



Newsletter 69

March 2016

GENERALIZATION IS NOT HELPFUL.



Dear Reader,

On several occasions, we have been asked about the success stories of CAS. We are often reluctant to mention them because it all depends on what we see as a success. We have to keep in mind the original mandate which we gave our selves when starting CAS.

1. Try to know more about the children in the street and
2. Assist those we meet.

The first mandate includes an in-depth study on the phenomena street children. Before we started, our superiors asked us, who are these children and why are they not in school? Frankly speaking, we could not give an answer to those questions. Some journalists claimed they knew the children because they had spoken to them in the street. They were their friends.

But did they really know them? We conducted various researches during the years and in 2002 we were able to give our definition of a street child and name the causes why they were in the streets.

Most of these findings were relevant but now they are irrelevant these days. We are sure that the children we meet today (2016) are different from those we met in 1992. Their status on health, housing, survival, and living conditions are not the same. But there are strong indicators that the reason(s) of being in the street remains the same, namely family breakdown. We hope we will be able to start a discussion on this issue because we think many people could help find solutions. We will debate with staff, Board members, and other partners to find the best strategy or approach to the cause.

“Knowing about the plight of the children”, we call it a success story of CAS. The fact that we have recognized that the working charities cannot solve these problems on their own, but that government has to take the lead in solving these problems in society, and this is a very big step we have taken.

CAS wants to collaborate with the Department of Social Welfare to advise and assist the children in the various districts. The problems are not the same in all districts, and their circumstances differs.

Generalization of the street children phenomena is a big mistake, according to our findings over the years.

Assisting individual children is another success. But how do you measure it?

Children we meet in the street and listen to our advices benefit from CAS. Maybe, we would never meet that particular child again, but the child has learnt something.

Children who visit the house of Refuge or Hopeland and take part in the activities, benefit from their visits. Children who start learning a skill or trade benefit and children who complete their training benefit as well.

Therefore, we could show a list of the thousands of children who have passed through our hands and use this as our success story.

But I guess you want to know how many children sat and passed for the N.V.T.I trade test exams in the past. Only a few. This year (2016) we taking this part of the training more seriously. We have registered 10 children for the N.V.T.I. trade test which will take place this month. It has not been easy. Children go and come. The Refuge is not a school which has a headmaster or mistress. The children regard their freedom as number one.



I will never forget a remark of one reverend sister who visited the classroom one morning; “brother, most children sit here half naked”. I replied; “but I am happy they sit here”. At least, they gave up their freedom.

In other words, what do you call a success?

We have tried to locate children (youngsters), who have passed through CAS and are now working somewhere. This is very difficult exercise indeed, because several children want to forget about the time they had been in the street. The street is associated with criminals, thieves and prostitutes.

This past will not help when applying for a job, better not mention it. Secondly, many have gone back to their regions, tribes and countries they came from. These regions include parts of Togo and Ivory Coast. Thirdly, often they are married and live with wife and children elsewhere. We do not have the time and money to locate them.

We checked the sponsorship list from 2007 –2015 and managed to know the present jobs of 216 youngsters. In alphabetical order:

4 are working in the aluminium fabrication trade, 1 is doing artwork, 3 are auto-body sprayers, 31 are auto-mechanics, 3 are barbers, 1 is into batik works, 1 is a bead-maker, 2 are carpenters, 21 are working in the catering industry, 1 is a cook, 1 works in the cosmetology trade, 18 are dressmakers, 3 electricians, 6 repair computers, 59 are hairdressers, 1 is working in the interior decoration branch, 24 are continuing their education (JSS) and 2 in SSS, 1 is mobile phone repairer, 2 repair motorbikes, 1 is a plumber, 1 a printer, 2 are secretaries, 15 are seamstresses, 1 is a sign-writer, 2 are tailors, 1 is working with tie and dye, 4 are welders, 4 are woodcarvers.

A variety of trades and skills indeed.

In 2003, we did an extensive research. About half of the trained children were located. All of them have settled well, either married or employed.

