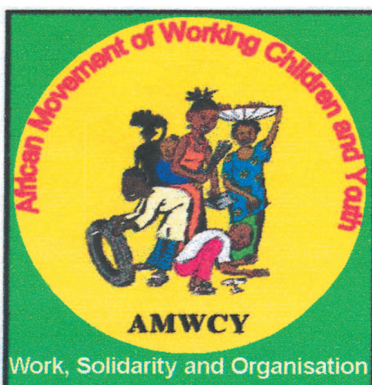


Protection of mobile children by organized children and youth



*Some experiences
of the **WCYs**
in West Africa*



African Movement of
Working Children
and Youth (AMWCY)

JEUDA 123

Opinions expressed in this document are those of their authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the organizations concerned in this publication. Reproduction is free for educational or scientific purposes, with clear indication of the source and address, as well as sending copies to Enda.

■ **Written by**

African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY)

■ **Facilitation**

- *Moussa Harouna*

Program Coordinator AMWCY

- *Aimé Bada*

Responsible for training enda

■ **Illustrations**

Anoh Jecy, Avoce Romeo, Simboro Seydou, Traore Isaak

■ **Production**

El Hadj Sarr, Fabrizio Terenzio

© enda tm jeunesse action. December 2011

ISSN 0850 - 1629

This document is produced with the support of Plan Finland.

SUPPORTED BY OFFICIAL
DEVELOPMENT AID FROM THE MINISTRY
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



Enda Tiers-Monde Jeunesse Action
BP 3370 Dakar - Sénégal
Tél. : (221) 33 889 34 20 -Fax : (221) 33 823 51 57
Courrier électronique : jeuda@enda.sn
Internet : <http://eja.enda.sn/>



Summary

INTRODUCTION	P.4
A- BENIN	P.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Protecting children like hens</i> - <i>Looking for a solution for a girl in town</i> - <i>Creation of a protection phone network</i> 	
B- BURKINA FASO	P.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Working like a slave in Libya, then back to his village to start an Income Generating Activity (IGA)</i> - <i>Listening and orientation activities in Mopti, along with the WCYs from Mali</i> - <i>Looking for an aunt in Ouagadougou</i> 	
C- CAMEROUN	P.10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Listening to a child working in a plantation</i> - <i>Protecting children working at the bus station</i> 	
D- CÔTE D'IVOIRE	P.11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Listening to a waitress working in a maquis (small restaurant)</i> 	
E- GUINÉE	P.12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Spontaneous listening: "life experience of a WCY from Kissidougou"</i> - <i>Creation of children's groups in villages, open talks with communities and cooperation with NGOs</i> 	
F- MALI	P.14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Chat with the employer</i> - <i>Radio programmes on child protection</i> 	
G- NIGER	P.15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Children do not travel with marabouts anymore</i> - <i>The WCY Association membership card: more security for mobile children and youth</i> - <i>creating grassroots groups in villages</i> 	
H- SÉNÉGAL.....	P.18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Mobile girl flees forced marriage</i> - <i>Talibés, younger brothers of WCY</i> 	
I- TOGO	P.20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Protection for the girls from Vogan</i> 	
PROTECTION NETWORK OF WCYS IN WEST AFRICA	P.21

Introduction

In 2011, the WCYs protected 11,999 mobile children¹ in the eight (8) following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

The protected children are: beggars, apprentices, orphans, adopted children, cart pushers, children in prison, stock farmers, car washers, house maids or boys, salesgirls, migrating girls, shoe shiners, Koranic school pupils, porters, waitresses working in maquis (small restaurants), children suffering family and social breakdown, street "girl-friends", pupils, children displaced by armed conflicts, handicapped children, gardeners etc.

In most cases, these are marginalized children who are in need of a lot of assistance. The Children and Youth members of the Association of Working Children and Youth **listened** to them being aware of the urgency of their case. Apart from listening to them, they helped them find solutions, **in order to protect them first, and then, help them live** in a better social situation.

Listening sessions took place in **all sorts of places** in the cities and villages: in garages and bus stations, markets, public places where children gather, in fields where children work, in houses (for housemaids, we use a door to door method) or in places where the AWCY and/or their supporting structures organize rallies for children. All those places are chosen according to the number of mobile children found there. **The listening process is often part of the action.** After an awareness campaign, we make ourselves available to the public (the children), to listen and to deal with particular cases.

