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UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

U.N. IN ACTION

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UN HELPS YOUNG DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SENEGAL

VIDEO

VILLAGE SCENES (18")

GIRL LEAVES HOUSE (11")

AISSATOU FAYE ON CAMERA
(11")

AUDIO

NARRATION

With half its population living below the poverty line, Senegal is one of the world's least developed countries. Deep rural poverty, made worse by frequent drought, means parents are often forced to send children to the cities to find menial work. It provides support for families back in their home villages.

NARRATION

Like many other youngsters with nothing to do at home and no way to make a living, 16-year-old Aissatou Faye came to the capital Dakar four years ago to work as a housemaid.

AISSATOU FAYE:

"My mother died when I was two. I lived with my father and sister in the village, but he could not take care of both of us. So I came here to help my father."

NARRATION

GIRL DOING HOUSEWORK (24”)

Working for long hours the youngsters earn very little. Sometimes, girls as young as six years old are employed to do all the domestic chores like sweeping, cleaning and laundry. But Aissatou is one of the lucky ones. With the family four years, she is treated well and paid regularly. Her employer, Diama Diagne, would like to see her return to her village to go to school.

DIAMA DIAGNE:

DIAMA DIAGNE ON CAMERA
(14”)

“I think that it is good that the children go to school and learn good manners, learn to speak French properly. Why shouldn’t they get the same chance as our children, nephews and brothers.”

NARRATION

STREET SCENES (15”)

With support from UNICEF, the UN Children’s Fund, the local child worker protection group Centre Emmanuel provides support. This includes education and a safe haven for young people, says Marius Biya, coordinator of the project.

MARIUS BIYA:

MARIUS BIYA ON CAMERA
(11”)

“Sometimes they get mistreated, molested by the employer or even by their children. Or they don’t get paid.”

CLASS FOR DOMESTIC
WORKERS (17")

NARRATION

To save money, the youngsters frequently share accommodation, sometimes 20 to 30 to a room. But after rising before 6:00 a.m. and enduring a long day's work, it's hard to stay awake for an evening mathematics class, one of many provided by the project.

RHAZAOUI WORKING (10")

NARRATION

Any efforts by the UN to assist these young workers must first address one crucial underlying reality, says UN co-ordinator Ahmed Rhazaoui.

AHMED RHAZAOUI ON CAMERA
(16")

AHMED RHAZAOUI:

"Poverty is a major problem here. It reaches about 60% of the population. In the rural areas up to 80% of the population are considered poor, that is they live on under \$1 per person per day. So that's extreme poverty."

GIRL WALKS TO FLOUR MILL
(18")

NARRATION

Unlike many girls, 18-year-old Fatou Diouf is one who has returned to her home village, thanks to the child protection project. Although her earnings as a maid helped her family, her father feared for her safety. He encouraged her to come back to complete her education.

FATOU DIOUF ON CAMERA
(11")

FATOU DIOUF:

"I heard about the project when I was working in Dakar. My family told me to come back to study through the project. I can help them here too."

EMBROIDERY CLASS (15")

NARRATION

With help from UNICEF and local groups, girls in Fatou's village are learning sewing. A cooperative enterprise is planned to sell the handicrafts. So, in addition to gaining useful skills, they will be able to contribute to the family income.

VILLAGE MEETING (23")

NARRATION

And in traditional Senegalese fashion, Fatou and her parents act out the story of her departure for the distant city and her eventual return home. The whole community can then examine the problems facing their young people and look for solutions that preserve their traditions. Initiatives like these can help prepare a new generation for a better future.

LOGO (20")

This report was prepared by Richard Sydenham and Noreen Ahmed for the United Nations.