

The Letter

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Asmae Association
Sœur
Emmanuelle



**YOUNG AGENTS OF CHANGE
FOR THE FUTURE:
TRAINING TO STEP UP TO THE
CHALLENGE OF AUTONOMY**



EDITORIAL



AMID THE NOISE OF CURRENT EVENTS, LET'S LISTEN TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a strong temptation to talk only about emergencies, because that's what our teams are dealing with every day. Acute situations are a priority, but we retain our ability to hear and share the myriad individual and collective struggles that make it possible to "Save children", in the words of Sister Emmanuelle. The more we listen to young people and children, the more effective and respectful of their rights our work will be.

"We shouldn't listen to what others say: we should follow our dreams. If you really love a job, whether it's for men or women, give it your all!" says Salimata, who is training in Côte d'Ivoire as a plumber – a career in which women are still the exception. You can read other testimonials from the J2A: Youth acting for their future programme on pages 4 and 5.

"My message to all young women and men is that you have something unique to contribute. Don't wait for perfect conditions, and don't be afraid of failure – it's a step on the road to success. Believe in yourself, even when the going gets tough." A quote from Sister Emmanuelle? These are actually the inspiring words of Nour, a young Lebanese woman involved in our Youth for Change programme, which has been affected by the war. I encourage you to read her testimonial on page 3.

On page 6, you can find out how **Tahina, a 5-year-old boy living on the streets of Antananarivo (Madagascar)**, has been able to go to school for the first time and obtain a formal education. Up until then, he had been living on the streets with his mother and brother, sometimes with less than one meal a day...

In France, **at "La Chrysalide", Ms M. is receiving psychological support from specialists for her trauma and her parental responsibilities.** This has enabled her to examine her role in the mother-child relationship and express her concerns. The team has reassured her regarding her maternal skills, as she is attentive to her children's well-being and development. With support, she has found accommodation and signed a work-study contract with EDF."

On behalf of the Asmae teams, I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and my warm thanks for your support.

Adrien Sallez,
Director General



For 44 years now, Asmae has been continuing the work of its founder and staying true to her principles

OUR VISION

"A fair world where children are guaranteed the opportunity to live and grow up in dignity within their families and their environments to become free men and women who can contribute to society".»

OUR MISSIONS

- **To promote child development** through a holistic approach. To achieve this, Asmae also works to support families with their environments firmly in mind.
- **To strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders** working in the field of child development, improving synergies between them and maximising their social impact.
- **To champion children's causes** by raising awareness and speaking out.
- **To experiment, expand and share information.**

ASMAE IN FIGURES

- **62,550 beneficiaries**
- **8 countries** of intervention
- **47 partner** associations
- **180 professionals** worldwide
- **31 volunteers**
- **15,565 donors**
- **44 years of experience** in the field

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AT THE HEART OF THE ACTION

FROM SCHOOL DROP-OUT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP: NOUR'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

At the age of 20, Nour resolutely set out on her professional path amid a challenging situation marked by the war in Lebanon. Having left school without any qualifications or experience, she joined our "Youth for Change" programme, which aims to train and integrate young people into the world of work. Here, she discovered a real passion for beauty care. Training and integrating young people is one of the goals, but there is also the aspect of increasing young people's personal agency, supporting them as they become agents of change.

What motivated you to join the "Youth for Change" programme?

I had a strong desire to acquire both practical and theoretical knowledge in beauty care. I also wanted to work alongside people who shared the same ambition as me. This programme offered an excellent opportunity to build a professional network and broaden my horizons, both personally and professionally.

What are the main things you learnt or discovered during the course?

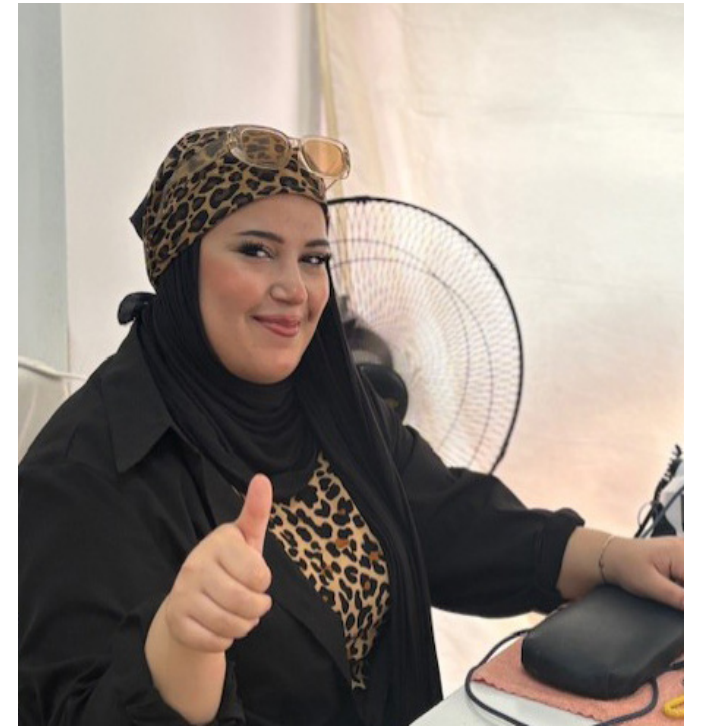
During my training in beauty care, I acquired essential skills in this professional environment and made links and friendships that strengthened my interest in this field. This experience gave me a better understanding of the profession and made me aware of my strengths, which I was able to develop. I regained confidence in my potential and discovered that change is possible, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Your work experience was interrupted because of the war. If you don't mind talking about it, could you tell us if it has changed your plans for the future?

