



Asmae - Association Sœur Emmanuelle
Bimonthly newsletter n°3 - September 2009

A la une

"Dis moi, pourquoi tu joues?" : l'importance du jeu dans le développement de l'enfant

Tous les enfants du monde jouent. C'est par le jeu qu'ils découvrent le monde, se familiarisent avec la vie en société, testent leurs limites, grandissent. Mais pourquoi jouent-ils ? Que leur apporte le jeu ?



Le jeu a une place primordiale dans la vie de l'enfant et un rôle essentiel pour son développement. Aujourd'hui, le droit de jouer est un droit fondamental de tous les enfants, reconnu par la Convention Internationale des Droits de l'Enfant, adoptée par les Nations Unies en 1989. Consciente de cette réalité, Asmae - Association sœur Emmanuelle intègre le jeu dans ses projets avec les enfants défavorisés.

[> lire la suite de l'article](#)

URGENCE BURKINA FASO : Inondations à Ouagadougou



Le Burkina-Faso est sous les eaux. Dans la nuit du 1er septembre dernier, des pluies torrentielles ont déferlé sur le pays. Bilan de la catastrophe : 150 000 personnes ont perdu leur maison et sont aujourd'hui sans-abri. Face à cette situation d'urgence, Asmae -

Association sœur Emmanuelle se mobilise.

Nous avons besoin de votre aide. Même si ce n'est pas dans notre mode de fonctionnement habituel, nous ne pouvons pas laisser nos partenaires et les enfants démunis face à cette crise.

[> lire la suite](#)

"Why are you playing?" the importance of play in a child's development

All children play. It is through play that they discover the world, develop social skills, test their limits and grow. But why do children play? What does play give them?

Play has a crucial role in the life of a child and is essential for healthy child development. Today, the right to play is recognised as a fundamental right for all children by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. Asmae – Association Sœur Emmanuelle is aware of this fact and has incorporated play into its projects with disadvantaged children.

In 2002, the Kanlungan Sa Erma organisation, one of our partners in the Philippines, identified the need for children to play and since then, has been organising play sessions. However, the shortage of personnel means that such sessions cannot always take place on a regular basis. Last July, a volunteer project was organised in order to provide children with more play opportunities and to give Kanlungan staff a break while also learning new skills.

Five Asmae volunteers therefore set off to support the Kanlungan team with their projects both on the streets and at their different children's centres. The programme included singing, dancing, group games, craft activities such as making board games, masks, puppets, necklaces and bracelets, and T-shirt painting and salt dough. There was even a cookery workshop with pancakes at the top of the menu. Most popular of all were the strings of beads, an activity which Kanlungan plans to develop as one of its moneymaking activities for children.

July is a particularly apt time for a play activities project at the temporary shelter as new children are being received at this time. This project enables Kanlungan to get to know each individual child through different recreational activities.

Growing up having fun

Play is, above all, a natural recreational activity. All children play spontaneously. The only objective consciously sought through play is the pleasure that it brings. Children laugh, have fun and create an imaginary world in which they can forget the reality around them for a time.



Photo : Georges Saillard

Play is an essential tool for a child's all-round development, encouraging the awakening of the child at all developmental stages. Through play, children gradually begin to comprehend the world and to discover and understand their surroundings. Children are made through play, which forms the basis of the majority of learning activities. Most importantly, it enables children to find out about their bodies, their physical limitations and abilities such as strength and motor skills.

Beyond psychomotor skills however, play promotes a child's intellectual development: concentration, language, attention span and analytical skills. Children also find out about themselves. Through play they learn to accept others. They develop a sense of team and community spirit and learn to respect the rules. Emotionally, children use play to express their fears and to get rid of aggression and other tensions. They learn to accept reality and to build their futures. Above all however it is through play that a child develops its personality.



Photo : Georges Saillard

These developmental stages are progressive. Up until the age of three, children develop their motor skills. From the age of four, children extend their imaginations and creativity through their play. It is

not until the age of seven that a child takes on board the rules of play. In this way they develop their social skills and learn how to work within the rules of life as a part of society.

