

**Monthly report – August 2011**

**ACCRA, GHANA**

<b>SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>		<b>LEGAL SERVICES</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>
Micro-Finance	Mobile Complaints Clinic	Case Work	Suicide
Intestate and Property Rights	Child Trafficking		Human Trafficking
			International Protocols

**Social Justice**

***Intestacy and Property Rights***

This project combines advocacy, focal group discussions and legal services to tackle violations of intestacy rights and to break the trend of such abuses in rural Ga communities. Over June and July we worked in 7 affected communities. In August we interacted with another five.

Having heard of numerous avoidable conflicts during our outreaches PAHO volunteers decided to promote the drafting of legal wills. At the end of each Intestacy outreach volunteers take details from interested members of the community and prepare a will which is signed and approved by Mr Hans. This initiative is called the Will's Clinic. Volunteers find this work extremely interesting and hands-on.

***Child Trafficking and Labour***

Over the past few months we have been working towards the establishment of a rehabilitation program for victims of trafficking in the fishing communities of Old Ningo and Awhiem. The final draft of the program was printed yesterday. Over the month of August our volunteers met with a Projects Abroad teacher who has been guiding us through lesson plan preparations. Rehabilitation will begin this month when school recommences.

At the end of July we received permission from Social Welfare to enter two children's abuse shelters in Accra where we hope to implement a similar rehabilitation program. Throughout August we visited these shelters and a private rescue home which is run by PACODEP to assess the institutions and determine the form of rehabilitation we can provide. Shelter Rehabilitation would be an adaption of our community program but run by PAHO volunteers (unlike the community, where we will engage local volunteers). The volunteers on this project have been extremely committed and excited, feeling a wonderful sense of achievement.

***The Mobile Complaints Clinic***

Work with the Community Police Unit recommenced this month. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August our volunteers held a Mobile Complaints Forum in the community of Tema in collaboration with the CPU. The program aimed to address civil responsibility and police accountability. Community members were given the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns to those best placed to challenge these issues directly. Over the course of the month, PAHO held many meetings with the CPU to discuss the possibility of providing

training to the unit and community watch committees throughout the city and suburbs. Ultimately we hope to improve the often fragile relationship between the Public and the Police.

### ***Micro-Finance***

At the moment we have a volunteer with an investment banking and business background. To get the most out of Richard's unique skill set PAHO has been encouraging him to get involved in a micro-financial project. Over the month of August Richard conducted much research on this project with the help of two other interested volunteers and began to integrate financial education with our running projects such as intestacy. Economic shortcomings certainly underlie many of the Human Rights issues we face through our social justice work. The project aims to facilitate the securing of funds for seeking entrepreneurs and provide education to communities and schools on financial and business management.

### **Legal Services**

In August PAHO resolved one case of wrongful detention and continues to represent six other parties in respective disputes.

Our cases involve issues of Child Maintenance, Property, Fraud, Assault, Domestic Violence and one refugee application. At the moment we have four volunteers working with Mr. Hans on these cases. All of them attend court together but each volunteer is responsible for a particular case; the preparation of submissions, drafting of documents and general reporting. With this improved structure we have easily begun to update our new database.

### ***Resource Development***

Information resources are certainly few in Ghana and every day we have new volunteers arriving at PAHO who have little knowledge on issues concerning human rights in the Ghanaian context. Our team has begun gathering information on the following topics;

- Intestacy and Property Rights
- Child Maintenance
- Domestic Violence
- Custody
- Child Trafficking
- Child Labour

All research found on these areas of human rights including laws, publications, statistics and other information will be organised into a comprehensive set of booklets. These booklets can be referred to by staff (particularly in Legal Service), volunteers in-house and can also be used as a resource for external partners we work with.

### **Research**

#### ***International Protocols***

This project aims to research the International Human Rights Protocols to which Ghana has signed. We hope to identify how well Ghana has embraced the intentions of these important agreements. Are these fundamental rights and freedoms being adequately protected by Ghana as a signatory nation? Throughout August our volunteers prepared reports in an attempt to answer this question. Over the coming weeks we will bring these reports together and produce one large publication and potentially offer training.

