

# ANNUAL REPORT 2004

## “Peace of Christ-Hand in Hand Community”

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Mr. Samuel Baffo with his staff at the Araba memorial Internet Cafe

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## **1: Summary:**

This part offers overview of the events, plans and activities of 2004.

The ‘PCC/Hand in Hand Community’ is an inter-religious residential home and rehabilitation center for abandoned and mentally handicapped children. The non-government organization was founded in 1992. At the end of the year 2004 32 lived in this family-home. Three children arrived new during this year.

The newly started ‘Sheltered workplace’ of the PCC/Hand in Hand Community is becoming a great success already. We received funds from the Dutch Embassy and ‘Sport and Spel Maasland’ to construct and equip the workshop. The buildings were completed in 2004. The sheltered workplace is meant to provide work and vocational training for the older mentally handicapped children of the community as well as for those from our villages. In 2004 Ellen joined us, a volunteer from the Netherlands, who now fully coordinates all sheltered workshop activities. In all there are 22 young adults working in the workplace, of which 6 are growing children from our residential community. Activities include farming, livestock (pigs, donkeys), bead-making, production of jewelry and necklaces, tie-dye, sewing and basic cooking and housekeeping.

During 2004 the internet-cafe also became operational under the leadership of Mr. Samuel Baffo, the director i/c of income generating projects. This great project was realized with the assistance of ‘Wilde Ganzen’ in The Netherlands and is meant to generate income for our children. It is the pride of town!

We had again over 200 visitors stay with us at our beautiful guesthouses, some stayed overnight, others for a few days, weeks or months.

The staff consists of four members of the board, a sheltered workshop coordinator, a house-prefect, fifteen caregivers, two activity leaders, a hostess, two watchmen and a farm-laborer.

The neighboring ‘Shalom Special School’ is a school for mentally handicapped children. There are now over 90 schoolchildren enrolled, of which almost all of our younger residential children. The school has been initiated by the Peace of Christ/Hand in Hand Community, but has gained independence as a government institution since 1997.

## **2: Some aspects of our region in Ghana:**

A national census took place in the year 2000. Our figures are sourced from this census report with adjustment for annual growth percentages..

Nkoranza district has a surface-area of 1200 square kilometers. It shares borders with the districts of Techiman, Atebubu, Kintampo and Ejura. Based on the annual growth rate of 3,2%, in the year 2003 the population of Nkoranza District was estimated to be 140,000, of which 40,000 inhabitants live in the district town called Nkoranza. This is where we have our residential home and sheltered workplace and where the Shalom Special School is situated.

Nkoranza is a rural district at the heart of Ghana. The main source of income is farming. The is large scale crop-farming of mostly maize, cassava, yam, watermelon and cashew, as well as subsistence farming for family use. Unemployment-level is high. (No local percentage known, estimated over 50%)

Nkoranza is one of the 13 districts that together make up the Region called ‘Brong Ahafo’. Brong Ahafo region counts approximately 1,5 million inhabitants.

Ghana has an overall population of over 19 million people.

The capital of Ghana is Accra, situated at the coast. Accra is growing fast and has over 4 million inhabitants. Our place is 500 km ( 8 hour drive) away from the capital.

The government of Ghana is stable and forms one of Africa’s most successful and oldest democracies.

Ghana gained independence on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1957. It was the first African country to gain independence.

Ghana has been and still is a peaceful country with a multi-party democracy. The present ruling party is the NPP with Mr. Kouffour as president. Mr. Kouffour was reelected in Dec.2004 for another episode of 4 years. The economy is improving since a conscious and determined effort was made (roughly from the 90-ties onwards) to reduce corruption, improve the infrastructure (roads, electricity, communication, water) and promote a free market and small and medium scale industries. Since inflation reduced and the economy

gained stability more investors find their way into Ghana than into any other West African country. Gradually a middle class is forming of professionals, farmers, traders and entrepreneurs. However the greater percentage of Ghana's population still lives below poverty level.