Learning through play

According to the psycho- sociologist Jean Epstein: (*an expert in childhood and the author of many works on child development –Ed.*) "Children do not play in order to learn, they learn because they play ". In Madagascar, as in many countries throughout the world, traditional teaching methodology is based on repetition, following a highly theoretical official curriculum which is of little relevance to the world children live in.



Photo : Florence Gogeon

The "Vowel Family" approach was born of a desire to make teaching more interactive through play. This simple method is appropriate for all small children and enables them to learn the alphabet while playing. The Vowel Family members are Madame A, Monsieur O, their son I and daughter E.

With the support of Asmae, our partners in Madagascar, AIC and CPM, developed this approach and teachers there have designed interactive learning tools based around the Vowel Family.

Each character is represented by a paper puppet and has its own belongings, a story and a rhyme to emphasise its letter sound. A range of activities can be developed around each character such as writing workshops, songs, recitals and story making. These activities promote the learning of various skills such as language, memory, handwriting and motor functions.

This approach promotes children's development and familiarises them-through play - with the letters "a, e, i, and o". They are able to recognise the letters' sounds and symbols, and to make a link between the two and to memorise them. In this way, children are prepared for reading and writing. The approach also encourages children's involvement and rouses their curiosity; through the pleasure they gain in playing they develop their desire to learn and a sense of trust. A favourable learning environment is established. Play based learning activities make school appealing to children and therefore help to reduce dropout rates.



Photo: Florence Gogeon

Play, a right for all children

Play therefore has a crucial role in the life of a child and is essential for a child's development. Today, the international community recognises the right to play as a fundamental right for all children. Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations in 1989, states that every child has "the right to rest and leisure, and to engage in age appropriate play and recreational activities." It also encourages "the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for ... recreational and leisure activity".

Because this fact is even more important for disadvantaged children, Asmae is committed to developing educational play activities within its projects.

Mady Chanrion

In collaboration to Marina Dubois, Asmae coordinator in the Philippines – Luzon

BURKINA-FASO EMERGENCY: Floods in Ouagadougou

Burkina Faso is under water. During the night of September 1, torrential rain poured down on the country. 150,000 people have lost their homes and are currently without shelter. Because of this emergency situation Asmae – Association Sœur Emmanuelle is taking action. We need your help. Although this is not how we usually operate, we cannot leave our partners and destitute children to face this crisis on their own.

During the night of September 1, torrential rain flooded Burkina Faso's capital city Ouagadougou. The damage is serious. On September 10, seven deaths had been recorded and more than 150,000 people had been evacuated from their homes. 110 emergency shelters have been opened to accommodate those affected. The majority are currently staying in schools in the city where they are receiving basic food supplies from the government of Burkina Faso.

Burkina Faso has not experienced such heavy rains for one century. Almost 300 mm of rain fell on Ouagadougou in one night, half the annual rainfall for Paris! The city was flooded within a few hours. Dams overflowed into the old districts where the majority of houses were made of banco, or mud bricks, and are not very sturdy. A total of almost 25,000 homes collapsed and personal belongings were swept away by the floods.

In the centre of the city, the outlet channels could not cope with the volume of water and overflowed onto the surrounding streets. The city's main bridges collapsed, the national hospital was flooded, the drinking water supply contaminated and a power station was also severely affected...



Facing this serious toll, Burkina Faso's Prime Minister Tertius Zongo has appealed for international aid. "The government cannot manage the situation on its own. That is why I am calling for your active support" he declared on September 4. On Wednesday, September 9, the Burkina Faso authorities met with voluntary organisations and NGOs to coordinate relief.

Our Burkinabe partners have also been seriously affected. The ABASF/E (which provides support to women and children in difficulty) has seen its clinic destroyed. Several women who work for the organisation have lost their homes. The ICCV, a neighbourhood organisation, is providing aid to 150 people who are staying in the school next to the community library. One meal per day is being provided thanks to donations from the local community. Unfortunately, the new wall which ASMAE volunteers began building at the nursery school last month has not survived the flooding!

Coordinators and staff from *Kamzaka* have also suffered heavy losses as the Ouidi district, where they all lived and which borders the dam has been severely affected. The people of Ouagadougou will find it hard to recover from this disaster.