## ***Human Trafficking***

This research project came from observations made by PAHO during work with child trafficking. The project has two main intentions;

1. To scrutinise the laws surrounding trafficking in Ghana,
2. To develop a national database monitoring children affected by trafficking. This database will be implemented in collaboration with relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies such as Social Welfare, Ministry Of Women And Children, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, UNICEF, IOM. There is currently no functioning live-database in the country which not only impedes upon trend spotting and statistical analysis but also makes rescue and re-integration difficult.

At the end of September we hope to bring all the stakeholders listed above together to introduce the database and discuss recommendations to the enforcement of the Human Trafficking Act.

## ***Suicide Research Project***

Attempted Suicide is a criminal charge in Ghana. Over the month of July and August our team conducted several meetings with knowledgeable persons and data collectors to get a clear picture of the legal and social frameworks surrounding suicide in Ghana. The information found was compiled in form of a publication outlining recommendations to the current implications and perceptions of suicide in Ghana.

We hoped to host a seminar on the 31<sup>st</sup> of this month to discuss our research with those involved in the project. Our proposed date, however, was deemed a Public Holiday in celebration of Ramadan. It is our intention to reschedule the seminar for next week; all participants have been notified about this change.

## **Other Work**

### ***Inter-faith relations***

In August PAHO conducted a survey on Interfaith Relations for an independent study. The volunteers, though they were not directly involved in this study, thoroughly enjoyed the interaction with various communities around Accra.

### ***First Aid @ Shelter***

PAHO presented 3 staff members at Osu Children's Abuse Shelter with certificates in First Aid. The training for this course was funded by PA at the beginning of the year.

## **CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

This month has been another busy one for PAHO with lots of new volunteers arriving and with that new ideas and dynamics are brought to the work we are doing. Some put all their energy and efforts into organising and pulling off a very successful football tournament in Manenberg, others made huge progress in terms of the work we do with the women's shelters; not forgetting the request from Bonnytoun themselves for us to spend more time with the boys each week because of the great work our volunteers have been doing there. Here's a round up of the progress being made in each of our projects.

## ***Social Justice***

### ***Bonnytoun***

Things at Bonnytoun have been progressing well with volunteers making a great impression. We are now working with two groups of boys, and have been asked to take on another day a week as well as organise

a 10 day program in September for when the teachers are on holiday. This month there has been a huge focus on 'perception' and how the boys perceive issues such as race, homosexuality and disability as well as how they perceive themselves. One of the boys prepared a speech, which a volunteer read to the whole group, about his aspirations and hopes for the future and this was very encouraging. Volunteers managed to bond with the boys through fun games and activities with encouraged them to open up and volunteers were able to learn a lot about the boys and their past, as well as their current frustrations in terms of the justice system in South Africa and how their sentencing is constantly being postponed. There is so much work that still needs to be done in places such as Bonnytoun but volunteers have shown that by giving these boys time and respect we are able to make a difference to their lives and there is a hope that we can effect their future in a positive way.

### ***The Women's Shelters***

#### ***Sisters Incorporated***

The volunteers working with the women at Sisters this month have worked extremely hard. They have been empowering the women at this shelter to build up their self confidence and belief in themselves again. They have been discussing jobs and interview techniques with the women and this is highly beneficial as all of the women are keen to find jobs. The women were asked to compliment each other and discuss each others best attributes. Many women were surprised what was said about them and this proved to be a great way to build up their confidence and encourage them to pick out their best characteristics which they can focus on during a job interview.

#### ***St Anne's***

Work at this women's shelter has also been progressing brilliantly with dedicated volunteers spending the time to get to know the women and putting effort into their workshops. This month volunteers began working through the Constitutional Rights within South Africa and have found there to be many more regular attendees to the sessions than there used to be. Feedback from the women has been great, stating that the PAHO volunteers' workshops are their favourite. They enjoy the lively discussion and that they are all encouraged to speak and get involved. Another new initiative with work at St Anne's has included giving the women resources to study after the volunteers leave. These have proved to be successful as the women always return the following week with questions for the volunteers about what they have been reading.

