

THEMAG

AIDE ET ACTION

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Special Report

EDUCATION
**TOMORROW'S
MAJOR
ISSUES**



Changing the world through Education

40 YEARS OF EDUCATION
ANS D'ÉDUCATION

IMAGE OF HERE AND NOW



On Sunday 19 September 2021, Aide et Action organized the “Schoolbag Race”. For this occasion, more than a hundred participants met in the Vincennes Forest, in Paris, to run for education in the world. This event had both a sporty and a fun side and was sponsored by the singer Silvàn Areg. It aimed to raise awareness on the reality of education for thousands of children around the world. We would like to thank all the people who embarked on this wonderful adventure by our side and who enabled us to raise nearly € 22 000 for the development of our projects. 🌱

“Thank you for taking part in this event with us and come on, put your bags on your backs and let’s run for a good cause!”

Silvàn Areg, singer and godfather of the “Schoolbag Race”.



“Tomorrow’s major issues must be incorporated in today’s education.”



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The populations we have been supporting for the past 40 years are now facing many crises: migration, conflicts, climate change, gender inequalities threaten the construction of a better world tomorrow. Indeed, climate crises expose entire populations to natural disasters and force them to migrate; conflicts expose them to violence and force them to flee; gender inequalities deprive more than half of humanity from access to their most basic rights ...

In order to best support these populations Aide et Action believes that education is essential. It is the only way for them to be trained and informed, to be more resilient in the face of crises and more able to adapt to changes. For this reason and as part of our ten-year strategic orientations, we are refocusing our action on the most vulnerable and marginalised populations to give them the right to education and the power to act. On the one hand, our association wishes to promote and develop the autonomy of each citizen, so that they become vectors of social change at local, regional, national, and international levels. On the other hand, we want to empower the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, to advocate with institutions and public authorities to assert their rights, including their right to education.

To achieve this, we believe that tomorrow’s major issues must be incorporated in today’s education. In the special report of this new issue of your Magazine, find out how our programmes take these issues into account and respond to the constraints that threaten quality education for all.

Happy reading!
With solidarity,

Charles-Emmanuel Ballanger
CEO of Aide et Action

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LAOS: WOMEN IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND EDUCATION

In Pakchan, a small rural village in the Laotian province of Vientiane, school lunch time is not just the highlight of the school day for the 200 students, but also an essential moment in their development.

Sommathid Sisompheang, first year teacher at a primary school in Pakchan, Laos, oversees the organization of school meals in her school. She is one of the teachers that contribute to children's development. This responsibility taught her a lot and she was able to develop her knowledge regarding nutrition and her project-based skills. "I learned to plan menus, to list the necessary ingredients to cook and manage both budget and time", she explains, before adding: "Since we started to organize school meals, teachers and members of the village community have learned a lot, especially about ingredients and on the possibility of having more variety in menus that we prepare."

EVERYTHING STARTS WITH EDUCATION

In a country where malnutrition is prevalent, school meals can play a vital role in a child's survival. According to a World Bank analysis,

Good to know

According to a report by UNICEF, based on research of the Lao Social Indicator Survey II (2017), about 33% of children aged less than five years old in Laos suffer from stunted growth. This affects both physical and cognitive development of children and risks to prevent them from reaching their full potential when they are adult.

the lack of dietary diversity is the main reason for the high rate of child malnutrition in the country. To remedy this Aide et Action trains parents and teachers, many of whom are mothers, in nutrition and health, and organizes school meals in nursery and primary schools across the country. Once trained, these parents and other members of the community are offered jobs as cooks in schools. They then play a key role in promoting health and well-being of children, both at school and at home, all by sharing their newly acquired knowledge with their families.

