Policy plan NGO Lumen Mundi Foundation Ghana 2022 t/m 2024

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**Board members**

1. Chief Apigyiak Gilbert Afulang Chairman
2. Richard Asumbisa Squella Amoak Secretary
3. Father Isaac Akatapa Treasurer
4. Kojo Mahama Member
5. Margreet Carpaij Member

**Introduction**

When in 2006-2009 Margreet Carpaij worked as a volunteer with G.E.S. (Ghana Education Service) in the Builsa District in the Upper East Region of Ghana, she noticed that in that area children with a mental and/or physicial disability had no possibilities for development.

At that time Chief Afulang of Siniensi was one of her colleagues at G.E.S. He discussed with her the idea to start a school for these disabled children. With her wide experience in special education Margreet saw good opportunities for such a school. In September 2020 she came to the Builsa District to start the Lumen Mundi school project. The Naasa community of Siniensi had given Chief Afulang land to build the school on.

On February 9, 2021, the NGO Lumen Mundi Foundation was established. This NGO is supported financially by the Dutch ‘Stichting Lumen Mundi’, founded at May 11, 2021.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the Lumen Mundi Foundation are:

1. To offer education to children with a mental and/or physicial disability, at their own individual level, and with attention for the personal needs of each child.
2. To support the parents of these children:

* In dealing with the child (caretaking; nutrition; clothing; teaching).
* In acceptation of the child, also by the close relatives of the family.
* In having an eye for the child’s talents and developing these.

1. To show the communities around these children that they are not creepy or frightening, that they have talents and that a disabled child is not a punishment from God.
2. To help also children who are only physically handicapped, by giving them extra training and improving their mobility (by, for instance, a wheel chair or walker), so that they are able to attend a mainstream school.

**Vision and mission**

**EACH child is unique, each child is meaningful, each child has the right to development and the right to a future.**

We want to learn children how to deal with their disability, and work on their development, their self-esteem and their self confidence, so that they will become as much self-reliant as possible.

We shall also work on acceptation by the communities, because parents with an ‘abnormal’ child often find themselves placed outside the community.

The children shall be made visible by excursions in the community, joint playgrounds, visiting the market, giving performances and lectures at the school and by involving children without disabilities in the school.

We shall cooperate with the regular primary schools as much as possible, in order to let children with only a physical disability move on to mainstream education.

By means of workshops teachers and caregivers will be trained in handling children with a mental disability, who often also have a physical disability. In addition, there are plans to offer workshops to young disabled adults, so that they can provide better for their livelihood.

The school will be set up with as much parental involvement as possible: which are the priorities. Special attention will be given to the individual needs of each child.

The school will be set up for children aged 4 to 18 years. In the first instance the school will take care of transportation to and from home, because the parents themselves have no means of transportation. But a next target will be to offer these children a place to stay during the school week or for a longer continuous period. This will be a new project.

The Lumen Mundi school is not a school with a certain philosophy of life, any faith is welcome. Joint services will be held where everybody may feel at home.

For the building of the school money has been donated from the Netherlands, and an interest-free loan was provided by Margreet Carpaij personally. In the Netherlands the Stichting Lumen Mundi has been founded to provide further financial support. Also, the parents will be asked to contribute to the school according to capacity, either financially or in kind (for instance, with a bag of rice or by helping with cleaning).

The intention is that in future the Lumen Mundi school will be self-sufficient. For instance, by growing vegetables, breeding chickens and fish farming – for own use, but mainly to generate an income by selling these. At the same time this will create work and learning possibilities for the children.

**Strenghts and weaknesses**

Strengths

* A clearly positive development is to be seen in the acceptation of children with a disability. Also, most parents of children with a mental disability would like to see their child visiting a school.
* Chief Afulang has promised every possible cooperation. He has a large network and good contacts with many official bodies.
* Within the board no social differences exist. Everyone listens to each other and everyone feels free to give his/her opinion or ideas.
* There are longer existing, good and reliable contacts in Siniensie and surroundings. The Lumen Mundi school is being built in the Naasa community, which is very positive about the school. The whole community is working hard on building the school.
* All board members are fully committed to the building as well as to the organisation of the school.

Weaknesses

* In Ghana, children with a disability are hardly accepted. Neighbours may see the child as a punishment from God for the parents. Many parents of children with a mental disability see their child as a limitation for their own life.
* Official bodies work very slow; it is hard to find the right way.
* Ghaneans often think: NGO = much money. Fund rising is a problem.
* The big cultural differences between Ghana and the Netherlands.
* In the Lumen Mundi team not all noses are at the same side yet, it still has to become a close team.
* Little experience in working at an NGO.
* Lack of a strong financial base.

