

# REPPER

RESEAU D'ECHANGE DE PROJETS ET PROGRAMMES EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS DE LA RUE

N° 18

January 04

At the Start of this New Year 2004 we wish you lots of joy, good news and success in the work you do for Children. In friendship, Martine Berge- Simenel.

## Extracts “THE GHANAIAN STREET CHILD” CAS 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition- june 03

*CATHOLIC ACTION FOR STREET CHILDREN (CAS) in Accra, Ghana has celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and for the occasion has published a booklet to present its activities, record its objectives and the guiding principle it upholds. We think it important to report here several extracts from this document whose depth and coherence of thought are quite unique. We very much regret that, owing to the lack of space, we have not been able to quote more texts and we hope that in summarizing it, we have not betrayed its meaning. The booklet (68 pages) is available at the cost of 5 euros (postage included). Write to [ficcas@ighmail.com](mailto:ficcas@ighmail.com)*

### Introductory remarks:

For the past 10 years the children who come to our CAS houses of refuge are registered (name, age, town of birth and residence, date of first contact, etc). The average age is 15 yrs and there are three boys for one girl. Their numbers are in constant progression : 7000 in 1992, 10000 in 1996, 19196 in 2002. Our children come from all regions of Ghana, 14% for reasons connected with poverty, the rest 86% for family reasons. Of course these problems have to be resolved before the child can return home.

Nearly all of them have some sort of work and a small wage which helps them to survive; they don't sniff glue, they are not ex-soldiers and don't suffer from Aids. They live in the streets under the protection of other children or adults from their own tribe. Sometimes they visit their families back in their village.

The local authorities, the social services and the public at large have at last , after 10 years of effort by the CAS, become aware of the existence of street-children but are not yet convinced that the problem needs attention. It is evident that only through the full and complete cooperation between all major NGO's working together can the numbers of street children be reduced, though never totally eliminated.

### CAS principles

CAS wants to avoid by all means that the children become dependant on their help.  
CAS provides no food or lodgings for street children

**CAS will not attract children by offering gifts**

**It aims at supplying them moral support and help, giving them a chance to learn and express themselves and to develop their self esteem.**

### **CAS activities**

**Before leaving the street, CAS children pass through five stages:**

- they meet social workers in the street and visit our centres.**
- they follow literacy lessons and other educative subjects in our centres.**
- they stay for a while in our Hopeland Centre and participate in its activities.**
- they receive a training in a school or workshop.**
- they start a life-supporting activity.**

### **The job of social workers in the streets**

**The places where children live and work change frequently. The 12 CAS social workers know their neighbourhood intimately and must contact the children, gain their confidence, listen to what they have to say, and give advice and help. They intervene also with adults in the sectors where the children live. They know who are the leaders, those who are in positions of responsibility, and the various ethnical areas.**

**Four small refugees have been set up in shops rented by the CAS and offer activities to the children near to the place where they live or work. Here the children can meet with the social workers, play, learn the alphabet and spelling and have lessons on hygiene. The aim is to bring to the children “the street corner school”. To succeed two conditions are essential : find a place near to where the children meet and organise the lessons outside of the hours when the children are at work. However, as the children are forever on the move, it is difficult to follow a programme as those attending change frequently.**

### **The house of refuge department**

**The centres are open to the children each day between 7 am. and 6 pm, except on Sundays. Here they can wash themselves and their clothes, play, watch videos, sleep, join in educational activities, ask for help and advice, deposit any savings, begin to relax. There is one condition – respect the rules: no fighting, stealing, no alcoholic drinks, smoking or playing for money. 80 children come and go each day. CAS has its office in the same building. In the Centre they can have lessons in literacy and maths at three distinct levels according to their abilities. Those who wish can go to the residential centre at Hopeland where the tuition is more intensive.**

