

Monthly report – June 2011

ACCRA, GHANA

SOCIAL JUSTICE		LEGAL SERVICES	RESEARCH
Police: Your Rights/ Mobile Complaints Clinic	HR Clubs	Case Work	Suicide
Intestacy and Property Rights	Child Trafficking		
Domestic Violence/ Islamic School Advocacy			

Social Justice:

Our social justice programmes have been running well. We have limited the number of projects undertaken to insure each project is getting sufficient attention and experiencing continuous progression.

Police: Your Rights/ The Mobile Complaints Clinic

Having spent the last few months educating communities on police accountability and the rights of suspects, PAHO volunteers identified the need to resolve complaints against police behaviour. This month our team has worked closely with CHRAJ (Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice) to create a mobile complaints clinic. This clinic will run in communities affected by low police accountability. Volunteers take complaints about the police in an attempt to facilitate access to justice. These disclosures are passed on to PIPS (Unit of the Police which deals with Professional Standards) and CHRAJ for investigation. Volunteers have been running an intensive publicity campaign from TV and radio promotion to handing out flyers on the streets. The first clinic of the month will come off on the 30th of June.

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 we worked in 3 affected communities; Pantang, Boi and Teiman.

Domestic Violence and Islamic School Advocacy

The domestic violence project recommenced this month. Our volunteers visited cluster schools throughout Accra educating Junior High School and Primary students on Domestic Violence. The presentation is fun and engaging and makes use of sketches and jokes for the children. In the coming month we intend to re-visit the schools and give the children a quiz to test their level of understanding and retention.

PAHO volunteers began similar work in Islamic schools across the city in June. As well as educating on Domestic Violence they present on child marriage; a common practice in Islamic communities. The presentation follows the same fun form as the domestic violence project and the kids have been increasingly responsive.

HR Clubs

HR Clubs also recommenced this month. Throughout the school term volunteers work with Accra High School in partnership with Amnesty International to establish an active club for the promotion of human rights. We hope to adopt the same project plan in two other schools where the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) have already established Human Rights clubs over July.

Child Trafficking and Labour

Over the month of June our Child Trafficking project really took off. Volunteers have provided advocacy at two parent teacher meetings in rural communities to sensitise them on trafficking. Alongside the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit we have offered two training seminars to teachers in the area on their role in rehabilitating a victim and how to deal with a victim of trafficking.

In both of the communities we work in, we proposed to set up an educational and social development program for victims of trafficking with the help of the local community. So far we have engaged twelve local volunteers who will help us execute the program on a weekly basis. The program itself has been templated and our volunteers are currently working on the content. Next week we will travel to Old Ningo and Anwhiam to enrol the children who will benefit from this program.

Over June we conducted meetings with IOM, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, the Ministry of Women and Children and Social Welfare to present our proposed live database of trafficking victims in Ghana. We have developed the logistics and hope to involve all stakeholders in the rescue of trafficking victims.

Legal Services

Over the month of June PAHO took on one new case and continued the progression of four more. The cases we are currently running cover issues of Asylum, Custody, Child Maintenance, Defilement and Unfair Dismissal. We are also advising and representing a Nigerian man seeking refuge in the US.

At the moment we have three volunteers working with Mr. Hans on these cases. All of them attend court and all of them together prepare submissions and drafts. Beginning in July we intend to assign one volunteer per case. We hope this will create more structure and generate a heavier work load and self-worth for the volunteers involved in our Legal Service.

Research

Suicide Research Project

Mid-June PAHO began analysing and researching the legality of suicide in Ghana. Recently an unsuccessful victim of suicide had court proceedings brought before him for attempting to take the life of a human being. Volunteers are extremely interested in this project.

Other Work

In June our volunteers drafted a letter to the editors of newspapers in their respective nations. The letter concerned the detrimental activity taking place in Obuasi being inflicted by AGA; a South African gold mining company. The volunteers were very excited about this action and we have so far sent the letter to 6 countries.

23rd June celebrated the launch of World Disabled Day and PAHO attended a conference held by Ghana's Federation for the Disabled to mark the occasion. Discussed at the event was the need to lobby

government and better facilities and provisions for the disabled. We also addressed the lack of legal precedent concerning disability discrimination despite the obvious display of prejudice which takes place on a day-to-day basis.

PAHO is partner to an NGO forum hosted by the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice. On 24th June, as a member of this forum, PAHO attended a symposium in support of torture victims to celebrate the UN's International Day in Support of Torture Victims. Torture, as a negation of human rights and dignity, was discussed within the context of Ghanaian Society.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Social Justice:

Bonnytoun

This month started with volunteers delving into their creative side and producing their own raps to perform to the boys. The aim was to try and get the boys interested through music and get them to write their own raps/songs. Volunteers then decided to address an issue which was important to the boys – court proceedings. All of these boys have found themselves caught up in the justice system and so such a topic is of great relevance to them. Their feedback showed that they really appreciated the workshop and they were grateful to learn about something which relates to their situation. The workshop was light-hearted and didn't contain anything too heavy which meant that the boys kept focus and learnt from it. We have found this to be the key to getting through to the boys at Bonnytoun. They shut off with workshops that are too full of information, but if things are delivered in a simpler form then they pay much more attention.

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

There were some issues with small numbers of women at the shelter which resulted in some of the workshops being cancelled. However some work was done this month with sessions being based on women's rights; a subject extremely relevant to the women at these shelters and a topic which we reiterate over and over because it is so important.

