Kumasi Street Children Project

The website (www.streetchildrenprojectksci.org) of Kumasi Street Children Project is currently down. The organisation hopes to get it back online soon. Until then you can read more on this NGO below.

Introduction
Kumasi Street Children Project is an initiative of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana to address the problems of young vulnerable women and children who are displaced and homeless in Kumasi city. The Project is managed by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. It was officially launched in June 2005 by Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong.

Our Vision
That all children live, grow and are cared for within their homes; that no child spends its childhood on the street.

Mission Statement
The Street Children Project is committed to address the reality of children on the streets of Kumasi, by reaching out to help them explore other options in life, offering enabling services to motivate them towards reintegration, empowering them by providing opportunities for education, and enterprise development.

General Objective
The goal of Street Children Project is to assist children in street situations towards rehabilitation, through street education, reintegration into their families and access to basic education/skill training.

Target groups
In 2007 the project was reshaped to include more street children than the Kayayos. In general, the children are now targeted under 4 different programmes for:

- Head-porters (Kayayos) (7 – 18 years old).
- Shoe shine boys (6 -18 years old)
- Young sex workers/street mothers and their children (12 - 18 years old)
- Babies, toddlers and young kids in risk of becoming street children (1 – 6 years old)

Scope of the Project
The project supports children up to the age of 18 years of both sexes without any distinction based on religion or ethnicity. Every street child is welcome to the centre. We try to create a friendly and non-threatening environment for children, upholding their rights and striving to restore their dignity. In general, we try to address the reality of children on the street by reaching out to help them explore other options in life other than street life.

The Project is located in Kumasi- the capital city of the revered Ashanti region, a very important and historical centre for Ghana. Kumasi is the second largest city in the country; it is located approximately 250 kilometers northwest of Accra. It has an estimated population size of 1,517,000 people. Many of the children supported by the project are originally from Tamale, Bolgatanga, and other Northern districts. When project staff help to trace and reunite children with their families in these districts, the project’s geographical scope expands.
Situation Analysis of Life in Kumasi, Ghana:
Kumasi has a thriving formal and informal business sector – it is the commercial hub of the Ashanti region and attracts a high number of migrant workers. The formal economy includes: manufacturing (Guinness Ghana Breweries, wood processing, and vehicular parts production), quarrying, urban agriculture, and an integrated system of markets (both wholesale and retail) in Adum and Kumasi Central market. The informal sector is a crowded space: it includes woodworking, handicrafts, and small workshops. Although the employment rate is listed as 86% by the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, approximately 60% of its residents have a ‘low standard of living.’ Access to social services (including health care, education, and housing) is inconsistent. National Health Insurance exists but requires registration before patients can receive subsidized care – this obstacle prevents many poor people from accessing the services they need when they fall ill. Ghana also has a free compulsory basic education programme. This means that all Ghanaian children are entitled to attend public schools for free; but there are hidden, cost prohibitive levies (dues, books, uniforms, extra classes, etc.) and inadequate facilities which prevents poor children from attending school.

Kumasi has been identified as a major transit point in the trafficking of child labor (Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, accessed 9/8/2010). Available statistics from the Youth Development Council indicates that Kumasi now has more than 10,000 street children (Ghana Web, 2002). Mrs. Agatha Ahia, Assistant Director at the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly has reported that 62% of nearly 3,000 street children in Kumasi Metropolis are females (Modern Ghana News, 2002). A more recent though un published head count by the US peace Corpse carried out in 2011 reveals an even more frightening reality of 20,000 children and young persons living on the streets of Kumasi.

Our investigations show that many of the children are sent by their families to work for their relatives because of poverty, hunger, and lack of opportunities in the North. In the Dagombe tribe, it is customary for aunts to educate and raise their brothers’ daughters; some aunts exploit their nieces and send them to Kumasi to work as porters or child minders. Other children come of their own volition seeking adventure or fleeing difficult or disintegrated family situations. The Street Children Project exists to support children and young adults on the street with the aim of motivating them to build up a more stable future, through rehabilitation programs, ranging from support in basic education and skill training.
Our Programmes
To realize the above objective, mission and vision the project carries out the following activities:

Field Work And Follow Up
The street workers of the project go to the street three times a week to meet the street children. The workers ask the children about their problems, tell them about the drop-in centre where they can come and help them with questions. In this way the workers start with the counseling of the children and after they have registered them they do investigation of their background. The children come for an interview to the office, where the drop-in centre is. The only possible way to help a child is when you know more about where he/she is coming from. When possible the children get reintegrated in the family and go back to school or vocational training. Several times a year the street workers visit the reintegrated children as part of the follow up system, to make sure everything is still okay.

Night work and Street Education
In the evening two workers go to the place where the street children sleep for the street education. They teach them about daily skills (e.g. hygiene, nutritious food, National Health Insurance Scheme), give literacy and counting classes and tell them more about the Street Children Project. This is a way to inform the children about the possibilities to leave the street and get a better life. These same topics are taught in the mornings by two workers who give the street education. For the street education the workers go to the market where many children gather to look for some work. We educate children on various issues that affect children on the street. Topics include, Sex Education (sexual abuse, HIV/STD’s), Healthy living habits, Dangers of Street Life, Child Rights, Benefit of Education/ skill training and Family Reintegration and Good Citizenship. At the end of every educational session, the workers invite the children to come to the project if they want help to leave the street.

