

AREA BOYS / GIRLS AND DRUGS ADDICTS REHABILITATION AND PERMANENT SETTLEMENT PROJECT.

WHO ARE THESE AREA BOYS / GIRLS AND DRUG ADDICTS?

They are people addicted Hard Drug such as Cocaine, Heroin, Marijuana (Hemp), Ecstasy and cocktails of Drug usually administered by Injecting these substances into their body with unsterilized needles hence they become menace in the society, Thugs and Criminals. They are constantly used by the rich people in the society to terrorise people and engage in street fights. They are also homeless and street beggars usually carried out by running after people in vehicles on the highway / public places or prostrate on the floor hailing them with names like Arise Sir, Baba Rere Baba Kee, Iya Rere, etc. They are usually referred to as “Yardy” in the United Kingdom (UK) and “Ghetto Boys” United States of America (USA).

Caring Outreach International Charity is a charity organisation not only reaching out to Area Boys and Girls trapped in the net of hard drugs, the rich and different people from all walks of life are also involved in rehabilitation and permanent settlement of drug addicts and trafficker. This can only be achieved by showing them sincere love.

Dr Gabriel Olasoji, President of Caring Outreach International Charity (COIC) began this project with the Area Boys and Girls in 1996 as he had a burden for these categories of people in our society. With the experience of carrying out these types of projects in the City of London: Homeless, Harden Criminals, Prostitutes and Drug Addicts in West and East London as soon as he arrived from London in 1996 he begin the work. He spends time with them by talking, eating and even sleeping with them on the streets which he believes is the best and only way one can show love. These Area Boys / Girls operate around Oja Oba area to Molete in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria. A relationship build on trust and love was made for 3 years, these was established through counselling and constant monitoring as they trusted COIC President, Dr Gabriel Olasoji. The COIC President had a full cooperation of these Area Boys and Girls which made it a successful rehabilitation process and this process was achieved over two years before December 28, 1999 when the formal inauguration of the project took place. COIC made shift centre could only cater for 10 members before the formal inauguration. On The inauguration day they had a total of 50 members of which 10 members were already on the

rehabilitation process for over two and half year before then and 40 new people enlisted on that day. Many member of the Public could not believe that this type of rehabilitation process was possible as this was the first rehabilitation project in Nigeria which involved the outcast, dangerous, criminals and notorious boys and girls. It was also a surprise that this project was spearheaded by a NGO (COIC). These Area boys and girls were captured and entrapped by forces that suppresses and defile “Will Power” and this can only be broken through the Power of Prayer. Even medical science has not been able to find solution because it is a spiritual problem. The Area boys / girls are captured within the mysterious trap of drug abuse and addiction typical of the sophistication of wickedness of the present Age. Drug addiction problems affects many people from different walks of life, enslaved to hard drugs which makes it impossible for them to do anything without drugs hence they become insane and usually chained where they are such as the Hospital and Church in extreme cases, many become fraud gang leaders / members, thieves, armed robbers and prostitutes in order to get money to maintain their addiction problem.

AREA BOYS / GIRLS

(a) BACKGROUND

Many of these boys / girls are from decent and respectable home as they are not only from rich family where they have can afford expensive life style. Many people also believe that they are just lazy people not willing to work or further their education unfortunately in most cases well educated people with decent jobs or in higher institutions and living with family or friend helpless as they do know not how to get them out of the drug addiction, crime and sleeping around.

They are usually introduced to hard drugs through friends with the make believe that the only way they can enjoy life and have a nice time is by engaging in this habit and also to prove that they are not weaklings.

(b) HARD DRUGS

Hard drugs are narcotics that are considered relatively strong and likely to cause addiction such as cocaine,

marijuana, ecstasy, glue and Hemp. Soft drugs and controlled drugs such as ephedrine, morphine, steroids and other pain killers when abused can also lead to drug addiction. Majority of these drug addicts when asked how they got involved, do say through friends, wife, husband and boss, on very rare cases through strangers. These Area Boys / Girls end up on street because their family could not cope with them at home as they resulted to selling their belongings and their family belongings to maintain the addiction. Living on street with the bad gangs made up of ex-convict, they become thugs, thieves, pick pockets, armed robbers, Hired Assassins, prostitutes etc. while others become beggars. They live a very hard life on street, very difficult for them to afford to buy a pair of slippers which is worth N40 (24cents or 15pence) as their daily income which is around N3,000 (\$18.50 or £11.50) or more made from activities they carry out during the day is used to maintain the addiction problem as they are held captive and controlled by this habit. Unfortunately, various attempts to keep them clean and away from the street through treatments and rehabilitation programmes sponsored by family, friends and organisation prove abortive. Even some churches and other religious organisations believe the issue of these Area Boys / Girls is an impossible problem to tackle. Many of these Area / Boys and drug addicts also sold their valuable property to maintain their addiction problem and then become thugs, thieves, pick pockets, armed robbers, Hired Assassins, prostitutes etc. when they have nothing left to sell.

