
 Monthly report – July 2011

ACCRA, GHANA

SOCIAL JUSTICE		LEGAL SERVICES	RESEARCH
Islamic Advocacy	HR Clubs	Case Work	Suicide
Intestate and Property Rights	Child Trafficking		

Social Justice:

Our social justice programmes have been running well. Having undertaken only four projects this month, volunteers were split into teams. Each project had two teams with different roles and a different set of tasks were assigned to each group.

Our Domestic Violence Project came to a close on the 19th of July. Most of our team attended the quiz organised by PAHO to test the level of retention and understanding of the kids we had provided advocacy for over the past year.

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. Throughout June we worked in 3 affected communities and extended this project to four others in July due to the project's success. Volunteers find this work extremely interesting and hands-on.

HR Clubs

Throughout the school term volunteers have worked with Accra High School students in partnership with Amnesty International to establish an active club for the promotion of human rights. Over the month of July we established Human Rights clubs in two other schools. Accra High completed a 5 week lesson program which had been constructed by a current Projects Abroad PRO volunteer (our skilled and qualified arm). The lessons were a form of intense training and tomorrow, 29th of July, we will hold a debate for the students concerning issues of Human Rights.

Child Trafficking and Labour

In the first week of July much community work was completed in Old Ningo and Awhiem. Over the past few months we have been working towards setting up a rehabilitation program for victims of trafficking with the help of local volunteers in both communities. As school broke at the end of this month we began to organise the leg-work in hope to launch the program in September. The volunteers spent the first week engaging with local volunteers and introducing them to the children we will be working with. These

children were assessed academically in the same week. These outreaches were fun and interactive much to the volunteers delight!

Since the first week of July we have been compiling the content of the program and meeting regularly with a teacher and psychologist who is helping us create comprehensive lesson plans.

On 27th of July we received permission from Social Welfare to enter the abuse shelters in Accra where we hope to implement a similar rehabilitation program. As part of our work in these shelters we will also begin to profile victims of trafficking with the Anti-human Trafficking Unit of the Police over the month of August.

Islamic Advocacy

A new project began this month! It was launched on 28th of July. The project is concerned with educating the Islamic communities of Accra on Human Rights. The presentation and discussion held in the community of Nima focused on Domestic Violence. The congregation were extremely responsive. Volunteers on this project have been given a huge amount of responsibility; the co-ordination, networking and legwork of this project lies entirely on them. Obviously there is still a certain amount of supervision however the level of independence has proven to be wonderful motivation for those involved. The purpose of the project is not just to educate on Domestic Violence. The idea is to focus on the group we are addressing rather than a particular area of human rights.

Legal Services

Throughout July PAHO managed to resolve four cases which had been pending in June. These cases included issues of assault, defilement, maintenance and wrongful detention.

We still have three cases running on issues of Intestacy, domestic violence and property.

At the moment we have four volunteers working with Mr. Hans on these cases. All of them attend court and all of them together prepare submissions and drafts. We have begun to allocate cases to volunteers in an attempt to add structure to the Legal Service provided by PAHO. We are preparing to adopt our new Database in the coming weeks which will benefit the monitoring and organisation of cases.

Research

Suicide Research Project

Our Suicide research project really took off this month. Over the month of July our team conducted several meetings with knowledgeable persons and data collectors such as members of the Police Force, Clinical Psychologists, Religious Leaders, the Courts, Judges and the psychiatric hospital at Pantang. We intend to wrap up our information by next week and compile a publication and recommendation report outlining the current perception of suicide in Ghana; questioning both legal and social frameworks surrounding this act. This report will be shared at a public forum we will host on 31st of August.

This is a topic volunteers are greatly interested in. We are hoping to increase the number of research projects in August.

Other Work

On 22nd of July our volunteers attended the Day of Action for Gambia conference held by Amnesty international.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Social Justice

Bonnytoun

This month Bonnytoun relocated to new premises. It is now much further away and volunteers must take time to travel there. The new premises are much more 'prison like' with the boys being placed in cells rather than dorms like the old building. They are now a lot further away from their families who are unable to visit as regularly because of the distance and many of the organisations that were also working with the boys have dropped out due to the distance. Despite this long journey we have decided to continue our work with them and have had a successful month with the boys showing a great willingness to learn. The boys have really started to open up and expressed to volunteers their fear of returning to their communities and being sucked back into the life they used to lead. These boys possess a real drive to change and know that there is no future in the life they came from, but they also know the difficulty of escaping a life of gangsterism, drugs and violence. Some even expressed a fear that they knew their lives would be in danger when they left Bonnytoun as there were people who would be looking for revenge.

The Women's Shelters: Sisters Incorporated and St' Anne's

This month there have been a number of different sessions planned with the women. Some of our American volunteers planned a cultural food exchange where they introduced the women to the typical American dish 'Sloppy Joe's'. Topics which were discussed this month include domestic workers rights and the Bill of rights with volunteers also getting some ideas of what other topics the women would like to discuss. At Sisters Incorporated, the women are introduced to jewellery making as a way of making income and they took time to share this skill and their work with the volunteers.

Free Gender

PAHO are still assisting Free Gender with their upcoming conference at the beginning of August. Volunteers will be able to take part in discussions over the two days and many volunteers are excited about this opportunity.

