
Monthly Report – October 2011

ACCRA, GHANA

SOCIAL JUSTICE		LEGAL SERVICES	RESEARCH
Islamic Advocacy	Community Police Unit Training	Case Work	Mental Health
HR Focal	Shelter Work	Resource Development	
HR Clubs			

Social Justice

Islamic Advocacy

This month PAHO held two programmes in the Islamic community of Nima. The first was delivered to a congregation of men and women, the first time both sexes attended advocacy together. Mr Hans joined our volunteers to discuss domestic violence and urge the community to drop the dangerous and illegal act. The second event was a weekend programme in partnership with the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Police (DVVSU) for the young people of the community.

The groups were extremely responsive and encourage a revisit in the near future.

Community Police Unit Training

Over the month of October several training sessions came off in collaboration with the Community Police Unit. This project developed from the 'Police Your Rights and Access to Justice'. Volunteers provide training to members of neighbourhood watch committees across the Greater Accra Region. During the training the CPU inform the group, practically, on civil policing while PAHO educate on fundamental human rights. It has been very successful and the relationship with the police continues to strengthen.

HR Clubs

Volunteers facilitate weekly clubs in three of Accra's High Schools with a focus on human rights education over a five week period. At the end of the term, students are engaged in a human rights debate to test their new-found knowledge and understanding of human rights.

The lessons provided over October have been a continuation of the work done over the summer months. The lessons have focused on issues such as Child Trafficking and Labour, Mental Health in Ghana, International Criminal Law, Inspirational Activists, Africa and Human Rights.

Student involvement in this phase of the project has been much greater. To enhance this development we plan to provide the students of our host schools with the skills needed to

actively participate in human rights. We hope to partner with Debate Ghana Association over the coming month to do just that.

Shelter Work

Volunteers have been engaging with children of Osu's Abused Children's Shelter. The named shelter is a governmental run home for children who have suffered an abuse eg. trafficked children, domestically abused children, hawkers etc. PAHO has been visiting the shelter twice a week providing education on human rights and social development programmes to these children.

HR Focal

HR Focal was re-launched this month. The project provides training for teachers across Accra. During this training session information is given on fundamental human rights, domestic violence (a representative of the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit will join us to take questions to this end) and corporal punishment.

Legal Services

Currently, PAHO has three running cases having provided successful resolve for our pending cases over October. Volunteers have been attending court and visiting cells with Mr. Hans (who's very own fan club has been launched on Facebook 😊 and who has fondly been renamed 'Mandela of Ghana' by the volunteers).

One particular case stands out to highlight the achievements of the legal services in October. Mr. Hans came into contact with Kweku during a visit to the cells of Madina Police Station. On investigation Mr. Hans and our volunteers discovered that Kweku had been held at the station for 6 months; a case of arbitrary detention. With no meals or counsel provided for him Kweku's case seemed helpless until the intervention of the team. This case moved volunteers and the surge of requests to work alongside Mr. Hans has been incredible.

Resource Development

This month PAHO has produced another resource development, this time on child maintenance and custody in Ghana.

Our legal volunteers have also begun to prepare an information manual/crash course 😊 on the Legal Services in Ghana for the benefit of incoming and often inexperienced volunteers.

Research

Mental Health

Due to popular demand Mental Health Research came to the forefront in the last weeks of October. Volunteers have been enthusiastically preparing tools for this project including questionnaires and meetings. We hope to research Mental Health in Ghana, not just socially but also legally- specifically investigating the reason the Mental Health Bill continues to sit unattended in Parliament. Plans have been made to visit psychiatric hospitals and prayer camps over November.

Other Work

Human Trafficking Database

Last month PAHO proposed the development of a live national database to tackle child trafficking in Ghana. On 27th of October PAHO was invited to a two day workshop where the current non-live database was reviewed and elements of PAHO's proposed database were included in the new structure. The new instruments will be deliberated on by the Ministry of Women and Children before a final review in the coming months. The workshop was attended by members of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, the International Labour Organisation, the Immigration Service, Legal Resource, UNICEF and Rescue West Africa.

School of Social Welfare

When the idea to recruit social workers first occurred we began to investigate social work in the area of Accra and found a governmental run school of social welfare across the road from us. Having agreed on grounds of work through an MOU we have established a good relationship with the school. Current PRO Social Worker Anouska Wharton has been engaging with the school, attending lectures and preparing to deliver a workshop over November on Crisis Intervention Counseling.