However, we discovered that most of them did not practice the skill they had learnt. Many learnt the traditional trades and could not be employed. You can read from the above list that many different skills and trades are now popular. There is only one working as mobile phone repairer and one is working in the interior decoration industry. 21 in the catering sector. We predict that many more will follow working in these trades.

During the registration, we discovered that skills could be understood in different ways. For instance; what do we (CAS) and the NVTI understand by catering? Is it providing food services, or be able to cook, make pastries and cakes? We hope to come to an agreement before the children sit for the NVTI examination.

Most probably, the girl who is cooking her own meal in Hopeland can be described as working in the catering industry.



Is CAS or any other organization able to offer such variety of skills and trades?

No, we are not but we can prepare and introduce children in the necessary skills, such as calculation, measuring, reading and speaking. But first of all, the child should be able to take care of his/her self. Functional literacy is therefore important.

From the internet: The **definition** employed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics sees **functional literacy** as a level of reading, writing, and calculating skills sufficient to **function** in particular community in which an individual life.

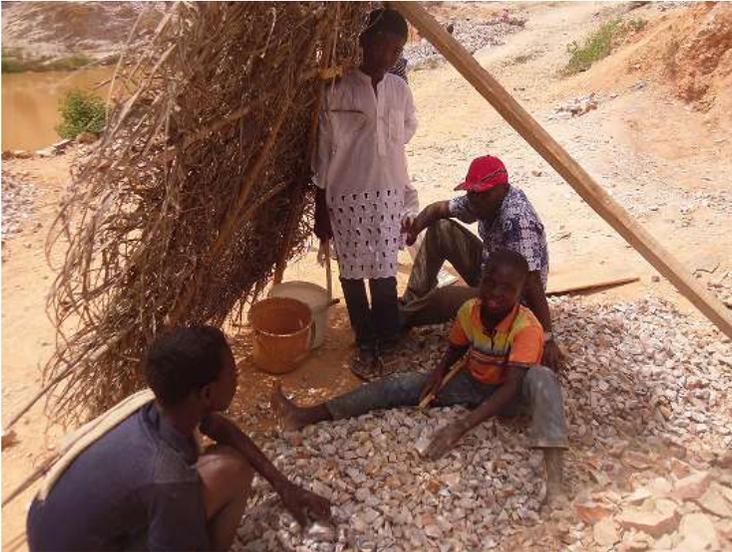
Once the foundation has been laid, the rest will follow. Some of these can be taught in the streets. We are happy that Right to Play (Ghana) is ready to be our partner and support the street corner education program. This month both parties will follow a training session after which actual setting up of a street corner meeting point can begin. It involves a lot:

1. Finding a suitable meeting place.
2. Locate and gather the children.
3. Meet the local authorities such as market women. AMA authorities. Authorities of the lorry parks, etc.
4. Think about the security, contact the police or other officers.
5. Agree on a suitable time to meet.
6. Prepare the teaching materials.
7. Select the games we want to use.

Presently, we are examining all the teaching materials we made during the past years. Some can still be used; others have to be replaced.

We will keep you informed.

We definitely want to prevent that children get involved in child labor. See below.



During the period CAS visited the social welfare districts, the workers came in contact with many forms of child labor. But often, the children are assisting their parents who are working in these industries such as farming, fishing, stone and sand winning, selling of goods in the streets or transporting them. It is clear to us that many children do so to get some income for their survival.

Of course, action should be taken when children are forced to work. Also, children should not be involved in activities which are dangerous to their health.

But after witnessing how these children get involved in work, we have become more careful in condemning it. What is the family tradition? How does the family get their income? Why do the children not go to school? And why have they become so skeptical of the promises to help?

With the assistance of some donors we were able to renovate and paint some of the rooms and buildings. We also made new floor covers in the classroom handicraft room and staffroom. We will repair some of the roofs because the rainy season is getting closer.

We are also happy that three Students from Norway are with us to do their practical fieldwork. Slowly the applications for volunteer placements are coming again. The Ebola scar has passed.

Finally, we want to thank everybody who assisted and supported us.

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