STREET

As earlier explained, these Boys /Girls on the street were homeless, outcast and always used by the wicked people in the society to carry out evil and bad dealings such as fighting, assassinations, riots, etc. causing trouble everywhere. They were also the regulars at drug joints every night where the Government are not able to persecute the drug traffickers and drugs lords / barons operating these joints. It is also very unfortunate that these joints are well known areas to Drug Enforcement Agency. Many of these Area Boys / Girls emancipated from criminal and drug activities have been on the street for over 15years with some of them starting their lives early on the street from age 8 to 13 years.

THE PROJECT

(a) THE INAUGURATION DAY

On the inauguration day, these Area Boys / Girls were given new clothes. Unfortunately, most of the rich invited guest did not turn up for the ceremony which shows how they are not bothered by state of these people in the society that is free from drugs and crime on the street where they live. The total amount realised on that day was one hundred and twenty Naira (N120) which was One dollar seventy pence (\$1.70) after spending hundreds of thousand for the event. Even government representatives did not make any donation. The Area Boys / Girls were disappointed as the invited guest did not turn up or sent a representative but they were made to understand that majority of the invited guest did not turn up because they did not want them off the streets committing drug and gang related crime as these Area Boys / Girls were used to carry out their criminal activities.

(b) AT THE CAMP

We took some of them to the rehabilitation camp as the capacity and the facilities in camp could not cater for all of them. They were taken to the camp which was the Gevic premises at Gangansi, off Akanran Road in Ibadan on 28th December, 1999. On the third day, the Gangansi Ifelodun Landlord Association protested against location as they claimed that they were criminals and dangerous people in the society and the neighbourhood were afraid and we were given three days to relocate them elsewhere. Unfortunately this was not possible and on the fifth day the Gangansi Landlord Association raided the camp with Armed Police and the people going through the rehabilitation process were arrested as the report made to the police was that gangs of armed robbers were camped by a pastor on the Gevic premises. They were all taken to the police station where they were kept in their custody. At the station, the coordinator of the project informed the crime officer in charge that it was an on-going special project and proves were shown such as newspaper cut-outs, photographs taken on the inauguration day and documents showing that they Government recognised. Based on the evidences given to the crime officer, they were released and were allowed to return to the camp. On their return to the camp, the representatives of the Landlord

Association told the COIC president that they were all afraid of the people in the camp because of the criminal activities they were involved in the past such as robbery, drugs, thugs, assassins etc. Following the second protest, the camp was relocated to the mission centre at Challenge area of Ibadan where we continued the rehabilitation and orientation process. In the camp, we spend time together eating, sleeping, engaging in sport activities, praying, carrying out seminars, trade, apprenticeship training and going out together. The camp operated from December 28th 1999 to March 2001 and at the end of this period they were back to their families fully recovered from their past. They were back to their communities contributing positively with their trade and vocation as good / reformed citizens.

(c) FUND

We got support from a few people in form of donation, unfortunately the administration in Oyo state government during this period promised to fund the project but failed to keep their promised and not a dime was received. They also promised their financial support during the inauguration but fail to fulfil their promise. The COIC President supported the project with his income as a clergy man. Below is the list of the people who supported the project and was also used this opportunity to say a big thank you to those that are still around.

1. Godwin Abegunde – Intec Printer (Active and Regular Sponsor)
2. H.I.D. Awolowo
3. Alhaji Bakare – Elero Ogunpa
4. Mufutau Ibrahim – Fish Merchant (RIP)
5. Ayo Folorunso – Plastic Merchant
6. Chief Olanrewaju – Cloth Merchant
7. Adetoun's Family
8. Aderibigbe's Family
9. St James Cathedral, Ibadan
10. St Paul's Church Yemetu, Ibadan
11. Emmanuel Society of St Peter's Cathedral Aremo, Ibadan.
12. Tribune Newspaper, Ibadan

The total donation realised from the supporters was Fifty thousand Naira (N50,000) out of the over Nine hundred thousand Naira (N900,000) spent towards the execution of the project.

(d) SETTLEMENT

The final stage which is the settlement of the emancipated Area Boy / Girls and Drug Addicts as they have gone through full rehabilitation process and they are now changed and better citizens ready to be part of the society living as law abiding citizens. They were also empowered with a trade or vocation of which they got training in during their rehabilitation from 1999 as means of livelihood. Trade and vocation such as barbing, car wash operative, chauffeur, fashion designer, Carpenter. Many of them are still living their normal lives with these skills till today.