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Street work

An international handbook

**Practice, methods and tools drawn from
The International Network of Social Street Workers'**

**Summary of the international guide on the methodology of street
work throughout the world (November 2008)**

Introduction

The international network of street workers first met in May, 2000. This handbook is based on the comprehensive methodology of street work, *Guide to International Street Work*, which the network published in 2009, with help from street workers from more than 30 countries.

Street work aims to protect the most vulnerable people – mostly young people – and to give them the means to protect themselves. Your challenge as a street worker is to work with children, young people and adults who live in difficult conditions and who suffer multiple forms of exclusion.

To them, you are the **first and last link** in the chain of education and social assistance. When all else has failed, you are there.

Social street work encourages the people we work with to play a large part themselves in what happens at each stage. Gradually, this approach builds a trust-based relationship. This helps break the silence and allows us to give ongoing support.

Whether it's with a child, a young person or an adult, our work is to accompany them. This means building their **self-esteem**, helping them develop **personal skills**, no matter how excluded they are, and enabling them to **participate in social life**.

There is no set model for street work. The following guidelines, though, will help street workers throughout the world **devise and develop their own practices**.

The guidelines reflect the network's commitment to **strong ethical values**: tolerance for the most marginalised populations and respect for their fundamental rights.

Getting started

Street work throughout the world follows a similar sequence of steps. Remember, though, that this process is not linear. The steps set out here overlap and feed back to each other.

It is worth spending time and energy in the early stages. This will help you integrate well into the environment in which you work. It also sets the scene for the subsequent stages.

The **first step** is for you to **study the setting**. You must learn about it both **theoretically** (its historical, social and cultural context) and **practically** (meeting people.)

Then your **second step** is to establish a **presence** where young people and others are. You **observe** them without necessarily intervening. You need to do this regularly, so that they get to know your face.

How do you identify the young people?

The team needed to locate the faces, the 'looks', the 'characters'...in the gardens, in front of shops, at the SNCF station, etc...

Given the ever-changing location of these young people, the team must constantly train their memory. This professional attitude is only possible thanks to frequent trips, to a strong team... and the sharing of the observations collected.

From *Etat Des Lieux Centre Ville*, codase France

The **third step** is to **identify** yourself. You tell people who you are and why you are there. This is when you begin to negotiate your place among them.

Blaise wasn't at home. I returned to the marketplace where I found his friends. I stayed with them for a while, chatting and playing. It was quite a long time later that they finally agreed to show me where he was sleeping... behind the toilets in the railway station, where nobody would have dreamed of looking for him'.

Street workers' workshop in Togo

The **fourth step** is to form a relationship with your target audience, in order to get close to them and offer guidance.

The observation phase helped us to note that the children are living in terrible conditions, hardly managing to feed themselves, suffering serious threats, insults and repression from the local residents. They are impressive, very solid and have their own codes. We now face the challenge of gaining their trust.

Street workers' workshop in Burkina Faso

The process from first contact to gaining someone's confidence is gradual. You will move from being treated with suspicion to a relationship based on trust. You may reach a 'threshold' – a moment when something happens that tells you that they have begun to trust you. Once this happens, you will find it easier to approach young people and others who need support.

From the moment when the local cigarette seller starts telling me that this young person has started asking questions about me (What is this guy doing here? He isn't bad, is he?), I know there has been a leap forward.

Street workers' workshop in Vietnam

The fifth step is to support and intervene. You may create a place where you interact with young people, either in groups or alone. This may slowly lead to community activities, with negotiations between those you are helping and others (traders, local authorities, etc).

The street work teams offer an informal education service to children of Kathmandu who live and work on the street... they have the chance to get involved in socialisation and educational activities – games, sports, basic education, culture, risks of life on the street, health, AIDS, drugs, basic hygiene and medical care.

The mobile teams improve relationships with local traders, landlords, the police and other organisations which help street children, to get them involved and help them to understand that street children are a part of society. Many now know the children who live around them, and they treat them with respect. Conversely, the children respect them and their property.

