



Newsletter 82

June 2019

Old Fadama-Konkomba market-Dumpsite

Not fake news but false news



1995 Babycare at Konkomba

Dear Reader,

In this newsletter we want to give you an update of CAS' activities and also go back to history to explain the problems we face today.

Konkomba Market. (Several other names are used for this area of the city).

One of the places our fieldworkers visit often is Konkomba market. It is slum area where many of the children reside. Street-corner education takes place in that area. Our latest video, which is available on our website, gives a good impression of the area. But before we explain the present situation you have to understand the history of CAS' presence there.

In 1993, our fieldworkers met many children and mothers at Konkomba. Mothers were keeping their babies in crèches which were minded by child minders. Often, elderly woman took turns to look after the babies to allow the other mothers to work at the market. Twenty to thirty babies were kept in one room and one or two women were in charge. This was not a good situation and we decided to fundraise for money to build a better crèche. Plan International helped us to build three crèches at the site. Before they could be built we faced a lot of other problems. The site was in fact a flattened dumpsite for waste. It was a swampy place with dirty water and many flies and mosquitoes. The City Mayor was reluctant to give us permission to build anything on that site. He transferred his authority to the chief engineer of Accra City. After many meetings he gave us the certificate to build temporal crèches for a duration of one year. However, we stayed many more years.

The crèches were built and our work started. However, other authorities such as ministry of health and town planning gave us a lot of headaches.

During those times not many people were staying there and at one corner of the site, the criminals and prostitutes were housed. That corner was nicknamed named “Sodom and Gomorra”, named after the bible story.

Princess Ann from England, during a visit to Ghana wanted to visit the crèches and a large police force accompanied her. It was on that occasion that a journalist who did not know the area well called Konkomba,” Sodom and Gomorra” and the name remained.

We asked one photo-grapher to make a video of the baby-care and the site. This video was made but the TV stations were reluctant to show it because it exposed too much of the reality and “people” do not want to see this.



CAS handed-over the baby care program to S.Aid, but our fieldworkers continued visiting the area. Some industries started there. First the Yam market, then the onion and car repair workshops etc etc. Presently, a very large population of people lives there.

The area has grown from the main mosque to the back of the Fire brigade training grounds near the sea. (See Google maps).

S.Aid has moved the crèches to other places in the city and does not keep children at Konkomba.

At one area, a dumpsite of scrap material was created. Plastic waste, metal waste and other parts of old fridges, radios, computers and other electronic apparatus are gathered and dismantled. The electronic plates are burned and the valuable materials (metals) are sold to be used in making coal pot and other metal products.

Two years ago, during my leave, I read in a Dutch magazine an article of this site. A Ghanaian journalist who lives in the Netherlands wrote this article. He stated that approximately 100 children die every year at the site as a result of inhaling the smoke while burning the apparatus. I wrote to the magazine, asking how the Journalist had gathered his information because we work with the children and never heard about sicknesses or death at the site. Of course, I never got an answer. Some months later, a German TV crew pickup the story and came to Ghana to make a documentary about the dumpsite and children working there. Our fieldworkers reported it and I in turn asked the then Director of Social Welfare to stop them. In order to make it more spectacular they asked children to stand in the smoke for a few cedis.

The documentary has been shown all over Europe and it was a great success because it was very sensational.

We learned the TV crew made a lot of money with it, but we have no prove for this. A lot more could be said about Konkomba market but we want to report on current happenings (2019).

PHOTO-BOOK MAKING 2019.

Our partners from Denmark, 100% for children planned to make a photo-book of children from the dumpsite, children who visit the House of Refuge of CAS.

We wrote a letter to the scrap-iron association who are in charge of one side of the area, explaining our intention, but they disagree for the fact that it is not an area for children under 18 years.

The scrap-iron association does not employ children so we do not understand their objection to make photographs of children.

For the photo-book workshop, we had to visit other sites as a result. We can call this method of journalism politely “fake news” but in fact it is unacceptable to tell lies and mislead the public.

For the time being, we will not be able to work at the Konkomba market until this matter has been settled.



PEER TO PEER EDUCATION.

We have added an article on peer to peer education in our booklet” the Ghanaian Street child” second edition.

The reason is peer to peer education can only be used with children who are stationary. This means, it can be used for the third group of children, “the urban children”. Urban poor children are children from poor parents who do not have the means to send their children to school.

The other categories; the migrant children and the children of the second generation are not suitable for the peer to peer program. These children do not know each other well. They do not trust each other especially when from another tribe.

Trust is one key to be successful with peer to peer education. During our partnership meetings, (Sister NGOs and Social Welfare) several members confessed that this concept cannot be used in their area. The children are simply not responding to the idea.

At one location the peer to peer education could be used but it needed constant support from our workers. As soon as the workers stopped visiting the area, the peer to peer education stopped as well.

Therefore, we suggest the children know each other and that they trust each other before trying this method of education.

VISIT OF HEALTH WORKERS AND NURSES.

CAS allows health workers from different institutions to visit the Refuge and educate the children. But we are never sure what they will teach them.

We noticed this danger some years ago when the topic HIV and AIDS were popular. Children heard all kind of stories in the streets because nobody checked those who were educating. They all became experts over night in their jobs.

We decided to write a syllabus which could be used by all workers, it has been documented and approved. This course has six topics and can be used in the streets, at the Refuge but also in workshops and other places.

Of late, we received different nurses who wanted to educate the children (see our website and face-book pages). Among them was a group of ten nurses from the United States and their teachers.

We asked five of them to travel to Hopeland and five nurses remained at the Refuge. It was the first time they visited us although every "Summer" they come to Ghana. The teachers now know CAS and so can prepare better for next visit.



WING OF SUPPORT

After more than 25 years of operating CAS needed to refurbish some of the furniture and equipment and replace others.

Wings of Support, a charity organization of pilots and stewardesses of the KLM airline was willing to assist us. We wrote an application stating new as well as second hand prices of cupboards, benches and other equipment. Some new equipment was approved as well as some second-hand.

We have completed buying of the goods and we can share the experience of buying second hand goods which proved not to be easy. In Ghana a lot of second hand equipment can be bought on the streets because it is imported from Europe and elsewhere. However, it is not always in good condition. The result is that, these items appear on the dumpsite very early. In other words know what you buy and remember where you bought it.

BUILDING OF THE FENCE WALL AT HOPELAND.

The building of a permanent fence wall around Hopeland center is gradually progressing. The wall at the far back is ready and presently we have asked the builders to rebuild the left side. At this side, many buildings appeared and most of them have been built very close to our fence. This side is also used by our children to enter the community and buy food stuff. Many wee smokers are staying in this area and come to Hopeland center to smoke in the hidden bushes. The police carry out raids regularly and we hope that soon when this side (fence) is closed, the trespassing will reduce.

We have already started to clean the area around the dam because people were using the center as a dump site for refuse. Next year we hope to have sufficient fund to close the right side and the front.



Back-wall Hopeland compound.



Left-fence wall Hopeland

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

Visit our website www.casghana.org for the video and the booklet the 2nd edition of the Ghanaian street child.


Bro. Jos van Dinther
(Director CAS)



Konkomba dumpsite.