

New Foundation Seeks to Help Street and Working Children

NEW YORK - A new foundation is being set up with the purpose of helping to provide education and other services to the more than 100 million street and working children worldwide.

The International Hope Foundation, which will be American-based and have offices in New York, is the creation of H.R.H. Princess Firyal of Jordan, who has been a Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO since July 1992.

The foundation, Princess Firyal said, intends to offer guidance and inspiration, as well as be a source of financing, to projects working with street children around the world, including the United States.

The number of street children is growing rapidly: 70,000 street kids are reported in Manila; 130,000 in Nairobi; 100,000 in Mexico City; and also 20,000 on the streets of New York. For Brazil as a whole, the latest estimate on street children is 8 million.

Separated from their families and marginalized from society, street children are prey to hunger, labor exploitation, drugs, rape and sexual exploitation, AIDS and other diseases. Often they are victims of violence, even murder.

Education is the only way out, and through education, street children can acquire the learning, skills and sense of self-worth to become productive members of society. Education for street children cannot be the same as the formal school system with classroom teachers. Specially trained street educators must reach out to where the children live and work; they must gain their confidence, speak to them in their own "language," adapt to their personalities and build on the children's own strengths.

The idea for the International



H.R.H. Princess Firyal of Jordan

Hope Foundation grew out of her continuing interest in children and education, Princess Firyal said. "This combines both my interests in one project."

The foundation's goal, she continued, is to complement the existing work being done to help street and working children as well as be a "pioneer" in developing new projects. "We don't want to duplicate anyone else's work," she added. "There are a lot of areas not now being reached, like the remote areas of Africa and Brazil."

Princess Firyal worked with the Education Sector of UNESCO in developing the foundation, of which she is president. "This is an area which is neglected. UNESCO cannot raise enough funds to help all the street and working children. We need private support, and the foundation is trying to fill that void. If we have funding, you'd be amazed how many doors will open."

The foundation's vision is long range, she said, and it intends to develop a 50-year plan that calls for joining forces with other organizations active in the field. "We want to create a chain reaction - we educate the children and train them to educate other children. We are go-

ing to give them responsibility. This approach has worked in India and the children loved it. They take charge."

In its fund-raising efforts, the foundation, which is tax deductible, plans to approach not only individuals but also governments and organizations, Princess Firyal said. "We want to work with anyone with compassion in his or her heart."

The foundation is now in the process of establishing an international advisory board who can "give us counsel and advice," she stated. She has invited business people, government officials and is especially interested in people "who are pioneers in their fields - social work, finance, anthropology." Her aim is to have the board members represent all the major regions of the world.

Princess Firyal said she wants to have the advisory board in place by Christmas so the foundation can get down to work by the New Year.

Executive Board Elects New Chairperson

PARIS - Nouréini Rémi Tidjani-Serpos, the Ambassador of Benin to UNESCO, was unanimously elected chairperson of the Organization's 58-member Executive Board, a two-year post.

He has published two novels, directed five plays and written more than 30 reviews on poetry, literature and education. A former professor of African literature at the National University of Benin in Cotonu, he holds a Doctorate in Arts from the University of Paris VIII.

The Executive Board meets twice a year to supervise implementation of the program of activities approved by UNESCO's General Conference. This year the board expanded from 51 to 58 members, mainly to reflect the addition of 25 Member States since 1989.