



Newsletter 79

October 2018

NO FAMILY



Dear Reader,

One of the main reasons why street children are in the street is family breakdown. Children are not staying with their family but in the street. Father and mother are no longer living together and the children do not know where to stay. Social surveys are conducted on all children who wish to be educated by CAS. These social surveys reveal a lot. The reasons of breakdown of families are manifold. To mention a few:

1. Parents do not want to live together any longer, but they have not found solutions for the children or do not care what happens with the children (neglect).
2. One of the parents dies.
3. The mother gets pregnant by another man.
4. The father fails to get a job and abandons the mother and children (lack of support).
5. The parents get too many children and are not able to take care of them.
6. The parents live in different towns for one or another reason.
7. The parents have decided to immigrate to another country and they leave the children behind (criminal). Etc.

Very often the reasons are selfishness which results into neglect. There are many young people who marry but are not well prepared for it. It is clear that the value of marrying has diminished. We have to accept that the social values of society are changing. To accept that when you bring children into the world you also have to be responsible for them. Many young people either do not accept these facts or do not realize these consequences. Materialism is another factor. People want to buy all kind of items but cannot afford them. Both parents have to work to fulfill their dreams and they do not have time for their children.

In addition, there are children who decide themselves not to stay with their family. Some do not know their fathers; others are brought up by grand parents.

Many children who live in the street have no connection with the tribe of their father neither their mother. They do not know the village or town of their parents. The cultural values are not known.

On a few occasions, the social workers travelled with the child to a particular village to verify the story of the child only to discover that the child was not known there at all. This means, the child does not want to reveal the past and the family.

Another reason why the child leave their family can be, s(he) has experienced violence (even sexual violence) at home. Often, these children are not willing to talk about it because they fear the person who has inflicted the violence will retaliate.



What they know is the **sub-culture of the street** and the “family “of the street. At times, the child tells the social workers where the father can be located, but when contacted it appears that the “Father” is a friend of the mother and has no family ties.

There are people who dismiss these histories and argue: “all children belong to one tribe or another. We know the extended family system, therefore one or another relative can be traced”.

After reading many social survey reports, I beg to differ that there are more and more children who have no family or do not know the family.



INTERVENTIONS.

Before we can have meaningful interventions we have to know these background information's.

It reveals why the child behaves in a certain way. It explains why s(he) refuses to listen to adults advice. It explains the educational background and the reason why the child need to pass through a long preparation period before s(he) can start learning a skill or a trade.

Often the child has passed the age of primary school. Many are 14-15 before they make up their mind of what to learn for their future.

This word, 'FUTURE', is a word which does not belong to their vocabulary. To many of the street children, it has no meaning. To advice them to learn a skill or trade for the future is not understood, because they live and eat today. When you offer the children three year training it is far too long for them. Even, 18 months training to learn a skill can only be done when a supervisor guides and advices the child during the process.

ENVIRONMENT

We also have to keep in mind the environment (the street) the child lives in. Many children and adults in their area did not enjoy formal education. They enter, or better remain members of the illiterate group. Their survival does not depend on education but on being smart and innovative by street standard.

While in the street, they learn at an early age to take decisions which are necessary to survive in that environment. They grow up very fast and do not accept another 'parent' to decide for them.

Every day is different in the street and they are used to adapting to situations. Their main concern is; Do I get something to eat today?

CAS decided from the very beginning not to attract children by offering them food, clothing and other gifts. We offer them education.

The child has to decide to visit CAS house of Refuge, to decide what to learn and to show this by taking part regularly in all planned programs and activities.



This is a hard approach and many visitors and well wishers cannot understand this. Visitors always ask whether we feed and accommodate children during the preparation period. The answer is no, and we are ready to explain these policies.

However, a few years ago we decided to offer rewards to children who regularly take part in the activities. It has changed now. The children now receive snacks.

COALITIONS

CAS is a member of several coalitions and often disagreements surfaces among members because of these policies. One NGO offer the children food and accommodation and the other's like (CAS) does not. How do we deal with street children issues?