**In liaison with the Salvation Army a dispensary exists at the Centre. If the treatment is to be administered over a period of time, each child is treated individually to avoid that they lose or sell their medicines. They also have lessons of “general education”. Left to themselves they have little care for cleanliness and hygiene and no balanced diet. They work in filthy and often dangerous conditions. The shelters where they find sleep are dirty and they are subject of sexual abuse. Their health is continually in jeopardy. They need to be alerted to these risks and other dangers and to receive practical advice. Lessons last for half an hour only as concentration is lost beyond this time. During the first 15 minutes the children discuss a given topical problem and suggest solutions. The teacher concludes and explains in simple terms the consequences of incorrect behaviour. One must admit that the children prefer to spend their money on food rather than on soap and water!**

**Similar lessons are given in the early morning, with help from small business managers, to the ice-cream and yoghurt vendors before they start work.**

### **The Hopeland Centre**

**One principle of CAS is to let the children decide for themselves whether or not they wish to pursue their education. The Centre receives children who have decided to leave the street and to learn a trade. 20 boys and 20 girls can be welcomed simultaneously for courses of 6 to 9 months. The teachers supervise closely each student. The students’ look after poultry, learn pottery and how to make candles, have intensive lessons in literacy and general education.**

We offer the chance of recreational activities including theatre, acting, music...Two workshops, for pottery and candle-making, have been opened recently with the objective of making a contribution to overhead costs.

The children look after themselves: they buy their own food, do their cooking and wash their clothes. A sponsorship programme, initiated 7 years ago, helps children through their studies and to learn a trade. At any one time CAS can sponsor up to 250 children and since 1995 480 children have benefited from sponsorship. Sadly to say, through lack of funds to support the system of prolonged training, certain students are led to abandon their studies.

The children don't know which trade to choose so CAS has provided a small range of trades to prevent disillusionment and help the children to stay in one place all day instead of wandering about town. At the start, before any choice is made, explanation is given of what is entailed in the various crafts of weaving, woodwork, pottery or candle-making. Certain monitors are themselves ex-street children and have the advantage of an excellent contact with the children, though they do not always have the required teaching abilities and this can cause difficulties. They need to work under the guidance of trained staff. The products made by the children are sold in a CAS rented shop also in hotels and markets, all of which helps to alert the public to the children's needs. With the same objective in mind notices, prospectus and photographs are distributed to the local community.

### The Schooling

The children attached to each Centre pursue their studies, in small groups of 4 or 5 pupils, at schools or in workshops; in larger groups they gang up and might receive a treatment different to that of the other students. Our network currently includes 109 workshops and 65 schools. The children sometimes board at school or in an hostel or hotel; some have their own housing. Each child is followed by a monitor, who visits at least once a month, and gives encouragement and help in resolving logistical or financial problems. Some children will leave to visit family without asking permission and don't come back in time for their course. However most children who start studying become students like the others and don't return to the streets. Similarly those children who are in the workshops to learn a trade are also monitored – CAS attends to their needs and insures that they receive the required instruction.

### Setting-up in active life

Once schooling is complete, CAS can make a modest financial contribution to help them set up in business or find a job. This help is not handed out on a plate, they must first start by proving their worth and perseverance.

According to a study undertaken by CAS with some 60 students and employers, it is estimated that: 15 work in their chosen trade, 6 find immediate employment, 3 find employment after delays between 3 and 16 months, 40 are still unemployed. The un-employment crisis in Ghana makes things particularly difficult for street-children.

Those children which choose a trade are in general satisfied with the training they receive and the trade they have chosen. Few, only 6%, have difficulties of adaptation. Some trades that the children choose don't offer outlets, sometimes because they require electricity available in larger towns, or where there is a larger number of potential customers (hairdressing; dressmaking; mechanics; bricklaying etc. ). CAS tries to orientate towards those trades which offer employment (computers, electronics, catering and tourism). In the three years of training, students must attain the level of grade 2. Only those who succeed are allowed to continue. The obtainment of a diploma is an important advantage when looking for work. When possible the children also learn English as without knowledge of this language their chances of finding a job diminish. **“THE GHANAIAN STREET CHILD.”**