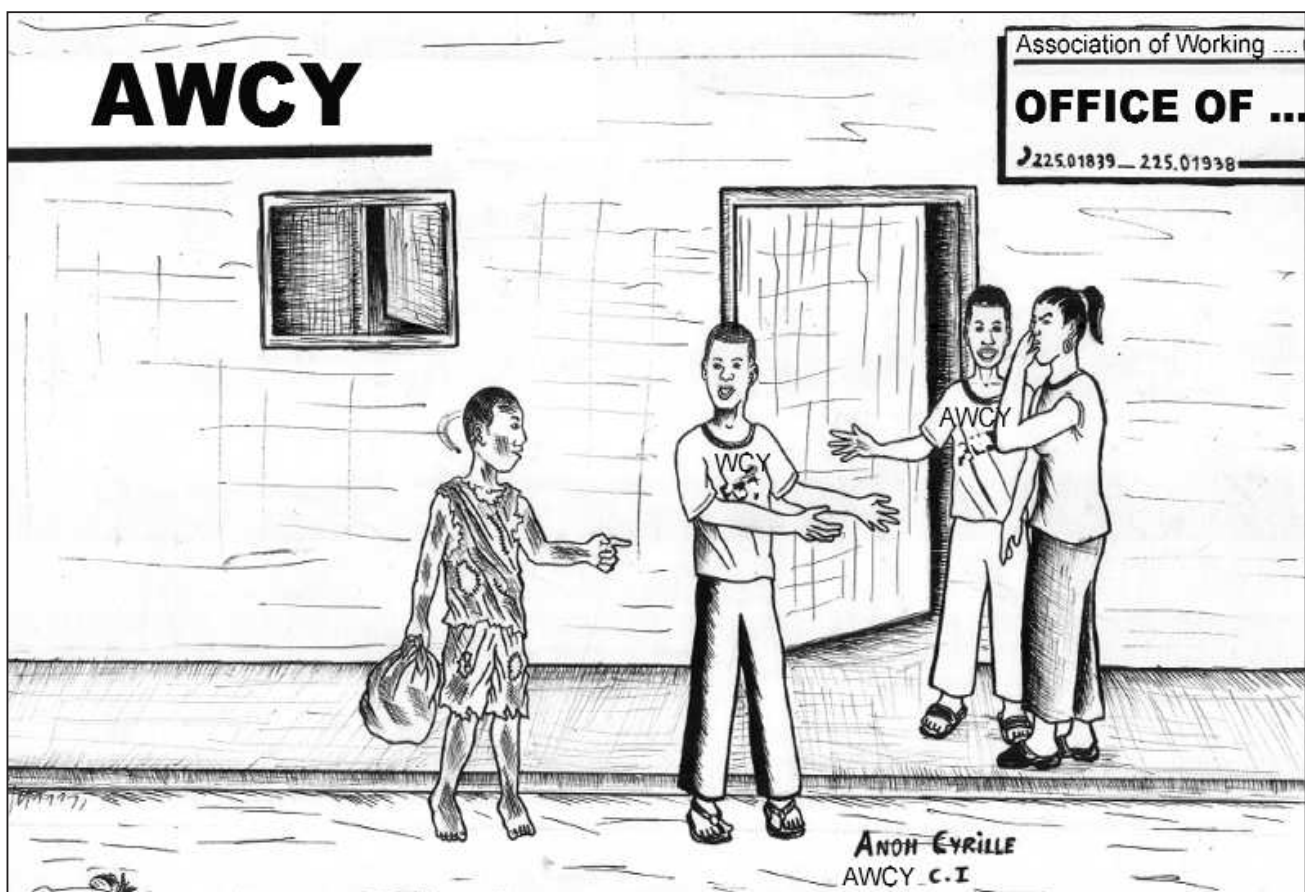
This listening process is particular, as it is undertaken from **child (or youth) to child who experiences the in same living conditions. It is an expression of solidarity from the WCYs towards the children living in difficult situations, no matter where they come from.**

We identified a whole **range of problems**, among others: no place to sleep, lack of food, no change of clothes, no means to go back to the village or place of origin, wages which are not paid, working contracts that are not respected by the employer, no means to carry on studies, insecurity, absence of health care, etc.

¹*Protection means that we did not just listen, but we also acted to address the problems which were mentioned during the listening phase. We can only estimate that the listening including "spontaneous listening", which is the object of the following examples, are at a far higher rate.*

Changes that we observed range from children returning to their village to a good integration in the city, through reducing the number of displaced children. We also note a decrease in the number of illiterate children, employees who are actually paid and many children who joined professional training centers (workshops). Prevention committees have been set up in villages and children who want to migrate are being better prepared and given safety rules through counseling from authorities and parents. Intergenerational tensions are decreasing in villages.

In the following pages, you will read some **examples of protection situations** from different countries, as described by Working Children and Youth themselves. They express a whole variety of situations. You will notice that the WCYs take initiatives with the support of all sorts of partners and authorities, in order to be more efficient and to solve the numerous problems they are facing.



Listening and orientation activities of AWCY

A- BENIN

- Protecting children like hens

We got ourselves organized in our Grassroots Groups to find out ways to deal with child mobility. In Misséréte we met with the local authorities to talk with them about child mobility. We spoke with them about protecting mobile and non mobile children. Any time we meet them, we talk about child protection. This encouraged the authorities to come up with an idea and to implement it.

The authorities invited the WCYs to gather at the public square. They gave them hens for our Grassroots Groups. They gave us the hens and told us that we should keep them forever. We were to protect those hens. The way we would protect those hens, the same way we were to protect the children in our areas. In order To protect the hens, once they have chicks, we were to prevent them from moving around too much, we were to feed them and regularly clean the place where they sleep along with their chicks.

For protecting mobile children and children staying in Misséréte, we were supposed to put the same efforts used in protecting our hens and their chicks.

We started breeding the hens properly. In the same way, we take great care of children who are moving around. We set up committees which attend to them, counsel and direct them. When a child wants to leave Misséréte to go to Nigeria, the committee is there to take care of him. At the same time, we get in touch with the Coordination to seek advice and information to give to the children who want to leave.

We have now set up follow up committees which protect mobile children in all cities in Benin. Today, we are liable to protect a child so that she/he does not travel around anymore. Before they travel, we have set up several follow up committees all over the country.

- Looking for a solution for a girl working in town

During a grand public awareness campaign which was organized by the AWCY from Kétou, the Association met a girl under the age of 16 who told them about her living and working conditions. After hearing about the mobile children phenomenon, she went to see the Association to talk about her living conditions.

She told the Association that she was coming from the ATANCHOUKKA village and that her aunt picked her up from her village telling her that her parents agreed she could carry on with her studies in the city where her aunt lived. Once she reached the city, she was amazed to find out a different situation. Her aunt entrusted her to an aladja (women who are pretending to be marabouts (spiritual leaders) and fooling people by saying they can manufacture money). She was supposed to help this aladja in the household and in her petty trade. She didn't have any choice and started working.

But today she is threatened by the aladja and her children to the point that she went to see her aunt to tell her about the situation, but her aunt turned her away. She did not know what to do. After listening to the girl, the AWCY and the girl went to see the ATCHOUBI neighborhood chief to relate the case. With the help of the neighborhood chief, the aunt came to an agreement with the girl. After the meeting, the AWCY committee and the delegate made an arrangement so that the girl could go back to her parents in the village. The committee and the delegate chose 3 people to accompany the girl to her village in order to speak to her parents.

Her parents finally understood the situation and said: "even if we had to eat sand, we would eat it with our children". The AWCY committee from Kétou recently visited the family in the village where the girl had already started an apprenticeship as a hairdresser. The girl's parents asked the Association to support them as often as possible and told them they were ready to support the AWCY's activities in the village. The AWCY from Kétou passed on the information to the Coordination via the Corporate network.