#### ***Free Gender***

A two day conference held by Free Gender took place in Khayelitsha at the beginning of this month. The conference addressed the issue of corrective rape and the South African police with the aim of sharing stories of those affected by corrective rape and to raise awareness of this with the police. Many of our volunteers attended and the conference was something for the organisation to be proud of. The first day was well attended with many police and officials in attendance. However the majority of it was spoken in Xhosa and our volunteers were unable to follow much of what was going on. Day two saw fewer people in attendance but victims shared their experiences and it was a great atmosphere with everyone learning a lot.

#### ***Manenberg Girls***

This month volunteers managed to secure some free tickets to Robben Island for the girls. They had never before had the opportunity to go and so they were extremely grateful for the trip. It was also a great way for the volunteers to bond with the girls and build up trust amongst the group. On occasions this month we encouraged the girls to take on the role of preparing a workshop for our volunteers, to teach them something for a change. This was a great way to encourage these girls and build up their confidence and self-esteem and the idea seemed to work really well. Other activities this month included

spending a day in Manenberg with the group, shopping and braaing (South Africa's take on a BBQ) whilst also building up relationships through singing and dancing.

### ***Manenberg Boys***

This month a few of our volunteers worked extremely hard to set up a football tournament for the boys in Manenberg. The idea was to create teams by mixing up those from different gangs within Manenberg so that they had to work together as a team and play football. Despite the awful weather and the apprehension of the boys in the beginning about having to mix with others, the day was a great success with eight teams participating. The whole community came out to show their support, coming together and chatting with others. Even one of the locals invited everyone into their home as the football finished to have an awards ceremony for the winning two teams and allow people a place out of the cold to enjoy snacks and drinks. The volunteers involved in this did a great job organising such an event and we hope to be able to continue organising many similar events as it is a great way of bringing a community together.

### ***Mock Trial/Debating Workshop***

There has been great progress with the group taking part in this program with things moving on from just debating to now preparing these youths for the mock trial. Volunteers have been discussing with them the process within court, the role of each person as well as the set up and how arguments are presented from either side. The group were then put to the test with a simple case for role play which they responded to brilliantly. We are now aiming to organise a court trip to for them to see a real trial in action which will give them a better understanding of the system before it comes to their time to present theirs.

### ***Sobambisana – Crossroads***

The youth in Crossroads are looking for a way to build a brighter future and many of them lack the necessary skills to find employment. Volunteers researched and found out about an employment/training initiative in South Africa, these are known as learnerships. They consist of employers taking people on, allowing them to work whilst also studying so that they become trained up and gain a qualification in a certain area. Volunteers discussed these with the youth at Crossroads and assisted them with filling in the application forms. This is a great learning opportunity for these youths and we are hopeful that many will be successful with their applications.

### ***Communicare – Ruyterwacht***

The community we are working with in Ruyterwacht was created by the government during apartheid to house all of the poor whites, away from view. The idea was to have these people find jobs and finally move from these free houses which were provided by the government. However they began expecting free handouts and ended up staying in these free houses for generations. Volunteers are currently preparing proposals and research questionnaires which will be used to gather as much information from the community as possible so that we can tackle the issues that are most prevalent.

### ***Legal Services***

#### ***Lavender Hill***

Many new cases have come to us through Lavender Hill this month with not only women now coming for advice. We have begun opening cases for a handful of men and are encouraging anyone who needs assistance to come to us.

## ***Parliamentary Monitoring***

Parliament has been getting busy this month with a variety of Committee Meetings which volunteers have been attending. Parliamentary monitoring is becoming highly popular with the volunteers with many of them wanting to visit Parliament to experience the committee meetings. One popular topic that was discussed this month was the Protection of Information Bill and the discussions surrounding it including national security fears which were being addressed in the committee meetings. Another popular discussion in Parliament this month included South Africa's contribution to Libya; their plans post Gadafi and whether their level of support will change?

