to provide:

- Contact with people outside, especially with other children.
- The caring company of children and adults.
- A pleasant environment (they should feel proud of the place where they grow up).
- Plenty of activities that are creative and enjoyable.
- Links to the children's places of origin.

Tonia has lived in 'The Children's Village' after her parents and relatives died in the big flood. When she first came, she was lonely, so lonely that she cried every night until she went to sleep. Then Tonia found Miriam wanted to be her friend ... and then there were two friends to face the world together ... then Sita and Tom ... and there were four to play together and share secrets with.

Every month, Tonia grew a little less sad and a little more confident. She went to a local school and began to make friends with the children there.

Tonia had always loved young children. The school was in a poor area and there were many young children around, playing in the street and near the rubbish dumps. They were often ill and often crying. "At least at 'The Children's Village'

the young ones are well fed and safe," thought Tonia.

Then she had her big idea; why not make a play group on Saturday for these children? They could use the playground in 'The Children's Village'. She told the idea to Miriam, then to Tom and Sita, then to her friend Nina at school, then to her housemother and the teacher, and they ALL agreed to help her!

Tonia's 'group' is quite well known now. It has been going for three months, and 15 children come every Saturday. Last week one of the parents said something very nice. "My little boy looks forward all week to coming to your group. Thank you, Tonia. I'm glad 'The Children's Village' is in our town."

"And I'm glad it's here too," said Tonia.

DISCUSS

What helped Tonia to feel more happy and confident?

All children need encouragement and support. Recognise and praise their efforts.

How to help

The institution as a 'family'

In a family home, children have special roles. They help with the housework, they play with and look after younger children. Often they look after gardens and animals.

In a happy family, children are encouraged to cooperate, their efforts to help are praised and adults have the time to play with them and help them solve their problems.

It is natural for children to take part in helping with washing, cleaning, cooking, decorating, gardening and improving the place they live in.

In an institution, children should participate in the organisation and management of activities. They enjoy responsibility. They need opportunities to discuss their needs and make suggestions about solutions to problems. They will have good ideas. They also need help and encouragement from the adults. Helping activities should never be used as punishments.

Some institutions place children and adult carers in small houses to live like a family.

Older children as carers

'Twinning' older with younger children can help at first. Sometimes children can help each other in groups. Older children can help a younger child with special difficulties, e.g. a disability or some bad experience. Older children can make toys and play with younger ones. Children also need the freedom to choose their new friends and interests. Forcing children to help each other will not work. Some children will need special help from adults when they have serious problems.



Children can help each other with school work such as reading, writing and mathematics. This will help them learn to be patient and it will increase children's knowledge and understanding of a topic.

They will enjoy seeing others benefit from their teaching.

Special friends should not be separated without adults explaining carefully why it is necessary. Friends should have a chance to say how they feel about it.



In institutions, adults need help too

Institutions can be stressful places. All children need attention and are sometimes difficult. It is important that the adults working there cooperate, share problems, and accept that both they and their workmates will sometimes suffer from stress. They need enough time to have their own lives outside work. Adults are helped by good leadership and a chance to discuss their work.

Linking children with the community

Whenever possible, children living in an institution need to attend school with children living in normal families. Their teachers may need special help and support to understand the needs of children in institutions, and to find ways to integrate them fully into the life of the school. Children from an institution need friends and contacts with people in the community, and family homes they can visit.

Children from both the institution and the community can join clubs, campaigns, events and sports activities together.

Institutions can make facilities such as playing fields, meeting rooms or a library available for people in the community to use.

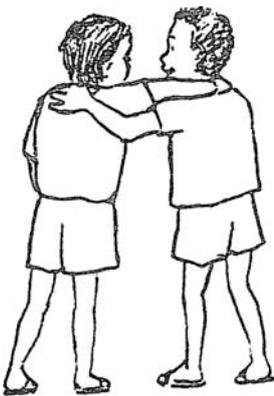
There are many ways of making the institution happy and active.

Linking children with their place of origin

A child's sense of identity is based on family, friends and where they come from. In an institution children may be living in a different part of the country or in another country. Children need to be helped and encouraged to establish good links with relatives, family friends and their place of origin.

Children can talk to others in the institution and in the community who come from their place of origin. They can look at maps, draw pictures and share this information with other children by giving talks or displaying pictures of things such as special customs or dress.

If possible, children should be helped to visit friends or relatives living in their home area. Children should be encouraged to celebrate special days or events that belong to them, such as anniversaries (e.g. of births or deaths) and religious festivals.



Bernado lived in an institution. Most of the children living there had parents who were killed in the fighting. Bernado had seen many terrible things. His friend Fernando helped him.

They played together and helped each other when they had problems at school. Although he was only ten, Fernando was the most important person in Bernado's life.

One evening, Fernando's uncle came and took him home. Fernando had no time to say good-bye to Bernado.

For many days Bernado would not speak to anyone. One of the boys in his dormitory was so worried that he went to the Director of the institution. 'You must understand that Bernado has lost his best friend,' he said. The

Director was sorry and told Bernado what had happened.

Then a message came from Fernando. He was happy living with his uncle but he missed Bernado. 'My uncle says that you can come to visit me in the school holidays.'

DISCUSS

Why was his friendship with Fernando important to Bernado?

How could the other children help Bernado?

Children helping to improve health

Child-to-Child health education activities are useful because:

- They give children the chance to participate actively in the improvement of their own health and that of others.
- They help to develop children's self confidence and sense of self esteem.
- They help children make good contacts with and contribute in a positive way to the community in which they live.

Child-to-Child Activity Sheets suggest many ways in which children can help each other and their communities. There are eight categories of activity sheets:

- Child growth and development
- Nutrition
- Personal and community hygiene
- Safety
- Recognising and helping children with disabilities
- Prevention and cure of disease
- Safe life styles
- Children in difficult circumstances
- Living and coping with HIV and AIDS.



Activity Sheet 1.1 **Playing with Young Children**

Issues of Child Protection

Schools, institutions and other organisations need to take all possible steps to protect the children involved in their activities. They need to develop and use a written set of guidelines on appropriate behaviour between adults and children (sometimes called a Code of Conduct or a Child Protection Policy) as a basis for training with adults and for agreeing responsibilities and procedures. Children and young people also need to know their right to be free and protected from abuse. Discuss the issues with them, talking about how they can identify risks and help to keep themselves and others safe. Ensure that they have identified a trusted adult to whom they can talk confidentially about any fears or actual cases of abuse.

Follow-up

Children can discuss:

- Why they had to leave their home area.
- Whether they would return.
- Why?
- What they will do when they grow up.
- Whether they would have children.
- If so, how they would treat their children as they grew up:
'I will play with my child.'
- What difference their activities have made to themselves and to others.
- Whether they now feel more connected to the local community.