We hope to continue sending volunteers to the school to inform them on issues such as rural development, mental health, disability, and criminal justice to name but a few curriculum topics.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

This month has been busy for PAHO, especially with the arrival of our Global Gap Year volunteers. Our social justice projects are progressing well, with a new football project in the works. Our mock trial program is also making huge steps and having a profound impact on both the children we are working with and the volunteers. On the legal services side, we have had many interesting cases this month, including a Road Accident Fund case, a medical negligence case, and some very interesting asylum seeker cases. Here's a summary of this month's activities

Social Justice Monthly Update

Manenberg Football Project

The aim is simple. Through sport, we hope to provide a positive outlet for the young people of Manenberg, particularly those at risk of falling into the local gang and drug culture that is so prevalent in large parts of the community. We have been in partnership with Self-Help Manenberg for a number of years, setting up sustainable, community driven projects that seek to promote positive attributes such as discipline, team work and mutual respect.

Most recently we have been assisting the people of Manenberg with setting up a weekly football league, catering for age groups ranging from 12 to 24 years. This has allowed us to develop a new partnership with the Silvertree Community Centre, based at the heart of the Manenberg community, away from the more recognised gang territories. This partnership has provided us with facilities in which to operate these leagues by utilising the large indoor space available.

Our project however remains at an early stage, as the possibilities for further expansion remain great. Through our partnership with Silvertree we are not only hoping to expand our

football programme, but also the range of sports we offer to include, among others, Netball and Table Tennis. At present, the facilities we have available require a great deal of rejuvenation, particularly the playing fields immediately outside of the community centre. We are currently in contact with local businesses and both local city and provincial government authorities to help assist us with this rejuvenation, so that we are able develop purpose built sports pitches that are sustainable and will serve the community at large.

Mock Trial

The mock trial group in Ruyterwacht has been progressing quickly. They are very bright and motivated. They have had lessons in public speaking, debate form and etiquette, analyzing arguments, and court room procedures. The group went to the Wynberg Magistrate's Court and performed a dry run through of a case script given to them the week before from Advocate, Mr. Ruiters. Despite only having the material to look over for one week, the kids did a phenomenal job in their designated roles. Mr. Ruiters taped the whole case and will use it for educational purposes, teaching students and social workers about sexual violation. The group is going back for their final run-through of the case next Wednesday, November 9th. They have made their own additions to the script to make it their own and are excited to be prepared and perfect their roles next week. The group is also interested in doing another mock trial in which they will prepare their own opening and closing statements and questioning of the witnesses. This will happen at the end of November or early December.

Manenberg Girls

For the past couple of weeks, some of our volunteers have been going to Manenberg to recruit and meet with girls about starting a new project in Manenberg. The girls are generally between 15-24 years and are school dropouts and young mothers, many of whom do not work. The girls brainstormed ideas about sports (e.g. netball and soccer), a swimming carnival, dance competition, etc. The volunteers are trying to find sustainable activities that the girls themselves can run and the volunteers can step in for support. The girls made it very clear that they do not just want to talk; they want to be active. The new program will kick off with a high tea function at the end of November; it is hoped that the activities will be up and running before the end of the year.

St. Annes

This month, volunteers focused on access to health care.

Bonnytaun

This month, volunteers focussed on gang culture around Cape Town. Volunteers took an article from the Cape Times website about violence in Lavender Hill which is a local township. The volunteers discussed how violence can tear a community apart from the inside out. The boys discussed how they feel about gangs and how they would like to get out of their gangs, but it's difficult because they are surrounded by them. They brainstormed ways to fix gang violence and how to change the communities.

Legal Services

Recently, we have cases where clients have signed documents that have precluded them from further legal recourse. In one case, the client originally came to us concerned about his unfair dismissal from a supermarket. He lost his job due to false accusations, namely that he had not turned up for work one day when he had, in fact, been present. At a meeting arranged by his employers between himself and two lawyers acting on behalf of the supermarket, he had been encouraged to sign a Mutual Termination of Employment

Agreement. Even though he had signed this under false pretences, having been told that he would subsequently be allowed to speak to his boss who would consider reinstating him to his former position, this contract was binding. Due to *caveat subscriptor*, which assumes that the signatory has a full understanding of any document to which he puts his name, and the nature of the contract which he signed, this case could no longer even be considered a dismissal; it was a mutual agreement, leaving him no recourse.