Street workers' workshop in Nepal

These five steps form a never-ending loop, as you meet other young people, or others who need support, and start again.

Where and when to do street work

As a street worker, you become **recognised** as a landmark or reference point. So **continuity** is important. If you move on, you should introduce the new street worker to the area and to the young people. This 'transfer of trust' is vital, and may take several months. And if you are starting somewhere, you should try to find out as much as you can from previous workers.

Dave feels that the good job done by his predecessors has facilitated his inclusion in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, his new colleagues let him wander around on his own at the beginning. During this time, you see a lot of things, but you are also seen a lot. This allows a 'word of mouth' process to start in the neighbourhood.

Street workers' workshop in Québec

Your main ally is often the political sphere (local authorities, etc). You need to talk to them about the needs and aspirations of those you work with. These goals are often easier to achieve than you may think, and local authorities etc will help you find sustainable solutions.

The institution that employs street workers must, though, respect the principles of **confidentiality**, in particular **professional secrecy**. As a street worker, you could severely compromise the **trust** placed in you, which has taken so much time to build, if you pass on information given to you in confidence.

Investing in the street

Street work means being **physically close** to those you work with. You follow and fit in with their lives. You don't force them to comply with institutionalised frameworks. By working non-intrusively, sharing their space and time, you gradually become included.

Stephanie started by going to the metro and schools at different times of the day. She was quickly included, because she knew a lot of young people already...and they helped her to get in touch with gangs. She took the time to stroll around and read in the park, to let people see her often and wonder why she was there.

Street workers' workshop in Québec

As a street worker, you may work in many places, from beaches to shopping malls, from bars to markets, from forest huts to train stations, from small alleys to town centres. Every street environment is different. A park where young prostitutes walk around freely is not the same as a bar where young people sleep on the floor. Each will have its own codes of conduct, and you need to respect those codes.

When I want to get involved in a new environment, I prepare myself both physically and mentally, and that involves working on my behaviour and my state of mind. I try to control my internal stress. I check every aspect of the way I look and the way I express myself in order not to create too big a gap between myself and the young people.

Street workers' workshop in Vietnam

During this integration phase, when you are simply wandering around and watching, you may feel guilty that you are being paid for doing what seems like nothing. You may feel that you need to be busy, to get results. Remember, though, that street work needs a long time frame. You need to get to know the area and its people in order to maximise the potential of both. The knowledge you gain of the surroundings is sure to come in handy later on.

This integration time also involves you **adapting culturally**, and in a non-judgemental way, to the codes, language, values, dynamics and conflicts etc that you come across.

In Africa, the family's honour and dignity often come before the child's welfare. Understanding this means trying to reconcile the need to safeguard the rights of the child and finding strategies that allow progress without treading on any toes. Like elsewhere, the family is not only an element of the problem but also part of the solution. We should recreate the space for words and dialogue, so that the violence perceived in their sharp expressions does not rear its ugly head...

Street workers' workshop in Senegal

As a street worker, you must show **solidarity with** yet a **difference from** the people you meet. You must not try to integrate by imitating their habits, customs and behaviours.

You need to consider the background of any situation, as well its cultural, social, political and economic context. That way, basing your decisions on your observations, rather than on assumptions, you can decide what to do.

When we talk about different cultures, this includes street cultures, young people's cultures, urban cultures, which are forged in towns and suburbs.

Street workers' workshop in Spain and the Basque Country

I ask each former child soldier to sing a song from their village and to show us some dance steps. Drawing is also used. The children thus begin to give us traditional observations on their villages. We can then try to find their families.

Street workers' workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo

As you **get to know the area**, you share with people their daily struggles and routines. This helps you build up a pool of shared experiences, on which you will build future projects.

After having been visible in the area, having dared to approach a group and felt the contempt ... after a very long process to get to know the area both physically and emotionally, the first requests appear: somebody waits for me to walk by so they can approach me.