- Creation of a protection phone network

In Benin, all member cities of the AWCY use favourite numbers that are called corporate. Each city got its corporate number through the Association. It is a WCYs initiative. We went to see the phone operator Mobile Telecom Network (MTN) and gave them all our numbers then, MTN created a network for us, for which we pay monthly. These numbers are used to direct children who move from one city to another. If a child wants to leave Kétou for Cotonou, the members from Kétou will call those in Cotonou to inform them and to give them the child's phone number. Departure and destination cities are given to the child, and when he/she reaches his/her destination, the child will call the members in the city, through this phone number. Members from the destination city will then call members from the departure city to confirm the child's arrival. After a few days in the city, the hosts will inform members of the departure city about the living conditions of the child.



B- BURKINA FASO

- Working like a slave in Libya, then back to his village to start an Income Generating Activity (IGA)

Following a video projection on *"the risks related to exodus"*, The WCYs from Koudougou met a 16 year old child coming from the SORAN village. This child was travelling with his friends who were able to head for Côte d'Ivoire. But, as he was moneyless, he got stuck at the bus station. It was then that the WCYs listened to him and took him to the Social Action Department, which registered him in carpentry at a training center. Finally, he was entrusted to a tutor who belonged to his village.

One of his friends, a youth, told us he had gone to Libya via Senegal. He had been cursed by his dad. He was fighting with his friend about a bike and the latter told him that if he was a boy, he should leave the country and come back with a bike. His father overheard the dispute and told him to leave the village and come back with a bike. In Senegal, he worked for an Arab employer. The latter, instead of paying him, told him he would arrange transport for him and give him clues to get to Libya.

Once they reached the Libyan border, his employer left him there by himself, as he didn't have the proper documentation to enter Libya. So he stayed at the border, where he worked like a slave for an Arab trader. He wasn't paid but, he was simply expecting that his employer would help him to get the appropriate documentation. He wasn't allowed to go out or to talk to the clients. He stayed there for one year and one month.

He wanted to go home but couldn't, as he would always remember what his dad had told him. He was able to cross the border with the Arab trader. The latter put him between barrels and made him cross the border. During his journey he met people who told him they were coming from Senegal but wanted to go back home, since Libya was too hard a country for a black person to live.

He travelled over 250 km and found nomads riding camels who offered him to pay 1,000 CFA per barrel of water for their camels. The amount of money he earned allowed him to return home. He did not return home with a bike but he was able to start an IGA of laying hens. The Association came across him when they were having a rally in his village, before collecting data on mobility. He came to us and told us his whole story.

Little by little he participated in our awareness activities and contributed to the creation of the Grassroots Group in the SAABA village. He is the general secretary of the Grassroots Group. He sells his eggs in Ouagadougou and brings us information about the group's activities regarding mobility. In this village, we scarcely find youth who have not migrated. In order to strengthen his IGA, he asked the Association for help. We met with the authorities of the Youth and Employment Ministry who granted us funds to start our IGAs.

We gave credits of 50,000 CFA to the groups for them to start IGAs. His group was also granted funds to strengthen their IGA of laying hens. He manages the IGA, sells eggs, but everybody takes part in it (food for the hens, medicine). He gives 1,000 CFA each month. His Grassroots Group helps youth who want to migrate by giving them useful information and by talking about their mobility experiences.

His group is located in a zone where people are on the move all the time. We cannot stop them from moving around, but this group gives them advice about itineraries, dangers on the road and how to avoid them. The Coordination takes advantage of the annual village celebration to visit them and to meet the members of the Grassroots Group.

- Listening and orientation activities in Mopti, along with the WCYs from Mali

Our listening activities enable us directing the children to safe places where we know for sure, their rights will be respected. Some children often travel from Ouagadougou to Mali. Before a member or a non member child who is familiar with the Association leaves, the WCYs from Burkina Faso inform the WCYs from Mopti in Mali and give him advice in case of problems. Once the child reaches his destination, he goes to the police which cooperate with the AWCY from Mopti. The police contact the WCYs, who immediately take care of the child, in order to start the project he chose. If a problem occurs, the child will be given assistance to go back to Ouagadougou. In order to protect mobile children and youth, our cooperation with WCYs coming from neighbouring countries is very important to us.

- Looking for an aunt in Ouagadougou

We know that some young girls are leaving Banfora for Ouagadougou. One of them, who worked for a lady in Banfora but wasn't paid, wanted to visit her aunt's in Ouagadougou. The WCYs gave her money for transport and got in touch with the WCYs from Ouagadougou.

When she got to Ouagadougou, the girl was received by the WCYs who helped her find her aunt. She didn't know where her aunt was living. She just had a vague idea of the address. She stayed with a WCY in Ouagadougou. For several days the WCYs helped her look for her aunt and they finally found her.

She is now living with her aunt. She has got the WCYs phone number who phone her aunt regularly to find out about her living conditions. The WCYs advised her to call Banfora regularly to avoid cutting ties with her original family. She is doing it and the WCYs make sure she gets in touch with her family regularly.

C- CAMEROON

- Listening to a child working in a plantation

As we were passing by a cocoa tree on the road to SAA, we met a child. We thought he was going to work, but we realized he had a bag but no machete. We called him and found out where he came from and where he was going. He told us that he had fled from his home because his uncle was mistreating him.

We took him to a WCY's home and in the meantime, we got in touch with his uncle and negotiated his return. We went to see the child's uncle, and he told us he was mistreating the child, because, he himself, had no children and had to do all the household chores. The uncle told us, that if a woman lived in the house, the housework for the child would be limited.

We told the uncle, that we met a child on the road and he had shown us his house. The uncle said he was worried and wanted to talk to the police. He said he was on the verge of trying to find him out: *"And now here you are, I will report you to the police"*. We told him that we met the child on the road and he told us that you were mistreating him. We talked to the uncle about our Movement, about the activities we were carrying out towards children living in difficult situations. His uncle stopped worrying and showed understanding.

We went to Yaoundé to get the child and took him back to his family in SAA. This child finally returned home doing lighter work. He is taking part in our activities and has joined the Association. Now his uncle acts as a counselor for a Grassroots Group and the WCYs ask him for advice whenever they carry out activities. Sometimes, on Sundays, he joins in our meetings.

- Protecting children working at the bus station

At the bus station, our WCYs carry out activities with mobile children. We get in touch with them, speak to them to find out about their destinations. We ask them for a contact person in charge of their arrival.

When we are given the phone number of the contact person, we call him/her to let him/her know about the child's arrival, with the name of the bus station, the driver's name, as well as the vehicle's number plate. Then we ask the driver to take care of the child until his destination. We exchange our phone numbers with the driver and we give him the contact person's phone number.

