
Monthly report – December 2011

ACCRA, GHANA

SOCIAL JUSTICE		LEGAL SERVICE
HR Focal	Community Policing Unit Training	Court induction
Domestic Violence	Shelter Work	

SOCIAL JUSTICE

HR Focal

This project took place from Monday 5th - Friday 10th December 2011 at Ashaiman. Volunteers facilitated human rights training of teachers on topics such as basic human rights, children's rights, child labour, child maintenance, etc. Participation was very encouraging. Sascha, Iris, Kristin and Sandeep were part of the team.

Community Policing Unit

The training of Neighbourhood Watch Committees (NWC) took place at the Odorkor on Wednesday, 14th December 2011. Volunteers such as Sandeep, Nathalie, Peter and Steve facilitated the training. The PAHO team will also follow-up to Chantan to assess impact of training on NWC members. The feedback was positive.

Shelter

PRO social worker volunteers (Anouska and Sascha) visited the Osu Children's home to assess the work of care givers. Anouska will hand-over to Sascha to continue the work at the Osu Children's' Home and the Osu Shelter.

Domestic Violence

There was domestic violence awareness creations seminar at Tema New-Town on the 19th and 22nd December 2011 to sensitize community members on the various forms of domestic violence, the effects, the need to report and how to report that. Volunteers such as Iris, Sandeep and Nathalie facilitated the training.

LEGAL SERVICE

Court Induction

Volunteers who have not had the opportunity to attend court sessions because of their schedule did so this month. They had the opportunity to witness proceedings at the Chief Justice's Court.

Others

The PAHO team (Ernest, Iris and Kristin) travelled to Ekumpuano in the Central Region on the 20th December 2011 to meet one of the heads of schools to discuss possible programmes to have with the school and community.

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) organized a series of activities to celebrate human rights week in Ghana. PAHO participated in some of the activities such as Peace Walk and Launching of Human Rights and Integrity Week on 5th December, Gender and Equality Day Symposium on 7th December and Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Symposium on 9th December respectively.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

December is always a quiet month at PAHRO as many of our partner organisations are closed for Christmas and so projects are put on hold. Legal work is also slow as very few new clients come in over the Christmas and New Year period but also because follow ups on current cases are not possible due to the majority of companies and organisations that we need to get hold of shutting down for the Christmas holidays. Here are the updates on the few things that have been taking place this month.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Bonnytoun

Towards the beginning of the month volunteers had a Christmas party for the boys at Bonnytoun. They took Christmas decorations and a Christmas tree and crackers and had a great time. The boys responded well and seemed to enjoy the activities. The office has taken a couple of weeks off from Bonnytoun over Christmas and New Year but volunteers have used this time to do a lot of preparation work and organise their workshops for the New Year.

The Women's Shelters: St Anne's

This month saw the celebration of world Aids day. This led to a HIV/AIDS themed workshop with the women. There has been a fairly small turn out this month but the women that do attend always end up teaching our volunteers something, which is great. This creates a great two way relationship as it is not just us going in and talking at the women. It's a discussion and both the women and our volunteers leave feeling that they've made a difference.

Manenberg Girls

This month saw the final result of the Hi Tea which was being prepared by the girls in Manenberg alongside our volunteers. It was held on a Saturday afternoon and although the turn out from the girls in Manenberg was not as big as we had maybe hoped, the afternoon went really well. There was food prepared along with tea and drinks. There was then the entertainment which included music and dance as well as some poetry recitals.

LEGAL SERVICES

Lavender Hill

Lavender Hill was put on hold for Christmas and New Year and so we are currently not visiting the centre at Philisa Abifazi. However any serious issues that have been unable to wait until the New Year have been transferred straight to our office and we are opening the cases and consulting with the clients in the office.

LOME, TOGO

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

Annual report:

Everyone at the league spent a lot of time finalising the annual report on the situation of Human Rights in Togo. This is an important report that circulates nationally, as well as internationally, especially through the FIDH, of which the LTDH is a member. The report is usually very dense and long, making it mostly accessible to agents of Human Rights. This year they changed tactics and made it much more concise, highlighting all the clear proof. This report especially highlights the lack of liberty of expression and liberty of demonstration. It also clarifies the ongoing threat to national security, with the dozen ritualistic murders committed on young girls and the following police negligence.