## **LOME, TOGO**

### **LTDH (La Ligue Togolaise de Droit de l'Homme)**

We had a total of 4 volunteers working at the League this month. At times they worked all together, in pairs and individually.

#### Refugee rights

They have been very interested in researching the refugee camp AVÉPOZO, as there has been talk of prostitution and rape. They had a meeting with the HCR (Haute Commissariat aux Refugees), where they were able to note the difference between objectives from the office to the ground. The HCR are looking for ways to relocate people as quickly as possible, whereas NGO's on the site are looking to improve the day-to-day living conditions. They talked to the psychologist of the camp, who claimed that rape was very frequent at the camp that the guards were the main offenders, but that the women were too afraid to protest.

This groundwork will be continued by internal and external awareness projects about the rights of refugee's.

#### Democratization project

The League had an extensive rural project in many areas of Togo, broadening their Lomé seminar in July about the engagements of the Bamako declaration, going into topics such as Human Rights, democracy, and peace. Our 4 volunteers split into three different groups. They had to keep track of focus questions and analyse the evaluation reports. The participation promised was disappointing, as the presentations were already long and the volunteers didn't feel comfortable adding any of the points they had prepared.

#### Individual cases

Their colleagues at the League don't always have time to listen to people's complaints personally. Therefore, the volunteers often take on this important first step, and then their supervisor will help them with the continuation.

The volunteers were able to take responsibility for several minor complaints received by the league. Franziska managed the case of Togolese national refused French VISA, although he has all his papers in place and wishes to visit his mother, a French national. Franziska organised meetings with the French embassy, but as they are not helpful she has now contacted the German embassy. Léa and Marie received a man, who had not received several months of salary by his boss, who is shortly about to leave the country.

This month the league received a case detailing continuous torture in the civil prison of Lomé. Two of the volunteers followed their supervisor to investigate these allegations; a task that is difficult as the information is vague and most prisoners want to remain anonymous. The volunteers were not allowed into the main hall of the prison.

## **CNDH (La Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme)**

Nkiruka finished her month at the CNDH with a lot of passion.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August she attended a meeting with traditional chiefs in Atakpamé, northeast of Lomé. The meeting was organised by the CNDH to shed light on Children's Rights and trafficking of children in the region.

### **Prisoners' rights**

She investigated the violations in the Brigade pour Mineurs with her supervisor Mr Pié. She interviewed the children, the director and the nurse. She has reported that the conditions are better than last year, as more children have been relocated and the meals have been reviewed.

Being very passionate for the rights of prisoners, she also visited the civil prison with a small team from the CNDH (which is highly unusual for PA volunteers!). She was horrified by the experience and observed extreme cases of Human Rights violations. There is a capacity of 670 prisoners, however there are 1950 crammed together in one large space. 556 men have so far been sentenced; some prisoners spend years locked up without knowing. The food is insufficient and vile. The EU funds this prison.

Upon visiting the Women's ward (where 4 women have been sentenced out of 50), she was contacted by a confused Malaysian prisoner who had been there for 3 weeks and didn't speak French or Ewe. She took the contacts of her family and later notified them of her presence. As the female prisoners cook themselves, there is a hierarchy of who can acquire nourishing food from family members. This means that foreigners endure especially grave conditions.

Touched by this experience, Nkiruka and Mr. Pié feel that the minority of foreigners in the Togolese prisons need to be represented. They had a meeting with CASIT about this obligation.

### **Refugee rights**

She brought her colleagues to visit the camp of AVÉPOZO, as she had heard of it from the other volunteers. This was the first time that the CNDH visited the camp and several of her colleagues didn't know of its existence. There was no proper groundwork put into place. She was outraged at her colleague's (the head of the department of Women/Child) unprofessional handling of the investigation, as she spontaneously interviewed people about allegations of mistreatment. Nkiruka couldn't believe it when she unexpectedly went up to a guard and asked about rape!

Nkiruka and another intern used the opportunity to interview the head of a women's organisation in the camp. However superficial the visit was, she produced a report about the inefficiency of the CNDH.