**Some Demographic and health indicators in our area:**

- Infant mortality rate: 45 per 1000 live births. (was 165/1000 in 1970)
- Literacy rate: boys: 50%, girls: 26%
- Fertility rate: 6,5 per female
- Maternal death rate in Brong Ahafo Region: 200/ 100,000 deliveries. (Was 1000/100.000 or 1 per 100 deliveries in 70's)
- Annual overall population growth: 3%, in our area: 3,2%.

**About Ghana government priorities:**

- The health sector received much attention and has remarkably improved over the last 10 years and more. There are 2 medical schools in Ghana and numerous nursing and paramedical schools. Enough health professionals are trained to sustain the Ghana health-services. However the ever increasing brain-drain of highly educated professionals to better economies is hard to reverse. Nkoranza district was the first district in Ghana to have a communal health insurance scheme. It is already running for over 12 years and in various ways it has been adopted in other districts. During the year 2003 a national health plan was announced but has not yet been implemented. Generally district hospitals are reasonably equipped and the secondary and tertiary (teaching hospitals, university medical units) have nearly all the facilities and possibilities of a western hospital.
- Improved education formed another of the main priority areas in Ghana. Special education for the blind, deaf and intellectually handicapped also received more attention. Not long ago a university for education was started in Winneba where teachers can receive graduate and postgraduate training. Many of the teachers at the Shalom special school followed postgraduate courses in special education in Winneba. The level is high.
- Other priorities are the stabilization and of course growth of the economy. Successful efforts have been made to halt further deflation and stimulate investments in Ghanaian industries.
- Neither Social welfare, however, nor Mental Health, are considered priority area. Nor would we expect it to be anywhere in the near future. In any developing economy there is hardly a budget for social welfare. This is the reason that the Shalom Special School could be handed over to the ministry of education, but that our residential home and rehabilitation center plus sheltered workplace cannot reasonably expect aid from the government over the coming years.

### **3. Purpose of the ‘Hand in Hand Community’:**

In these rural areas intellectually handicapped children are still sometimes referred to as ‘Water-children’. Local tradition has it that these children are born from ‘water-spirits’ who manage to copulate with women. The result is said to be a retarded child. Water spirits, real or not, are thus causing havoc in peoples lives. In the traditional way the handicapped child is abandoned at night along the riverside where these spirits are supposed to have their abode. At night they submerge from the river and take the children ‘back home’.

Luckily these traditional concepts are rapidly changing. In Nkoranza the presence of our many special children has already caused a positive change. In the beginning we had a real problem finding caregivers who could rise above the fears and family pressures of the local community and have enough courage to live and work with our kids. In rapid succession, these early days, caregivers came and went. Some stayed only for a few hours. Now, 12 years later, our caregivers form a stable team that has a free and loving way with the children. The oldest worker has stayed for over eight years with us.

Clearly the innocent presence of these special children has helped disarm the people. Gradually the mentally handicapped child is not only seen as harmless but as truly very special.

Increasingly also publicity has been given to the harmful traditional practices. The media, the classroom and the churches have been the most active agents in these campaigns for a more humane treatment of the intellectually handicapped child.

Apart from the dangerous traditional belief-systems, the parents of course have to cope with the universally experienced feeling of agony when having to face the reality of a handicapped child.

*It is not surprising therefore, that some of these handicapped children are abandoned along the river, or else starved and/or hidden away in small rooms and sheds, while others are laid abandoned in more public places (far from their own community), so that someone may find them and hopefully keep them alive.*

It is to children like these, who are abandoned, that we want to offer a warm and loving home.

Most of our children arrive from two state institutions in Accra: the state orphanage at Osu and the state mental hospital in central Accra. This is where abandoned foundlings are brought, generally. These two institutions, ill prepared as they are for the housing of mentally disabled children, form the end of the line for these kids, until we founded our "Hand in Hand Community" in Nkoranza in 1992.

Of late we have also received children from Tamale, Cape coast and Kumasi orphanages. Of the actual origin and natural family of the abandoned child we usually know nothing or near to nothing.