ENCOURAGING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

When children have access to nutritious meals, their risk of malnutrition and stunted growth is reduced. This promotes their physical and cognitive development and encourages them to go to school. An Aide et Action report found that 81% of pupils benefiting from the project declared that they preferred to eat at school rather than at home because the food there was not as nutritious and tasty. Knowing that their children will have a nutritious meal at school is also a relief for parents. So Pa Vang, a mother of three children living in the village of Nongpor, says: "Lunch at school gives me confidence because sometimes when I go to the farm for a whole day, I know that my daughters will be able to eat at school. I do not have a lot of money to buy good food, fruit and milk for my daughters, so I am happy that they are benefiting from the project." Mothers like Pa Vang who participate in this project also play a key role in their community and help change things for future generations while developing their skills and knowledge. 🌱

RESILIENCE

IN SRI LANKA, VOCATIONAL TRAINING ALLOWS YOUNG PEOPLE TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES AFTER CONFLICT

After having to flee their country because of the civil war, Rajitharan and Tharani, two Sri Lankan sisters are back at home and managing to rebuild themselves and support their families through the vocational training programme “iLEAD”. Being independent and optimistic, these days they are determined to build a better future.



© Aide et Action

Rajitharan and Tharani Sayanthi, two sisters, are already their own bosses. They run a beauty parlour in Palinagar Vaunikulam, in Sri Lanka. Yet it was not so long ago their family had to take refuge in India to escape the civil war that ravaged the country for 30 years. They then lost any hope for a professional future.

EARNING RESPECT FROM SOCIETY

Back in Sri Lanka in 2009 after the end of the war, the sisters aspired to acquire professional skills which would earn a living and respect from society. Determined to be independent and to support their families, they then discovered the “iLEAD” project which offers vocational training for young, marginalized people. They enrolled in the beautician course. In a few weeks, Rajitharan and Tharani not only acquired the skills necessary to become beauticians, but also other skills that gave them enough self-confidence to get started. After working a few months in a

neighbouring living room, the sisters opened their own establishment with financial support from their friends.

“THE TRAINING HAS HELPED US TO STAND ON OUR OWN TWO FEET”

The sisters have now established themselves as expert beauticians and earn their livelihood (40,000 LR per month, or 170 euros). “The iLEAD Aide et Action programme has helped shape our careers and helped us to stand on our own two feet, says Rajitharan. The training gave us the necessary skills to become beauticians and we were also given confidence through various other modules, including gossip circle for empowerment and life skills.” Rajitharan and Tharani are proud of being able to now provide for their family needs. “Our family went through many hardships during the years of civil war, now that we have finally set up shop, we hope to take care of them and support themselves with the help of our new business,” Tharani concludes. 🌱

Good to know

During the last 16 years and thanks to the initiative of skills development and its multiple and varied approaches the Aide et Action programme “iLEAD” restored trust among young people, revived the economy and rehabilitated communities living in areas of conflict located in Sri Lanka, Nepal and India. With this objective, the programme has established tightly knit partnerships with governmental authorities, local communities, and the private sector.

ROMANIA

FAVOUR INCLUSION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS IN ROMANIA



Challenges in accessing health and education services, exclusions and discrimination threaten more than 40% of the Romanian population and more than 49% of children are exposed to the risk of living in precariousness. To support the marginalized community of Sătmărel, Aide et Action and its local partner Stea, take action for the inclusion of young people and adults.

Faced with the challenges that the marginalized community of Sătmărel - an outlying and particularly underprivileged district in the city of Satu Mare, Romania - the local association Stea developed an integration project which has been supported by Aide et Action since 2018. Its objectives are to increase access, attendance rate and the retention of children and young people aged 6 to 14 at school; involve more parents in education and school monitoring of their children; accompany children and their families through a community approach; increase the level of employability and the skills of young people and adults; promote social and economic inclusion of families by raising awareness of all stakeholders of Satu Mare (population, institutions, etc.); empower families in their efforts to access their rights; and finally, facilitate access to health and social services to members of the community through daily distribution of medication and administrative support. So many actions that aim to compensate for the lack of support from which this community suffers.

Good to know
A large territorial gap. In Romania, there is a large discrepancy in access to education between rural and urban areas. Indeed, the school dropout rate is 25% higher in rural areas for young people aged less than 14 years old.