Street workers' workshop in Spain and the Basque Country

Sharing the realities of life... a 'meal of scraps', football, a group discussion... these prompt solidarity and trust; we understand some of their thoughts, joys and pains, their feelings of rebellion or resistance. These experiences help us to have appropriate reactions to the context, adapted for these young people.

Street workers' workshop in Vietnam

Cycles of street work

Sudden changes can occur in the lifestyles of the people on the street. As a street worker, you must adapt to this. Your **timetable** has constantly to be revised. Although you may need to be in a certain place at a certain time, the reality of the lives of those you work with means that you may need to rearrange your plans, perhaps several times, to remain flexible.

Two teams (each team has two people, one who speaks Greek and one who speaks Albanian) work in two different areas every day, at varying hours, so as to observe child exploitation day and night. We see different age groups at different times. Younger children beg and sell during the day. Older children work at night, selling flowers or playing music outside night clubs and restaurants.

Street workers' workshop in Greece

You must regularly reassess the hours you spend in the field and adjust these to meet different people and adapt to changes in their lives. You mustn't lose touch with what's happening. Equally, you must take care not to get exhausted.

As time goes by, street workers often find that meetings and other demands on their time mean that they spend less and less time on the street. The following points may help you:

- You have to find a balance between these demands and offering a permanent presence on the street. You must **block off days in your diary** for the street.
- This **presence on the ground** is very important, especially to teenagers.
- You must spend enough time on the streets so that you go to **people who don't come to you**. These are the primary target of street work.
- Focus on your **availability and accessibility**.
- Ideally, stick to **specific days, specific places and specific times** on the street, so that you know where and when you are likely to find certain people, and so they know where and when they can find you.

'Loitering' : an important street work strategy

As you go through the lengthy integration process, you start to understand the street, its atmosphere, its rhythms and the relationships that occur there. Take the time to loiter – to 'do nothing'. It will help you build your role in a subtle way, to become accessible, without imposing your mandate.

I approached Rocky, 8, by offering him a bottle of sugary drink and some food because he was really hungry. After a few meetings, he ended up talking to me very sincerely about his situation. His mother had left for Angola when he was four years old, after the death of his father. There was no one to see to his needs (school, clothing, food...). After obtaining from him some of his family details, I contacted the grandfather. A single meeting between Rocky and his grandfather was enough to get the two happily back together. Today Rocky has a normal life.

Street Workers' workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The art of knowing how to do 'nothing' can become a key to street work.

One of the tricks to being comfortable in the places frequented by your target audience: arrive a bit early and keep busy doing something else (reading the paper for example): you can learn a lot from street work!

Street workers' workshop in Québec

In terms of your work, you won't plan everything that you do from the outset. But you still need to work **appropriately** and **efficiently**. These points may help:

- think of projects – even 'ready-made' street work programmes – as **flexible**
- be **creative** and **adapt** these programmes as necessary
- **observe, analyse** and get **involved** with others
- remember that the **quality** of this process is more important than the results
- **commit** to being receptive to everything the situation leads to, either thanks to or in spite of your work.

Getting known on the ground, consolidating contacts

As a street worker, you eventually end up being part of the environment – available to those who need your support. Through your networks, you will be able to restore a basic sense of solidarity and contribute to the social well-being of the neighbourhood.

In Quebec, the '*Poteau*' concept refers to people with whom the street worker maintains a strong relationship. These people can help the street worker integrate. Other countries call these people 'relays', 'contacts', 'partners', 'key persons' etc.

One has to establish links with third parties who share the same space or who are in the vicinity of young people on the streets (for example the owner of a popular hotel or bar, the person who sells cigarettes in the neighbourhood...)

Street workers' workshop in Vietnam

You must always be clear about your mission. Tell people what you will be doing.

The question "*What do you do?*" comes up a lot.

- You will probably **vary your answer**, depending on whom you are talking to.
- Explain why you **build contacts and relationships with young people and adults**.
- Give some examples, but never compromise on **confidentiality**.
- Be ready to explain your relationship with your **employer** and with **other institutions**, such as the police.