#### **4. Short history and a sketch of the present situation:**

Our community was started by four (3 Ghanaian and 1 Ghanaian-Dutch) health-professionals as far back as 1991. A Christian spirit and a commitment to providing shelter to abandoned children with a mental handicap lay at the basis of this movement.

In 1992 land was provided by the traditional chief. Gradually, after the official registration in 1992 of the community as a non-government agency, simple houses were constructed to provide a home for abandoned mentally handicapped children that we encountered in state mental hospitals and elsewhere under the most horrendous circumstances. From there onwards the story line was set. The project developed. Donations came flowing in.

Our very first child, Nana Yaw, arrived in December 1992. He was brought from the mental hospital in Accra. He is an autistic boy who by now is approximately 19 years old. Two months later Nyamekye Commando followed, someone we all remember because of his almost insatiable taste for life, people, music and fun!

Activities temporarily slowed down when in 1994 one of the founders, Dr. Bosman, left for further studies to the USA. The Ghanaian founder Dr W.Appiedu Mensah left for further specialization and Mr. George Kumih Kyeremeh was transferred by the ministry of health to another region. So temporarily the "Hand in Hand project" was left on the shoulders of founder Andrew Osei Takyi alone, who was previously aids counselor at the hospital and a poultry farmer. He looked after the children with the help of two caregivers and continued further constructions. Dr.Bosman returned in 1996. Andrew Osei and Ineke Bosman together then started to systematically, one by one, bring the selected abandoned and mentally handicapped children from the mental hospital and state orphanage in Accra to our residential community in Nkoranza. Every time a room was ready and there was the hope for a sponsor for a child, the two-some traveled to Accra to bring more abandoned children to our community. Unfortunately Nyamekye Commando died suddenly in 1996. It was the first death in our community and the grieving was deep.

In 1997 a proposal for the construction of a special school was agreed upon and temporary premises build. The government was willing to take over the management of the school in that same year. Shalom Special School was born. Presently over 90 children, from inside and outside our community, are enrolled at the school.

In the middle of the year 1997, Mr.Bob Maram, Ineke's future husband, came over from Chicago. A fairytale like wedding-feast at the Hand in Hand premises took place that people will long remember with a smile. The Chief with all his regalia included dancing umbrella's drums and traditional dancers give Ineke away as his daughter to become the bride of Bob. The wife of the chief did the same for Bob. Many prominent guests and almost all of our town's inhabitants made it a very special occasion. The then 12 handicapped children formed the focus and the soul of the party.

From there onwards Mr.Bob became the third executive director, in charge of finances. We invited a fourth director, Mr. Samuel Baffo, to be in charge of the income generating projects. By and by the number of residents grew to the present number of 32 not including the people who work at the sheltered workshop.

Facilities were added, such as the swimming-pool in 1998 and a summer-hut for art and music-classes as well as a kindergarten in 1999. The construction of 6 guesthouses took place between 1998 and 2003. A telephone-connection was established in 2001 and a kiosk and snack-bar for visitors was also opened around that time. With the help of a good friend a complete cuddle-room was constructed! The idea for a sheltered workshop where young adult persons with a mental handicap from outside our Hand in Hand Community could work was born in 2002. Two boys from a nearby village were invited to work with us. This went so well that in 2003 we asked the Dutch Embassy for a grant

which we received. This year we completed the construction of a work-hall, round-hut, farm, dormitories, etc of the sheltered workplace. The **volunteer Ellen** arrived from Holland in April and she made a fantastic job out of initiating and coordinating all activities. She also send a container with the most wonderful practical items for the community to Ghana!

Our premises are large. They measure 24 acres of hilly land with a lovely natural setting. The buildings where the children with their caregivers live form a half circle of small cottages. The caregivers live like parents with their children. They sleep together, play together, bond together. They bathe their children, eat with them, bring them to school, and so on. Each does the laundry of the child and keeps their cottage clean.

