

NEWSLETTER

86



2020 JUNE

CAS Catholic Action for Street children
Authored by: BRO. JOS



CAS AND THE PANDEMIC



Dear Reader,

This month, June 2020, we want to keep you up to date and write about the pandemic and how we are coping with it. Many people contacted us about it and therefore we will try to explain it in this newsletter.

On the 16th of March we closed the House of Refuge as well as Hopeland center as part of general measures put forward by the President of Ghana. He asked all schools and other institutions to close to prevent the spreading of the Corona virus in Ghana.

We followed this advice because not only the children were in danger but the staff as well. Not all staff understood this decision but eventually they all complied. We explained as good as possible to all the children that for their own safety they should go home or find a safe place to stay.

The closure was followed with a complete lock-down. Everybody in Accra, Kasoa , Tema and Greater Kumasi were asked to stay at home and when possible work from the House. Not all people understood that advice or order because in front of our very houses the roads were never quite. Day and night people past on foot, on bicycles or in cars. It was so bad that we asked ourselves whether we had understood the President well.



The House of Refuge as well as Hopeland center remained closed. After a few weeks the lockdown was lifted and we were allowed to move again.

At this time the apprentices who followed the long sponsorship program were back at their workshops. We questioned whether they were learning the trade well without good supervision?

The staff in- charge assured us that the workshop managers were doing their best to keep the learning process in place. This made us wonder why the children learning skills in the short sponsorship program could not continue as well.

At Hopeland center, enough working spaces were available to allow ten (10) or more girls to continue their training on private tables with their sewing machines and also observe a good social distancing.

At the House of Refuge we could create same. With this, we instructed the teachers and instructors to prepare for Monday the 4th of May to allow the apprentices to continue their skill training.

At Hopeland center, eleven children finally were re-admitted and at the House of Refuge twelve (12) children could continue learning a skill.

All children as well as staff have to observe the anti-corona rules. This is easier said than practiced. Children do not understand why they should wear a face mask. We asked the nurse and the social workers to explain this to the children.

All children who are learning a skill or trade are accommodated in rented rooms and the children at Hopeland do go home in the evenings. Staff supervisors in- charge of the sponsorship program are also in- charge of the accommodation and visit the rooms from time to time.

Unfortunately, not all went well. We gave each child a notebook. They have to record the date, the time of starting and closing as well as what they learned that day. This information was transferred to the computer using the assess program.

It revealed that, most children worked for approximately four to five hours a day. what this meant was, instead of 18 months of training the child needs 24 months to learn the skill. We discussed this problem in a general meeting and have decided that the staff should make it possible for the apprentices to work six hours a day.

I know I am repeating myself, “A skill or a trade cannot be learnt wholly from the books. You have to practice it with your hands until you are sure you can do it without any assistance”. Practice makes perfect.

At the end of June we will re-discuss this issue to see whether the apprentices made enough practical hours.

Photo hairdressing exam 2019



PANDEMIC

The pandemic has emphasized and authenticated CAS findings of December 2019.

We are dealing with three different types of street children.

- 1. The migrant children who have travelled from the rural areas to the city.**
- 2. Children of various generations. (Children of street children).**
- 3. Urban poor children. Children who are in the street but go back to their family in the evening.**

Photo: rural classroom -Jirapa UWR



Presently, our attention is on the last group of children termed the urban poor children. The whole family lives in the city. Most probably the families migrated from the rural areas of Ghana but have an accommodation in the city. Often, they live in the slums areas in the city with probably poor running water and electricity but the joy is, the children have a home to go to.



RURAL AREA

The arrangements we made with the parents are simple. You continue taking care of your child and we (CAS) offer free training in a skill or a trade.

If parents are not willing to cooperate, CAS does not accept the child.

We foresee that during the second half of this year not enough children can be prepared from the first and second groups because fieldwork has been partially halted and the children are not allowed to enter CAS compounds because of restrictions on group movements.

At Hopeland, all the registered girls now are learning the sewing skill. But workshop space as well as staff instructors are available to teach bead design, catering and hairdressing. This made us decide to increase the number of children at Hopeland center. However the children should be interested in the skills mentioned.

Hopeland staff will find out more about the surrounding town named “Sun City” to see whether more children would be interested.

At the House of Refuge we have the same possibilities. Field-staff did a mini- research and presented a list of fourteen children. Four of them are interested to learn or continue learning a trade. These four children will be prepared by the long sponsorship staff with the assistance of some literacy facilitators. The preparation should include CAS accepted standard level of the previous skill training. That is the level of English and arithmetic as well as reading measurements. What we should not forget is to include works done on the behavior of the children.

In the past some of our candidates failed the exams because they insulted the examiner. Of course, this can only be known after interacting with the children in order to know them well. Social surveys have to be conducted and reports written accordingly.



Hopeland dining and resting room

Migrant children:

What happened with those (migrant children) we asked to go home or find a safe place? The latest information is that indeed a few went home but the majority remained in the streets. Some of the children are of the opinion that, we should not have closed CAS because we (CAS) could have benefited from the food aid from the Government. Unfortunately, the children are not aware of the import of the restrictions of the Governments directives. Maybe they could have benefited a few times from the food aid, but they were still not allowed to enter the compound per the directives. It clearly shows they think about the present time and do not care about what is to come. They just do not think of it. Only a few are interested to learn something to prepare themselves for the future. The majority is content with what they meet in the street daily. They are able to survive as many others do.

It will still take time before we can fully take care of the needs of the Migrant and the second generation children, but our attention will always be for them. We do not want to break the law.

Website: <http://www.casghana.org>.


Bro. Jos van Dinther
(Director CAS)





Learning skills at the House of Refuge.