EXTREMELY CHALLENGING LIVING CONDITIONS

In Romania, due to challenges in access to health and education services, exclusions, and discrimination, more than 40% of the population and more than 49% of children are exposed to the risk of living in precariousness. In 2020, the crisis linked to COVID-19 disproportionately affected the most vulnerable children whose living conditions in precarious housing are extremely difficult and made their situation even worse. Supporting and accompanying them is therefore more than ever a necessity. Thus, last year, 78 children aged 6 to 16 years old, 26 parents and 11 young adults in a socio-professional pathway of inclusion were supported by our project. 347 people benefited from our actions to access rights, care, and medication. And finally, 11 mothers were involved in educational activities with a focus on helping parenthood and the development of their resource management skills for their families. 🌱

A similar action in Bulgaria

Likewise, in Bulgaria, many people live in precarious housing. Since 2020, Médecins du Monde and Aide et Action are mobilizing and strengthening the power to act for both young people and women from the Nadejda neighbourhood to enable them to improve their access to basic rights and develop projects geared towards their own difficulties.



EDUCATION TOMORROW'S MAJOR ISSUES

To adapt to changes in societies, as much as to transform the world we live in, education is the basis of everything. That's why, for 40 years it has been at the heart of our efforts to support future generations. The stakes are high: a migration crisis, conflicts, climate change and gender inequalities are issues today that threaten the construction of a sustainable world for tomorrow. Aide et Action has decided to take action on these four major topics for the coming years. To train children and young people to take up these major challenges; discover how our programmes incorporate these themes and how to respond to the constraints that threaten quality education for all.

Tomorrow's major issues

Gender equality in education

Education needs for a sustainable world are changing and we have to adapt to these. To do this, Aide et Action has defined strategic orientations for the coming ten years, intended to meet the main challenges, both current and future ones.

Among our priorities: gender equality. We believe that this issue is intrinsically linked to promotion of the right to education.

Many obstacles prevent women and girls to exercise their full right to participate in education, to use it for a good purpose, and benefit from it. These obstacles include early marriages and pregnancies, gender-based violence, traditional customs based on patriarchal status and the role of women, poverty, geographic isolation, and minority status. Yet gender equality, both within and outside education, is essential. "Education should teach how to live on a planet under pressure. It should aim at cultural literacy, based on respect and equal dignity for all", said Irina Bokova, ex-managing director of UNESCO*. In order to achieve this, access to and quality of education for primary, middle, and secondary levels must be effective for each and everyone.

GIRLS' EDUCATION CAN BREAK THE CYCLE OF INEQUALITY

Over the past 25 years, access to girls' education has improved dramatically. Yet girls, especially those who accumulate disadvantages such as poverty or disability, remain confronted with the most extreme forms of exclusion in the more underprivileged countries. Aide et Action believes that education is a powerful lever for the rights of girls and women, and we are now defending the idea of increased civil commitment in education. Far from being an isolated problem that affects only half of the population, it is contrary to a global challenge on which the good development of the world of tomorrow depends. Promoting education, especially that of girls,

helps break the cycle of inequalities between generations.

CHANGING PEOPLE'S MINDS

In Madagascar, for example, thanks to a training project and socio-professional integration, Aide et Action supports young single mothers in underprivileged urban neighbourhoods in Antananarivo, the capital. Over the course of three years, 900 unmarried mothers, aged 15 to 29, will acquire the necessary skills for their development and autonomy. But, beyond this objective, we also aim to change attitudes. In Madagascar, a large number of young girls become mothers at a very young age (32% girls aged 15-19 have at least one child). Often stigmatized and rejected by society, in particular because of their low level of education, they often face destitution, without psychological or financial support. It is therefore a whole system and social perception that we must succeed in changing. To do this, the project deploys mentoring services, psycho-social support that pay particular attention to gender-based violence through assertiveness activities of self-confidence and personal development, and finally support in terms of training and professional integration. The project is also aimed at society as a whole and develops awareness-raising activities on early parenthood in neighbourhoods, particularly focusing on men and adolescents, as well as campaigns to promote the image and representation of teen mothers.