On the spot, the rain is still falling. The relief effort has begun, but our partners need our support because of the extent of the disaster and the health consequences if aid does not arrive quickly. With our assistance, the ICCV, the ABASF/E and Kamzaka could supply food, drinking water and clothing to affected families right away. When the rains stop, our partners will help families to rebuild their homes and community buildings.

Asmae – Association Sœur Emmanuelle has therefore decided to establish an emergency fund for those people affected. Please send your donations, by cheque or postal order made payable to Asmae – Association Sœur Emmanuelle, to the following address: 26, boulevard de Strasbourg - 75010 Paris. Please write « **Urgence Burkina** » on the back of your cheque.

You will receive a tax receipt for a 66% tax deduction on the sum donated for up to 20% of your income. If the donations received exceed what is needed to provide emergency relief and fund rebuilding programmes, Asmae will donate the remaining funds to our partners in Burkina Faso as part of the ongoing programme of activities we regularly support.

For their sakes, thank you!

Georgia Guinault, Asmae Coordinator for Africa

From the coordinator of our partner organisation ICCV in Ouagadougou:

Nothing Left

A small crack,
Then a gaping hole,
Filling with water from the sky,
From five in the morning until five in the evening.
A new river swells.
A small section of the wall and then everything else,
Is swept away From OUAGADOUGOU!
The raging torrent
Takes it all.
Houses are raised to the ground; disaster.
Nothing but a memory, lost homes
The only remaining image
In the minds of families who vaguely try
To envisage the future.

Simon Nacoulma

Clowns Without Borders perform in the Philippines



Les Clowns Sans Frontières font le show aux Philippines



Clowns Sans Frontières, c'est une association d'artistes qui parcourt le globe depuis près de quinze ans avec dans leur bagage, un nez rouge, un numéro de cirque, de jonglage, de la musique et une envie :

offrir du rire et de la joie aux populations victimes de la misère, de la guerre ou de l'exclusion, avec une pensée particulière pour les enfants. Pauline Scherer est l'organisatrice du projet aux Philippines, en partenariat avec Asmae. Une jolie rencontre, pour le plus grand bonheur des enfants. Récit.

[> lire leur témoignage](#)

Tell us about your shows in the Philippines. How were they?

Last April, we spent three weeks travelling on Panay, the Visayas and in Manila with a team of six performers: an accordionist and percussionist, a clown, a dancer, a juggler, a puppeteer and a Filipino percussionist who joined us out there. A photographer travelled with us throughout the adventure and I was responsible for the organisational aspects.



We had established an initial partnership on Panay with an organisation called Chameleon. They support young girls who have suffered sexual abuse and are already using circus skills in their recovery programme. We also decided to take the show to the remote rural villages where Chameleon runs community development projects. Through Asmae, we were put in contact with Ulikid, an organisation for parents of disabled children, and we put on our show for them in the local gymnasium.

When we arrived in Manila, we restricted our work to street children. Asmae coordinator Marina Dubois introduced us to two charitable foundations, Virlanie and Hope Worldwide and to a local voluntary organisation Kanlungan Sa Erma. We put on our show at drop-in centres for street children and at a detention centre for minors. It was a powerful moment to offer entertainment and a breath of air to children who are locked up and don't have an opportunity to see much on the outside.

We also wanted to work directly on the street so that we could really relate to the children. We travelled with the mobile street units, voluntary buses that travel up and down the streets carrying games, toothbrushes and food and which have fixed meeting points with the children. At the end of the show, we organised some small workshops. Every child could meet the characters and have a go at juggling, working a puppet and playing the accordion.

What sort of show did you put on?

We developed the show when we got there. In the Philippines, we had four days to prepare it. The story was based around pictures, there were no words. We set the story in the world of the islands so that it would be familiar to the children. It was a dreamlike story in which an accordionist gets caught in a fishing net. There was also a double act between the French clown from the team and one of the girls from Chameleon, who made a wonderful clown. They were caught up in a storm out at sea. We made a lot of use of music through an interesting exchange between the French accordionist and the Filipino percussionist.