We call the contact person to let him/her know about the car schedule, as well as the driver's phone number. Upon arrival, we call him/her or he calls us, in order to make sure that the child is there safe and sound.

D- CÔTE D'IVOIRE

- Listening to a waitress working in a maquis (small restaurant)

During a public awareness campaign on child mobility, the WCYs of Bouaké met a girl from N'guessankro. She told us that she used to work as a waitress in a maquis (small restaurant) in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). Nobody noticed her when she left home. She had a child who was not accepted by the father. Since she wasn't able to take care of the child by herself, she used to fetch firewood in the bush, in order to sell it, but she could barely make ends meet. One of her sisters started to take care of her child who got sick and then died.

She was not able to bear the situation any more and relations with her family were getting bad, it did not work anymore. So she decided to leave home without telling anybody. She lived in Burkina Faso for one year. So, her parents had given up hope of finding her. And then one day when she was wearing a festive local cloth (Easter uniform from N'guessankro), a man asked her where she was from, as he was wearing the same local cloth and was coming from the same village.

He met the owner of the maquis, introduced himself as a family member of the girl and then introduced his wife and children to the girl. Later on, he helped the girl to be reunited with her family. She returned to Côte d'Ivoire where we met her during our public awareness campaign.

After we listened to her story, we asked her if she wanted to be idle. She said she wanted to learn a trade. We agreed with her, but we told her that we did not have the means to get a training for her, but that we would get in touch with a centre (organization) which could help her in that matter. During the weekend, we heard a church announcement about enrolling children and youth in training activities. We got in contact with the priest who was familiar with our Association. We told him about the girl's situation. He gave his approval and the girl was enrolled.

We went to the village to inform the girl. One week later, she came to Bouaké to stay with her sister. We took her to the training center where she chose to be trained as a seamstress. She has started her training. Now she feels at home and involved in her training. She does her training with a seamstress in the Gouffre neighborhood and is now a member of the AWCY. She does tailoring in Bouaké, since there is no possibility to do it in her village. That's why she left her village to go to the city to live with her sister to whom the WCYs introduced themselves. Her sister has our phone numbers and we have hers. We call each other regularly. In order to encourage her, The AWCY offered her a pre-apprenticeship kit. She works in total security and her sister is in perfect harmony with her.

E- GUINEA

- Spontaneous listening: "life experience of a WCY from Kissidougou"

It was a Monday evening when I left the prefectural football stadium, that day I was very happy because my football team had won. After a few minutes' walk, I arrived at the central market, which is not far from my home and suddenly, at about 2 metres away from me, I noticed a barefoot girl, about 14 years old. She was crying. So I went to her and asked her who she was and why she was crying.

Once I got closer, I recognized her immediately. She was one of the many girls who sold coconuts all around the city. I asked her what was wrong with her. She told me that she had lost all the coconuts which were in her plate, during a fight. So the man who provided her with the coconuts to sell, took her shoes away and as long as she did not reimburse him, she would not get her shoes back.

At this point, I told her I was a WCY and that we were members of an Association that protected children and helped them implement their rights. I took her with me to her home. The next day, I went to see the man that I greeted politely and started talking to him. I introduced myself by telling him I was a member of the AWCY from Kissidougou. He said he knew our Association. I told him what the girl had said to me. He told me it wasn't the first time the girl had done this.

I told him that keeping her shoes was not the right solution because there were things more important than shoes. He said he understood and he was embarrassed by the wisdom of my act, because as an adult he should have thought about it before I told him. I recovered the girl's shoes and informed my other friends, so we could go as a group to the girl's place to meet her tutor. We went together to the girl's house and spoke to her tutor who exploited her in this retail activity. It was her tutor who entrusted her to the coconut seller. If the girl sells coconuts for 5,000 CFA, 3,000 CFA go to the man and instead of giving the 2,000 CFA left to the girl, he gives them to the tutor. So in fact, the girl earns nothing.

We suggested to the tutor to register the girl in a school or to enroll her at a training course. She said she was poor and that is why she made the girl work. Then, we told her to send the girl back to her parents in her village. She said she needed some time to think it over. The next morning, we went to see her again and she accepted our proposition to have her trained as a seamstress. She also told us she had 2 other girls she would like to entrust to us for a hairdressing training, but she didn't have the money to buy the equipment for them.

With our own contributions, we bought 3 outfits and 10 cola nuts that we gave to the training workshops managers. The girls got enrolled and they are attending their training normally. Two of them (including the girl that I had listened to) are attending the activities of the Association. Now their tutor is selling rice and we buy ours from her. She used to welcome a lot of children from her village. Through our contacts, she said that from now on, she will not welcome girls from her village anymore, if she cannot put them up decently.

Through our listening sessions, we were able to make children, employers and parents understand the necessity to stay in touch with our Grassroots Groups, as well as specialized centers. We also inform the children about their rights. After the listening sessions, we find out that these children are better protected against mistreatments. Through our listening sessions, we were able to help a lot of children to return to their cities or villages of origin, on their own request. Some children learn trades: mechanics, tailoring, soap making, fabric dyeing, masonry, hairdressing, etc. Some others are interested in literacy courses and we help them to get enrolled in courses which take place in hangars.

- Creation of children's groups in villages, open talks with communities and cooperation with NGOs.

We are supporting the creation of children's groups in villages where mobility really sticks out. In Koulé and Samoi, we created 2 children's groups which carry out mobility prevention activities. During their Grassroots Groups meetings, the WCYs share their experiences and inform and counsel each other about the risks faced by children during migration. The number of mobile children is decreasing and the schooling rate is in real progress, especially amongst young girls. They keep busy through studying.

Through awareness/debates campaigns, in the Beindou and Bardou villages, WCYs are facilitating talks and reflection between parents, authorities, traditional chiefs and children. Consultation frameworks have been set up in these villages. Meetings about child migration and prevention of that phenomenon are regularly organized.

In cooperation with some NGOs and local partners, we help making the return of children, boys and girls easier in their respective areas where grassroots groups take care of them, reassure and help them to join literacy activities, vocational training or develop Income Generating Activities.