Manenberg Girls

At Manenberg, volunteers organised a baking session with the girls. They also discussed relationships, basic women's health and sex education with them and spent a lot of time focussing on individual and group goals that the girls could set themselves for the future. The outcome of this goal setting seemed to focus around education and so we are now looking into organising further education for the girls. Some have not completed their high school studies so would benefit from being able to complete that and those that have finished would like to study something further which will give them a skill and enable them to get a job. There was also a trip this month for the women and their children to the aquarium in Cape Town, a place that none of them had been able to visit before. Volunteers have also been visiting schools and just speaking to the community in an effort to spread the word and recruit further girls for the groups.

YEP Clan

This month a number of activities took place with volunteers leading a discussion on health and feminine hygiene after which the girls taught the volunteers some traditional song and dance. A fashion show was also organised in which the girls were set a challenge of working in teams to create outfits from newspaper and other supplies. They were then to model these outfits in front of the rest of the groups. This allowed them to express themselves freely whilst also improving their ability to work together as a team with others.

Mock Trial/Debating Workshop

It was decided that the mock trial would need to be put on hold and it soon became a long term goal after meeting the children and realising that they were not comfortable and had never done any public speaking before. So the focus shifted to getting the group comfortable with speaking aloud and discussion regarding human rights topics were used in this respect. The group then did a debate in a TV format which was filmed by the volunteers. When this project began the children were on holiday from school and so time with them was more readily available. The children have now however gone back to school and so sessions with them have had to shift to a bit later in the day once they have finished school.

Sobambisana – Crossroads

This is a new project with focus placed on the youth and finding them careers. When this project first began, volunteers went door to door within the community to find out what it is that the community needs the most. It was found that the biggest need of the residents was employment and so volunteers have since been assisting with setting up a careers clinic. We are looking into a number of options to assist this community, one of which includes 'learnerships'. This is an initiative for workplace learning programmes, which allow young people to work whilst studying towards a nationally recognised qualification. As well as this, volunteers have spent much time with the youth at crossroads, even organising a day trip out to the zoo. This was a place that none of the children had been able to visit before and so they were greatly appreciative of the opportunity.

Communicare – Ruyterwacht

This is another new project and is based in a poor white community here in Cape Town. This month has involved getting to know the project partner and the community and the ways in which we are able to benefit them. Similar to the work taking place in Crossroads, we have found that a big problem is lack of employment and so we are again looking into a career clinic to assist the community in gaining employment to improve their standard of living.

Legal Services

Lavender Hill

This month volunteers have continued to attend Lavender Hill to provide legal assistance and advice to those who need it most in the community. We have taken on some interesting cases and volunteers are working hard to ensure that these clients are assisted.

Sobambisana Legal Clinic in Crossroads

This month saw the beginning of our process of getting a legal clinic set up in Crossroads. Our Legal Services Coordinator visited the community to meet with the organisation and discuss the next steps for implementing the clinic and ensuring that the community are made aware that this service will be available.

LOME, TOGO

La Ligue Togolaise des Droits de l'homme:

Marie and Jonathan have been finalising their reports on the student protests. This is very urgent and delicate, as there has been very little information about these events.

Maj and Polly joined the team for two weeks. They arrived just in time to assist a project concerning the importance of civil marriage documents that Jon and Marie had been working on. They used their research to make a PowerPoint and a sketch. On the 13th of July they presented the project in the church *Eglise Pentecôte du Togo* in the village Hahatoé. The PowerPoint was culturally relevant and even funny, by asking strategic questions to involve everyone in the discussion. They felt that the points were well understood and that the crowd showed keen interest. They felt that some of their jokes went a little over the crowd due to translation. We used the opportunity to redo this project alongside other awareness programs in the domains of prevention of disease and hygiene, when all our volunteers went to the village Tzévié on Saturday the 16th.

The Ligue organised a peace caravan in the town of Aneho to commemorate their 21st birthday. Following this, they organised a 2-day educational seminar about Human Rights and reconciliation where several ministers were present.

On the 22nd of July, Marie and Maj paid a visit to the children's prison to follow up on former volunteers' report of Human Rights violations.

Marie had her own idea to teach the history of Togo to adolescents, as she is appalled that there isn't enough focus on this aspect. She set it up in our summer school with Franziska and feels that she might have motivated some of the students and in that way, made a difference.

Marie, Maj, Polly and Jonathan were lucky enough to meet the leader of the opposition ANC, Mr. Jean-Pierre Fabre, when they observed a demonstration. He told them about the numerous restrictions he lives under because of serious intimidation from the government.

La Commission Nationale de Droits de l'Homme

Two volunteers have joined the state Human Rights department this month.

Kate joined a meeting on the 12th of July, under the headline: "*Panel à l'endroit des organisations de la société civile, des institutions gouvernementales et des ministères; thème: genre, développement, edification de la paix*". Kate thought it was very interesting to assist an important meeting like this, which unrolls very differently than in the UK (everyone is very passionate, ideological speeches, less organisation, a lot of repetition). She wrote a report about the points addressed in this meeting for the records of the CNDH.

Nkiruka joined a meeting at the CNDH about the conclusions reached at the UN committee of Human Rights in New York. The president of the CNDH conducted the meeting in front of heads of organisations, ministers and the press.

Nkiruka has been given the responsibility of dealing with the first step in the treatment of cases, which is first of all to outline whether the CNDH can treat the case and secondly, to describe how. She sends the suggestion to her supervisor and he sends it back with corrections. This way, Nkiruka really gets a feel for that important first aspect of the department called "Protection".

In the matter of law, July has held *les cour d'assises* for two weeks, which in the francophone system of law hears the harshest defendants accused of major crimes such as murder, rape, trafficking and drug traffic. All of our volunteers were interested in gaining rare insight into this aspect of law.