



CATHOLIC ACTION FOR STREET CHILDREN



FUNCTIONAL LITERATES

Newsletter 67

January 2015

Dear Reader,

Happy New Year. We are late to wish you a happy new year because we did not manage to publish the December 2014 issue. We were busy writing and re-writing proposals to the donors. Proposal writing is a skill, but you need to have more skill to understand the requirements of a donor. Unfortunately, the activities are explained well on paper but are not always very practical because they are not in relation with the reality on the ground. What could work in one country is not appropriate to be applied in another.

Because, we were not sure of the outcome of our proposals, we “slowed down” our activities. For instance, we did not enroll “new” children in the sponsorship scheme and we suspended the skill and trade trainings.

Staff and children were fully informed about the developments, but it took time for some staff to understand the consequences.

During the evaluation meetings we have come to the decision to lower the standard of education and aim at involving many more children.

Previously we aimed at educating children in skills and trades up to the grade two NVTI practical levels. This has proved to be too high for many children and often they feared to take part. We should not forget that many have no educational background whatsoever. They have never been in school. They did not learn basic issues such as punctuality, working together, discipline, etc. What children learn normally in kindergarten schools or from their parents is lacking. Often, their parents are trying to survive in the streets and have no time to educate the child. As soon as the child can walk properly it is more or less on his/her own. Parents have no money to pay for the child's education or parents do not see the need of educating their child.

When these children visit the House of Refuge we notice it very soon that they are different and our task as “parents” starts. We have to reform the child step by step. It is very difficult to change habits which you have learned wrongly.

Because, we aimed too high, many did not take part or stopped taking part.



We have now decided to educate the majority to become **functional literates**.

What does that mean in reality? It means that we try to educate the child wherever s(he) is and in every circumstance they are. In the street, during street corner education, at the Refuge either in class or during entertainment, as well as when in Hopeland.

This is nicely said, but we still have to learn how to do it. In particular, how do we measure the results?

This problem we met in the past, how do you measure the work we do in the streets? Children come and go, but they have learned something. Some visit the Refuge for some time and then disappear only to resurface months later.

In December 2014, we introduced additional lessons in the Refuge and at Hopeland. These lessons include measuring, drawing, working with paper, plastic and other materials which could be recycled. We introduced more counseling

sessions and individual training. We selected games which could be very educative, etc.

All these lessons have proved to be helpful already, but we are thinking of additional lessons.

We are only able to introduce these with the **participation** of the children. This is another word which people like to hear, but what does it mean?

“Out of school” children like to do everything for food. They like to be free, but do not ask too much. But where is the discipline? Where is the cooperation with others?

First of all it means that we have to understand the children properly. It is only when you deal with the child for a period that you get to know how to educate the child. This cannot be achieved by interviewing the child only.

The level of participation is also related to the “support” a child receives from friends, from parent (s) or relatives.

A “Migrant” child is often on its own or has some friends. Those born on the street have their mothers to assist, and the urban poor have their brothers and sisters around. We know children who were asked by their friends to stop taking part in CAS' activities, others also stop taking part because they did not get the approval from their parent(s). It is not always the child who decides.

CAS has still the policy not to work with parents, because the parents have many other needs which CAS cannot solve. We are ready to educate the child until the parent agrees to continue.

The social survey reports reveal who is involved. All staff agree that more efforts have to be made to obtain good social survey reports. These reports are the foundation of CAS' assistance.

We have designed a new format so that all social workers try to obtain the same information on the back-ground, the family and the present situation of the child.

DISTRICT WORK

We applied to 100% for children (Denmark) to assist us to do the district work with the Department of Social Welfare. This work will start soon.

In order to be well prepared we organized researches in various districts. The sponsorship teams as well as two members of Hopeland and the field workers were all involved. Nine members of staff in field and two in the office organized these researches. Three teams of three persons were formed.

These teams visited one district each for two weeks to obtain additional information due to developmental changes going on by the government.



1. The area
2. The landmarks
3. Meeting points
4. Opinion leaders
5. Potential partners
6. Kind of children
7. Problems.

After the two weeks period we will meet again to discuss the way forward. Official contacts with potential partners could not be made as yet because the actual program has not yet been approved.

The aim of the pre-testing exercise is to have a good over view of the various districts because of the periodic changes going on to help introduce street corner education and other activities. This we want to organize with the partners in these districts.

It is an ongoing project and we will keep you informed.

We also have the same objectives for the children who visit the Refuge or are invited to stay in Hopeland to make them functional literates. Members of staff have to learn how to keep records. This has to be done on individual children involved. Staffs have been asked to design their own method. After a few weeks we will meet and learn from each other's method.

An interesting question was asked during the department meeting: how long do we allow the child to stay at Hopeland?" In the past, the average time was six months, but we do not have an answer as yet for these "new" children.



Stivosina:

Stivosina is a Dutch organization that promotes sports and games in Africa. The organization assists CAS by paying the salary of a coach, with sports materials and in 2014; they fundraised for CAS to renovate the volleyball and basket ball court at the refuge. In January 2015, a team visited CAS to officially open the volley/basket ball court.

Their visit lasted three days. One day at the Refuge, a day at Hopeland and on the third day they visited a baby crèche in one of the slum suburbs of Accra.

During the visit to the House of Refuge, the volley/basketball court was officially opened. The children played games which were organized by the coaches. After a snack, a volley match between CAS and school children took place.

The next day the Stivosina team visited Hopeland. The day started with a football match between CAS and some organized boys in the area. It followed with a volley match and refreshments. The visitors were very happy with what they had witnessed and promised continuous support.



Staff and children are very grateful to Stivosina for this support.

Whilst we are waiting for positive approval of our applications to Misereor-Germany and 100% for children-Denmark, we are happy that we can count on the following:

1. Continuous support from Kindermissionwerk- Germany for the running of the Refuge.
2. Continuous support from Lentenfund-The Netherlands for running of Hopeland.
3. Two families and Aidworld- Italy who support the sponsorship.
4. Stivosina and Right to Play – games and sports.
5. Many private donors- Salaries members of staff.
6. Adeline Janssens stichting-The Netherlands- Education
7. Families Jansen Scholtes and Kunnen for tools and other equipment.
8. EOF and Stichting Songzel for continuous support.
9. Streetinvest- research.
10. Several individuals who support us regularly.

Many thanks to all.

Visit our website: www.casghana.com and our new email address is:

casghana@gmail.com

Bro. Jos van Dinther (Director CAS)