Too often, street workers are asked to address issues of safety and social 'problems'. Politicians tend to confuse what street workers do with what other professionals do. They sometimes ask the police to do social activities, for example. Or they expect street workers to help establish public order.

Young people and other people experiencing difficulties need to build a constructive relationship with the law. They need to be clear about what the police do, what the educational teams do, and how the two differ.

As a street worker, you may be the only law-abiding person with whom young people can establish a free and stable relationship. Young people often put you to the **test**. It is up to you to react in a way that will establish you as a **credible** adult and a point of **reference**.

One kind of test was to see how the street worker reacts to someone who has a knife discreetly sticking out of his clothes.

Street workers' workshop in Québec

Street work is socio-educational work with people who are socially excluded, in their environment. This means that you work within a challenging network of different partners, including:

- the young people and adults themselves
- others who live in the neighbourhood
- the social professionals who work there
- local politicians.

Your team will have to negotiate its place in this network. This implies stating the characteristics of this educational and informal work (of which street work is a fundamental part). Terms such as “education in the community”, “social presence”, “outreach work” often don’t manage to convey the particular, unique elements of street work; you should explain your work carefully.

Some institutions may want you to become a partner before you have even started to get to know the target audience. Remember, though, that your very first step is to establish a solid relationship, based on trust, with those on the street.

The faces of street work

There are **three kinds of action**:

- **Work with individuals**
- **Group work**
- **Community work and work with organisations**

Street work develops by **making use of the potential** in a given situation. The **aims and objectives** are secondary.

You should not impose **your own** solution. Instead, you should simply wait for some elements to come together. Then you will be able to **accompany** a process that has become inevitable.

This process is inseparable from the **context** and **environment**. You rely on the circumstances of the situation, rather than impose a predefined solution.

Some workers may offer a meal ticket, sports equipment, show tickets, a travel ticket, or the facilities to record music or make a video, or even condoms and syringes.

These tools don’t work if they are a means to an end. If, though, you offer them in the spirit of a meaningful relationship, they can be valuable.

Individual support

You may be asked to support people facing various difficulties, both in the short and long term. Offer help in a way that respects individual rights, confidentiality, and the need for emancipation.

Listening and negotiating in individual support.

After you have made contact, spend time with the individual and talk about what interests them, about important and trivial things. They will begin to tell you their fears and needs. Then, together, using different techniques and tools, you will devise a plan of action. This phase can be more or less structured. It is important for both of you to know where this educational relationship is leading.

You should sum up the situation, the goals, and the means and tactics to be used. You will regularly evaluate and revise this plan with the people concerned and with the street workers' team. This will put the individual at the centre of the situation as an agent of change. It will also prevent counterproductive (e.g. patronising) attitudes.

The street worker needs to have a great deal of patience and a lot of ingenuity. The people we work with are vulnerable. Their situations are complex. They can only accept themselves if they feel accepted by others, if they feel that they are not stigmatised or disapproved of.

Street workers' workshop in Senegal

The process within the relationship of assistance

This work is quite intense: the moment when barriers begin to break down is the most important one. It is the beginning of a relationship, even if fragile.

The first request often hides the real need. You may be asked for concrete things (such as food or shelter). Or you may get more requests for help on more complex issues (illegal drug-taking, work, emotional situations, family...).

We met Anis, 18. His only request was to help him find some accommodation. But several signs alerted us to the fact that this boy was hiding great suffering: his heavy, regular consumption of alcohol, cannabis, and his state of bodily hygiene indicated the state he was in.

He told us of his relationship with his mother, using very harsh words. But at the end of the conversation, when we suggested that he attend an educational camp, he asked us to contact her so that he could stay with her for the three weeks.

This interview allowed us to evaluate the different areas to be worked on:

First area: Accommodation, food, hygiene.

Second area: His suffering (his relationship with his mother) and his self-esteem.