We always work with the imaginary, using objects that we find in situ. What we are trying to put across to children through the show is that by using what they have around them and their imaginations, they can play, make up stories and escape. We try to encourage them to use their imaginations. In any kind of day-to-day life, and even more so when that day-to-day life is tough, it helps to have access to play, creativity and imagination.

How were you received by the children?

During the show there was a genuine delight. It is very unusual to have indifferent children. Even those who have been seriously marked by life, who are shut off and who have difficulty communicating and smiling react positively to the performance.



We got a fantastic reception, especially in Manila with the street children. We would have barely turned into a street before the children were running towards us and jumping on us. They would not let go of us all the time we were there. It is very upsetting. They have such a need for affection and we cannot really provide this for more than a moment. We were also very well received on Panay.

With the disabled children from Ulikid for example, our show helped to improve how they are regarded within the community. (In the Philippines, disabilities are often viewed badly - Ed). Because of them, other members of their community could enjoy a show. This moved us very much.

What will be the follow-up to this project?

This first visit to the Philippines was to establish initial contact. We did many things in very little time and met so many people. From next year onwards, the idea is to develop regular and permanent projects over several years with a few targeted organisations. We shall continue to work with Asmae's partners, Ulikid, Virlian and Kanlungan Sa Erma, where we had excellent contact with the children and educators.

Performing will remain our key idea. We want people who never have the opportunity to do so, to enjoy a show. It provides a pleasant moment and provokes laughter, tears and thoughts.

We would also like to offer workshops on performing, creativity and teaching, and give training sessions to street educators so we can work together on incorporating the arts into their day-to-day activities. In the Philippines, people are especially keen on anything artistic; singing and dancing is a part of life. We may also go there with a hip-hop dancer on the team so we can run workshops with teenagers who are on the street and show them some real skills. This would enable us to create an additional link. We try to listen to what people want.



We are also going to try to meet with Filipino performers so we can work with them. They provide us with the themes and cultural awareness so we can get as close as possible to the country where we are going. We can help to raise the status of the profession of performer in countries where it is not at all recognised and where people do not make a living from it. There are examples in other countries of local performers taking over projects and working directly with NGOs. We do not want to force this type of development but it is an interesting perspective; it enables our projects to be more effective.

What is Clowns Without Borders' objective?



In the early days of Clowns Without Borders, I think that our slogan was "*because moral support is just as important as material support*". This pinpoints our state of mind perfectly. We are not meeting children's primary needs but we do bring them lightness and laughter. This provides a break and a breath of fresh air for people in difficult circumstances.

We always try to develop our projects in partnership with organisations that are there on the ground throughout the year so that our work compliments ongoing activities rather than just provides the odd bit of sparkle.

Why the partnership with Asmae?

The Asmae approach appeals to us very much. We like the idea of development, the teaching and psychosocial objectives for the children and the partnerships with local organisations which Asmae also helps to set up. Our areas of work are similar and we found that we had a lot in common with the two coordinators in the Philippines. This is not necessarily the case with all NGOs; some have very different ways of working. Now, as soon as we see that Asmae is present in a country, we are happy!

The coordinators have played a real facilitating role. Before putting on the performances they helped us to identify potential voluntary organisations and to arrange the practical side of our project. We hope to involve them in our planning and in developing the project in the long-term, because they live there and are aware of the issues and realities.

Although we have focused on specific areas in the country, we are still a transient presence. It is essential for us to work in partnership with everyone involved when it comes to a complex issue such as the street children of Manila.



You can find out more about Clowns Without Borders' work in the Philippines, and see photos, by visiting their blog: <http://csfphilippines.blogspot.com/>

You can also support Clowns Without Borders by coming to their 15th anniversary celebratory performance on November 8. For more information visit: www.clowns-sans-frontieres-france.org

Text by Mady Chanrion

Photographs: Christophe Raynaud De Lage

L'actu du terrain

A Lille, les troupes s'organisent : naissance d'un relais Asmae dans le Nord



Le relais Rhône-Alpes fait des émules. Créé en 2004 par un groupe de bénévoles motivés, il relaie le message d'Asmae à Lyon et dans la région.