F- MALI

- Chat with the employer

The chat takes place between 2 WCYs, the employer and the employee: *"Good morning auntie (a mother who employs children for domestic work), we are members of the AWCY and some of our members are migrating girls, just like the one who is working for you now. She doesn't have enough time to attend our activities; so we decided to visit her and to talk to her employer as well"*.

We asked the employer a few questions and to also grant us some time to talk to her employee, who took advantage of that moment to talk about her problem: *"I'm properly fed, but I am the only one working all day long. I do the laundry, I do the washing up, I sweep the courtyard, I cook meals, not forgetting all the little errands I have to run, whilst her daughters are also there but they don't help me at all"*.

In the beginning, during that activity, the employer would not listen to us: *"I am sorry children, I don't know you. How dare you get involved in other people's problems! You are the ones who actually denounce employers or stir our employees up against us. Please, leave me alone, my employee is here, but she is very busy"*.

We left the place, then, we came back later, in a group including a majority of girls. We brought some documents along and talked about our activities. She started to be interested in what we were saying. She said she was not properly informed about us and about what our activities. Then, she listened to us calmly and she understood what we were saying. She let the girl to join us. She listened to us and got informed about the WCYs activities. Now, This girl is working less and takes part into our activities. Her auntie treats her better.

- Radio programmes on child protection

Before each rally we organize, we also use our radio programmes to inform the public. During these programmes, we also send out messages on mobile children and youth protection issues.

To find solutions to problems experienced by children, we use a radio station people listen to most, to send out our messages and statements, at least twice a day.

The employee's auntie that we met, said that she listened to our programmes and statements which helped her a lot to understand the Association's activities. Her employee who is taking part in our activities, also gives her detailed account.

G- NIGER

- Children do not travel with marabouts anymore

The marabouts (Muslim religious leaders) are used to moving around in town with their pupils, turning them into beggars for their daily meals and some money to cover other expenses. Some marabouts exaggerate and even try to get rich through these practices, although they are given money for the food of their pupils by parents, in the first place. But those marabouts do not give them that money and tell them to go begging for food. Moreover, these children fetch firewood early in the morning and late in the evening, in order to learn the Koran in front of the fireplace.

In the Daygorou village, lived a marabout who came from Zarmaganda. We, WCYs often used to go to Daygourou for our awareness campaigns on child mobility and children's rights issues in general. The village chief's son, who is the president of the Grassroots Group WCY from Daygourou informed his father and other parents. The father asked the marabout to stay in the village instead of moving around with the children. The latter said he had to move around, since he did not have any food for himself and the children.

The village chief said: *"OK, we will give you a field to plough so you can stay"*. He agreed, so he was given a piece of land. The koranic school pupils who came with the marabout stayed with him and the village kids come to learn the Koran and then go back home in the evening. The koranic school pupils do not beg anymore and contribute in cultivating the marabout's field. 15 Koranic school pupils are members of the Grassroots Group and one of them participated in our Coordination's meeting in Makalondi.

We undertake awareness sessions on the WCYs 12 rights with them and through our activities, we offer them clothes for the Koranic school pupils and give them soap. From time to time, the marabout pays a visit to his family, but he comes back and does not move around anymore like he used to.

With the help of the AWCY, awareness campaigns in villages, parents are now aware of the problem and no longer entrust their children to a marabout they don't know, or to unstable marabouts (who move around too much).

From time to time, the WCYs pay a visit to the marabout, in order to meet the children. This is a new and very important approach, because according to the tradition, when a child *"was given"* to a marabout, nobody called on him anymore; it was like the child was abandoned... In other villages, marabouts are asked to stay in one place and to teach the children the Koran, in return he is allotted a field to cultivate.

- The WCY Association membership card: more security for mobile children and youth

The WCYs from Niger membership card is very important during travel for children who possess it. This card which is provided by the Coordination has been approved by the authorities, especially the police who, in that way, acknowledge the child's registration to a network which takes care of children's security. Each year, the Coordination hands out 50 cards to each WCY in the village, who also uses it as an IGA, since the cards are sold to new members and the money goes into the Association's funds. From Tillabery to Zinder, if you have the AWCYN (Association of Working Children and Youth from Niger) membership card, your traveling is easier, even if you don't have a National Identity card. The AWCYN membership card allows you to travel from one city to another without too much hassle.

If a youth wants to get a National Identity Card in Dosso, where an agreement has been reached with the police officer, and if he has the AWCYN membership card, he only needs to go to the police station, leave his membership card and pay the appropriate amount to have it delivered. If he doesn't have the AWCYN membership card, he is compelled to produce his birth certificate. For mobile children, who do not have an AWCY membership card, since they cannot get a National Identity Card either, we advise parents to entrust them to the "touts" who are working on buses which are parked in bus stations. To entrust them to the driver is risky, since they are liable to forget. But if the child is entrusted to the "touts" and the latter is given some money, the child will sure get to his destination.

- Creating Grassroots Groups in villages

We got in touch with youth from Makalondi, this is where the border post between Niger and Burkina Faso is located. With those youth, we organize exchange meetings by visiting them regularly. In the beginning, we were welcomed by a group of 4 to 6 people. During those visits, we usually talk about the Association, the history of our 12 rights, the reasons why we identified them, the way we are organized in Niamey, as well as the activities we carry out regarding our rights.

Little by little, after 2 to 4 calls, they started to be interested and to show a willingness of organizing themselves. So we gave each other goals and a meeting plan. We invited them to participate in our training sessions and other activities. With them we carry out awareness campaigns about child trafficking and early exodus issues all over the city of Makalondi and in other nearby areas.

They created 6 Grassroots Groups in which they contribute financially. They also set up an office which coordinates the group at the grassroots and organizes regular meetings. They also develop solidarity and mutual help activities for the inhabitants of the village. During one meeting with them, we exchanged opinions about "*the right to stay in the village, not to leave*". We told them that we have the right to stay in our area, in order to undertake our activities in a safe environment.

