

## **'My future is big!' Het verhaal van een voormalig straatkind**

*A. is een jonge dame van rond de 20 jaar oud die als tiener op straat werkte en woonde. Inmiddels is ze volleerd kledingmaker, met een vakdiploma op zak en een betaalde baan. Hieronder haar verhaal.*

"Two years ago I was in the street, selling things for other people to try and earn a bit of money for myself. Some staff [of the Street Children Project] came and talked to us. They told us about the Vocational Training Centre, where we would be taught to become dress makers. Some of the other girls didn't go, but I came to the centre. Since I was saving for training in dressmaking, I wanted to try this.

When I first came in the VTC it was very difficult, but I decided to stay. The first months this place was so quiet. I saw all the training work and it was difficult. But then I thought: first I also did difficult work, but for others. This I do for myself. I wanted to save money for my school... But this is my school now! Then I decided to stay. A few of the girls have left. You know, when you're young and you have quick money on the streets, sometimes it's hard to live without the money. Or a girl left because she had somebody [a boyfriend] outside.

An important thing I learned here is that when you are a lady you have to stand up for yourself. I learned how to take care of myself and how to handle myself. When you are outside, nobody will help you. You have to be respectful and respect yourself. The day I was able to sew a dress for myself I was so very happy and still I'm very happy.

I have seen my future and it's very big! I'll be a big fashion designer. And it's not only sewing, but I'll also be helping people and children like those who helped me. After my training I decided to stay here and help. When I was outside, I experienced and suffered a lot. I know these things and I want to share my experience with the girls here in training in a way other staff cannot do. I just tell them what I did and what they can learn from this.

My advice to girls now living in the streets is that they should not put their mind on quick money. They should think about their future. They should think about tomorrow, not today. You'll carry load as you marry and your children also will carry load. It's better to learn a more profitable occupation. And they should be open to people, let people help them.

I'm very proud of myself. I've never thought I would have a certificate and would be employed as a teacher. Now I have my certificate and am even employed by the place that thought me!"



*Na haar afstuderen is A. in het Vocational Training Centre aangesteld als trainer/ begeleider van de nieuwe groepen meiden. Het feit dat ze haar eigen ervaring kan gebruiken om andere meiden te enthousiasmeren is het afgelopen jaar heel waardevol gebleken. Wanneer kinderen net van de straat komen krijgen ze vaak na een tijdje last van een dip in motivatie. A. blijkt in deze gevallen de aangewezen person om twijfels om te zetten in nieuw enthousiasme. Van de nieuwe groep trainees is tot nog toe nog niemand uitgevallen.*