

Dear Readers:

Just one year ago at this time, I was living and working in Sandema, a small, rural town in the north of Ghana. One day, a tiny boy named Kasimu arrived at my door. He looked to be 8 years old, and his clothes and hair were caked with dirt. In a barely audible voice, he asked for me for 500 cedis (20 cents) and showed me a badly infected sore on his leg. I decided to take him to the pharmacy in town to buy some medicine for him.

Little did I realize that the short journey into town would change my life. Kasimu was a street child. As I got to know him better, I came face to face with the reality of many other youngsters eking out an existence on the streets of Sandema. Most of these children are orphans who have been neglected and/or abandoned by their extended families. They face overwhelming obstacles -hunger, loneliness, sickness, and social rejection. Their ability to survive under such harsh circumstances is a testimony to their courage and strength of spirit.

I was truly inspired by these children. Working in partnership with two very committed Ghanaians (Simon Akoba and Maxwell Akandem), we developed a programme to assist street children in Sandema. With the generous support of family, friends and acquaintances, what began as an informal intervention has now evolved into Horizons Children's Home.

This newsletter is the first 'chapter' in the unfolding story of their lives. We have included a description of our programme activities, some photos that capture 'daily life' at the Home, and some comments from the children themselves. In Ghana, there is a popular saying, "Forward Ever, Backward Never". Guided by this wisdom, we look forward to a year full of promise and hope.

Sincerely,

Heather Menezes



## CHILDSPEAK

In one of their recent family meetings, children shared their personal stories and their personal visions for themselves. Here are some of their comments (translated by Simon):

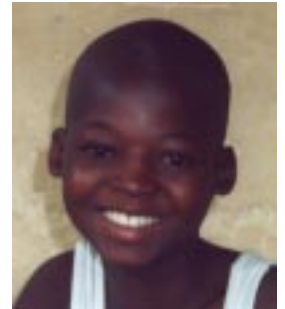


*"If I remember back to my former life on the street, it was so disheartening...until you discovered that I had value. You brought me here, gave me shelter, clothing, as well as food. I am now part of a family. We are responsible to live in unity, to learn to say sorry to one another. It is my responsibility to work hard towards my education."*

Kofi, age 17

*"When I was sleeping in the streets, I never thought of such a wonderful opportunity. I even used to doubt what meal I would take when day breaks. Now I want to be serious about my studies so that I will never be disgraced in society again. I will never forget you for giving me this education."*

Daniel, age 12

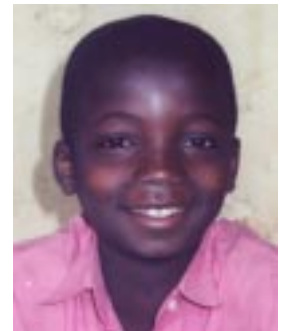


*"I want to tell other people in the streets that they have other opportunities, that they should not give up on life."*

Kasimu, age 8

*"I want to take care of myself today so that I can take care of other orphan children in the future."*

Yaw, age 8



## **Update on Horizons Activities April to December, 2000**

### ***April - June***

The children moved into their new house. They worked together to clean the place and make it a home. They built an outdoor bath using local materials. They also planted vegetables around the house. The younger children commenced primary school and all the boys began their after-school classes with Mr. Paul Abalansa, a local teacher.

### ***July - September***

We painted the inside and outside of the house and purchased sleeping mattresses for the boys. We also bought mosquito nets and other household items. The 4 older boys received admission to the Youth Leadership Training Centre to commence a 2-year vocational training course. Kofi and Jacob decided to pursue carpentry, while Roland and Sunday have opted for masonry. We bought them their tools, sewed their uniforms and prepared them for the start of their classes. The vegetables planted in April were ready for harvesting, which was a family event.

### ***October - December***

Wooden beds were constructed by a local carpenter. He has also put mosquito screens on the doors, and built a kitchen cupboard to store food supplies. Moses (the youngest member of the family) underwent emergency surgery to remove an umbilical hernia. He is now fully recovered. The younger boys started school again after a summer vacation. The older boys began 'auditing' (observing) their classes at the technical school, and will officially begin their new school term in February, 2001.