* Report *Rethinking education: towards a global common good?* 2015

“

There is no more powerful transforming force than education - to promote human rights and dignity, to eradicate poverty and deepen sustainability, to build a better future for all, based on equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, international solidarity and sharing of responsibilities, which are all fundamental elements of our common humanity. ”

Irina Bokova,
Ex-managing director of UNESCO



© Vincent Reynaud-Lacroze

Good to know

The Education 2030 Agenda is a universal and collective commitment that requires political will, global and regional collaboration and commitment of all governments, civil society, industry, the private sector, youth, the United Nations, and other multilateral organizations to meet educational challenges and build inclusive, equitable and relevant systems for all learners.





Tomorrow's major issues

Education for the environment and for peace

In the face of growing insecurity, promoting education for peace and citizenship, and living together is essential. But to imagine societies in peace, we must also build a sustainable world and therefore, at the same time, raise awareness among younger generations about climate change and the environment. These two questions seem to us unavoidable and inseparable.

In a global context where issues of living together and protecting the environment are crucial, it is important that everyone is able to assert their rights and to contribute, both individually and collectively, to the construction of a more sustainable, fairer and more inclusive society. According to Philippe Meirieu, a teacher of French: "School

has a fundamental role to play in building a society of peace since it is the most suitable place where the child learns to substitute violence with debate. This is where he learns the distinction between believing it and knowing it." This is also our belief. Therefore, we focus our efforts on early childhood, in order to overcome the deficit in nursery schools in our countries of



Good to know

Created as an extension of the Climate and territories summit in Lyon that gathered climate stakeholders ahead of the COP 21, Climate Chance is the only international association seeking to unite all non-state stakeholders recognized by the Framework Convention of the United Nations about climate changes in order to help emerge priorities and proposals from municipalities, and to strengthen dynamics among stakeholders.

*At the heart of Agenda 2030, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up and they cover all development issues in every country. Among them, SDG 4 is about education. It reminds us to “ensure that everyone can follow quality education under conditions of equity and to promote learning opportunities for all throughout life”

intervention and allow the 175 million children still deprived of pre-school education in low- and middle-income countries, to reach their full development at the age of five years (*Report Leaving the Youngest Behind report, Theirworld, April 2019, UNICEF*). What’s more, we develop specific projects that allow younger generations to become aware of the challenges of citizenship and solidarity.

STRENGTHENING EVERYONE’S POWER TO ACT

In West Africa, we have set up an education project for citizenship (ACTE) in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Togo. Its objective is to contribute to better access to rights by strengthening the power to act for children and young people. By making them, for example, get involved in projects such as birth certificate declarations by leading a census survey within their community, children are encouraged to become agents of change in citizenship, social cohesion, and development.

Sustainable Development Goal n° 4*, dedicated to access to quality education for each and everyone, specifies in its 7th paragraph the need that “*all students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, especially through education for development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, of global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution from culture to sustainable development.*”

EDUCATION TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT SOCIETIES

In the Vietnamese schools where we operate, we have also organized clubs for children to learn about and participate in peace education. This seems to us an essential component in bringing about changes in behaviour in order to enable children, young people and adults to resolve problems and conflicts peacefully. Traditionally, children do not take part in the decision-making processes in the field of education in Vietnam, but through our focus on them, we want to encourage teachers and students to listen to their voices. Our clubs are run by the children themselves and it is they who decide what they want to do there. For example, club members chose to define their own ground rules and

appoint team leaders. This method helps provide children with a real role in their own education and awaken their citizen and collective conscience.