Third area: The consequences of this suffering; (alcohol and cannabis consumption, violent and delinquent behaviour.)

Extract from the activity report 2007 from the Eybens team, France

As a street educator, you will accompany a person as far as they want to go, without judging them. Keep your focus only on the individual and what they are capable of.

Denise is nearly 50. She seems to have drunk a lot. She has been a prostitute for 20 years, and her violent husband takes all her earnings. Her parents both committed suicide. Her daughter died after being tortured and raped. The couple responsible will soon finish their prison sentence. Isabelle doesn't want to go home anymore. We put her in touch with a night shelter, but she runs away. We then put her in touch with another association that finds her a place to live. Denise decides to stop her work as a prostitute. Today, she is about to get divorced and is slowly starting to enjoy life.

Street workers' workshop in Belgium

Group action

Group action can be a door-opener. Street work relies on activities that build shared social experiences and increase trust.

At first, your interventions won't seem to matter much. But later, when problems appear, you will already have laid the groundwork, so that you can act effectively when the time comes.

It is sometimes helpful to use 'excuses to meet'. You can propose various group activities in the street (capoeira, drumming, juggling, football...). You must explain why you are doing this. "We are social workers; we have skills and time to spend; we must keep secrets; if you have a problem, we are available; if you don't, if you don't want to talk about them, then we play football." For adults, you can use different 'excuses': distributing condoms or syringes, offering soup or coffee. One street worker finds that her dog offers a pretext for people to start talking.

Street workers' workshop in Belgium

In Quebec, 'World Circus' offers young people a learning process that is both fun and disciplined. They gain confidence and skills, and participate in group projects that lead to social recognition and sometimes professional achievement.

Street workers' workshop in Québec

Group perspective

If street workers do a good job with groups, then the groups will, in turn, support the individual members. We focus on the objectives of groups: we organise leisure activities, or activities that may lead to employment, the promotion of culture, and initiatives such as healthy living, etc. This group perspective is common in Mediterranean and southern countries, where it is more difficult to work outside these groups.

In Belo Horizonte, we use Capoeira and drums as a way of hanging around with young people. In the long term, this group coordination has other educational advantages. The young capoeirista in turn sets an example to his favela of origin.

Street workers' workshop in Brazil

Community action

Through your actions as a street worker, you will become integrated into the environment in which you work. Local people will recognise you as a credible person, able to help the community meet its needs. Thanks to the individual help you offer, you will be confronted by many problems. Those problems that you see time and again are the real concerns of society. You should draw these to the attention of local politicians.

Community perspective

A community perspective gives you an overall picture. It makes it possible for people to reach support that is already in place, and create support they still need.

In Colomiers in the South of France, street work brings together different age groups, to mix social and cultural backgrounds. We ask people to reveal their passions, their desires, and to transform these into project proposals. They all then participate in a real citizen analysis, based on the discussions that these ideas generate. Prospective workshops are then implemented.

ACSE Colomiers

As street workers, we empower target audiences. Through participation and creativity, they feel socially useful.

We also support the work of local associations so that people can reach support that already exists. Your mission is to re-establish links between the people in need, and their environment. It is not to solve all their problems alone.

The street worker is often identified as the person who holds the key to solutions of all the problems. I met kids and parents from a difficult neighbourhood in Kinshasa and explained that I was there to discuss the opening of a training centre and a specific programme. The kids asked me to find solutions to various problems (school, the lack of electricity). Some mothers asked me to promote the children's cause to the government, UNICEF etc. In the end I asked myself: Who am I? A street worker or Father Christmas?

Street Workers' workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo

You should not get involved with these existing institutions. Instead, you should **mediate**. You can help people in need reach help that's already in place. And you can help those partners understand more about the young people that may come to them.

Attitudes and approaches

The most important thing is not the activities or interventions, but the trust-based relationship... Children ... need someone to listen to them before giving them advice. We shouldn't lie or make promises that can't be kept. But we should believe in their abilities and give them value. These are professional qualities that youth workers acquire through experience.

