

**CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT**

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

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**1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021**

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**Giving kids a brighter future**

**[WWW.CHIDLRENOFTHELIGHTGHANA.ORG](http://WWW.CHIDLRENOFTHELIGHTGHANA.ORG)**

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# Mission Statement

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**Children of the Light (CotL) impacts young lives by providing creative, holistic, child-centred education in order to build lives that influence society.**

## Description of CotL

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CotL is a dynamic organisation bringing education to life for numerous children aged 5 to 16 years in Ghana, West Africa.

Its educational program is unique in that it nurtures children in all areas of learning; Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education, Environmental Issues, Visual and Performing Arts. CotL meets with the children after-school, Saturdays and during the school holidays. A hot meal is served during the Saturday classes.

The children enjoy a lively educational experience which is conducted in a safe and non-threatening environment.



# Our Vision

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- To have a fully equipped, easily accessible learning centre in the Eastern Region of Ghana.
- To become an educational training resource provider in Ghana and create branches of the organisation.
- To have a program that provides quality education to many children in Ghana.

# Our Achievements

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- Through donations, CotL has built a Learning Centre in Ghana's Eastern Region which was officially opened in August 2019. Although the centre is not fully complete, we have come a long way since construction started in 2009. A large playing field has been created and a variety of trees have been planted on the property. The construction of the front wall is also complete and in addition to the main building a storage room and washroom have been built.
- Work has begun to create a branch of the program in a remote village in the Northern Region of Ghana.
- Many of our past students have ventured onto higher education and careers and our current students continue to benefit with the program, acquiring a vast amount of knowledge and skills.



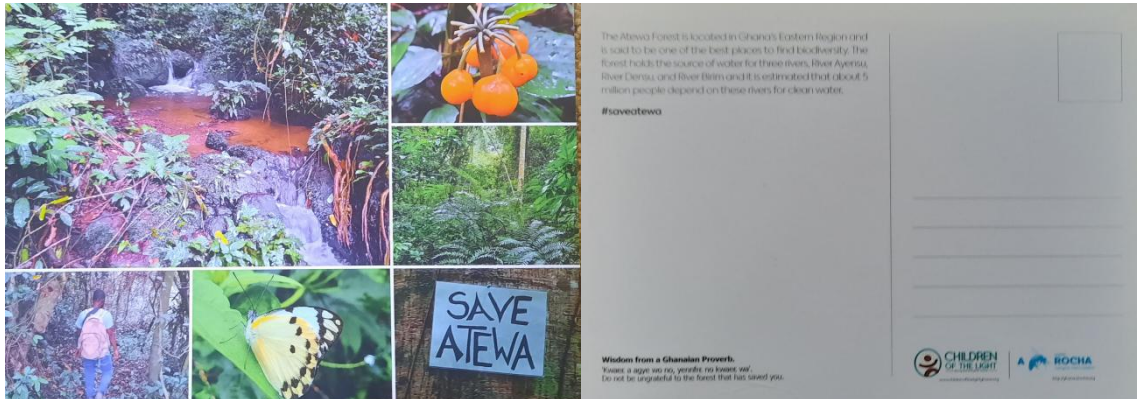
# 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March Activities

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**Due to Covid-19, the centre closed in March 2020 and reopened in October 2020.** During this time, those staying at the centre got busy on the farm. The harvest benefited many. Later in the year, the organisation ventured out by sharing food with a group of street children. It was also during this time that the organisation received a large food donation. This donation was distributed to the families in the organisation and to the children we had started visiting on the street. Since this event, CotL now meets with the street children twice a month. The visits include sharing a healthy meal, story time, crafts, literacy and numeracy lessons in which the children have the chance to draw and write.



It was in the closing of the centre that the organisation filmed a short video titled '**Hear the Cry of Atewa**'. This video was to raise awareness for the Atewa Forest that is currently under threat of mining, farm encroachment, logging and hunting. 'Type Company Limited' sponsored 600 postcards for distribution from the photos Jeanette Opoku had taken and compiled.