# NEWS FROM OUR NETWORK

## SUPPORTING ASSOCIATIONS :

**Action, Autonomie, Avenir (Nepal)**, an association under Nepalese law, which has adopted more than 100 children of which 36 have now reached the age of students. The news is good but budgetary control is required as funds are scarce: the oldest ones will soon begin an activity and small subventions are required to help them start in jobs...Email: [ushant@noos.fr](mailto:ushant@noos.fr)

**ISO (Informatique et Solidarité)** successfully dealt with 39 of the 60 requests received from 30 organisations in 19 different countries . It has supplied 112 computers and 105 days of work in assistance. For more information consult site : [www.iso.asso.fr](http://www.iso.asso.fr)

**Enfants du Sourire Khmer ( Cambodia)** “Since starting up seven years ago ESK has built or enlarged schools which today welcome several hundred children. ESK has financed the creation of 3 orphanages, sponsored some 60 children, created a school of needlework, literacy and hygiene. Moreover in this country which has the highest number of land mines, care must be taken not to become dependant on outside help but, on the contrary, help the people in our villages to take care of themselves. As an example ; the “goat bank” will supply 2 goats to a family (with one billy-goat for each of 4 goats) and each family must then in turn supply 2 kids to another family in need.” Email : [sisowath@club-internet.fr](mailto:sisowath@club-internet.fr)

**Le Sillage,(Haïti)** with all it's action of help and development in Haiti it doesn't overlook the orphans and abandoned children who are served a meal every other day, funds don't permit to do more. 7 rue Surcouf, 29570 CAMARET (France)

**Les Trois Quarts du Monde (Guatemala)** « In Guatemala one speaks of “children in street condition” rather than “street children”, this in order to underline that it is a temporary condition and not a foregone destiny. Work has been completed in the first hostel to improve security. New motivating activities have been put in place in the second hostel where the girls, bruised and battered physically and mentally by drugs and prostitution, are unstable and ready to return to the streets at any moment. Discovering those activities which entice them to stay became a necessity.” Email : [tqmapascal@aol.com](mailto:tqmapascal@aol.com)

**Tissons (Burkina Faso)** has worked for several years to create co-operation between associations and between these associations and the country's administration. To further improve this co-operation possibilities of strengthening common talents are sought, specialisation of one or another in different areas. Searching for new techniques in welcoming children or adapting these according to the length of time they have spent on the streets. Last but not least a programme of awareness, on a country-wide scale, has been made to those organisations and the government which may contribute financially to our needs. It is evident that the co-ordination between different associations improves results and encourages the smaller, sometimes isolated, ones in their work.

Email : [tissons@club-internet.fr](mailto:tissons@club-internet.fr)

## **ON-SITE PROJECTS :**

**Balkendra. Les enfants de Népal (Nepal)** “the project with the children who are still in the streets continues to advance: their files are being completed and the numbers coming for a morning cup of tea are ever increasing, some 20 children come regularly each day. We have created a small gardening centre, the children have put grain in damp cotton wool to help germination. We follow progress step by step up to the actual planting – the children are very keen”. Email : [les\\_enfants\\_du\\_nepal@yahoo.com](mailto:les_enfants_du_nepal@yahoo.com)

**Centre ND de Clairvaux (Madagascar)** *message from a co-operant who has spent a month here*  
 « The Centre cares for 155 boarder-boys and a further 75 day-boys, this represents maximum capacity. The most needy cases are accepted first. A revision of what they have learnt at school is followed by a training in a workshop (metalwork , woodwork, agriculture, rearing animals).After this the children get a job with a local firm; potential employers often come to the Centre to engage boys as the Centre has an excellent reputation on the employment market ( training the young to be honest, competent and hard-working professionals).

