



CATHOLIC ACTION FOR STREET CHILDREN



INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES OF CAS

NEWSLETTER 64

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Dear Reader,

In this issue, we want to share our experiences of income generating activities in order to make CAS self-reliant. We want to share this knowledge because other NGOs and charities could use these experiences.

CAS started its income generating activities in 1995. Hopeland was established as a farm project. Chicken as well as pigs were reared and dry-season gardens started. CAS continued with the farm because we thought street children could learn the farming methods or animal husbandry for their future. As explained before in previous newsletters, not many children showed interest. After investigating the reasons it became clear that children did not want to live the same kind of lives as their parents did, work in the farm in order to survive. There is no gain or profit but the work is hard.

After we discovered this, we decided to continue the farm as an income generating activity in order to be able to pay the salaries of the employees as well as maintaining the buildings. At Hopeland we tried the following:

- Chicken (2000 layers), eggs were sold regularly.
- Chicken -broilers and sold the meat.
- Pigs (40 at a time). We had to build a new pigsty in order to house them well.
- Ducks. We changed the old pigsty into a house for ducks.
- And other animals.

What are the experiences?

Rearing chicken is a very delicate business. The chicken easily get sick. The place should be kept clean and when entering you have to dip your feet into a bath which kills all bacteria. These dipping baths are constructed at the entrances of the chicken houses.

Not all children showed this care and walked in anyhow. Day old chicks do need even more care and before you realize it, many can die. However, the sales of eggs was no problem. Often the eggs were sold before they were laid.

Rearing Broilers is another story. They are kept until they get a certain weight. In other words you have to buy a lot of food for them and provide the correct kind of feed.

At Hopeland we grinded and mixed the food ourselves. We had to do this in order to cut costs. Of course more hands are needed to prepare the feed. The investments are very high and we had to stop this activity when the feed became too expensive.

We stopped with the layers recently in December 2013 when the costs became too high.

Rearing chicken can be an income generating activities, but we advise don't rely on the children only. Chicken are delicate animals and street children are stronger. Employ professionals and don't start on a small scale. The investment you have to make are very high anyhow. We also advise to study the market well, because the feeding costs often exceed the income.

Unfortunately, even though Hopeland did not experience the swine as well as the bird flu which affected other farms near Hopeland, Hopeland experienced major financial loses because no animal or birds were permitted to be slaughtered or transported for sale during this period.



What else did we try at Hopeland? **Ducks**. As mentioned earlier we reared ducks at Hopeland. They multiply very fast but the cases have to be kept very clean. The same counts for **Rabbits**.

Restaurants were willing to buy them from us, provided we could supply them an agreed number every month. This requirement could not be fulfilled because we did not have the capacity and experience to meet the dead lines.

Unfortunately, the ducks also suffered from the appearance of monitor-lizards who came from the surrounding bush. Monitor-lizards are as large as alligators and have a similar appearance. We did not know they could climb a two meter wire fence, but they did. The lizard came to eat the eggs and in the process killed all the ducks. In addition to the many sicknesses we experienced made us decide to discontinue rearing them.

OTHER ANIMALS:

Snails. They grow easily, but the marketing is very difficult. Grass-cutters. These animals live in quiet and dark places. They eat vegetables. They can become very large and heavy.

The grass-cutters are not used to noise. In other words grass-cutters and street children do not go together. We try to rear several but they did not multiply.



We also kept bees and have a fishpond.

At Hopeland we still rear pigs and goats. All other animals we have stopped.

ITEMS WHICH CAN BE RECYCLED. GLASS AND PLASTIC SACHETS.

In 1997, a retired owner of a glass factory phoned us. He was willing to assist us in organizing broken glass collection by the street children. We visited his house several times to learn from him how to go about it.

Broken glass is dangerous. He advised us to collect it in sacks made of jute. Glass is also very heavy. The factory buys it per lorry load not per kilogram. This meant that we had to collect a full lorry load. He give us the price we could get and we figured out how much we could give to the children per kilogram. Glass has to be sorted in different colors. Green, red (brown) and white glass. There are still more colors but the use is limited.

We instructed the children and arranged certain times of buying it from them. Where to store it? We decided to keep it on the flat roof of the House of Refuge where we could keep it safely. The disadvantage of this place was that it had to be carried up and brought down later.

