



PRESS RELEASE

Life on the streets of Dakar: Village Pilote and Bureau Veritas work to develop a Social Pact

Hundreds of children living on the difficult streets of Dakar are vulnerable to abuse and drugs. In addition, they are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill with HIV because of their lack of access to decent nutrition and medical care during the pandemic.

That's why projects like Village Pilote, supported by Bureau Veritas Group, a global leader in testing, inspection, and certification are now playing a more crucial role than ever in helping children escape the trap of a hopeless life and future.

Bureau Veritas' QHSSE/TQR Manager for Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal, Ahmadou Gaye, said the company took note of the outstanding social action of Village Pilote, an Afro-European association advocating for children's rights, and pledged to assist the project by providing educational materials, skills development, and financial support to former street children.

Village Pilote is a non-governmental organization that advocates for children's rights and has the noble goal of helping all street children in Senegal find shelter and a better future. "Village Pilote is a unique initiative because it aims to help abandoned children who, in many cases, have no choice but to live on the city streets when their families abandon them because they cannot afford to feed them. Society is also strict and unforgiving when cultural norms and rules have been broken, which also leads some parents to reject their children altogether," said Gaye.

Gaye said he and other Bureau Veritas employees recently joined the Pilot Village in an outreach program on the streets of Dakar to encourage children to join the orphanage where they can access education, skills development and eventually employment. The goal of this program is to encourage children to leave the streets and live at the Village Pilote, where they can either reconcile with their families or stay in the home, go to school and learn skills.

Gaye said he and other Bureau Veritas employees recently joined the Pilot Village in an outreach program on the streets of Dakar to encourage children to join the orphanage where they can access education, skills development, and eventually employment. The purpose of this program is to encourage children to leave the streets and live at the Village Pilote, where they can either reconcile with their families or stay in the home, attend school, and learn new skills.

Gaye's adventure on the streets was heartbreaking, but the outcome was positive for many children. "I was very frustrated to see children as young as seven years old left

to their own devices on the streets. Many of the children have organized themselves into gangs, led by the oldest child in the group. Some of the kids who were using drugs were violent, so although they felt protected in the gangs, they were exposed to the violent behavior of the leader," said Gaye.

"The employees/collaborators of Village Pilote are extremely experienced in working with children and they were able to get down to their level and explain to them not only the ultimate dangers of life on the street but also the fact that there is a better way to live and that there is hope for the future," he added. Most of the children the Village Pilote and Bureau Veritas outreach team spoke with that day agreed to trust their new friends and join the orphanage. Approximately 350 children a year are transferred from the streets to Village Pilote, where they are fed, clothed, educated and helped to learn skills. Bureau Veritas has supported Village Pilote since 2019. "Bureau Veritas helps the home with donations of educational materials, such as computers and books for the children, as well as skill-building projects. Our team of technical experts donates their time to organize educational lectures for the children, where they are exposed to a range of possible careers, from vehicle testing to the construction industry. Our engineer recently taught the kids a short course on construction and we also offer other skill development courses," said Gaye.

The company has also become a regular supporter of the Pilot Village's annual Gala Dinner, a charitable event to raise the funds needed to cover some of the home's daily operating costs. "We chose to support this worthy project because it is a valuable investment in the future, helping the most vulnerable in society, our children, who are truly helpless and at the mercy of strangers, whether on the street or as they begin their new lives. If we can give children access to education, they will be able to get on with their future," he said.

Caption: Ahmadou Gaye, QHSE/TQR Manager for Bureau Veritas Senegal (right) presents a donation to Benjamin Sagno (left), a facilitator at Village Pilote, a local project that rescues orphans from the street and then works to provide them with education and skills.

/END.

Published By: Assegai & Javelin

For: Bureau Veritas

Contacts

Sal Govender:

+278 36 42 63 93

sal.govender@bureauveritas.com