In addition, in Niger, between 2017 and 2021, Aide et Action developed the PassEduc project which sets up “bridging classes” in favour of out-of-school or dropped-out children aged 9 to 14. These offer accelerated education in one or two years before reintegrating the children into the regular school system and thus reduce the risk of seeing them join extremist groups. Knowing that an increase of only 10% in secondary school enrolment rate may reduce the risk of conflicts by 3%, it now seems more than essential and urgent to allow all individuals, children, and adults, to learn to read and write. Convinced that education is a massive weapon of peace that enables economic, social, ecological, and political progress, Aide et Action reiterates that access to quality education must be our common priority. This is a fundamental right and, as such, those who are private individuals are victims of profound social and legal injustice since it is about failure to respect their most basic rights.

NO SOLUTION WITHOUT EDUCATION

Today, only half of the programmes at schools around the world refer to climate change, warns the UNESCO. However, according to the World Bank, this phenomenon could plunge 100 million people in poverty during the next 15 years. “*The climate crisis is no longer the fear of a distant future, but a global reality,*” says Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO. “*There’s no solution without education. Each student must understand climate change and be able to contribute to a solution, and each teacher must receive the necessary knowledge to teach it. States must be mobilized in this direction.*”

Recently, in Cambodia, Aide et Action launched a programme, supported by the European Union, to raise awareness among the population to environmental issues and to support vulnerable communities dependent on fishing for their livelihoods. Finally, to commit again, more, and globally, in 2021, Aide et Action joined Climate Chance, the only international association seeking to federate all non-state stakeholders on climate change. 🌱

Tomorrow's major issues

Alternative education in the face of migration

In the face of population growth, ongoing urbanization, and migration, promoting alternative education adapted to everyone's needs is a crucial challenge. Indeed, population movements can have repercussions and a considerable impact on education systems around the world.



© Vincent Reynaud-Lacroze

Since 2009, Aide et Action has been actively working to take care of these children and the application of their right to education. Our programme is mainly aimed at distressed children of migrant workers in brickyards and construction sites in the states of Bihar, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana in India. Thanks to the establishment of centres dedicated to early childhood care, we strive to provide hospitality services as well as basic education. We thus promote cognitive learning and children's physical growth through the development of materials and adapted programmes. Over the years, we have managed to make sure that migrant children can return to school once again and return to their villages of origin.

MAKE MIGRANT CHILDREN'S FATE A PRIORITY

With the aim of making this tool sustainable, we have succeeded in building

The reciprocal impact of migration and displacement in education is complex, UNESCO believes. It affects people on the move, those who stay and those who welcome or are likely to host migrants and refugees." For Aide et Action, education is one of the answers to be given to this problem. Indeed, education, whose role is to promote understanding and tolerance like we have seen it previously, takes here all its place. We believe that school systems must adjust to every student's needs, regardless of their origin, so that they can hold their promises. They must also respond to the need for resilience and adaptation of societies.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR ALL, EVERYWHERE

In India, nearly 100 million people are considered to be seasonal migrant workers. Among them, 10 to 15 million are children who find themselves in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

The international community is working to improve its SDG 4 monitoring tools

In addition to establishing an ambitious action programme in the field of education, SDG 4 calls for monitoring of targets which especially concern multiplicity of learning outcomes, inequalities, and teaching content. Although some denounce its excess of ambition, this monitoring framework makes it possible above all to attract the attention of countries on central issues that were not relevant before 2015. It should lead to investing in reliable national mechanisms for monitoring equity, inclusion, and quality of education.





© Chandra Kiran Katar/Aide et Action

a collaboration with authorities and communities which now allows them to establish and manage centres directly on construction sites. Efforts have been made to reproduce housing models and reception areas for children developed by Aide et Action. Partnerships have also been forged with teachers, officials of the Integrated Childhood Development Service, health officials and municipalities to connect government services and family rights of migrants. At the political level, we have succeeded in drafting and sharing recommendations with the government, decision-makers, and owners of projects to develop a framework allowing families and migrant children to access decent living conditions, basic services and exert their rights in the workplace. National and local consultations and workshops were organized to highlight the issue and to provide solutions. We have also established networks with

children's rights groups and university institutions to express the concerns of young migrants and find political solutions.

