

CAS NEWSLETTER

A CHANGE FOR ALL.



NEWSLETTER 85

APRIL 2020

CATHOLIC ACTION FOR STREET CHILDREN-CAS

GHANA.



Dear Reader,

Greetings from Accra-Ghana. I am writing this newsletter from my house, because all of us have been asked to stay at home. Is there a home for street children? Only their family homes, which are often miles away, but we are not sure that they are welcomed there.

We have closed CAS-that is the House of Refuge as well as Hopeland center because of the corona virus. It was not an easy decision to take, but the President of Ghana gave us the advice.

CAS continued their normal operations during the months of January and February till mid-March when changes to programs came into effect.



SPONSORSHIP:

Four girls, who became pregnant during the skill training period, have now returned to the Refuge to continue their training after delivering healthy babies.

We have received the mothers as well as the babies in our workshops at the House of Refuge.

This could be done because we set out own rules. I am not sure that these girls and their babies were accepted if the training took place in an external workshop.

Still it is not an easy thing to do, because the mothers cannot pay enough attentions to the training. Therefore, we have decided to keep records on all those in training to record how many hours they are actually learning the skill.

Of course, we can see from the products they make to monitor their progress, but a skill or a trade can only be learned by practicing it many times over. While working with the hands, techniques and skills can be improved. They cannot be learned from the book. Sometimes an apprentice shows me the item he or she was asked to make. The end product does not show much. The methods used and the skills applied can show how skillful somebody is. You can compare it with a game of football. If the TV station only shows the goal, it does not show how skillful the team is playing the game of football.

Those in training, or the apprentices have to practice for a number of hours regardless the presence of the instructor. The instructor can give a task to an apprentice and examine the end result afterwards. But s(he) should ask how it was done, how were the items prepared and assembled?



House of Refuge- staff meeting

Not all children receive training at the House of Refuge. The children learning trades in the long sponsorship program as well some of the children in Short term sponsorship whose choice of trade or skill are not done at the House of Refuge are in apprenticeship workshops scattered all over Accra, Tema & Ashaiman.

All children who are following the apprenticeship training, are all accommodated in rented rooms and receive a support for feeding, training material and transport. This training is still in progress but we wonder how long we can continue this under these circumstances. The current supervision will be inadequate and as described above, we do not know how they managed to reach a good result without constant and strict supervision.

HOPELAND CENTER:

As explained in our previous newsletter, we have with the assistance of our donors improved the infrastructures at Hopeland. The center has been fenced with a solid fence wall on all sides. That is to say, construction work are still on-going to finalizing the wall at the right side of the compound. At this side, the water from the surrounding area enters the compound and flows into the dam. This dam was built as a storage facility and to nurse smaller fishes. Unfortunately, neighbors at that side of the wall channeled their waste water into our dam. The fishes died and the weeds grew. We are at the beginning of the rainy season. Therefore, we have drained most of the water by opening the spillway.



Water engineers from the Ghana Water Company, and the assemblyman have visited the site and are willing to help us to drain most of the water by building a drain through the compound in order to keep the dam full. The hope is that, when everything is completed we can start fish farming in the dam.

In addition, the buildings have been maintained and repaired. One chicken house has been transformed into a dining/resting room for the children. Because of my relaxed time at home, I managed to construct two long dining tables for the children. Now all is set to continue to train new children in the sewing skills. Ten teenage girls from the neighborhood have been admitted. These girls are children from poor families, “urban poor children”. This means, we have asked the cooperation of the families. The families take care of the upkeep and CAS provides the training in sewing free-of-charge.

The compound of Hopeland is ten acres large. Unfortunately, the night security man died recently. May his soul rest in peace. We still have to improve the security of the center to be sure that staff and children can live and work there safely.

Two girls ex-trainees, who finished their training in December 2019, have been settled at Hopeland. They are learning how to run their own workshops and produce items which can be sold. The start of this program is not very good because of the corona virus situation.



Hopeland dam/weed/birds

CHILDREN IN THE STREETS:

All children who visit us daily to take part in our 'preparation' to leave the street to learn a skill or trade or take part in our functional literacy program were made to return to their various destinations (the streets). This means, those from poor families- **urban poor children** have returned to their homes and their parents or single mothers take care of them. The parents try to give them security, food and shelter. These children are from poor and sometimes very poor families. Often the children are asked to do certain jobs to supplement the income of the family.