The caregivers also have some communal task to perform, like cooking, serving meals, supervising the kindergarten, leading art and music classes, joining the children in the swimming-pool and other such activities. Emphasis is laid on warmth, fun and love. Parties are small but frequent events. We also loyally adhere to the daily routine so that the kids can feel safe.

At the center of the semi-circle of houses is the communal play cuddle and learn area spread out over a beautiful large green lawn. In the middle is the shallow swimming-pool where the children bathe and exercise in the afternoon. This ‘pool-happening’ is the highlight and also the beginning of the end of the day. Afterwards kids and caregivers eat together and then retreat to look TV or move to their cottages.

The land has sources of natural water and some awesome rock-formations.

At the other side of the semi circle of cottages of ‘Hand in Hand’, there is a grouping of small round huts, which are very picturesque guesthouses for our many visitors. Through our guesthouses we help to generate income for our kids. We also do that by way of selling cards and other items at the kiosk. The newly constructed satellite internet-cafe in town will generate substantial money for our project. The new products of the sheltered workshop are becoming popular among our friends and visitors and sell very well. All this is much needed for the continuation of our project.

Two of our children have Down’s syndrome. Six others are autistic children. Three suffer from various rare hereditary congenital diseases (Rett’s disease, Recklinghausen’s adeno-friroma and Friedreich’s ataxia). Three children have cerebral palsy and the others suffer from non-specific intellectual handicaps, often combined with epileptic fits and physical handicaps. The majority of these syndromes are caused by birth-injuries.

### **5. Journal of the year 2004:**

This year our community celebrated its twelfth birthday.

Three new children joined: Ahmed from an orphanage in Tamale on Feb 3rd , Liza from Kumasi on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> and Emmanuella from Nkoranza on Dec. 21st.

Our staff increased in size again: we employed two more caregivers: Jerry and Veronica and two activity leaders (Linda and Faustina) , of whom Faustina is also a caregiver for Liza. Caregiver Dennis left this year.

Joyce volunteered to take Emmanuella as her ‘third child’, not an easy as the baby was only 10 days old when she was rejected by the parents.

During 2004 we registered, according to the visitor book, 206 visitors who stayed for various length of time.

Besides we enjoyed visits from several benefactors and delegations such as the delegation of Sr. Pat and Emma from ‘Intercare’, UK, who always helps us out with medicines. A delegation of the ‘Ghana International Women Club’ visited us and were satisfied about how their last year’s donation for building a cottage was implemented. The Sisters of Mother Theresa from Kumasi made a friendly visit to our community, a visit which we gladly returned a few weeks later. The RC Bishop of the Sunyani Diocese paid us a courtesy visit in May. Mr. Daan Verboon came several times to assist with the maintenance. Joke Wittekoek, our ambassador in Holland, came for a visit and so did our benefactors Tine and Nieske, Paul and Marianne Lamberts and many others.

In September we celebrated the wedding of our friend Solomon with his fiancé Faustina. Solomon is an old friend and during the wedding ceremony Bob and Ineke gave him away to his bride as our son. Afterwards Fausti and Solomon spend their "honey-moon" in the bridal suite of our guesthouses.

We started a fresh volunteer program in 2004. **(Ref. Attachment 4).**

After Elke (Norghavo) worked as a volunteer with us at the farm of the sheltered workshop, which she did very well, we received Ellen in our own new volunteer-program. Ellen has a long term commitment to the organisation and coordination of the sheltered workshop and will be with us through 2005 and hopefully longer. She is now the coordinator of the above and coordinates her own staff..

Of the 22 persons working at the workshop, 16 are from outside our residential community. There are 9 girls and 8 Boys from outside: *Dorris, Abena D., Augustina, Afia, Suzie, Akosua, Abegail, Amoakowaah, Charles, Latif, Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi, John Ambrose, Yaw Kwah Johnson and Zachariah.*

Those that live in Nkoranza town are day-attendees who return to their family at night. The people from outside Nkoranza stay in the dormitories and go home during vacations. A policy paper was worked out by the management on goal objectives duration and other specifics to do with the sheltered workshop. **(Ref. Attachment 5)**

Peter Yaw and Samuel had to return to their families this year as one kept running away to get drunk in town while the other was very physically abusive of our small children. These were necessary but not easy decisions to make.