Drop-in Centre And Literacy Classes
In the building where the office of the Street Children Project is, is also a drop-in centre for street children. The children can come here for rest, toilet, bath and recreation. When you would enter the place at 11.00 am, you will always find the whole place filled with children.
(mainly girls) sleeping, watching television or playing oware together. There is a nice and relaxing atmosphere, which attracts the children to come to the centre all the time. About 50 children come into the Drop-in-Centre on daily basis.

When they are at the centre, the children also have the opportunity to ask the street workers some questions, if they are really in need of something (e.g. medical assistance) or to get an interview and investigate their possibilities to leave the streets. Together with the social worker present, they will do family assessment to their background (family, school). They look for a safe place for them to stay with some of their family members (parents, grandparents, aunt or uncle), find out what the child wants (school or vocational training). The staff members are generally warm towards the children and make efforts to build trust and create rapport with children who come into the centre daily.

When the child has proven to be serious by coming to the centre regularly for some time, we rehabilitate the child with the family and register him/her in school or vocational training. For the children who want to go back to school, there is a literacy class every morning. To show their motivation and to get ready to start school again, children come one hour every morning for three months to learn basics like maths, English and reading. The Drop-in-Centre also provides the space for administrative activities, arrangement for rehabilitation and follow-up of children and a safe place for children to take refuge in.

Counseling of Young Sex Workers
The area of the racecourse market is the place where many street children spend their night. Among these children, you can also find many child sex workers. Girls, sometimes as young as 12 years old, live at this place and sell their body to get their daily food. It's a dangerous place. In the nighttime there are many robberies (sometimes by the street boys who also live there), and the chance to get raped is always present. Most girls have boyfriends there. They don't always treat them well, but at least it brings some safety. The project offers them counseling services in the drop-in centre, a street education on topics like rape, self-defense, HIV/aids, literacy.

Especially with this group it is very important that the workers spend enough time just to get to know the girls before trying to take them out of the work they are doing. These girls don’t easily trust people and because of that most will lie to you the first time you ask about their background. Of course they know that the work they are doing is not a good job, so they don't want their family to know about it. When a girl shows serious interest in leaving her job and going back to school or to vocational training, the street worker takes her to the office. There the cycle of investigation to the background, reintegration and follow up will be done, in the same way as described at the topic 'fieldwork and follow-up'.

Rehabilitation Activities
When a child indicates interest to leave the street and return home, to go to school or into vocational training, we assist in the rehabilitation process and take up sponsorship in their chosen career (education or skill training). Presently, the Street Children Project is sponsoring over 200 children (formerly on the street) in education and 100 children in skill training (dressmaking and hair dressing, electronics and fitting) as well as providing support for vulnerable children in street situation who turn up in the Drop-in- Centre daily.

In addition, the project is undertaking the following scheme:
• Construction of a 3 classroom block to provide day care/nursery education for children of street girls to prevent them becoming future street children.
• Construction of a vocational training centre for young girls willing to leave the street to learn dressmaking and hairdressing, and to provide a short term accommodation (STA) for street girls transiting from the street to their homes. The centre is intended to accommodate about 60 girls in all. Presently 10 girls have begun training in dress making.
Follow-Up of children under rehabilitation
Project staff carry out regular follow-up visits to families, schools and training centres of children under assistance. This is very demanding on the project both financially and otherwise. Staff take a lot of trouble to visit children even in the remotest villages. Sometimes staff have to be away from the families for up to one week during major follow-up visits to the north of Ghana (where we have over hundred children). Staff also carry out follow-up on weekly basis to visit children in the schools/ training centres around Kumasi and once in a month to children in the regions around the neighbourhood of Kumasi.

Day care center
The Street Children Project used to accommodate two day care centers (crèches) for children who are in risk of becoming street children. The day care centers were situated in the Racecourse market, a slum area in Kumasi. This is the place where many street children spend the night, especially the young sex workers. Especially at one crèche many of the children were kids of the street children, most of the mothers at the other crèche worked at the market.

By offering the babies and toddlers a safe place for the day we prevent them from spending the day on the street at their young age. For a very low fee (€ 0.25 per day) the children get a safe place to play, a nutritious meal, basic teaching in the English language, mathematics, hygiene, storytelling, songs, and poems that will enable enrolment in proper primary school. Unfortunately the crèches have been demolished by the local authorities during a slum-clearing exercise. Through hard work and persistence we have now bought a new plot of land to build a new crèche. We are still looking for funding to complete the construction of this new crèche.

Contact Us
The easiest way to contact us, is by sending an e-mail to streetchildrenprojectksi@yahoo.com

You can call the Street Children Project at +233 3220 81578 from Monday to Thursday between 8.00 am and 3.30 pm, on Friday between 8.00 am and 12 noon.

Our postal address is
Street Children Project,
Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi,
P.O. Box KS 99,
Kumasi,
Ghana, West Africa

If you want to visit us you can find our office and drop-in centre opposite the St. Peters Basilica Cathedral near Kejetia Market in Kumasi, behind the Catholic Bookshop. The office is open from Monday to Thursday between 8.00 am and 3.30 pm, on Friday we close at 12.00 noon. We advise you always to call before you come, because we are out of the office a lot to work with the street children.