This report has clearly frustrated the government, but mobilised the private social sector in Togo, who are all standing up for the LTDH report. A march against the Human Rights violations of 2011 and a call for justice has been programmed for the 12th of January.

Student protests:

Following the release of the LTDH annual report, Cassandra and her supervisor monitored the student protests at the University of Lomé on the 8th and 9th of December. The main purposes were to collect the identities of students that were either arrested or harmed by rubber bullets.

December also saw the biggest student demonstrations in the North of Togo, more specifically the Region of Kara. This is unusual; because the ethnic group, the Kabyé, of this region are heavily represented in the government, police force and army, and as a result of this, don't usually criticize the government. This prompted the government to claim that these rioting students had most definitely come all the way from Lomé!

Children's rights:

The League received a complaint from a parent whose child was formerly sponsored by the organisation La Chaîne de l'Espoir. However, due to a dispute between the organisation and the parent, the child was refused the sponsorship. Cassandra was very taken by the case, since she had also formerly worked at an orphanage on the Care project. She discussed resolutions to the case with her supervisor. Finally, in early January, the LTDH visited the direction of the organisation. They would not agree to reintegrate the child, but accepted to integrate his younger brother.

Seminar:

Cassandra took part in a platform seminar on the 6th and 7th of December, organised by GRAD (Groupe de Réflexion et d'Action pour le Dialogue, la Démocratie et le Développement), calling together all components of the civil society for a healthy discussion.

Collectif des Associations contre l'Impunité au Togo (CACIT)

We started working with CACIT in late November, which is a collective of associations that collaborate in the fight against corruption and impunity. This is of an immense scope in Togo, as the biggest offenders (government officials, policemen, businessmen and even the president) are rarely, if not ever, put to trial. Even this month, a particularly violent case of male rape was heard at CACIT. The perpetrator works at the French embassy, and his lawyer's claim that he is untouchable, because of his diplomatic status.

Although cases involving questions of impunity are difficult to treat in Togo, because of the nature of the government, CACIT specialises in collecting evidence and writing reports so that these cases also have a chance to reach outside of the country. Like the LTDH, they are known to pressure the government. In

times of recent unrest, CACIT and the LTDH have been the only organisations that monitor Human Rights violations.

Prison rights: Upon receiving a female prisoner's medical report, Joost and his supervisor have paid repeated visits to the women's prison. She is suffering from leukaemia, but is refused even the most basic treatment. This is of course against countless international charts that Togo has signed. The woman cannot afford healthcare, so Joost is researching different Dutch funds that might want to help her cause.

Research: Joost was given the task to research the CVJR. His conclusion is that the organisation is not transparent and seems to serve the interests of the government more than the people.

Worker's Rights: Joost and his supervisor handed out pamphlets about Worker's Rights, in the industrial towns where phosphate is produced. There have been allegations of deplorable pay and exploitation. Raising awareness is the first step to get the people involved.

Seminars:

Joost attended the following seminars:

14/12: A seminar about corruption and impunity held by CACIT

22/12: A seminar about leadership and reconciliation, held by the CVJR

28/12: A discussion with all players of the social sector about their discontent with the governance in 2011, a march planned in January will mark this.

ASFEEN

We started working with the small NGO in November. ASFEEN works to promote gender equality, by starting at an early age and raising awareness to strengthen Togo's youth of tomorrow.

Rebecca spent a month teaching in a huge public school, before she began her Human Rights placement, so she had a good deal of insight into the hardships facing both students and teachers alike. Her supervisor decided to bridge her to projects in such a way that Rebecca was in charge of setting up afterschool clubs in several schools.

They had already set up these clubs in 20 schools, and with the help of Rebecca, they found another 5 schools to partner with. The clubs mainly focus on raising awareness on children's rights and gender equality. Moreover, they paid follow-ups to see how the clubs were running and helped solve problems if needed.

Rebecca also attended a forum organised by the minister of female promotion, that laid out new statistics of the grandeur of gender discrimination in Togo. Because of repeated laments from men, it also focused, for the first time, on discrimination against males.

Human Rights seminars

We held one seminar in November, which unrolled more like a discussion group, about violence committed against women in Togo. We discussed physical, psychological and economical violence. We also talked about traditional rites and customs still common in some parts of Togo, such as widowhood rites where a woman is left naked and not allowed to leave her hut before she sleeps with another man, or levirate, the custom of the widow being forced to marry her deceased husband's brother.

We also held one seminar in December about the appalling prison conditions in Togo.