Street workers' workshop in the Philippines

As a street worker, you have the privilege to be part of people's lives. You can witness their living conditions and lifestyles, the highs and lows of their daily routines.

Like other methods, street work uses **active listening**. But what makes street work different is that this active listening happens in the individual's own environment. They decide when and where they talk. It could be on the steps of a building, in a car, in a bar or on a bench or curb, or when kicking a ball around.

Communication at this stage is extremely important. You are setting up a direct listening channel that is confidential, voluntary and neutral.

She was begging and washing car-windows on the streets with her children. At first she was hesitant about talking to strangers... By opening a friendly conversation, asking about the health of her children, we made communication possible. It's very important to stress that we didn't try to get information from her from every contact. Being a good listener helps build a stable and permanent contact. Here, the mother started confessing her worries...After more than 4 months, we managed to involve her and her children in every activity.

Street workers' workshop in Albania

For this listening exercise to work, your own position must be clear, so that you don't confuse the person. You are there to go *in* to their environment – and then *out* again. You are a messenger, a bridge, a first contact person, the missing link, someone who consoles and supports.

You are not a resident, nor a neighbour, nor a member of the family. You will be friendly, but you are not a friend. For this reason, it is neither appropriate nor effective for you to live in the neighbourhood in which you work.

Street workers ... are expected to be different from the adults these young people know in their everyday lives. We create the opportunity to connect with the reality outside the social ghetto. It is easier if the street worker doesn't live in the ghetto. We had a problem with street workers doing a great job, but living just a few streets away ... kids started to knock on their doors ... Sometimes there are moments when you don't want to be at work.

Polish street workers' workshop

This attitude calls for:

- **commitment**
- a **non-judgemental** approach
- respect for **discretion and confidentiality**
- **indirect action** as the most efficient approach
- the ability to **adapt constantly**
- not getting bogged down in **planning**
- accepting that **being in the field** is sometimes part of the method even when it seems ineffective.

Street workers usually feel more at ease (but also more doubtful), when they have a broad mandate. That is, when they don't focus on one issue (illegal substance abuse or delinquency). Looking at these issues in a more general way will allow you to put them into their social context.

As a street worker, the only way to achieve results is to work:

- **long-term**
- **slowly**
- **continuously.**

At first, chatting or taking part in games may seem unimportant. But focusing on such informal dimensions of your work is time well spent. It establishes relationships and trust. It means that later, when a problem appears, you have already set the stage. You are then able to respond flexibly to a situation. You can react in a way that is appropriate to the needs, hopes and culture of the people concerned. This is called the 'double bait'.

Kamel often came to my sporting activities. He sometimes had bruises, but never spoke about them. One day, I met him in the street. His arm was broken by his father. He told me of his problem. He would never have come to talk to me if we had not got to know each other through the sporting activities. Our relationship meant that at the most important moment, I could be efficient and offer support. His father never hit him again.

Street workers' workshop in Belgium

Humour

Humour cannot be separated from street work. If you use humour with intelligence and insight, it can lighten difficult situations. Avoid sarcasm and irony, which can be hurtful.

While working with children, try to be inventive, funny, and dynamic. Try to vary daily activities, taking heed of the children's requests. This way the children should hopefully remain attentive and not get bored.

Street workers' workshop in Nepal

Connect people with the system

As a street worker, you act as a link between those on the street and other professionals. If existing support structures are properly connected, they form effective social pathways. As a street worker, you can go with young people to places and events they would not otherwise go to (youth housing, sports facilities, cultural activities). You can accompany adults to public social services (legal advice, the health system, social institutions...).

Partnerships are the key point for a holistic and successful intervention. A network of different governmental and non-governmental structures... provides services to children and their parents.

Street workers' workshop in Albania

Directing and opening new services

Many of the requests you will get will be beyond your capacity. You must then redirect, or 'signpost', people towards more specialised professionals.

Usually, the way to accompany the person is to set up a support framework with the relevant professional.