Street children are very clever. At times we were overwhelmed with bags and paid twice for the same bag.

Also, rubbish was between the pieces of glass so that the weight increased. Anyway, this was our own fault of not organizing it well. We were inexperienced.

After a few months the children had collected enough to fill a lorry. The glass factory is in Takoradi. In order to be able to return the same day everything had to be organized early. Some staff volunteered to accompany the truck.

To make a long story short, the factory cheated us and we received far less than agreed before. It was a big loss because the staff and children had to be compensated as well. This was the end of the glass collection.

Plastic sachets.

In Ghana pure water is sold in plastic bottles but also in sachets. Street girls and boys sell them near traffic-lights and in other places. The idea came up to use the sachets and make small bags which can be used as pen holders etc. Street girls who learn the trade of sewing will learn and the income could be used in the department to buy other materials. The activity was organized by the demonstration department.

Plastic sachets have to be collected. We asked school headmasters to organize the collection of sachets which were used by their children. The headmasters did not know why we needed these sachets until we showed them the products. The sachets have to be washed, dried and later sorted.

Plastic pen holders, shopping bags as well as skirts were sewn. Soon other people took over the jobs and started small factories who produced better quality items than street children can make. The children are still at an learning stage.



The main problem is that we did not have a patent on the products we made. Others are free to copy the item and produce them as well. We witnessed this with several items invented. Ceramics items as well as candles and carvings. As soon as the item is successful and liked by customers, you lose it because professionals take over the production.

CERAMICS.

Before CAS started ceramics production, a study was conducted. We asked some people with knowledge of this industry to assist us in this research. Many ceramic items are imported in Ghana. Especially, plates, cups and saucers. Clay is available in areas close to Accra.

There are many artisans who manufacture ceramic items based in Accra. Street children could learn this trade but have to form small firms in order to earn enough to pay for the investments.

Baking ovens are very expensive. They are not really necessary because the items could be transported to places where they could be baked.



This is the method we used at the House of Refuge. Children made the items and we transported them for baking. At a certain time we decided to expand the workplace and most the main production was done at Hopeland where we had space. There two ovens were built and many items made.

In this trade we experienced the same difficulties as described above. There are many pots makers and at several locations sold. CAS cannot compete with these tradesmen. We choose items which were not common but again we noticed that others duplicated them.

Also, not many children showed interest in this trade and after five years of experimenting we decided to stop it.

CANDLE-MAKING

We were assisted by several donors to establish this trade. We visited candle making factories and the Netherlands and in England and several artisans gave us advice. Candles can be made in different ways. Beeswax candles are expensive because the wax is pure.

Commercial wax can be bought at the market. You have the choice of coloring them through and through or only the outer layer.

Plastic Molds' are used to manufacture the candle using different shapes. The skill is to use the correct size of wick to produce slow burning candles. We try many different kinds, but discovered that the plastic molds are not made for the tropics. They have to be replaced often.



Another method are the so called drip candles. We tried them as well. Even very large candles were made which are often used in churches. Competition is great. The people who sell the candles determine the price.

They do not calculate the amount of wax or other materials used but simply tell you that they can obtain these candles cheaper from other suppliers. Quality is not the measure, only the appearance.

Making candles is not a good trade to involve children. The wax has to be heated and the work has to be carefully done. It is a dangerous job for children.

We also stopped with this trade after some time.

CONCLUSION.

You may conclude that all what CAS tried failed, this was partly because we tried to involve the children who have no experience at all or they just do not have interest in the projects. However we did not fail in everything because we still make artifacts and rear the mentioned pigs and goats, but have gained a lot of experiences.

Our advice is as follows:

1. Do not try to compete with others, if you don't have the expertise, the capacity and adequate funding base.
2. Study the market well. Often the investments are more than the profit of end products.
3. Do not start vegetable gardens when the rain pattern is not predictable. Irrigation is an expensive investment.
4. Most animals are not used to the rough handling by children.
5. Start income generating on commercial bases and employ professionals. Do not solely rely on the children.
6. Be aware that from the twelve products children attempt to make only one or two can be sold.



We are aware that where CAS has failed others could succeed. It all depends on where your place is located and on the circumstances.

We still have many ideas how CAS could continue, but we want to base them on the experiences we gained in the past. We hope you will supports us.

Thank you

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(Director CAS)