Yes, the war disrupted many of my activities, limited my movements and often made me feel unsafe. As a result, I've had to postpone some of my objectives and seriously consider other options which are better suited to the current situation. My priority today is to stay safe. Although I'm not taking the exact path I'd imagined at the start, I'm now even more determined to succeed in a different way.

What are your future plans today, and how has the programme helped you to develop them?

I'm currently working on launching my own institute, because the programme has given me a clear understanding of how to set up a business, a supportive environment and practical tools to plan and implement my ideas – which are things I lacked before.



Nour in her own institute.

What would you like to say to other young people to encourage them to believe in themselves and commit to their future?

My message to all young women and men is that every one of you has something unique to contribute. Don't wait for perfect conditions, and don't be afraid of failure – it's a step on the road to success. Believe in yourself and keep moving forward, even when the going gets tough. You are the future, and with determination you can achieve your goals. Face up to reality with courage, and build your future with your own hands. Each of us can achieve great things if we truly believe in our abilities.

Financial partner: Agence française de développement, Fondation Air France and Fonds de dotation transatlantique Ayudar



Young people undergoing sewing training in Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire.

FROM TRAINING TO INDEPENDENCE: YOUNG PEOPLE FORGING THEIR OWN PATH

In both Côte d'Ivoire and Madagascar, young women and men in vulnerable situations are rising to the challenge of empowerment every day. With the “J2A : Youth acting for their future” programme, they are building their guidance and training pathways, asserting their career choices and challenging stereotypes.

■ Chosen paths that empower people

The J2A programme is aimed at young people in Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Antsirabe, Madagascar. All of them are experiencing different levels of vulnerability. For example, they may be living on the streets, be victims of violence or come from complicated family backgrounds. These young people have difficulty gaining access to the world of work, which is essential to their economic and social empowerment. The programme gives them a fresh start. After an initial career guidance phase, each young person is given the opportunity to realise their aspirations by training for a career that offers real opportunities. This freedom of choice is enabled by personalised support: individual interviews and discussions with families. Girls and boys are helped to challenge stereotypes and learn the skills they need, without gender bias: hairdressing, electricity, carpentry, sewing, etc.

In Korhogo, a number of girls have opted to train as plumbers – a vocation too long seen as the preserve of men. *“We shouldn't listen to what others say: we should follow our dreams. If you really love a job, whether it's for men or women, give it your all!”* exclaims Mariam, who trained in unisex hairdressing in a local environment in which this is still rare. To date, nearly 440 young people in the two countries, including 250 girls, have taken part in training courses, and the initial results are promising.

■ First steps towards employment and first projects launched

Support goes beyond vocational training: young people learn to write CVs and covering letters. They also acquire the soft skills that are essential in the workplace, and develop greater self-esteem along the way. The J2A programme therefore acts as a powerful springboard. Many young people have already taken a decisive step towards financial independence. In Madagascar, around twenty young people have already entered the world of work, whether through salaried employment, an internship or even starting their own business. Among them, several young women have created income-generating activities in catering, livestock farming and financial services. Through its support for young people and the financing that is sometimes provided, the project aims to encourage the generation of sufficient income to ensure they are empowered.

■ Young agents of change in the programme: driving social development

One of the reasons for these successes is that, like all our programmes, J2A is co-constructed by and for young people. In this way, participants can go beyond being mere learners and become genuine agents of change in the programme and their own future. As a result, they are regularly asked to put forward their recommendations and take part in collective

spaces in which decisions are taken jointly. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, consultation meetings act as a forum bringing together young people in training, trainers, association leaders and institutions. These bodies enable young people to make their needs and proposals heard, and sometimes to change the actual structure of their training. In Madagascar, eleven youth clubs are in operation, providing leadership, information and support for young people. This active participation by

young people gives them greater autonomy and legitimacy. Some of them decide to pass on all these skills and become “Jeunes Pairs Educateur-ices” (Young Peer Educators). They run their own awareness-raising sessions for their fellow students on subjects such as violence prevention, HIV, gender stereotypes and environmental protection. Through their energetic sharing and inspiring approach, they are making their own contributions to building a fairer world.