Later in the year we filmed a video about CotL. The video starts with the history of the organisation and continues on to where we are today. It was edited by Michel Ntoutoume from Where the wind takes me, Ghana.

**On 11th July**, a bike club from Accra joined with CotL to clean the near-by stream of plastic waste. Food was served to all participants after the clean-up exercise.



**On 8th August,** 70 beautiful eco-friendly gift bags containing food and hygiene supplies, school materials and cups, spoons and bowls were given to 70 street children.



**In August,** we celebrated our **15th Anniversary.** A cake and drinks were shared with the children.



**On 5th September,** a teacher training session was held at the centre for CotL staff. Jaimee Perrett, a Registered New Zealand teacher, led the session.



**On Saturday, 12th September,** CotL held its first fundraiser for the year in which Jeanette Opoku and Patience Akunduo climbed Mt Afadjato, Ghana's tallest mountain located in the Volta Region. The climb was to raise awareness and funds for the organisation.



**On 18th September,** a Parent Teacher Meeting was held with the main topic being the re-opening of the centre.





**On Saturday, 19th September,** CotL joined in to commemorate World Clean-up Day. Trash including plastic waste was picked up along the main Aburi Road. This waste, with the previous plastic collected, was all sent for recycling.



**On Thursday, 1st October,** the centre reopened and on this day we were honoured by a visit from the Australian High Commissioner to Ghana, Gregory Andrews. Mr Andrews read to the children and shared a delicious treat of fresh apples to all.



**On Saturday, 31st October,** we held a 'Think Before You Throw' march. We collaborated with other organisations and marched locally with banners encouraging people to reuse their bottle and dispose of it properly. Food and drinks were served after the event.



**On Monday, 3th November,** we held the Borehole Inauguration. This took place with Mrs. Susana Stalder-Schmid, the Swiss Ambassador's wife.



The Teens Program started back with Mrs Paulett Opoku (CotL Board Secretary) on **Friday 18th December**. The topic discussed was ‘Domestic Violence’. A second session for the year was held on **26th February**, the topic being discussed was ‘Child Marriage’.



**Christmas at the Centre:** Alongside an amazing party with deliciously cooked food and drinks, we gave a new pillow with pillow case to all the CotL children (70 in all). On Christmas Day we gave a Christmas parcel to many street children, each parcel contained beautiful clothes, hygiene packages, school supplies and a handmade colouring book. A healthy meal was also given.



**On 31st December**, our children distributed colourful hygiene parcels to the elderly in the community. The same day we held a last day party for all the children. A sport and talent show was included in the event.



**In December**, Geodrill granted our request of funding to make 100 eco-friendly sleeping mats for the street children. **At the end of January**, the first batch was ready for distribution. The day after receiving the mats, we distributed them to the street children.



**In January**, Jeanette Opoku, Patience Akunduo, Slavi Rizov (volunteer) and Belinda Anakaru travelled to Northern Ghana in the hope of setting up a branch of Children of the Light. We were also taking Belinda, with whom we had recently met in Accra, back home. Along the way, we met many people. Most of our stay was spent in a small village in the Upper East Region called Dibisi. This being Belinda's hometown.

The North of Ghana is different to the South in many ways. Extremely under-served is one. During our stay, we reached out to over 1000 children with Lupita Nyong'o's book, 'Sulwe'. The theme: 'Black is Beautiful'. We gave out pencils, crayons, and colouring sheets to all the 1000 children. Jeanette also taught many children to crochet with plastic and used the book 'One Plastic Bag' by Miranda Paul to help with this exercise. Included in this visit was the reconstruction of 26 school desks, doors, and tables for a school in the village we were staying in. On returning to Accra, we organised 1000 exercise books, story books, maps of Ghana, pens, pencils, and children's clothing. We continued working close with the school by supporting them in any way we could.