Overall, Aide et Action advocates for education systems that are inclusive and consistent with the imperative equity. UNESCO specifies: *"Migration and displacement becoming a hot political topic, education is essential to help citizens develop a critical vision of these issues. It can facilitate processing of information and promoting cohesive societies, which is the essential foundation of a globalized world. Education must nevertheless go beyond tolerance which, sometimes, seems akin to indifference; it is a powerful weapon to fight prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination. Poorly designed education systems can propagate a negative image, which is biased, exclusive or contemptuous of immigrants and refugees."* 

Good to know

According to estimates, 763 million people live in a region other than where they were born. Of all models of possible displacement, whether they are permanent or temporary, they will come into effect between rural and urban areas or inside these areas, the rural exodus, and seasonal or circular migratory flows are the most destabilizing for educational systems.

(UNESCO 2019)

NIGER Bridging classes to catch up on lost time

Between 2017 and 2021, Aide et Action developed the project PassEduc which experimented with the implementation of «bridging classes» in favour of out-of-school or non-school attending children aged 9 to 14, in Niger.

These classes of non-formal education offer accelerated education in 1 or 2 years before reintegrating children into the regular school system (in elementary school, college, or vocational training centres).

Good to know The project experience has been documented in two capitalisation booklets intended for any stakeholder interested in the establishment of bridging classes. Good practices, approaches and tools are presented here.



© Aide et Action



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MADAGASCAR Alleviate the cost of education for families

Due to the lack of means for families, in Madagascar many children are victims of school dropout. Indeed, among the obstacles to education, the cost of education is a major issue. To support them and enable them

to access education despite everything, Aide et Action and its local partner SODIM raised and distributed more than 5,000 school supplies for primary school children.

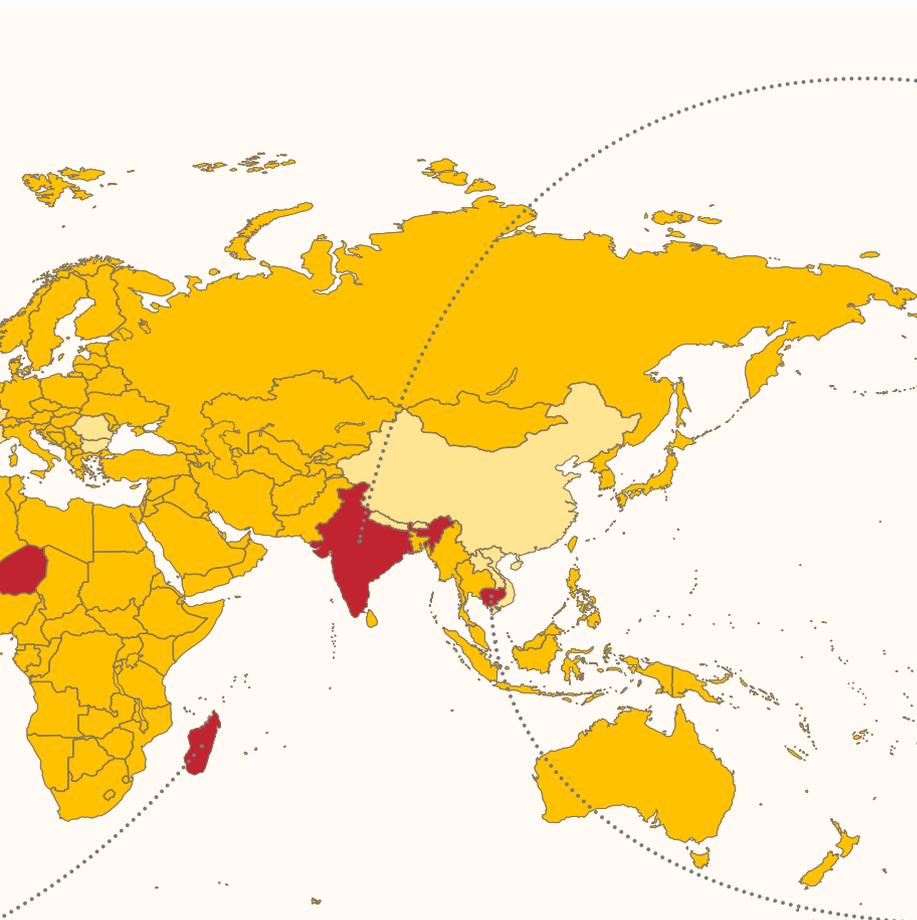
Good to know Thanks to this large fundraising effort, pupils of three primary schools were able to benefit from the distribution of school supplies. UNICEF estimates that currently in Madagascar 1 million children are excluded from the education system.