TESTIMONIALS A COMMITMENT TO THE J2A PROGRAMME



“The Asmae project has enabled me to learn more about hairdressing. Now, I feel ready to work for myself.”
Aya, trained in unisex hairdressing as part of the J2A project



“I didn't encounter any prejudices when I chose this profession. It is possible to work in a “men's” profession. I want to tell girls not to be afraid of taking the plunge!”
Salimata, trained as a plumber in Côte d'Ivoire



“It wasn't easy at first, because my home was too far from the ANAED centre. In April 2024, they found me accommodation, so that I can follow the training on site.”

Asma, a young woman taking part in the J2A programme



“After J2A, I can see myself as being someone who supports young people – a trainer who gives them time, daily support and advice. Before the project, I had always dreamed of creating an association that would help vulnerable young people and children.”
Rébecca, Young Peer Educator with the J2A programme

Watch the video testimonials on www.asmae.fr and our social networks:



Financial partner for the project: Agence française de développement

MADAGASCAR: CHILDREN IN ANTANANARIVO FIND A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

In Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, 20,000 children are currently living on the streets. Deprived of a roof over their heads, a school and healthcare, they are forced to take their lives a day at a time. To support these families, Asmae and its partners are working at the Akany Iarivo Mivoy (AIM) centre, a place of reconstruction and hope.



Children from the AIM centre reading.

Growing up in a stable environment

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Madagascar, many families living on the streets found themselves with no way of protecting themselves. In response to this crisis, an accommodation centre was opened in the capital to receive them. What was initially intended as a temporary refuge quickly became a permanent accommodation facility, offering a secure and caring environment. Working alongside its partners, Asmae has taken action to improve its services for welcoming and listening to children and their families, co-constructing with them a comprehensive support system that includes access to healthcare, formal education and a protective environment.

Access to formal education empowers children

Accompanied by their families, children aged 3 to 12 can enjoy playing, learning and envisioning their futures. For many, it has acted as a springboard. Access to education plays a key role in their empowerment. Two classes have been opened, providing the children with an optimal learning environment and enabling them to return to a regular pattern of schooling. Alongside this initiative, school kits have been distributed. School fees have been paid for 54 children, enabling them to attend the state primary school in Anosibe.

This enabled Tahina – a 5-year-old boy who had been living on the streets – to seize the opportunity to go to school for the first time in order to benefit from a formal education. Until then, he had been living on the streets with his mother and brother, sometimes eating less than one meal a day. Upon arrival at the centre, he discovered a calmer way of life: meals every day, clean clothes and – most importantly – the opportunity to go to school, spend time with others, learn and play at his own pace.

Strengthening family ties

The AIM centre attaches central importance to family ties. The 120 families are offered one-to-one meetings in which they can discuss their situations, express their needs and the difficulties they are encountering, and work out lasting solutions. There are also sessions on parenting and conflict management. They take place in an environment of listening and respect, drawing on the resources and knowledge already possessed by the families.

At the AIM centre, each child – supported by his or her family and Asmae – can once again take charge of his or her own life, learn, grow and chart a course towards a future of his or her own choosing.

Financial partner for the project: Ile-de-France region



“I’ve been living at the AIM centre for a year with my mother, brothers and sisters. I like spending time with the other children living there, especially when there are entertainment activities. I get along well with them, and I enjoy reading new books in the activity room. At the centre, I like the atmosphere we have with our teachers. I’ve been able to improve my French and my arithmetic skills.”

Mialy, 10, a resident at the AIM centre

LA CHRYSALIDE: A NEW START FOR MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Upon her return to France, Sister Emmanuelle alerted public opinion to social issues and spoke of the great emotional distress affecting many families in France. Since 2006, Asmae’s “La Chrysalide” maternal support centre has been welcoming single mothers with young children aged 0 to 6 who have been left vulnerable by difficult and violent experiences. We look back at the past year with Sophie Royer, the director of the maternal support centre and crèche.



La Chrysalide opened its doors in Bobigny in late 2006.

Can you tell us what makes the maternal support centre different?

The maternal support centre enables mothers in Seine-Saint-Denis to rebuild their lives, both psychologically and physically, with the help of a secure living environment. In situations where the mother-child bond is often fragile, these women are offered comprehensive social support and psychological and medical care, generally for around three years. Children are also a key focus of this system, and are supervised by the teams in their early years.

Among all the women you’ve assisted, is there one whose journey has had a particular impact on you?

