

FIELDWORK

CAS staff carry out 'fieldwork', meaning they visit the streets to be with the children to find out where they work and sleep and inform them of CAS activities and programmes. Fieldworkers interact with the street children and offer them the opportunity to use the services of the refuge. In this way children can benefit from the work of CAS.

CAS sees it as an important part of its work on the streets. The fieldworkers meet the street children and start a friendship. They talk to the children, gain a level of trust, listen to their problems and sometimes give advice. They give the child advice and information about the various possibilities CAS can offer them. The street corner facilitators teach health education, life skills and literacy at selected meeting points. Meeting points are mostly different places such as verandas of shops, areas around public toilets or public bath houses. Children are encouraged to visit the refuge at their own free will. It is entirely up to the child whether they decide to continue the contact and come to the refuge or not.

All the fieldworkers and street corner facilitators have been assigned to a particular area of town. They keep records of the number of children they teach and meet and they give reports about the circumstances of the children on the streets.

Fieldwork-follow-up work

Social workers also try to locate the child in the street after s(he) has absconded. This is a very difficult exercise and is not always successful. When a child does not want to be found s(he) cannot be found. Several girls absconded because they were pregnant and did not want to reveal it. The reasons behind it are unknown. Children receive health education and may be think that they have made a mistake by becoming pregnant.

There are many other reasons why children return to the streets. Some cannot stay because they miss their friends. Others cannot live without their boy or girl friend. We also know that peer pressure is one of the main factors. When one child fails in the sponsorship, he or she will advise their friends to stop the training as well.

In other words; the follow-up work has to continue and even extended. In addition to this work, CAS has proposed to the DSW (Department of Social Welfare) to start fieldwork in the various districts of the City. CAS workers can join workers of the DSW to work hand in hand to find out what approach can be used in each district to work for the "out of School" children. Each district is different because in one, many migrant children are staying. In another, you could meet working children or urban poor children. There are 16 districts and during the period of four months all could be visited.

The plans are as follows:

- * (Jan-April 2013) - Street-mapping in the 16 districts for a period of four months.
- * (May-June 2013) - Follow-up workshop during which more officers can be trained.
- * (October-November 2013) - Strategic planning to carry-out headcounts of out of school children in all regions of Ghana.

- * (2013) - The Director of the DSW has agreed with our plans and we hope to start in February this year.
- * 2014 training of officers in the region and actual headcounts to be conducted.

During the year we worked together with the staff of DSW to organize the first training session for social workers of the department. We are very grateful to Streetinvest who organised and sent their trainers including the director of Streetinvest.

As you can read, the plans are in place. Now we have to materialize them.

CAS is also hosting the StreetInvest research. One member of staff of S.AID is in charge and one member of staff of CAS is assisting. The research is going well. The staff still has to learn how to carry out the administration according to the terms of the donor. It is always difficult when the donor does not understand how our administration operates. We can of course not keep a separate financial administration for each donor. We always have to come to a compromise. What is acceptable and what is practically possible.

DISTRICT WORK:

In 2013, after 20 years working with street children in Accra- Ghana, CAS recognized that the problems of "out of school" children cannot be solved by the work of NGOs only. The number of children who do not go to school are increasing daily, the problems in the streets are increasing as well. Several children get involved in crime, prostitution, or drug addiction. And some can easily be brainwashed and get involved in extremism.

In October 1992, the time CAS started, most of the children could be found in the centre of the city where they could find jobs to survive. When numbers grew and the city infrastructure changed, children moved to the outskirts and could also be located in the suburbs.

Majority of these children were migrant children who came from the rural areas of Ghana and surrounding countries. Many of these children grew up in the city and "married" unofficially. Babies were born and together with their parents remained in the city. Children of poor families are already in the streets and their total numbers increased and now many can be found in all social welfare districts of the greater Accra region.

In 2009, CAS, SAID and the Department of Social Welfare conducted a research with the financial support of Ricerca an Italian donor. The headcount showed that 61,492 " Out of School" children (migrant children, those born on the street and urban poor children) were in the streets of the Region.

As a result, CAS planned to get more social workers of the department involved in street work. These workers have to be trained. With the assistance of Streetinvest, an NGO from the UK, ten workers were trained in 2009. The plan is to train at least two workers for each district office. Social Welfare has 16 districts in the Region.

CAS has applied to 100% for children a Danish NGO for financial assistance to carry-out this training as well as the work in the districts. Promoting children's rights and teaching functional literacy. 100% for children is in turn working with CISU to obtain financial backing for this exercise.

While working on the application, CAS workers have started to do some preliminary investigation in the districts to update the existing information and pretesting. We want to determine where the children live and work and to know which NGOs are already operating.

Three teams of workers are carrying out this investigation besides their normal work at CAS. The districts are visited on three occasions to obtain full report on each district. We hope we will be able to work with other NGOs and CAS is trying to obtain work agreements with some of them.