We mentioned the reasons and consequences of migration and proofed the existence of phenomena like exploitation, violence, child trafficking and early migration. In return, they told us that, for the moment, most of the youth in the city are leaving for neighbouring countries like Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

They said they understood what we were talking about and that they would stay in their village. They even gave us true testimonies which some of them went through. They also told us they completely agreed, that they were thinking about looking for actions by themselves and reflection will be carried out during meetings. This is how an action-research process started in the Grassroots-Groups with the inclusion of elders from villages. During the meeting of the WCY network on the "*fight against child trafficking*", which was held in Niamey, we paid a visit to one of the Grassroots Groups of the AWCY from Makalondi, in the Oufouanou village. Oufouanou is a village where children and youth under 18 years of age, usually leave after the harvest. But thanks to our contacts, they created a Grassroots Group and are holding regular meetings with adults who advise them.

At the end of their reflection about the question "*what can we do whilst staying in our village?*", they decided to take advantage of the weekly markets that rotate in the area and the high demand of vegetables and fruit in this dry region (Sahel zone) to take up to gardening as an IGA for the group. Income from this activity is shared amongst the members but also replenishes the WCYs funds. In return, these funds contribute to supporting public activities in the village. For example, the well which is next to the WCYs garden and which is used by all village people has been repaired. During talks we had with visitors who attended the meeting, these children and youth from the Oufouanou village told us that, that same year, nobody left their village for another country. As a matter of fact, we met a lot of children and youth there, although they did not we were coming. Replying to our questions, the WCYs told us, that since they started meeting and decided to take up to gardening around the village well, they also sell firewood and do livestock farming. Their contributions of 100 CFA per month are collected for their solidarity funds. It was then that we understood that they were developing individual IGAs, but gardening and selling of firewood are undertaken by the children and youth collectively and they are organizing themselves, in order to manage them.

During the activities carried out by the AWCY in the surrounding villages and neighborhoods, visitors who talked to the WCYs from the city of Makalondi, noted a significant presence of children and youth as potential candidates for migration. The involvement of indigenous youth in activities like mud brick making proves that they are staying with their own families. This activity is no longer developed by youth coming from neighboring countries only. Moreover, children working in the off-season fruit and vegetables market, confirm the youth contribution to the self-sufficiency of their zone, through child education and the implementation of economic activities. We found out that they no longer leave their area like before. Their wish is to learn trades and to set up literacy centres to strengthen their initiatives.

H- SENEGAL

- Mobile girl flees forced marriage

A young girl named Aby was forced into marriage by her father who did not live with her mother. As the girl did not agree, she left the village for the city. She found work there, but her aunt who took her in, made her work day and night. Our field worker lives in the same village as the girl. The neighbors who saw the bad conditions the girl was in, informed our field worker. They also talked to the police, who rescued the girl and entrusted her to our field worker, who brought Aby to our headquarters. He explained her case to us. We had a talk with Aby and decided to integrate her in our activities. Every morning she comes to the center, participates in games, attends our literacy courses and goes back home to her aunt.

We found a job for her in a lady's house, with good working conditions. She worked as a housemaid, finished work at 4.00PM and would attend our activities until 6.00PM and then she would go back to sleep at her aunt's. But her family tried their best to prevent her from attending our activities. She has stopped coming to the WCY's center and her family made her leave the lady she was working for. She wanted to commit suicide. When we learned about her suicide attempt, we intervened and brought her back to the AWCY headquarters and back again to the lady's house.

During our celebration on June 16th (African Child Day), we took a bus to go to the city of Diourbel. The tout (apprentice) of the bus driver recognized Aby, who was seated at the rear of the bus. He said he lived in the same village as Aby and knew her mum who worked at the Sandaga market in Dakar. However, Aby never saw her mum since she was told that her mum had died during her birth. The tout promised us that, once in Dakar, he would search for her and let us know. The tout of the bus already had our phone numbers, as we used to be transported by his bus when we had rallies. Back to Dakar, he told us he had found Aby's mum. At that moment, we asked the good lady (Aby's employer) who was about to travel to Dakar to do her best to find Aby's mum.

Once found, Aby's mother gave us her phone number, through the tout and the lady. We called her and she talked to her daughter. They both started crying, because they never knew of each other's existence. None of them knew that the other one was alive. After the phone call, on a Saturday, her mother came to Fatick and we introduced her to her daughter. But instead of taking her with her, she entrusted her to one of her relatives and got back to Dakar. But Aby was also being mistreated by the host family. Any time we called her mother, she would promise to come, but would not do so. We insisted, and when she heard about Aby's problems, her mother finally came and took her back to Dakar.

We keep calling her mother in Dakar to ask about Aby's situation. She says she is well and works in her restaurant. Our goal is to put her in contact with the AWCY from Dakar, in order to better follow her up and keep in touch with her.

- Talibés, younger brothers of WCY

It all started within the Grassroots Group from Keur Mbaye Fall, in the Mbao Community, where the WCYs, after talking to the population, wanted to set an act of solidarity. The WCYs had the idea of saving up, every time an education or training activity took place. This money will allow them to buy cleaning products for identified Koranic school pupils who are living in the area. There are two Koranic schools (Daaras) in Grand Mbao. Some ten children (from 7 to 12 years of age) who come from rural areas are living and studying there in very precarious conditions.

The WCYs from Grand Mbao (a group of girls) joined them in order to find a lasting action since cleaning products run out quickly. Their reflections led to identifying a Koranic school pupils patronage system carried out by the WCYs. This system was set up during a day dedicated to Koranic school pupils as part of a "Child's week in the Mbao community", co-organized by the WCYs and the municipal authorities of the above mentioned community. During that day, each WCY and field worker made a donation: clothes, soap and bleach. The girls also organized collections of these products in their neighborhood and in the market. The result of these activities allowed carrying out cleaning and supporting sessions in the two Daaras (Koranic schools) within the zone: sweeping, laundry, and the planting of trees with the support of a football school in the area, representatives of Sports and Cultural Associations and municipal authorities.

At the end of the sessions, WCYs and Koranic school pupils met in one of the Daaras to share a meal (thanks to the municipal authorities for collecting products and for their financial support). Then a performance took place. At the end of the day, talks were carried out in order to identify the kind of system to be implemented. The aim is to support the Koranic school pupils, in order to improve their living conditions in the Daaras and to reduce time spent on begging. To facilitate the repartition, all the names of the WCYs and the Koranic school pupils were written on pieces of papers then, they proceeded to a random draw. This was a very emotional moment. The girls decided to "adopt" them. Each WCY has now a little brother, whom she visits regularly, serves meals (lunch or dinner) and for whom she does his laundry and gives him affection.