INDIA Protecting the most vulnerable ones in the face of COVID-19

Continuing our efforts to vaccinate as many as possible marginalized Indians, a special campaign was organized by Aide et Action in Hyderabad for construction workers. Developed in partnership with local health professionals, it has enabled nearly 300 precarious workers to be

vaccinated against COVID-19. Elsewhere, in Trichy, there are 60 garbage collectors who have benefited from our vaccination campaign and 2948 adults received vaccinations through a massive drive organized across 64 villages in Rajasthan.

Good to know Aide et Action manages eight childcare and learning centres for children of construction workers who migrate to Hyderabad. The centres also provide them with necessary nutritional and health support.



© Aide et Action



© Christine Redmond/Aide et Action

CAMBODIA Providing teachers with better living conditions

In rural and remote areas of Cambodia, teachers travel long distances to school or stay in substandard housing. Aide et Action supports the development of better school infrastructure for teachers so that they have better living

conditions and are better equipped to provide quality education. The construction of new dormitories intended for female teachers and separate toilets are part of our response to the problem.

Good to know In remote areas of Cambodia, it is not uncommon for dormitories to be deprived of ventilation or roofs of building to have holes. Sometimes about 15 teachers are crammed into one dormitory without any comfort.

Education at risk

The future of millions of children threatened

As we have seen in the main report of this Magazine, the gravity of the current crises threatens the vulnerable populations, and more particularly the children, as well as the efforts which we carry out for 40 years to give them access to a quality education. This is why we must act together, in order to give the tomorrow's generations better opportunities for the future!

The COVID-19 crisis threatens 24 million children to never be able to go back to school (UNICEF 2020). But even before the pandemic, migratory and environmental crises, insecurity, and social issues were already real obstacles to education and to building a peaceful and sustainable world. This is why it is important to take action today and be mobilized so as not to let the many crises, current and ones to come, dictate the future of the youngest generation. In countries in crisis, 128 million children of primary or secondary school age are not educated. Moreover, in a situation of emergency - natural disasters, epidemics, wars, influx of refugees - education is not sufficiently prioritized. Nevertheless, for Aide et Action, education makes it possible to provide multiple and relevant answers to these major challenges.

EDUCATION, A FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PROJECTS

As stated by the Education Coalition*, of which Aide et Action is head leader, maintaining and strengthening quality education is essential to combat humanitarian crises. Through education, it is about giving populations, and especially to younger ones, psycho-social support, a framework for the construction of individual and collective projects, as well as knowledge



and skills to keep hope for the future. Too often the target of violence, schools and other learning spaces are, however, the crucible of pacified, tolerant, and respectful societies for everyone's freedoms. For boys and girls alike, schools are safe places against risks and dangers associated with an environmental crisis such as violence, early or forced marriages, recruitment by armed groups or organized crime.

Schools are also the point of access to other essential services such as nutrition, water, sanitation, and health services. Crises have substantially weakened progress made during these

years in education. Also, at the end of the year, we invite you to provide additional support to our actions in order to help us build strong and resilient education systems that enable the most vulnerable children to withstand shocks and cope with the challenges of the 21st century. 🌱

*The Education Coalition brings together 23 French civil society organizations and claims the right to inclusive quality education for all, especially for the most vulnerable ones, and affirms that international solidarity is necessary to lead this fight.