Caroline Plasson habite Lille. Bénévole pour Asmae depuis de nombreuses années, elle

s'engage aujourd'hui dans une toute nouvelle aventure : créer un relais d'Asmae chez elle, dans le Nord, pour faire connaître l'association, ses actions et récolter des fonds. On souhaite de belles réussites à notre « ch'ti » bénévole !

> [lire la suite](#)

Sur le chemin de l'école... grâce au parrainage



C'est la rentrée scolaire ! Partout, les enfants reprennent le chemin de l'école. L'accès gratuit à une scolarité de qualité est un droit pour tous les enfants, garanti par la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant. Mais dans les pays du Sud, la réalité est souvent plus compliquée. Parce qu'aller à l'école, ça coûte cher alors quand on vit dans un bidonville de Manille, est-ce que c'est possible ?

Par l'intermédiaire d'Asmae, 1265 parrains fidèles soutiennent la scolarité des enfants défavorisés dans chacun de nos pays d'intervention. Grâce à une scolarité de qualité, les enfants peuvent de venir acteurs du développement de leur communauté.

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Volunteers mobilise in Lille: a new Asmae group is created in the North

The Rhone-Alpes regional group has set an example. The group, which was set up by motivated volunteers in 2004 promotes Asmae's message in Lyon and the surrounding region. Caroline Plasson lives in Lille. She has been a volunteer for Asmae for a number of years and today she is embarking on a brand-new venture - to create an Asmae regional group in the North in order to promote the organisation and its work and to raise funds. We wish our friend in the North every success

It all began in July 2004. I wanted to travel and make myself useful at the same time and I was looking for a suitable voluntary organisation. I came across Asmae – Association Sœur Emmanuelle on the Internet and found a clear and accessible website and an organisation that inspired confidence. Asmae recruits volunteers for short-term projects overseas. These are open to everyone; no particular qualifications are required. This was just that I was looking for! So I left to take part for the first time in a project in the Lebanon.

Before joining the programme you have to take part in an obligatory training weekend. You meet the people you will be working with as a team and receive training in cross-cultural matters to find out about the habits and customs of the country you are going to. I appreciate the organisation's thoroughness. The weekend gave us some awareness of the reality on the ground; something we had not necessarily thought about that much. In every country where there are projects, there is an Asmae coordinator to ensure that our work runs smoothly.

When I came home again, I was more motivated than ever and wanted to continue my involvement with Asmae. However it was not possible for me to go off to take part in projects abroad regularly. As I lived in the Paris area at the time, I offered my services as an administrator to the organisation's head office in Paris. I also helped with preparations for and took part in the Humanitarian Tour de France where I was able to share my experience as an overseas volunteer with members of the public. The atmosphere at the head office is very family-like and convivial. It was a pleasure to go there regularly over three years.



In 2008 I was bitten by the travel bug once again and set off to Madagascar to work as a volunteer with Asmae's partner HARDI. This summer I went to Burkina Faso to work with AEFAC, looking after children with disabilities. It is a real pleasure to find out about a country by living among its population. With these projects, you go in order to give but when you come home again you realise that you have received so much more than you gave. The local community gives us so much that you come away fortified by the experience. This is an excellent lesson in sharing.

Today, I live in the Lille area. Volunteering for ad hoc short term projects with ASMAE does not satisfy me entirely, I would like to work on a more ongoing basis. I mentioned this to the organisation's director Catherine Alvarez and her assistant, Julie Favreau. They suggested that I organise talks in schools and colleges in the north of France to raise awareness of Asmae's work and encourage pupils to get involved with the organisation. I was enthused by this idea and I soon realised that I was getting a very warm reception.

Pupils from the Collège Saint-Exupéry in Roubaix, for instance organised "bread and apple" days in their canteen last April. For the usual price of a meal, pupils received a piece of bread and an apple and the money saved was donated to Asmae. Thanks to this, the school raised 1819 € which will finance meals for children in Burkina Faso for one year.