Since that day, the Koranic school pupils and the WCYs from Mbao have become more than brothers and sisters. Their health has really improved. A WCY's family from Grand Mbao paid the ophthalmologist fees for her Koranic school brother. The Koranic school teachers have become less rigid. They are happy to see their pupils supported and partially looked after by other children and it takes away some of their worries. The WCYs and the Koranic school pupils often play together. When there are invited to child activities, they go together. For instance, they attended a drawing workshop on child participation which was organized by Plan at the British Council premises.

This experience was shared during the monthly meetings of the AWCY. Grassroots Groups like those from Diorga and Niacoulrab established relations with Koranic school pupils who are living in their neighborhoods. Then those relations started to spread to Guédiawaye, thanks to the "Gnogal" project, as well as to other neighborhoods in the eleven cities (regions) of Senegal where WCYs are living (Diourbel, Kolda, St-Louis, etc.).

I- TOGO

- Protection for the girls from Vogan

During a research about child and youth mobility itineraries in West Africa, we noticed that Vogan, an area which is close to Lomé, has a very high mobility rate. Girls and adults are those who usually leave their village for Lomé, where they are working as porters in the grand market of Lomé. They are exposed to risks, like illnesses and heavy work, but they do not have any choice. So, we started our "*protective measures*" between the cities of Lomé and Vogan.

Following a study on mobility itineraries in order to find solutions to tackle this phenomenon, the AWCY from Togo set up a surveillance and listening committee in favour of those porters at the grand market and another one in the city of Vogan, in cooperation with Terre des Hommes. This committee involves the WCYs and the local authorities who are in charge of following those workers from Vogan, in order to listen to them and to give them advice on questions like: "*Should I leave? How should I leave? With whom should I leave? Where should I go to (if it is possible) before leaving Vogan for Lomé?*".

In the market, a Grassroots Group of porters was set up. We visit them regularly. During our visits, we also meet some other children who are not in the Grassroots Group but who come from the same village. We usually discuss with them about their living and working conditions in the market. These children say that they often work for ladies who do not pay them or just pay them very little. Some children have contracts with those ladies to carry their luggage from one shop to another. With those ladies, they agreed on doing 3 return journeys for 1,000 CFA. Once the work is finished, the ladies pay them 500 CFA instead of the 1,000 CFA they had agreed upon in the beginning. Those ladies usually promise to pay them the remaining sum later, but they never do.

After talking to the children, we met those ladies and told them about our Association. We sensitized them on Children's Rights and asked them to respect the contracts they signed up with the children. The ladies listened to us and since then, they respect their contracts with the children who come from villages. During each school holiday, some children come to work in the market, in order to get money for their schooling. The money they earn at the market allows them to help their parents when they go back to their villages. But it also helps them to care about their own needs. We are in touch with those children who go back home. In some villages, there are Grassroots Groups, which facilitate contacts between those who stayed in the city and those who got back to their village.

The members of our listening committees respect what the children say. If some children want to get training in their villages, we talk about it to the village chiefs, as well as to other partners. If a child wants to go to school, we will enrol him in a school. If a child wants to leave his village, the committee will meet him and will give him advice and then will pass on the information to the WCYs of the destination area. The committee will also talk to the bus drivers for them to lend a hand to the child.

PROTECTION NETWORK OF THE WCYS IN WEST AFRICA

In West Africa, there are 118,392 WCYs. If we add their 265,326 supporters (sympathizers), we get a total of 383,718 children and youth who are available for listening and protecting other children and youth and treating them as friends.

It is a very dense and omnipresent network including 1,973 grassroots groups, 218 Associations in 13 countries. One would find it hard to travel for 200 Km in West Africa without meeting an Association of WCYs.

This network is in touch with other actors (authorities, communities, associations and Non Governmental Organizations) with whom it interacts by sharing its contacts, its "cases", as well as its contributions.

In the first instance, Initiatives are taken, with no intention of leaving behind any (even one) of these people "(their friends)", when they are in trouble.

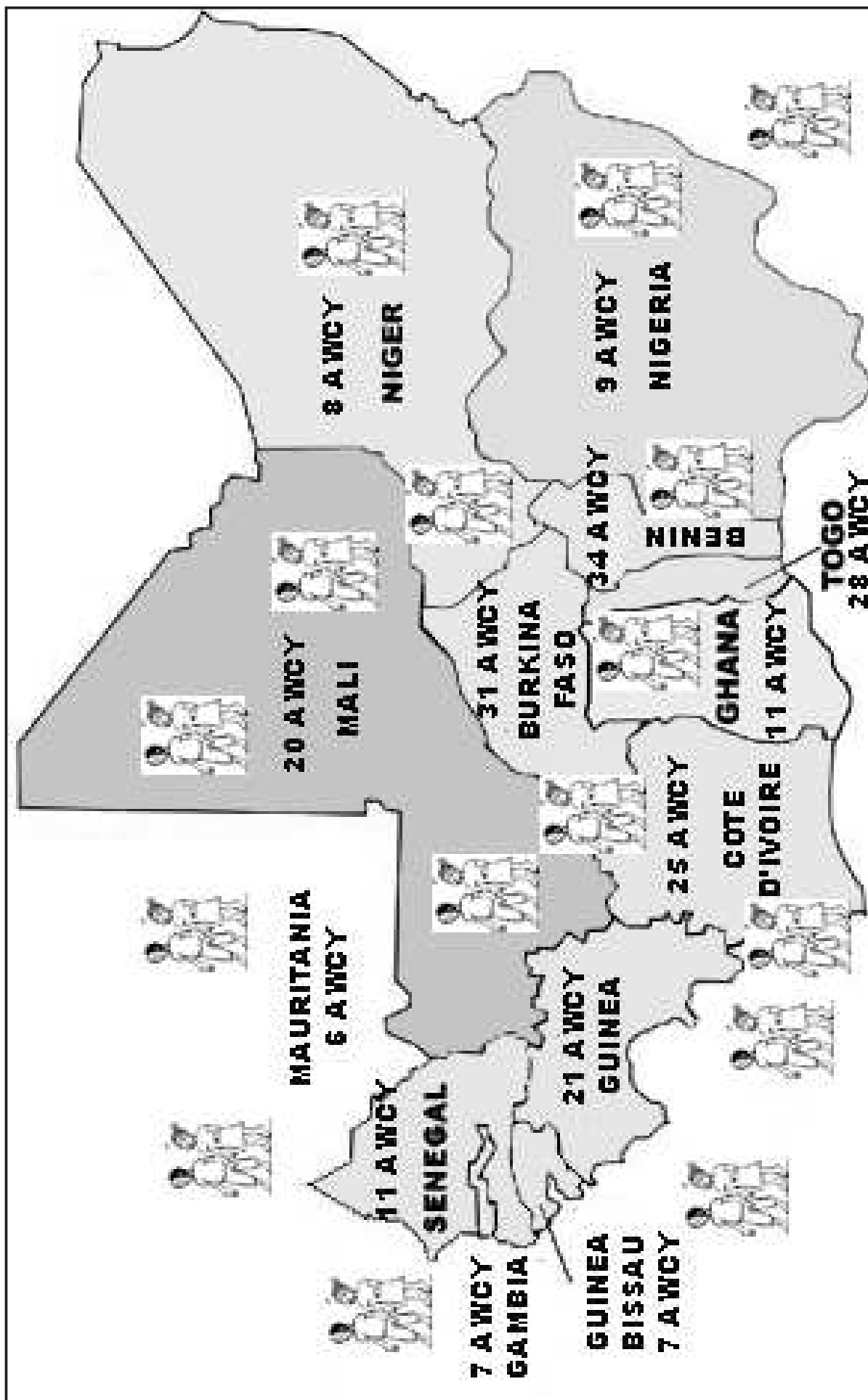
That is why the few examples of initiatives they are taking and which are outlined in this document, should draw great attention. From the WCY membership card, which allows safer travel, to the "corporate" phone network in Benin, to the different messages which are broadcast through radio programmes... all these initiatives coming from the WCYs, go in the right direction and contribute to protecting children in all areas and at any time.

