

MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD DAY

THE SITUATION OF CHILDHOOD IN YENDI DIOCESE

In Yendi Diocese we have four main categories of children.

- a. Malnourished children
- b. Children born with birth defects
- c. Street children
- d. Bright but needy children

Malnourished children

Some women in our villages are not able to prepare nutritious food for their children and as a result such children look pale and malnourished. The women are not able to do so because of ignorance of how to prepare such meals for their children. Again, because of poverty they lack the financial resources to buy the necessary ingredients to prepare such nutritious food.

To help these children, one of our St. Gildas sisters works with the women in the villages to teach them how to prepare nutritious food for their malnourished children. In this respect she encourages every woman to have a backyard garden where they can grow vegetables like tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, eatable green leaves, etc. other women too are also empowered to rear fowls, goats and sheep so that they can get some meat in preparing food for their malnourished children.

Children born with birth defects often described as “spirit children”

Many women in the remote villages when they are pregnant fail to attend anti-natal and post-natal care, either because they have no access to a nearby Health Clinic or because they don't follow mid-wives instructions. Other women give birth to children with deformities because of all kinds of medication they take. Further, some women give birth to children suffering from defects due to traditional forms of child delivery being employed by traditional birth attendants.

“Street children”

Some of these children may be orphans, children neglected by their parents, abandoned children. Such children are left to fend for themselves. One can see

them at Transport Stations, market places, standing by the side of the road, in all these cases such children do beg for money or do petty jobs to get money to buy food to eat. Some have no place to sleep and so spend the night at market places or lorry stations.

Brilliant but needy children

Children in this category are from families where parents are illiterate and don't see the need to educate their children by sending them to school. They prefer that the children should help them out in their farms. Some also come from broken homes and no parental care. There are also cases where the children come from poor families and simply cannot afford to pay the school fees of their wards.

In all these cases the observation is that some of these children are bright but they have no one to sponsor their education.

Our pastoral interventions:

- i. **Nazareth Home for God's Children, Sang:** This is an orphanage that caters for over 80 children mostly orphaned and/or rejected the family based on beliefs and cultural practices that discriminate against children born with physical and mental defects. The home is managed by the Marian Sisters of Eucharistic Love (MASEL). Apart from shelter and feeding, the home also organizes spiritual programs for the faith formation of the children. Some of the children need special medical attention including various operations which are done in the Teaching Hospital in Tamale and in specialized hospitals in the country. Most of the children are infants and below five years.
- ii. **Centre of Hope for God's Children, Makayili:** This home is under the management of the Medical Sisters of St. Joseph. As it was done in the past years, once again the part of the ordinary subsidy from Holy Childhood was given to the Sisters for the management of the home and the care of the children there who suffer from different degrees of physical and mental challenges.

- iii. **Animation and Promotion of Children Groups in the Diocese:** As a Diocese, we have continued to give attention to the faith formation of our young ones at various parishes. The Children of Mary Group is found in all the parishes of our Diocese and there is ongoing formation of animators of such groups and there is a program of formation designed to promote children groups in the various parishes.
- iv. **Anawim Sisters** – caring for abandoned children as well as vulnerable children.
- v. **Providing sponsorship for bright but needy children**
 - Construction of schools in our village communities so that children can go to school
 - Establishment of four Clinics and a Hospital to facilitate the health needs especially of children
- vi. **St. Gildas Community**
Primary Health care program
 - The sisters are working with parents who have malnourished children.
- vii. **Child & vulnerable protection committee**
This is headed by a priest who is also a Civil Lawyer. They handle issues related to child abuse, etc.

Our pastoral interventions would not have been possible without we receiving financial help from Donor Agencies like Pontifical Mission Society, Benefactors, Benefactresses, etc.