



Newsletter 74

June 2017

FINDING LASTING SOLUTIONS FOR STREET CHILDREN.



Dear Reader,

Almost half a year has gone by, therefore, we want to keep you up to date with the activities of CAS. Since March, a number of events took place worth writing about.

STREETWORK

The life of street children takes place in the street. They eat and work there, they sleep and entertain themselves there. CAS and other workers have to be there as well to understand what transpires and what could happen in the future. This way of life cannot be studied from an office or classroom. You have to become part of the street.

Workers who are in the street for a very long time even talk in a similar way as a street child. They use local phrases and names of locations which are not recorded in books.

The street-corner education program is set up to educate and advice the children. They learn to address an adult, they learn how to take care of themselves and hopefully learn how to behave. CAS estimates that presently 90.000 to 100.000 street children are in the streets of the greater Accra Region. Nobody, not even people with lots of money will be able to remove these children from the street and place them in schools or in workshops.

The main reason is, they are “street- children”. They have learnt to survive, they are hardened, they do their own will. Because of this, they do not fit into a school, a home or a workplace as an immediate solution. These children have to be reformed if you have an intention to remove them from the street.

But, there are so many children in the street. They need guidance and advice, they need to know that people care for them.

They street corner education program also attracts youngsters, young people above the age of 18 years. There are many of them in the streets and we know for a fact.

Many know CAS or the workers of CAS. They were offered a sponsorship package in the past, but they refused to take part. Many now realize that, they had lost a chance of leaving the streets and do demand a share of what we offer.

Several are visiting the House of Refuge again but are only interested in games and sports. One day two teams were playing volleyball and one of the workers told me; 'all those playing are 'hardened criminals', this is a game for criminals'. Although we do not know the background of all of them, he could be right. How do they survive in the streets? Some have a 'job' but many of them survive the illegal way.



Gang fights

During the many years we are in the streets we have seen children moving from the center of the city to the out-skirts, from the suburbs to the surrounding villages and in 2017 each slum area has its own groups of children and youth who form gangs.

They protect their area and know everything that is happening. If one of their members is offended, all are offended and will retaliate.

Unfortunately, CAS was involved on three occasions in these gang fights. They fight with knives and other dangerous weapons. We managed to keep them separate, but we know the fight will continue elsewhere.

All those involved are extremely frustrated. They do not have a regular income, they have no fix place of abode, they have lost hope. The gangs are now fighting each other and we believe that it will not be long before they will fight others in society.

PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS.

We are working with various partner NGOs and officers of the Department of Social Welfare who know CAS very well. These partners assist to organize the street corner education activities and other developments of the streets are also discussed with them. Alongside the street works, we also discuss what transpires in the House of Refuge and Hopeland Center.

In addition, details of the activities are agreed upon and later evaluated.

The city is very large and persons who work in the streets are few. CAS has chosen to work in three of the sixteen Social Welfare districts as a start.



Workers of CAS start in a particular locations with partners and eventually the partners continue the activity on their own. The workers of CAS move to another location to start street corner with another formed groups.

Locations in Kaneshie and Konkomba were visited frequently and of late workers moved on to Ada West and Adjei Kojo to try and form groups. Hopeland center is located at Adjei Kojo but the works in meetings-places in town were still at the formation stage.

These new areas give us a new challenge because of the environment and type of children involved. Many urban-poor children live in these areas.

This means fathers and mothers are present and have to agree to their participation. We have a few reports which are not sufficient to give you an overall view.

TRAINING WORKSHOP

Many more field workers are needed to carry-out this work. Therefore, we organized a training workshop for senior workers. Persons and organizations who are more than ten years in the field were invited.

Some of them were trained during the 2008 workshop and many others learnt from them whilst in the field. Together, they have a lot of experience on street children and related issues. 26 persons took part in this workshop which was organized in the Social Center of Osu Children's Home. The duration was four days.

The aim of the workshop was to find strategies and working methods to tackle the root causes of the street children problems. Street children come from various tribes. The Traditional rulers know about this problem.

The children find their abodes in a certain areas in the city. Therefore, the district assemblies, those in authority are aware.



MAPPING OF AN AREA

Although the workshop was planned for four days we did not have enough time to discuss how these key players could be involved in solving some of the issues on street children.

Not all members were experienced. Some organization sent new officers and therefore time was spend on introduction and sharing of experiences.

The strategy of approaching these issues as a group was briefly discussed. There is still a distance between social welfare officers and officers of the NGOs. The approach is different. For instance, the NGOs discuss their plans and give the freedom to their officers to find solutions whiles working in the street. The officers of the department have to consult regularly. More discussions are needed among partners to overcome these bureaucratic difficulties.

The training officer from Streetinvest UK did not receive all the information we mailed to them in advanced including the training needs. This resulted in the trainer running the workshop according to the terms of reference as understood. However, the participants learnt from the experiences from each other and have a good idea what has to be done in the near future.

We are grateful to Streetinvest for the training, to the Regional Office of the Department of Social Welfare for helping in the planning of this training. To Osu Children's Home for the good reception/accommodation and most of all to 100% for children and CISU for financing the workshop.

LOCAL MEETINGS

Since this large network is now in place, we want to build on it. The plan is to widen the contacts of the street corner education program. At each location we want to see the involvement of the local authorities and traditional

leaders. We hope these ideas are carried-out in the district of a particular assembly. The plan is to organize meetings and invite all those concerned.



AIM:

The aim is to find ways to give advice and guidance to the street children in that particular area. The children should know that they are not alone and that certain authorities are in charge.

These meetings should be planned together with the partners. Church leader who are operating in these areas could be invited.

Soon we will discuss these plans with the Department of Social Welfare.

DOCUMENTARY: We have been contemplating as how we can inform the larger society. CAS has made a number of videos in the past and we have been interviewed during TV and Radio programs.

Surprisingly, not many people have seen or heard these programs. It all depends on the time and day of broadcasting. Now, with the improvement of social media there are more possibilities.

We asked the TV makers of Catholic Digest to make a video of the training workshop and also video the street corner education sessions. This has all been completed and soon we hope to see the results.

Catholic Digest will show it during their broadcasting time and in addition CAS will use it on their website www.casghana.org and on our facebook page.

SETTLEMENT OF EX-STREET CHILDREN.

We reported to you in our previous issue of the newsletter, that CAS is in the process to settle ex-street children in Hopeland center. This could not be done easily. Money is available to buy the necessary tools and equipment needed, but are the candidates fully prepared. The project will change the life of the persons involved completely. It is their own workshop and they have to build-up their own life around it. It is a great step.

Some are ready and some are not yet completely ready. They might argue, when all the tools and materials are bought and in place the rest will be easy to implement.

At the end of May, some have started and are settled and others are in the process. As soon as all are settled, we will give you a full report.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

Brog. Jos van Dinther
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(Director CAS)



CATERING NOW AT HOPELAND