Email : [cndc.sdb@dts.mg](mailto:cndc.sdb@dts.mg)

**Koinonia (Honduras)** A new managing team has taken over the two hostels, each of which receives from 8 to 12 girls aged between 12 and 16 yrs., some of who are mothers. Here they find friendship, some social activity, some medical and psychological care to help their re-insertion, and if possible, a return to their families. The learning of a trade helps them to find a livelihood without returning to the street. The association “Honduras Fraternité” sends to us specialised voluntary instructors for periods of one year. Experience shows that a period of 18 months might be advantageous. Email : [koinonia@sdnhon.org.hn](mailto:koinonia@sdnhon.org.hn)

**La Belle Etoile (Cameroon)** « In June and July 2003 received 69 children, 24 were returned to their families, 28 went back on the streets and 17 remain in the hostel. For the most part they are drug addicts who steal to survive. Physical comforts can be useful, but sometimes it suffices just to listen to what a child has to say, to be at his side and to give him friendship and love. When the children go out they are accompanied day and night by helpers. Equally when they return to their family there is still a follow-up. The supervising team consists of 5 persons. The helpers have had a literacy course so they can teach the children the alphabet ,vocabulary, simple grammar. Good relationships are fostered with local authorities ( social services, dispensaries, Schools, police, the local radio..) Email : [diocmm@yahoo.fr](mailto:diocmm@yahoo.fr)

**RCVC (Tajikistan)** has been honoured in the attribution, by the French Ambassador, to it's manager Mavjuda Rakhmanova of the Order of Merit. We, too, offer him our sincere congratulations. The children from the Karine Mane Centre have given a concert, lasting half an hour, on the theme of sexually transmissible disease and Aids.

One of them won second prize in a singing contest organised at Dushanbé. Two others told of their work in class and of their previous life on the streets, and how - thanks to employment - their lives had been changed.

Email : [mavjuda.reve@tojikiston.com](mailto:mavjuda.reve@tojikiston.com)

**Refugios Pana (Venezuela)** currently takes care of a group of 24 children, all being schooled, of which 12 are in secondary education. The ministry of Education has granted to each freedom from the costs. Consideration is being given for the purchase of a large house, as the current building has a normal capacity for only 18. This would also permit the older more advanced children to be separated from the new-comers. Refugios Pana would be pleased to meet adherents of REPPER to learn of and

exchange experiences. Board and friendship will be willingly supplied! Email : [refugiospana@hotmail.com](mailto:refugiospana@hotmail.com)

**Snehasadan (India)** Father Fonseca who has managed Snehasadan for the past 30 years has been nominated to be Director of a Social Centre in Bombay with the objective to give it a new lease of life. Father Fernandez will take over from him at Snehasadan. Life goes on : hostel N° 7, continually occupied since 1969, was badly in need of renovation; some Snehasadan “old-boys” came and did the work and it is now completely restored. As an extra joy for us, some new “hostel-parents” were themselves once students in Snehasadan.(....) When doubts and sadness prevail because a child returns to the street, the team at Snehasadan says “ Its impossible to take the place of the street, its freedom, that which nurtured the child for so long. Why want to cut their wings? Why try to retain them? One must listen to what they have to say and leave the door open. One day, perhaps they will decide to come back.” Amrut Nagar, Chakala, Andheri East, Bombay 400 093.

**Virlanie (Philippines)** The children supported by Virlanie now total 548. Family-type hostels welcome 254 and a further 294 participate in various schemes organised with help from partners and volunteers ( a programme for the 15+ yrs., a programme on computers, programme psychology, a small loans programme etc.) The programme for the new “drop-in” children, entitled “The Passage”, consists of taking the children out of Manila and on to an island, in groups of twelve at a time and for a three-week period; they follow an educational course, an artistic occupation and practice a sport. The aim is help the children discover new standards, new values, in an environment of nature. Email : [virlanie@vasia.com](mailto:virlanie@vasia.com)

## THE NEXT MEETING

Is fixed for  
**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2004**  
**from 10 am. to 5 pm.**  
**12 rue de Martignac 75007 Paris**  
 (Métro : Assemblée Nationale)

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