**3-Year plan**

*The foundation was laid in August 2020-December 2021 by:*

1. Building of the school (two class rooms) and the security room on the land donated by the Naasa community. Also, the container from the Netherlands was converted into a workshop.
2. Appointing three paid workers: an administrator, a supervisor and a night watchman. The people of the Lumen Mundi Foundation and the people of the Naasa community did as much as possible themselves and, if necessary, a craftsman was hired. One class room was furnished with materials donated from the Netherlands, in order to be put into use in January 2022. (Please note that the government has equated the school year to the calender year, because of the school closures due to the corona pandemic.)
3. Apart from Margreet Carpaij, the school team exists of a teacher, an educational supporter/carer and a cook. They are appointed for three months; a permanent appointment will follow after proven suitability. The administrator will also be working as a practical trainer, the supervisor will stay on as a concierge/handyman.
4. Inviting parents and children for the school. For this, an official announcement has been made at Builsa Radio and a meeting has been organised for interested parties.
5. Adapting the Motorking for transportation of the children.
6. Preparing the start with a group of up to 16 children, aged 4 to 18 years. The children will be picked up from home and brought back again.

*Januari – December 2022*

1. To teach at an indivdual level and training skills, so that a child will become more self-reliant. Parents will be involved.
2. To shape practical teaching, in cooperation with the parents, in combination with the process of acceptation in the communities (sheltered workshops, guest house, restaurant, making consumables and jewelry, etc.). Further development of the children’s talents, with a view to the future.
3. To expand knowledge and quality of the team. Much time will be spent on getting to know the children and their possibilities, and also on mutual cooperation. Much consultation, extra training, creativity and exchange of experiences.
4. Affiliation with other N.G.O.’s for help and information. Together we stand strong(er).
5. Fund rising in Ghana, for instance at banks, representatives of political parties and the district Assembly.
6. To teach parents and carers the best way to deal with a disabled child, by means of workshops in the school.
7. To grow vegetables and fruits for own use and for sale.

*Januari – December 2023*

1. Extension with the second class and appointment of a second teacher. The first teacher will be able to independently take care of a class and Margreet Carpaij will train the second teacher.
2. To give practical training more shape and to investigate in the Netherlands the possibilities to sell products made by the children.
3. To generate more funds.
4. To find possibilities/funds for building houses for the children.
5. To investigate the possibilities for internships from the Netherlands, such as pedagogical academies, physiotherapy training, training for nursing the mentally handicapped, occupational therapy training.
6. Further development of training for parents and communities.
7. To build a breeding pond for catfish, for own use and for sale.

*Januari-December 2024:*

1. To build houses for those children who – for whatever reason – cannot live with their parents. They will live in small groups, under supervision, either during the week or during the school year.
2. To hire personnel for accompaniment outside school hours. Education is not acquired, but having a heart for disabled children is a must. In-house training will be given. Appointment will be for three months; a permanent appointment will follow after proven suitability.
3. To evaluate how sales of vegetables and fish are going.
4. To find more possibilities to generate income, for instance keeping livestock and poultry.

**Roadmap**

1. To make the second class of the school ready for use. (Richard Amoak Squella Asumbisa, Kojo Mahama)
2. To put together a good team for the second class, consisting of a teacher and a an educational supporter/carer (Margreet Carpaij)
3. To contact parents with a mentally handicapped child in the Builsa district for the second class. (Chief Afulang, Margreet Carpaij)
4. To put into use the second class in 2023. (Margreet Carpaij, Richard Amoak Squella Asumbisa, Kojo Mahama)
5. To extend the workshop for practical education, so that also older children may be supported in their independence. (Richard Amoak Squella Asumbisa, Kojo Mahama)
6. To maintain cooperation with Social Welfare and the G.E.S. Disability Group (Ghana Education Service) for giving workshops in the communities. (Chief Afulang, Margreet Carpaij, Richard Amoak Squella Asumbisa)
7. To maintain contact with the primary schools in the area, in order to create more understanding for disabled children, and to let children with only a physical handicap enter mainstream education. (Chief Afulang, Margreet Carpaij, Father Isaac Akapata)
8. To maintain contact with official bodies to give credit to the Lumen Mundi Foundation and its goals. (Chief Afulang, Margreet Carpaij, Richard Amoak Squella Asumbisa)
9. To raise funds in Ghana. (Father Isaac Akapata, Kojo Mahama)
10. To keep negotiable the differences in culture. (All board members)