



CATHOLIC ACTION FOR STREET CHILDREN

FOLLOW-UP WORK

NEWSLETTER 60

MARCH 2013



Dear Reader,

It is time to write an up-date of CAS activities. Although, the activities are in progress as planned, we are sad to let you know that we have lost another member of staff. Mr. John Fosu has been a member of CAS for the past 19 years and unfortunately he passed away after a short illness. May his Soul rest in peace! John has been the head for the education activities. These include literacy, drama, library, computers and sports. We have re-organized these activities by adding to the timetable a staff/volunteer list. Every week, we assign members of staff and volunteers who are available to carry-out an activity.

Of course you might question whether all these persons are trained teachers? The answer is simple, none of them. Educating street children is different from educating school children. Most staff have acquired the skill of teaching street children over the years through in house training and practical involvement in the teaching process.

As we explained before, CAS is now dealing with migrant children (street children), those born on the street, Urban poor children and working children. We group them under one common name "out of school" children. This name explains it all. They are not in school in fact, most of them have never seen a school from the inside. And most of them will never go to school because, they do not fit in these institutions because of their behavior, age and back ground.

At CAS, all staff and volunteers have to act as fathers and mothers to the children. We have to educate them on good behavior, self care, and how to listen to adults and treat fellow children. In fact, in the past, they have learnt everything by themselves because there was nobody available to advice or correct them in the proper way or manner.

To re-educate a child, the basic principle of life is very difficult. You need to have a lot of patience and determination. But everybody who loves children can do it.

The teaching at CAS is very basic. CAS has developed teaching aids for that purpose but

here again a lot depends on the skills of the "teacher" as how to communicate with the children.

In the classroom, children are divided into four groups according to their abilities. These abilities are soon discovered by the "teachers" through simple exercises and daily communication with the child. Each group is directed by a member of staff or volunteer. This means, there is always noise and movement of children. Visitors often ask, "Can't you separate them?" We have tried it, but it does not work. These children are very curious. They want to know what the other group is learning. They do not agree with the selection the "teacher" has made. Some want to be part of the group because their close friend belongs to that group.



The age group is also interesting. In the past the average age was 14 years. Now it is lower. In order to get their attention, you have to create something new every time. Therefore, CAS allows volunteers and students to assist them. These assistants can introduce new methods or approaches.

However, the "teachers" have to work as a team. Work has to be discussed and planned even the games and sports activities have to be prepared in advanced.

In Ghana, many "teachers" have been brought up during the time that the cane was generally accepted! At CAS we do not agree with these methods, but unfortunately some "teachers" are of the opinion that the cane is part of the educational tools.

Children are living in a violent world. We have to try to reduce this violence. Therefore, we do not want to use games which include knocking and pushing.



The makers of the games are surprised when we explain to them the reasons. Despite some of the measures put in place to reduce the rate at which children abscond during the preparation period, still children abscond. Some abscond during the initial preparation time, others during the introduction of the trades/skills and others when they are at Hopeland or in workshops. It is our task to find out the reasons and correct the mistakes made.

FOLLOW-UP WORK.

An investment in a child starts as soon as a child takes part in any of the activities at CAS. Initially, in time and availability of staff, later when enrolled in training money is added. Unfortunately, staff can spend a lot of time on preparing a child, but s(he) take the decision to stay or to leave. CAS is not run as a school, we do not enroll children and they do not pay fees. We invite them to take part. The child decides to come to CAS' House of Refuge, the child decides to take part in the activities. Even, when the child is at Hopeland s(he) is free to go and come. Hopeland is the extension of the street. Often we are asked why we do not run it as an institute or a school. We

do not want to run it that way because, we are not yet sure that the child is serious of leaving the street.

But I can assure you that it is often frustrating for the staff when children run away. We often ask the question, "where and when did we make the mistake?"

Is it our approach, our treatment, or don't we want to see the problem, and what can be done?

First of all, we have to understand the problem. Discussions between members of staff in departments are very useful. At times, some of these problems are highlighted in monthly departmental reports. At times, these absconding cases come up during Head of departments meetings, although, these meetings are not meant for discussing individual case studies.

One thing is very clear. It is very difficult to penetrate the minds of the children. After so many years, we are still not sure how children react and respond to assistance we offer them. The fact that we do not run CAS as an institution is a result of the original setup. We do gather the children but we go to them. In order not to lose the investments we have to



take care of his/herself.

- A child is not ready to follow instructions.
- Peer pressure, the child has to listen to older children.
- And there are many other reasons.