MIGRANT CHILDREN:

In 1998, CAS asked Mr. Eric Beauchemin a Dutch journalist and two members of staff, Paul Avevor and Charles Baffoe both social workers, to do a research into the backgrounds of the street children.

By keeping records on children who visited the House of Refuge and Hopeland center, conducting social survey investigations and listening to the children, CAS had a lot of information gathered. All this information came from the children and we were not sure whether they were all true hence the call for the 1998/1999 research.

Information from the register, transferred to the computer revealed a lot of details. The age group, the number of boys and girls, the regions children came from etc. Five regions were chosen to visit, because the majority of the children came from these regions.

The three men team visited these five regions and held discussions with parents, guardians, pupils, teachers, market women as well as persons in authority. The Exodus report was published with the assistance of UNICEF in 1999. You can find it on our website. www.casghana.org

This report revealed the movement of street children in the country. During that period all children in the street were street children and no category was known.

Now we know that Urban poor children and those of successive generations did not feature more in our research findings.

MOVEMENTS OF CHILDREN:

This report came to my mind when we decided to ask all children to return to the streets. What does this imply? It implies that it is too dangerous for all the children to stay in the street. Especially now that we have the corona virus outbreak. The President of Ghana has decided to partially lockdown Kumasi, Greater Accra and Tema and Kasoa for two weeks. This means nobody is allowed to be in the streets.

We received proposals from concerned citizens that we should ask the government with their support, to open the schools and let the street children use the premise as temporary shelter. This is a humanitarian proposal but we have to think of the consequences. The street children are not the most cooperative group to work with, and who will feed them? Who will safeguard the schools? CAS may take a second look at this kind of adhoc measures which turn out to create more problems than one can manage. Hopeland center has been closed for the same reason. It is very difficult to control this group of children.

Children move from their villages to the nearest towns and regional capitals and may be forced by situations to return this movement whenever necessary.



CAS experienced these movements on several occasions. In Accra, cleaning exercises were organized by the AMA (Accra Metropolitan Assembly). Kiosks in which people lived were destroyed, stall and goods on pavements confiscated, and the people were scattered. Several children moved back to the families or to the regional capitals where they came from. This same movement has taken place in the month of March 2020. The clever children left in time. Several may have started their movement too late and are now restricted by order from Government.

All this strengthened our conviction that when you are looking for solutions to the street children problem you have to do more for their families.

Only the families can have influence on the behavior of the children. CAS works with children who are willing to help themselves. All those who have no interest remain in the streets.

STICHTING WERELDWIJD:

Stichting wereldwijd, a Dutch based organization donated tools to CAS. They donated them in 2018, but unfortunately, the container in which the tools were gathered was not shipped because it was not full. In 2019, CAS received a similar offer but we knew that the tools we asked for were difficult to obtain by the Stichting. They agreed, and instead offered us an amount to buy the tools in Ghana which we did. The tools from 2018 have arrived a few months ago. Thanks!

We at CAS have slowly shifted away from teaching traditional trades and skills to the children because of lack of job opportunities. Trades like carpentry, (wood work at the building site), and masonry, (laying of bricks) can still be learned but there are many carpenters and masons in Ghana who do not have a job.

The method of building has changed. Presently, people who can manufacture aluminum frames and doors are welcomed. The raw type of carpentry work has changed into interior decorations and door making. The carpenter has to change his trade to a furnituremaker.

There is business in trades such as coffin manufacturing and paneling.



Sewing



Decoration



Bead design



Catering and nursing

CAS offers skills and trades in internal decoration, shoe and leatherwork, bead and fashion design, sewing for girls as well as for boys. Cooking and catering are also in demand because of the tourist industry. We hope it will be reactivated soon.

For these skills and trades, different tools are needed. To be able to get customers to buy the products, the children have to learn a bit of the English language. Unfortunately, this is not understood by all, but we continue advising the staff to teach the children in this language. Often the examiners from the NVTI (National Vocational Training Institute) ask questions using the English language. Instructions on cutting-list (The list showing all the items needed to make a product), as well as the names of the tools and writings on containers is in English.

We want to improve on this when we can start again with the daily teaching.

With thanks to our donors and well-wishers we greet you all.


Bro. Jos van Dinther
(Director CAS)