



Newsletter 81

April 2019

THE ULTIMATE TESTS.



Dear Reader,

We once again want to report on the developments at CAS. Many things happen around us and we have to be on alert otherwise some developments will take us by surprise.

THE GHANAIAN STREET CHILD.

During the past months CAS organized a number of meetings to brainstorm on the responses of the children to our programs and the progress of our plans. The aim was to update information in the booklet “the Ghanaian Street child”. We managed to do so. We wanted to write down all we know about the street children in Accra. This meant, workers had to agree and disagree with each other about definitions and opinions. The Ghanaian street child is not the view of one person.

We debated a lot on, for instance; the three types of children we are dealing with. Examples were given and scenarios were cited so that everybody could agree on the definitions. It is clear that exceptions are always there.

Why is this so important? Our opinion is that you can only help a child when you know the full background. And since we are dealing with human beings it could be a very delicate matter. Therefore, social survey reports are needed and should be confidential.

As soon as we know what type of child we are dealing with, many questions are already answered. For instance, a child of the second generation has always a poor education background. Often they cannot take good care of them-selves because they are not properly brought up (educated). Often, you have to deal with the mother as well. On the other hand, when dealing with urban poor children you have to involve the parents in your entire decision making process.

Place of birth.

As a result of our discussions, we are no longer interested in the Hometown, in terms of the second generation children but now we want to know where the child was born. Often, the child does not know where s(he) is born. A street girl who is about to deliver is escorted to a hospital. So, technical speaking, a child is never born on the pavement of the streets, however, there are exceptions. It could even happen that the mother travels to the village she is from and delivers there.

How does the social worker get the correct information? There are social workers who think they have to protect the child and will never disclose that the child is a second generation child, but write that the child is a migrant child. I think, nobody is helped by this, as mentioned above you can only help a child when you know the full background.



REGIONS.

CAS' data base earlier on shows that there are ten regions in Ghana. Now the country is divided into 16 regions.

This means we were just in time to publish the booklet because now (2019) we have to start with a new data base.

The data base also shows the ages of the children. We compared information from 1992-2017 and 2018. There is not much change. The average age has changed from 14 to 15 years of age. Since we try to take care of the three types of children we come in contact with (many younger ones (8 to 15)). At Hopeland several children below 15 years are accommodated. What to do with them still remains a question to be answered. They do not fit into a school in terms of the level to start with and are too young to start apprenticeship training.



FIELDWORK/ STREET CORNER EDUCATION.

In addition to the three types of street children below 18 years of age, we meet many youngsters who are still in the street and do not have work, but also try to survive.

The numbers are so large that gang forming is an obvious result. The gangs allow certain persons to live in 'their' area and others not. Some areas are controlled by hardened cliques who occasionally identifies with political parties due election campaigns. When you do not belong to that 'particular party' you have to move.

Of late we receive reports that some persons in authority no longer tolerate street children lined up in certain areas of the city and have set up 'units' to beat up children who appear in their areas. At times they attack children while they are sleeping. The result is there is a lot of movement among the children. Some have even moved to communities around Accra to sleep there but they come to "work" in the city during the day.

Also, migrant prostitutes from surrounding countries have settled in the slums; from Niger, Nigeria, Burkina and Togo.

Following the world news, we are informed that extremists have brought a lot of confusion to Mali and Burkina Faso. Their push to reach the coast is very close. And the likelihood to recruit new followers among people living in the streets is also real or highly possible.

Therefore, we want to start a campaign to educate the street children and youth on the dangers joining such groups. We will start by adding this topic to the street corner education program but we are also discussing it with others. We have already discussed during the head of department and Board of Advisors meetings in a bit to explore possible solutions.

Life in the streets is not stationary. Markets and lorry parks can be relocated and children have to move. You also have to move when you do not agree with the so called authorities in certain areas and of course you better move when attacked.



HOPELAND CENTER.

Hopeland center experiences also different challenges. Just a few years ago the center was marked into an area selected for agriculture. But the land was sold to persons who wanted to settle there. The result is that Hopeland is now completely surrounded by buildings some very close to the fence wall.

We built a three block high fence to demarcate Hopeland, but this did not prevent persons from crossing the compound and using it as a refuse dump.

The compound is often used as public toilet because of the many trees and bushes. In addition, wee smokers meet there.

We decided to raise the fence with bamboo sticks. This proved to be not strong enough because insects also attack the bamboo. The fence had to be repaired regularly.

We applied to several donors for support but none of our applications was approved. We now have decided to every year to build one section of the wall with concrete blocks using money we received from “private” donors. This year, 2019 we will build the wall at the back of the compound and the wall at the left side of the compound. The other sides have to wait until more money is available.

We also asked the welder to make two new gates, one for the wall at the back to allow the football players to enter and the other for the front wall. We hope that when the two walls have been completed it would improve the security challenges.

Presently, 26 children are staying at Hopeland. Some are from Adjei Kojo village while others are from Accra. In future we could allow more children from the neighborhood to learn a skill at Hopeland.

All children who want to enroll in the sponsorship program are invited to stay for some time at Hopeland. CAS staff are also living with them and this is a good opportunity for the staff to know the children better.

Three workshops are in operation at Hopeland, one for catering one for hairdressing and another for sewing.

Since the first group of ‘settlers’ has moved to their own workshops there is space for other trades to start there.

DEMONSTRATION DEPARTMENT

In addition to introducing children to skills and trades, the various workshops produce several items or products which can be sold to customers. These items are made by the decoration, catering, carving and bead design shops. It is a skill for the various persons in charge to try new ideas and new models.

With this, we receive a lot of support from Laure, Kathy and others. But the customer decides what to buy.

BAZAAR

The last bazaar did not work out well. Not many people visited there. Maybe the dates for this bazaar were poorly communicated. Of course, during Christmas time many things can be sold. Other dates have to be chosen for the bazaar since people continue to show interest in the products.

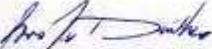
EXAMS.

Presently, several street children are “sitting” (doing) for their proficiency exams in various skills and trades. Some are conducted in examination centres others are at CAS center. The preparations went well. However, there are always candidates who abscond at the last moment. We think we know the candidate sufficiently enough, but we do not know what is goes on in their minds.

This year, we have one candidate who wants to try the written exam as well. This means she is confident in the English language (reading and writing). We wish her well and we hope many will follow.

Exams are being conducted in auto mechanics, fashion design, beads design, sewing, hairdressing, and catering.

We will keep you up to date with developments. Yours Sincerely,


Bro. Jos van Dinther
(Director CAS)