The name I’ll mention is Ms M., who lived in Equatorial Guinea until the age of 8. Upon arrival at the maternal support centre, she told us that from her youngest childhood, her mother had been physically and psychologically abusive towards her. She gave birth to her first baby at the age of 15. When she was 16, she arrived in France. Shortly afterwards, her mother started being violent towards her again, and she was even excluded from the family home. She continued her studies, but found out she was pregnant. She gave birth to her second child and obtained her baccalaureate the same year.

The care within the maternal support centre lasts for just over a year and a half, and we have provided comprehensive support. The children’s father and the family live in the provinces, and family isolation is a major issue. She has been able to build a calmer relationship with her mother, and the children’s father is growing into his role. At “La Chrysalide”, Ms M. is receiving psychological support from specialists for her trauma and on her parental role. This has enabled her to examine her role in the mother-child relationship and express her concerns. The team has reassured her regarding her many maternal skills, as Ms M. is attentive to her children’s well-

being and development. Having received support with her administrative applications, she has found accommodation and signed a work-study contract with EDF. Through networking and partnership work, she has been able to leave the maternal support centre with a job and a crèche care solution for her youngest child.

What initiatives do you have planned in the near future?

My goal is to develop activities and stays for families, with the aim of reducing the feeling of being “locked in”. It’s very important to be able to offer them a window onto the outside world. Another goal is to consolidate our teams.

Financial partners: Seine-Saint-Denis Local Authority and Bobigny Council, CAF



The maternity centre is a safe place where people can regain confidence in their ability to plan their lives.

“I had lost touch with my family. I was young. I was left to fend for myself. Personally speaking, I’m proud to have come through the centre. It was a second chance for me. I talk about it a lot with other people. We attended workshops to learn things that mums need to know. My time there helped me to grow up. Without the mother-and-child centre, I wouldn’t be the person I am today.”

A mother’s testimony

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS IN COUNTRY SPONSORSHIP WITH ASMAE

Asmae volunteers are the invisible yet vital pillars of the country sponsorship system, which provides long-term support for local initiatives to help children. Their dedication and hard work not only serve to circulate information and raise awareness, but also create a virtuous circle of generosity and commitment. They enable sponsors to become real agents of change through an awareness of the impact of their support, motivating them to continue their valuable contribution.

Strong links between sponsors and the field

Twice a year, Asmae volunteers write a "Country Letter" informing sponsors of the actions taken and the progress made thanks to their support. These letters are more than just updates; they are a tangible reflection of the impact of donations on the lives of vulnerable children. Through their descriptions of educational projects, child protection initiatives and social inclusion efforts, volunteers provide sponsors with the assurance that their donations are being put to good use and an understanding of how they are transforming lives

Transparency and mobilisation of resources

Volunteers play a key role in raising awareness and creating bonds of trust with sponsors through stories and testimonials. Their work ensures that donors feel involved in positive changes. They contribute to transparent communication on how donations are managed by sharing information in a clear and accessible way. Keen to strengthen the link between children and donors, they are committed to explaining the practical grass-roots impact of contributions.

SISTER EMMANUELLE'S LEGACY: THE WEBINAR

Sister Emmanuelle – an icon in the fight against poverty – has been an inspiration to Asmae, which continues her fight for social justice. The webinar for Asmae donors, "Bringing Sister Emmanuelle's legacy to life", held on 22 May 2025, was a great success. The event highlighted the impact of donations on the lives of vulnerable children.

Hosted by journalist Olivia Schaller, the webinar afforded an excellent opportunity for discussion and sharing. Several speakers shared their experiences and presented inspiring projects. As Pierre Villelongue, Director of Communications and Resources, pointed out, donations – whether one-offs, regular donations, sponsorships or legacies – make a real difference to the lives of children in need.

A legacy of solidarity and justice

Sister Emmanuelle is our inspiration. An iconic figure in the fight against poverty and exclusion, she leaves a legacy that lives on in Asmae's day-to-day work. Catherine Alvarez, Head of Donations Relations, spoke about her personal experience with Sister Emmanuelle.

Inspiring projects in Madagascar

Among the flagship projects presented by Vatosoa Andriamiarana, Country Director for Madagascar, the J2A programme (J2A Youth acting for their future) was particularly well received by young Madagascans. It provides teenagers with vocational training and personalised support to help them integrate into society and the economy. Thanks to this programme, many young people have been able to acquire essential skills and find stable jobs, thus improving their own living conditions and those of their families.

We extend our thanks to all participants for their commitment to perpetuating this legacy.

You can watch the recorded webinar on our YouTube page: Asmae – Association Sœur Emmanuelle, and by scanning this QR code:





Asmae Association
Sœur Emmanuelle

Asmae is an association formed under the French law of 1901. Recognised to be of public interest and authorised to receive bequests, donations and gifts.

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