Now during discussions at government level, these sharp differences appear between persons who are dealing with the children daily and those who have studied into it at the highest level (Social Welfare officers) but do not meet children regularly. We are happy we continue to have these debates and hope to come to certain understanding one day as a solution to street children issues.

SPONSORSHIP

We are very grateful to MISEREOR a German donor organization that they have approved our application for sponsorship. In our previous newsletter, we explained that we had to stop certain activities because most activities at CAS are related to sponsorship, the training of children.

With the approval of the application we are able to re-activate some of these activities. The step by step approach is back in place; meeting the children in the street, preparing them at the House of Refuge and Hopeland center and offering either short or long training using the sponsorship package.

At the beginning of each sponsorship scheme, major investments have to be made. Rooms have to be leased or hired, Logistics have to be bought and workshop agreements have to be signed.

WORKSHOP AGREEMENTS.

In Ghana, many private workshops have been established in industrial areas but also along major roads. Many different trades or skills are practiced in these workshops. To name a few: We have CAR mechanical and spraying workshops, cement block and tile making workshops, Carpentry and furniture making, coffin and door making workshops, Catering and hairdressing workshops. Etc.

The workshop managers employed their workers but in addition train apprentices. For this training you have to pay. You pay a starting fee which consists of money, minerals and/or animals, training fee as well as a fee for completing the period.



Years ago, CAS run into trouble with an official of a major donor who thought we were organizing parties instead of training. Workers of CAS visit these workshops regularly to verify that the child is learning well and has received the necessary logistics.

During the years, CAS knows a network of workshops where children can be trained. CAS buys these logistics in bulk and keeps them in containers which are placed in Hopeland Center.

FIELDWORK

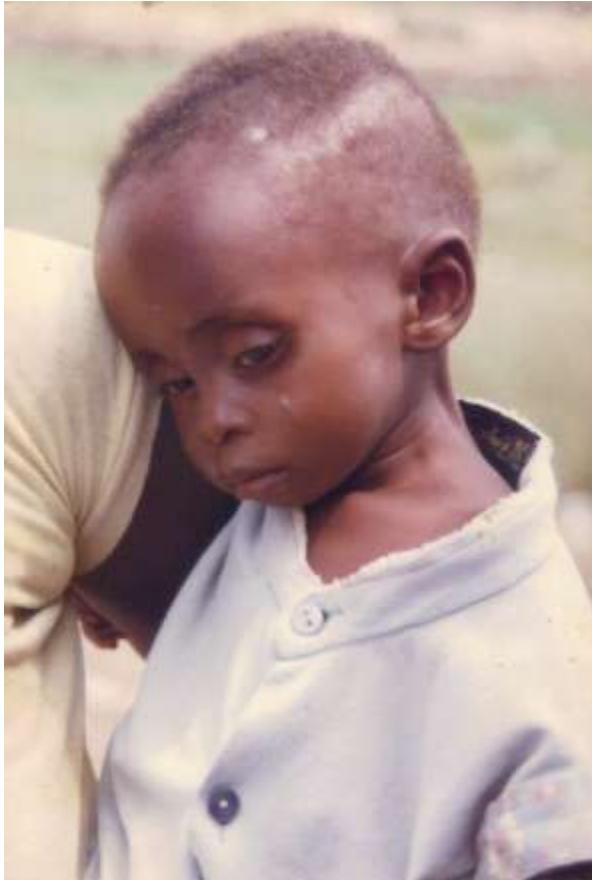
As mentioned before, we have completed the fieldwork contract with 100% for children and CISU. The auditor is checking the accounts. When it is done, we will forward it to the donors.

Although we are reaching the end of year soon, we are working on a new proposal to CISU. In this proposal, we want to extend the work in the field to more social welfare districts. The aim is to work with the communities in these districts.

Presently, we have included this approach when workers conduct street corner education in many working areas in the street. They try to meet: Heads of Associations, market and transport officials as well as traditional leaders and area opinion leaders.

With this approach, the street corner education as well as the counseling of children will be locally organized. Advice can be given to all those staying in a particular area.

We will keep you informed about all the developments.



Is there a future for this child?

Thank you for your support.


Bro. Jos van Dinther
(Director CAS)