### ***Front Cover Picture***

*Back Row (Left to Right): Jacob, Roland, Anon., Kofi, Sunday, Simon, Danzumah  
Front Row (Left to Right): Anon., Francis, Daniel, Kasimu, Danladi, Victor, Yaw  
Absent: Moses, Isaac*

## **Program Overview**

Horizons Children's Home is a Canadian non-governmental organization set up to address the needs of street children in Sandema, Builsa District, Ghana.

### **Mission Statement**

We aim to address the basic needs of street children through the provision of food, shelter, medical care and counselling. We provide formal education and/or vocational training to street children to enable them to become independent, productive members of society.

### **Program Components**

#### ***Education:***

Currently, we have 13 identified street children under our care. 9 of the 13 children are enrolled in primary school in Sandema. The 4 older youths will soon commence a two-year vocational training course at the Youth Leadership Training Institute in Sandema. We cover all tuition fees and provide all necessary educational inputs (tools, school supplies, uniforms, etc.). The sponsorship is contingent upon the children attending school *regularly* and completing their education programs. If a child decides to drop out of school, they will no longer be sponsored. When the children have successfully completed their schooling/training, we will actively seek out opportunities for apprenticeships and/or employment for them.

#### ***Housing:***

During the duration of their schooling, the children receive accommodation and food. Their living costs and incidental costs (e.g. medical expenses, clothing, etc.) are also covered by the program. A house has been established and furnished to meet the basic needs of the children. The household is a supportive and healthy living environment, where the children learn values of cooperation and social responsibility. A volunteer social worker works closely with them to provide guidance and support through one-on-one and group counselling.

A teacher/tutor provides educational support for the children. We also employ a Manager to oversee the program administration. A volunteer Advisory Board will provide advice to guide the program's current and future developments. The board will meet 2-3 times per year to review the program's activities and provide technical advice.

#### **Finances**

The program is currently financed through private donations. We are in the process of registering Horizons Children's Home as a Canadian charity.

# Horizons Children's Home



### Acknowledgements

On behalf of the children, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the following people, who have shown such generosity in providing their advice, time, financial assistance, and encouragement towards the development of Horizons Children's Home:

- Maxwell Akandem
- Henry Akanko
- Simon Akoba
- David Amobil
- P.P. Apaabey Baba
- Janet Apenkrum
- Moses Appiah
- Pascal Ayaric
- Builsa District Assembly
- Builsa District Education Office
- Conrad Collaco
- Jeanine Ewert
- Christine Francis
- Elizabeth Francis
- Winston Francis
- Stephanie Levine
- Karen Marsilio
- Andrea Menezes
- Beryl Menezes
- Derek Menezes
- Edmund Menezes
- Jeanette Menezes
- Elizabeth Nash
- Alan Ribeiro
- Bombay Tahidu

Heather Menezes with Simon Akoba, Program Coordinator.



Maxwell Akandem, Volunteer Social Worker for the Home.



### Sandema, Builsa District, Upper East Region, Ghana

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Horizons Children's Home,  
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**In Canada:**  
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## A Glimpse of Family Life

The Horizons Home is a modest dwelling where the children live together as a family. Since moving in, the boys have assumed responsibility for laundry, dishwashing, tending to the garden vegetables, sweeping/washing the floors, and carrying goods from the market. Their evening tutorial classes take place in one room of the house (which is also their dining room). They also have daily 'family meetings' where they share ideas, tell stories, and sing together. Simon and Maxwell work tirelessly to maintain this supportive and caring home environment for the children. Here are some photos that capture day-to-day activities:



Above: Kofi prepares a meal of TZ and stew (a local staple dish) for his brothers while Danzumah looks on.

Right: Yaw, Kasimu and Victor get a headstart on their homework.



Above: Danladi tends to the vegetables planted around the house.



Right: Moses, Yaw and Kasimu return from the market with some household goods.



Left: The children participate actively in their after school classes with a local teacher. Their teachers have commended the boys for adjusting so well to their new school.

Right: The family shares an evening meal together. Mealtimes are always occasions for good fun and lively conversation.