In November and December Marieke and Fred came to make wonderful furniture for us. In December Anna came to help out for two months

The "Araba Memorial Internet Café " was registered and opened in April. After some delay we were hooked up to the satellite and started operating. Mr. Baffo, who is the executive director for income generating projects, is in charge. The place is well attended. Thanks goes to Wilde Ganzen and countless individuals such as Joke Wittekoek, Daan Verboon, Nieske, just to name a few, and to Mr. Baffo in particular.

At the end of the year there was a discontinuation of services by the provider in Canada which has cost us a lot of money and headaches. Other unexpected setbacks were the sudden increase of erratic power cuts and voltage fluctuations in town. Mid January 2005 the connection was restored and the power-supply more reliable. We are working on a stand-by generator..

As usual Fr. Willy Huisman, SMA, did a fabulous job in administering our account in The Netherlands.

What else? So much.

Ellen's container with the most fabulous , handicap-aids and wheelchairs, to name a few, arrived and was just in time for Christmas to make it an extra special celebration this year! Thank you Ellen and all your friends!

As usual the enthusiasm of our children and caregivers reached its peak during the Christmas events. The Christmas-play which depicted the birth of Jesus was performed and received joyfully. The number of visitors peaked over the Christmas. It is clear and awe inspiring that our visitors get touched by the simple and happy spirit of our community. Many return and become established friends. Our children in all their disarming spontaneity are at the heart of this attractiveness.

## **6. Organization and Management:**

In 1992 our project was registered in Ghana as a "non government organization".

Its aim is to give integral care to abandoned and mentally handicapped children in Ghana. The style of Hand in Hand is open and family like. Children live in small groups of two or three with a caregiver, who acts as the mother and/or father figure for their kids. Attendance to school, rehabilitation, medical care, therapy, joint meals, joint siestas in the cuddle room, and of course music and play are all part of the daily program.

The caregivers who live and work with the children consider their service as voluntary. However the caregivers receive a monthly allowance as well as free board and lodging together with their children. The 15 caregivers have a leader, Mr. Emmanuel, who is known as the ‘house-prefect’. Emanuel is responsible to the coordinating director and board.

The Executive Committee is formed by four persons: Mr. Andrew Osei Takyi (coordinating director), Mr. Robert Maram (financial director), Dr. Ineke Bosman (director of child development) and Mr. Samuel Kwame Baffo (director for income generating projects). All major decisions are made by the members of this board.

Other employees are: 2 watchmen, a hostess for the visitors, a farm-worker and a part time computer teacher.

New is our volunteer program. Ellen was the first person serving in our own volunteer program. She manages the sheltered workplace and is presently its coordinator as well as the coordinator for the involvement of the volunteers. Ellen has four staffs under her: 2 activity-leaders, a dormitory-farm supervisor and a farm laborer. Two of them (Faustina and James) are also caregiver and look after Liza and Ahmed respectively.

At the end of 2004 our staff existed of: 1 house-prefect 15 Caregivers, 1 workshop coordinator, 2 activity leaders, 2 watchmen, a farm-laborer, a hostess, a part time computer-teacher and 4 executives

At the end of 2004 we had 32 resident children and 16 young adults working at the sheltered workshop.

The ‘Araba memorial Internet café’ runs as a separate enterprise. There are 3 staffs and a cleaner employed.

In 1997 the development of a special school for the mentally handicapped was initiated by the PCC. This ‘Shalom Special School’ (SHASS) became a government organization in May 1999. Headmaster Godfrey Yoppour is in charge.

## **7.Finances:**

### **(Ref. Annex 1 for the 2004 financial statements and projected budget for 2005.)**

PCC/Hand in Hand works without government aid. At present it depends almost fully on donations and child sponsorships from outside the country. Gradually, however, there is a small but significant shift towards income generated here in Nkoranza in Ghana.