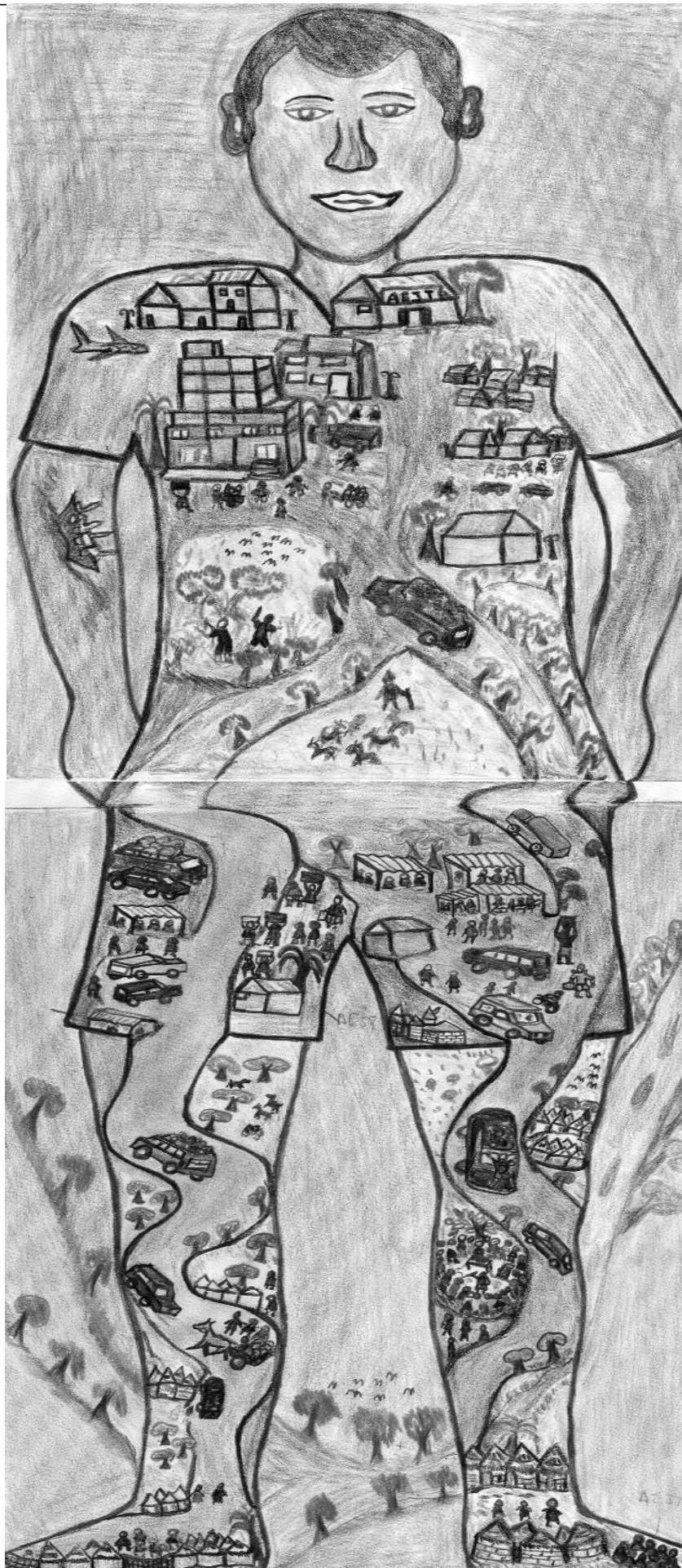
These are the bricks the WCYs are bringing to the building of their collective goal: protective measures. In so doing, the WCYs are automatically part of the "protection systems". Their contribution must be acknowledged as such and vigorously encouraged, because it is voluntary and massive.

Contact :
ejt@enda.sn



Protection network of the WCYs in West Africa





In 2011, the WCYs protected 11,999 mobile children in the eight (8) following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

The protected children are: beggars, apprentices, orphans, adopted children, cart pushers, children in prison, stock farmers, car washers, house maids or boys, salesgirls, migrating girls, shoe shiners, Koranic school pupils, porters, waitresses working in maquis (small restaurants), children suffering family and social breakdown, street "girlfriends", pupils, children displaced by armed conflicts, handicapped children, gardeners etc.

It is a very dense and omnipresent network including 1,973 grassroots groups, 218 Associations in 13 countries. One would find it hard to travel for 200 Km in West Africa without meeting an Association of WCYs.