Therefore, we at CAS have decided to attach supervisors to regular children. The supervisor has to try to become a friend of the child so that s(he) can advice and counsel the child. The supervisor gets to know the background of the child. At any time in the preparation or in training the supervisor can assist the other staff and take decisions for the child's future.

During the preparation period, social survey reports are written. These reports are confidential. The report explains the life of a person and we do not want to publish them. But the supervisor knows the details.

Follow-up workers are asked to trace the child. This is more difficult than it sounds, because at times the child does not want to be seen.

trace those children who abscond and find out the reasons. There are many reasons:

- A child does not agree with the treatment at CAS
- A child wants to be in charge of others and does not get that chance.
- A child cannot do without his/her friends.
- A child has chosen the wrong skill or trade and is afraid to amit that.
- A child steals something and runs away.
- A girl can be pregnant before starting and does not know how to handle the situation.
- A child is too use to the freedom.
- A child refuses to take his/her bath and

WORKERS:

The follow-up workers of CAS have already a job in one of the departments. This work is done in addition to their main job. A special schedule has been made so that at all times management can see where the person is



JOHN FOSU - PATIENCE OCANSEY - ANACLETUS NEEBO IN ITALY

operating.

There are six main areas in the city where children can be found namely; CMB, Railways, Circle, Kaneshie, Agbogbloshie and Konkomba.

95 % of the children in these areas know about CAS and know some of the workers. Most children in these areas survive there because they carry out small jobs as porters, driver-mates, sweep markets, or are involved in the scrap (iron) trade.

They earn 8 to 10 cedi a day which they use for their survival. Interestingly, many are between 11 and 13 years of age. Unfortunately, some practice child prostitution and 'wee' smoking. During the day they move from place to place but at night they often sleep at the same place. There are other NGOs working in these areas. Chance for children and Children with difficulties are two other NGO working for street children.

When an absconded child is located, the supervisor is informed and together they try to persuade the child to continue with the training. Of course, the final decision is with the child. Follow-up workers always meet "new" children. These children are invited to come to the refuge. Presently, 50 to 60 children visit the Refuge every day. Sometimes attendance is high, and other times it is low. On their movements we know that when something is happening in town. Sometimes, it is because the AMA (City Authority) officers are conducting a "cleaning" or a demolishing exercise. It can also be other reasons such as festivities or political party rallies.

DSW

DSW which was formerly a department under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare now comes under the new Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. With this change, DSW is now getting itself in order to get activities going. Interestingly, DSW has also a new National Director. This explains why we have not started with the districts work as planned. We hope by the end of this month (March) everything will be in place to start this exercise. We will keep you informed.

OTHER NEWS:

- We are happy to let you know that we have re-employed two members of staff who either went on studies or were offered a contract. Another member of the staff is now employed by the Department of Social Welfare.

- Some volunteers who are presently with us have donated some needed items to CAS. With their assistance we were able to buy a new photocopier, a water tank and a new table football game for the children. Many thanks.

- CAS received other donations, food items, clothing and games. At times persons drive into the yard, present their items and disappear again. Others stop and enquire what we are doing with the children. It proves that we are not working in isolation but others are showing concern.

- We can also report to you that the research Streetinvest in conducting is going on well. They only experience, just as we do, the many power cuts (electricity). The reporting is not up to date. When there is electricity work should be carried-out immediately without delay.

You are invited to visit our website for more information. www.casghana.com

Bro. Jos van Dinther
(Director CAS)





TRIBUTE TO MR. JOHN FOSU

John Fosu popularly known among his working colleagues and the street children he works with as Teacher Fosu joined CAS in 1994 as a Teacher to the children.

The unit he headed was built around his personality and for so many years assisted to grow this unit- we called it the education department of CAS.

John Fosu played a very strong role in helping build good educational programmes for the department. He was with the children every day. To the children, his departure is still a dream.

He was a good organizer and a strong Team player but occasionally could be very "difficult". He was an achiever.

He was one person who built surprises when least expected. When all says yes, he still will say no and has never turned against this belief all these years.

He got sick in September 2012.

His health deteriorated rapidly and in January responded to new treatments. He was assisted to go for treatment by CAS which he responded poorly.

It was sad losing him when he was needed most. But who can overturn God's wishes and decisions. From our belief, we saw his situation as a preventable one but it is God who disposes.

He is gone and we hope the Good Lord keep him safe. May his soul have perpetual peace and rest. Fare thee well Teacher Fosu. All will miss you.

Good Bye