This year ... % of the cost was financed by the produce of local income generating projects such as the kiosk, the communication-center, the guesthouses, sales of cards, calendars, farm-products and necklaces. The internet-cafe started to bring in income in 2004. We are very happy with this rising trend.

In 1999 Bob Maram took an active role in the financial administration. He changed and updated the financial systems. Now as financial director he steers and supervises all aspects of financial administration.

For our 32 children we need approximately 93 sponsors, as the usual sponsorship is shared between three (or more) persons. The cost of upkeep of one full child is 900 euro per year. Divided by three persons this becomes a more manageable 300 euro per year or 25 per month. The children at the Sheltered Workshop are needing at total amount of 300 euro per year for their financial sponsorship..

- At the end of 2000 we had 21 children and 45 sponsors. (2/3 sponsored)
- At the end of 2001 we had 27 children and 66 sponsors.
- At the end of 2002 we had 29 children and 2 young adults. We had 70 sponsors.
- At the end of 2003 we have 29 children and 4 young adults ( 2 children died).
- At the end of 2004 we have 32 children and 15 young adults. 13 of the 15 young adults at the workplace have no sponsor yet. They all need 25 euro per month. At the home Pakor has not yet been sponsored and needs three sponsors for 25 euro, while Ntiamoah is partly sponsored and needs a sponsorship of 25 per month.

You can inquire about sponsorship by mailing to: [handinhand@ghana.com](mailto:handinhand@ghana.com)

<b>Child-sponsors and other benefactors could donate to:</b>
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. In Ghana: the ADB Bank at Nkoranza. Account no: 5232 c/o "Peace of Christ Foundation", Hand in Hand Community.</b></li><li><b>2. In The Netherlands: To: "The Bresillac Foundation", postbox 9, 6068AA, Oosterbeek. Fax: (00-31) 026-3340001 Bankaccount: ABN-AMRO, No: 40.06.14.030. mention: hand in hand/300.151.</b></li></ol> |
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Comments on the financial statements 2004 and budget 2005 (annex 1):

- We were within 90% of our projected budget.
- Big offenders were: food, maintenance, repairs and personal needs of children.
- Personal needs include: toothpaste, cream, powder, soap, cloth, shoes etc for the children. We still went higher then expected with this item.
- Maintenance is bound to go up each year as our roads, buildings and car gets older and needs more repairs. We have to take this into account for our budget 2005.

### **8: Evaluation of our plans for 2004:**

The plans for this year were for the most part accomplished.

1. Succeeded: we completed the sheltered workshop and the internet café. They are both running well.
2. We planned to start no other new project for 2004. Succeeded.
3. Plan: to be very strict on our budget. Succeeded. We stayed within 90% of our budget.
4. Plan: Have 8 to 10 persons working at the sheltered workshop. More than succeeded. There are 21 young adults working at the workplace as per 31-12-04.
5. Plan: we start our own volunteer program. Succeeded.

### **9. Plans for the year 2005:**

1. Extend the sheltered workplace with another work-hall (weaving)
2. Improve the guesthouses. Upgrade two to self contained luxury suites.
3. Improve security on the compound: light at strategic points, more dogs, increase the height of the wall.
4. Build a food-store for CRS food
5. Build a watchman 's cabin
6. Repair our bus
7. Renovate the tower-house
8. Purchase a stand by generator for the internet café.

### **10: Conclusion and acknowledgments:**

We are grateful to our staff and caregivers, our friends and benefactors. We are proud of the fierce and friendly spirit of our children, who seek a contented and joyful life out of their foundations of abandonment and deprivation. This is a small miracle, that no one, certainly not a psychologist, nor a psychiatrist, nor we, for that matter, can understand. But we see it and believe!

*It is clear to all of us that all this involves a vision and a commitment that is much larger than all of ourselves together. We believe that the breath of God is at the heart of it all. This may also explain the joy and peace that many people, including complete strangers, experience at our premises.*