Through activities in my region, I have gradually got to know other organisations that tell me about events I can take part in to promote Asmae's name. However, it is impossible to do this all on my own. Asmae therefore put me in touch with their Rhone-Alpes regional group - a team of volunteers who went overseas and who are continuing their work with Asmae in their home region in various ways: attending demonstrations, selling mulled wine, giving talks in schools, etc.

The idea of establishing a similar group in the Lille area came to me. With the assistance of Renaud Des Gayets, volunteer coordinator, we got in touch with people from the north who had volunteered overseas with Asmae. Several of them responded to our calls.

Since our first meeting last June, a small dynamic group has formed, full of ideas to help Asmae! We are planning to attend Lille Catholic University's Volunteer Forum on September 24 and we shall be meeting with a journalist from the *Voix du Nord* to create an article about our experiences volunteering overseas.

I shall take advantage of this to mention Laurence, Hélène, Claire, Florence and all those people who I am sure will be joining us soon, motivated by their experiences volunteering with Asmae's partners on the ground.

Caroline Plasson

Off to school....thanks to sponsorship

The new school year has begun! Children everywhere are going back to school. Free access to quality education is a right for all children that is guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, in the developing world, the reality is often more complex. It costs a lot to go to school if you are living in a shantytown in Manila; is it even possible to get to school?

Through Asmae, 1265 faithful sponsors are supporting the education of disadvantaged children in each of the countries where we work. Through a good quality education, children can play a key role in developing their communities.

"My parents died 10 years ago. I did not believe it was possible for me to go to university but fortunately I was accepted by TOS. Not only did this help me financially, it also helped me to build up my belief in myself and to develop my personality." Thanks to the sponsorship she received, Irish was able to study. Today she is a schoolteacher. "I am very happy to have qualified and I would like to thank ASMAE on behalf of all sponsored children".

TOS is a Filipino organisation that has been one of Asmae's partners since 1996. It assists with access to quality education in the deprived areas of Caloocan in the north of Manila. In the Philippines' state schools, teaching conditions are very difficult. Every day, the same teacher gives lessons to three classes, one after the other in rotation. Each class therefore only receives one or two hours of lessons a day. Sometimes there can be 70 to 90 pupils in a single class and the traditional education system is very often based on learning by heart and repetition. The schools TOS has opened offer innovative teaching methods that encourage children to learn and find out for themselves. Pupils receive eight hours of lessons and there are 30 to 35 pupils per class. Teachers are particularly attentive to the needs of children who are in difficulty.



Photo : H el ene Blary

To enable children to receive an education, TOS and Asmae have set up a sponsorship programme to pay for meals, tuition fees, educational outings and summer camps. 55 pupils are currently pursuing their studies at university thanks to sponsorship. "It is possible that sponsors do not realise just what an impact sponsorship has on the lives of these young people. I can tell you that without this they would not have been able to study and would not be becoming teachers" points out Rekka, coordinator of the organisation. Of the 24 teachers the organisation employs, seven were sponsored during their studies. All former sponsored pupils are in employment today.

Asmae's approach to sponsorship

Sponsorship is one of the four areas Asmae works in. Sponsorship programmes are set up through local organisations, our partners. We have been working with many of these organisations for a number of years and it is they who implement the programme. They identify pupils or children who need financial support to continue their education, and children who are experiencing extreme difficulty. They then take care of monitoring and supporting these children under the supervision of and with the support of the programme coordinators, our representatives on the ground. Sponsored children come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. These are children whose day-to-day lives are extremely unstable, whose family situations are often very difficult or whose circumstances are particularly problematic: children who are living on the streets, orphans, children with disabilities. They receive an education from nursery, infant and primary level through to secondary school and then either professional training or university.

The aim of our programme is not only to improve opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access an education (by promoting education within the community or taking care of tuition fees through sponsorship), it is also our aim to promote quality education . We therefore also work within existing schools, improving the quality of training for teachers, refurbishing classrooms or paying for educational materials.

Sponsorship provides children with the opportunity to grow and to blossom within their local environment, while respecting their culture. It is also an excellent way to offer concrete support to a charity and to open up to the world, both learning about and raising awareness of living conditions for children in the developing world.

Mady Chanrion

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