**The CotL centre reopened in February after a short break. The focus for February was ‘Black History’. The children also took part in a Road Safety exercise in February. On 6th March (Ghana’s Independence) the children presented their projects to each other on prominent black people.**



**In observance of ‘World Water Day’ on 22nd March, Children of the Light staff, volunteers and students cleaned the stream of plastic waste. After the clean-up, a healthy meal was enjoyed. Later, a PowerPoint on water and ways to play a part in keeping our water bodies clean was presented.**



**Alongside the many special programs, the children participate in regular literacy and numeracy lessons at the centre and a hot meal is served every Saturday.**



# The Team

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## Management Committee

CotL is managed by a Board of Directors/Management Committee. This Management Committee meets at least three times a year to discuss and make decisions on pertinent issues.

## Staff

CotL has a staff of five, four being teachers and one cook. The teaching staff are involved in other tasks that help in the smooth running of the organisation. The cook prepares meals for the Saturday and special programs.

## Volunteers

We were fortunate during our calendar year to complement our staffing with the help of some wonderful volunteers. All our volunteers are required to fill an application form and read and sign our ‘Child Protection Code of Conduct’. Volunteers are an immense support in all areas of the organisation.

## Children

This year we had 84 children including teenagers registered in our program and on each visit to the street children we worked with up to 40 children. We also reached out to over 1000 children on our trip to Northern Ghana.



# Successes

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- Through the donation we received from the Embassy of Switzerland in Ghana, we now have water to the centre.
- We received a donation to complete the front wall.
- We received donations to build a storage room and additional washroom.
- We received donations in kind to support the families struggling during Covid-19 lockdown.
- We started a program that is helping a large group of street children.
- We had a flow of volunteers once the centre reopened.
- We continue to serve a hot meal during the Saturday classes.
- The on-going programs continue to be enjoyable and beneficial to the children involved.
- The 'Teens Program' continues to empower those who attend.
- Work has begun to create a branch of the program in the NE Region.

# Challenges - Covid-19

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- Due to Covid-19, we lost some of our regular donors.
- Due to centre closing the CotL staff did not receive a salary for 6 months.
- The road to the centre remains to be a challenge.
- Some of the children have to walk a long distance to the centre and at times unable to come due to the weather.
- Our primary vehicle was off the road for a good part of the year, this was due to lack of funds to have it fixed.
- The water from the borehole is needing another filter due to the third water test showing a high level of manganese.





# What's Next

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- Build up our monthly donor support to help us with the operational costs of the centre, special programs and our bi-monthly visits to the street children.
- Complete the entire Learning Centre; doors and electrical fittings to purchase and install.
- Upgrade the solar unit.
- Add an additional filtering system to our water supply.
- Secure the grounds with a fence wall and gate.
- Upgrade the primary vehicle.
- Purchase a bus for transporting the children.
- Continue with the landscaping work on the grounds.
- Purchase additional classroom furniture and IT equipment.
- Continue the work in building the branch of the organisation.



# Acknowledgement

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The Hazel Dick Trust, New Zealand

Geodrill Ghana Limited, Ghana

New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, USA

Hosanna Trust Foundation, New Zealand

PFC Auditing Services Ltd, Ghana

Top Choco, Ghana

Shoprite, Ghana

Type Company Ltd, Ghana

Where the wind takes me, Ghana

Beads for a Reason, USA

Extra Mile West Africa, Ghana

Women of Alexander, Ghana

Springforth Community School, Ghana

After My Kind, Ghana

A Rocha Ghana

Let's Do It Ghana;

and all the individual CotL supporters.

## THANK YOU!

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# Message from the Founder

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Although the centre closed, we not only kept going but ventured out to help more children. I use this opportunity to thank CotL staff, volunteers and donors. It is through your kindness and commitment to us that we are able to continue serving the many children we work with. May God richly bless you all.

*Jeanette Brown Opoku*

## Contact

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