Poonam PARDESI

A visually impaired Aide et Action Program Officer in South Asia

Poonam Pardesi, Aide et Action Program Officer in South Asia is visually impaired. On the occasion of the international day people with disabilities, on 3 December, we wanted to give her the opportunity to share her story with us, her background and her point of view on inclusive culture within the Association.



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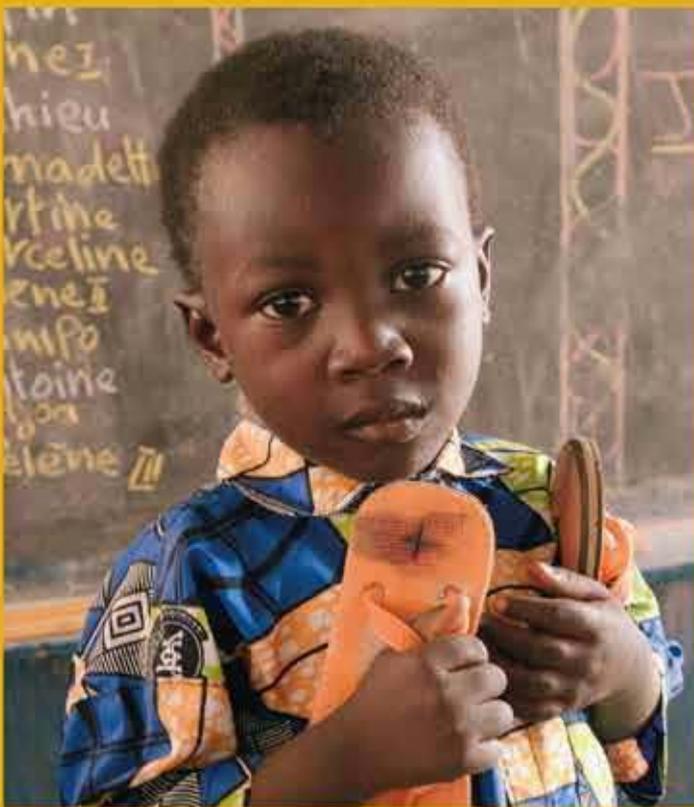
“ I have been blind since my birth. I was born in a middle-class family. My father was a line manager in the state-owned public transport company in Maharashtra and my mother, a typical Indian housewife. Of course, my family was confused when they learned that I was blind from birth. My parents accepted this new reality and admitted me to a boarding school in Mumbai, welcoming only blind girls. I finished my school years and graduated my studies successfully, then I obtained a bachelor's and a master's degree in social sciences from a renowned university in Mumbai. I had to face enormous challenges when I tried to find a job at the end of my master's degree in social sciences. Employers didn't want to hire me just because I was a woman with disabilities. That's why I didn't get the type of job that I initially wanted,

and which matched my qualifications and skills.

IT IS THE WILL OF THE ASSOCIATION TO TAKE DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT

My journey with Aide et Action has been a wonderful experience. I joined Aide et Action in 2013 and since then I have been part of the department of Development and Support to Programmes. Before hiring me, the Human Resources department identified my specific needs and provided me with adapted techniques. My line manager and the other team members are incredibly understanding and supportive. They help me prepare and make all efforts to create an environment which is conducive to my work. I'm proud to say it is the willingness of the association to take diversity of colleagues into account. Aide et Action's efforts to adapt my workstation and guarantee me the

same opportunities as others have enabled me to strengthen my abilities and to be efficient over the years. Aide et Action also encourages me to meet the communities we work with and make them aware of problems of people with disabilities. I am happy to evolve in a work environment that gives a sense of identity, of dignity and the possibility of becoming an active vector of change. In order to promote greater openness and strengthen the value of inclusion within the association, Aide et Action must go even further and integrate disability into our daily work by adapting the principle of inclusive and universal design. For that, it is still necessary to make entry accessible to all our web sites, our teaching and learning materials as well as other resources. And we must, finally, raise awareness among staff of our programmes as well as communities about rights of people with disabilities. 🌱



1981-2021: 40 years of action

dedicated to increasing access to quality education for all, worldwide.