Sometimes, though, there is no such specialised service or professional. This is where street work can pioneer the support that is needed. A street education programme could, for example, set up a pilot project in response to strong demand. The local authority may later take this project on.

Street workers can thus set up many things such as toy libraries, sanitary care services, youth services, or information centres. We may temporarily invade other educational sectors in order to respond to – and then institutionalise – demands. In this way, your intervention as a street worker will have a big impact on the community.

Encourage the most vulnerable people to participate

Street workers try to give a voice to the people on the street, so that the authorities hear them. In this way, people on the street can influence policies. This is not an easy task. But you must not forget this political dimension of your work. It has an enormous effect on individuals and communities.

Broadening people's perspectives

Street work helps people to leave the neighbourhood, to experience new services, structures or places. This 'opening up' helps them to become autonomous and to realise what they are capable of.

Carrying out actions with natural groups

For individuals, especially in southern countries, their group is everything. Strengthening its ties is the best method of prevention. Street workers propose activities, and from these, the group questions itself and then consolidates.

Supporting others in the community

You should take the time to talk to and listen to others in the community. Waiters, shop-owners, police officers, mechanics, sales people, leaders etc; these people naturally shape community life. You can provide them with support, too.

Being part of community life

Street work takes place in the community. You must recognise the community context, in order to make it your accomplice. There is no point making changes to a person's situation without more profound and collective change. When you help those you work with participate in the community's activities, you help boost trust and bring people together.

Act as a mediator in this community

As a street worker, you can act as a mediator when residents, traders, young people and adults live near each other. You can help dissolve tensions and even improve solidarity among people who would otherwise continue to be in conflict.

A mediation service between traders and people of the street contributes to smoother co-existence and even integration.

Street workers' workshop in Québec

The owner-chef rejected street children who surrounded her restaurant and bothered her customers. A street worker then invited them to have a meal with her. As a result, she no longer sees them simply as barriers to her business, but as needy young people. Now, she offers them the food that her customers have left. This also saves the young people from the disdainful looks they used to get as they went through the bins to get to the food.

Street workers' workshop in Senegal

Conclusion

Street work has no ultimate job description. This is because, in street work, success hinges on your ability to develop and sustain trust-based relationships with those you are working with - those who need your support.

As a street worker, your aim is to help them recognise their value as individuals, the power they have to influence their situation and their future. You also help others recognise and respect the fundamental rights of those on the street. You do this by offering an alternative to the view of people on the street as 'problems'; they are, first and foremost, people.

If you follow the guidelines outlined in this handbook, you can make a difference.

Strategies

- Be visible and available.
- Do not judge people.
- Limit yourself to observing acts and situations.
- Be a resource for the community.
- Be interested in people and their backgrounds.
- Work in a political and community perspective.
- Work with the individual not as a symptom, but as an agent of change.
- Base intervention on relationships and affection.
- Offer the community a way of seeing themselves that's different from the stigmas they have been exposed to.
- Connect people, groups and existing social paths and organisations.
- Create neutral space to meet people and promote activities.

Tactics

- Be known in the neighbourhood.
- Be discreet and respectful.
- Have varied and useful information: first aid, Internet sites, risk mitigation, news about the neighbourhood, provide kinship and friendship...
- Learn to understand the demands.
- Offer yourself as someone people can relate their sorrows or joys to.
- Show yourself to be a link, someone who can liaise between the neighbourhood, between the institutions and the people.
- Avoid becoming too identified with either of those two environments; operate on the border of authority.
- Set up training, leisure, adventure, recreational activities, etc to open up new horizons, promote participation and positive experiences.
- Create a sense of trust and situations in which demands can be made and people can be heard.

Key words

- Availability and nearness.
- Regular and solid presence.
- Discretion, respect for life rhythms and cultures.
- Understand the landscape.
- Understand the times.
- Make contacts.
- References for the community.
- Flexibility: adapt to any situation.
- Know and recognise different professionals on the ground.
- Have your own tools and resources.
- A team that provides support.