Khayelitsha – SiyaKhathala

House visits were carried out this month with our volunteers being taken around by Siyakhathala's own volunteers so that they could understand the process that the organisation goes through in supporting the children. These home visits are done to check up on the children who have been noted as 'at risk'. Volunteers also prepared and delivered a series of workshops for Siyakhathala, namely 'one man can'. This curriculum focuses on promoting the idea that each of us can create a better, more equitable and more just world. The main goal is to support young males in becoming responsible young adults.

Free Gender

Progress had been made in securing funding for a conference to be held by Free Gender in August. Volunteers are in the process of assisting them with the implementation of this conference. A group of 2 week special volunteers, with the help of Free Gender, did extensive research on corrective rape, as well as a presentation about the subject and how change is needed within South Africa regarding this issue.

Manenberg Boys

One of our volunteers is currently spending his time drawing up a proposal for a community centre in Manenberg. There has also been a focus on arranging a mass clean up effort in Manenberg to assist those living there to clean up their area and learn how to take care and appreciate their surroundings. We are getting as many volunteers involved in this initiative as possible.

Manenberg Girls

This month the girls were taken on an excursion to the Wetlands, a park area within Manenberg itself. The girls enjoyed the visit. The guide who showed them around on the day was very inspirational, even offering the girls to spend time volunteering at the park to get away from the stresses of their everyday lives. Each of the girls were given a plant to take home as a memento of their day. Such excursions are what the girls have been requesting we do with them and it seems to be an aspect they respond to positively. For these girls who have barely had the opportunity to leave Manenberg, exploring their city is creating a whole new perspective in their lives.

YEP Clan

This project is still in its early stages but has been running fairly smoothly. Volunteers have been giving up their Saturdays to meet with the YEP Clan and set in motion the process of arranging activities for the group of girls from Khayelitsha. Activities such as a book club, make-up and hygiene classes and activities/workshops based around issues that girls of this age group are going through are all being discussed and will hopefully be set in motion in the coming months.

Mock Trial/Debating Workshop

This has not yet started but much of the ground work has been taking place this month. This is a project which will be taking off in the month of July with volunteers working with different groups of youths, carrying out workshops to teach them debating techniques and then having them put these into practise during their mock trials. They will be performing their mock trial at the Wynberg Magistrate Court in front of an advocate with parents and friends being invited to the proceedings.

PAHRO has also been preparing a proposal this month to apply for funding for a training program which we are looking to set up in Khayelitsha and Manenberg. This is based around skills development workshops for youth groups to enable community development and job creation. The types of skills which will be involved include metal and wood work, fashion design, business skills and working with leather. We are hopeful this will be sent in July and these workshops can be started.

Legal Services

Lavender Hill

Volunteers continue to visit Lavender Hill every Tuesday alongside our Legal Services Coordinator Maria. Currently the number of clients requiring our advice and assistance is slowing but we continue to assist those who require our help.

We have also begun carrying out research into the necessity of another legal clinic, similar to what we do at Lavender Hill, which will be started in another area of Cape Town. This is an idea which may take some time to come to fruition but we are excited by the prospect of spreading our wings to another possible area.

LOME, TOGO

WiLDAF

This month Jenna went on an outreach project with 4 colleagues from the association AFEL (one of the organisations within WiLDAF) to Dapaong, at the very North of Togo, bordering Burkina Faso.

They distributed birth certificates to hundreds of children and Jenna became aware of the many bureaucratic implications this poses. If a child does not automatically get a birth certificate when it is born or shortly hereafter (often if it is at home in villages far away from hospitals), the process is costly and

complicated. Therefore AFEL also tries to raise awareness about the importance of this document; for example, children cannot be accepted into most schools without it. They talked to village chiefs, groups of women and schoolteachers.

Jenna also attended a 4-day sub-regional meeting in Lomé where all the countries involved in the project “Using law for rural women’s empowerment in 5 west-African countries” were represented. At the meeting, important organisations and ministries were present and WiLDAF called on the state as well as financial partners to extend the project that has given good results for the rural women involved as well as agriculture in general.

La Ligue Togolaise de Droit de l’Homme

The Ligue received 2 volunteers this month, Jonathan who has some experience in the field and Marie, who is still pursuing her studies. In the beginning of June, Jonathan was lucky to participate in a 3-day seminar about genocide and reconciliation where all Human Right bodies were present, as well as the EU and the UN. He was so inspired by this that he’d like to create a similar project of his own, taking it to university level, and getting access to some of the same speakers and video-material.

He also visited the refugee camps for people fleeing the Ivory Coast and he was surprised to see that it was rather well managed.

For the past 3 weeks, Lomé has been the scene of some harsh Human Rights violations as students and police are erupting into open battle on the campus. For several weeks the students have been exercising their barely-existent right to demonstrate, but have become increasingly desperate as the days wore on. Students have resorted to ridiculous strategies such as throwing rocks, the police are firing teargas and rubber bullets and there are several wounded. The Ligue has decided to be present at the campus to secure a more controlled handling of a situation that could easily escalate (as the country witnessed after the coup in 2005). Our volunteers have spent time at the university in a protected group of Human Rights activists that all carry vests.

As this is only the top of the iceberg, as the worst atrocities are committed out of sight, the Ligue visits the police station in order to support the students that have been taken from the university and locked up for days, and often subjected to torture. They try to record all cases in order to write extensive rapports. Marie and Jon are in charge of finalising the reports on behalf of the Ligue, and this is a huge responsibility. As there are so few Human Rights organisations present on the ground (only our volunteers from the Ligue along with their supervisor, and another small organisation called CASIT consisting of two interns and their supervisor!), these reports can become vital. It is well known that it’s difficult to draw attention to these violations, when organisations such as Amnesty, the EU and the UN aren’t provided with any information except hearsay. These reports collecting all the conspicuous data surrounding the handling of this conflict are undoubtedly necessary.