Road Accident Fund

A woman came in to see us regarding a Road Accident Fund claim. Her husband died in a car accident in 2004. She has been seeking compensation ever since from the Road Accident Fund. Her application was refused because the police said that it was her husband's fault. The accident was very serious. Along with our client's husband, 17 people were killed. Our client has had multiple attorneys, some have said that the accident was his fault, and others have said that it was not. Our goal is to investigate the claim and see if we can get compensation for her.

Medical Negligence

We have another client who has been seeing us regarding his son who has cerebral palsy. We believe that the client may have a legitimate medical negligence claim and we have been attempting to find an attorney who could take this case pro bono. We consulted with an attorney from DSC attorneys who explained that she too believed that there might be a case of medical negligence, but there must be sufficient proof so that the client can win the case on behalf of his son. The client signed power of attorney forms so that DSC attorneys can represent the client's son in court. She warned the client that the legal proceedings could take years, but she will arrange an expert to evaluate all of the hospital records to conclude whether the client's son's cerebral palsy is a result of medical negligence. If the case is successful, the client would be eligible to receive damages.

Asylum Seekers

One of our cases involves an asylum seeker from Zimbabwe. The client worked as an accountant for the EU and was a signatory for the EU's development assistance funds which are channelled through NGOs as to rural areas, as a result of the EU sanctions against the Mugabe regime. The areas that receive this funding are strengthening areas of MDC political support, the Mugabe opposition party. In late 2009 the government secret service, which is widely regarded as Mugabe's personal police, began harassing our client; coming to her house repeatedly and interrogating her about her job. One night, after a few months of this, they came to her house and took her husband for detention. After being released from a four day detention, he died in a hospital a few days later from internal injuries. Our client then fled with her three children to a different city, but was forced to return to her job in Harare to support her family after three months. Upon her return the harassment began again, eventually resulting in her own detention where she was beaten. After her release she and her family fled to Malawi, but that did not work out and they returned to Harare again. In September, when the harassment did not stop, out of fear for her family's safety, our client came to South Africa. Her original application for asylum was rejected, but we helped her prepare a Notice of Appeal and she has a hearing before the Refugee Appeal Board on December 5th. This is the first time PAHO will represent a client at an appeal hearing and Sanjay, myself and Edward are working hard to prepare a strong case.

Volunteer Research

There are a number of opportunities in South Africa to apply for community grants, from local governments and national banks, to international organisations and individuals. As a sideline

project, one of the volunteers decided that it would be beneficial for Projects Abroad and their partners to have a reference list of the different types of grants available and how to contact these organisations. The advantage of this information is that Projects Abroad can let project partners know of relevant grants that may be used for particular initiatives and to help the individuals who use their services. Furthermore, by helping project partners apply for grants, both Project Abroad volunteers and the organisations develop skills that will increase their understanding of funding processes and articulating the values and objectives of their initiative. Ideally, this would become a springboard for both Projects Aboard and their partners to build long-term links with other community stakeholders.

Finally, we are very proud of our volunteer, Samuele Pavan. Tragically, two of his friends back home in Italy passed away in a car accident. In their honor, Sam decided to collect funds from friends and family members in their honor to donate to a local organisation. Sam was able to raise 22,000 rand to Philisa Abafazi Bethu, a program that focuses on gender based violence and child abuse prevention in Lavender Hill.

LOME, TOGO

LTDH

In October we've had 2 volunteers working at the League, as Cleo left the CNDH in order to work with Katherine. *As this was the trial period for the CNDH, please note that we no longer intend to continue working with them.*

Lots of people have come in to the League this month to get their stories heard. According to Togolese Human Rights activists things always heat up at the end of the year. They claim it's to do with ancient voodoo beliefs that are still latent in society. Basically one needs to ensure certain things for the fruitfulness of the following year and sometimes the acts required are unpleasant. The volunteers have been implicated in all the following cases, often also involving the first hearing. The month has seen some very absurd affairs!

- ❖ **Environmental rights:** The League was asked to investigate an alleged contamination of corned beef at the Turkish consulate (which also functions as a store). According to the neighbouring school the stench of the rotting corned beef was so serious that it was affecting the students and teachers. Katherine and her supervisor went to investigate and later appealed to the health services. The director of the school thanked the League for handling the case, because bureaucracy-wise in Togo a Human Rights organisation must first state the environmental problem, before the state will intervene.
- ❖ **Liberty of expression:** Here one needs to note the lack of infrastructure in Togo! At the scene of a strange killing, presumably connected to voodoo practices, a group of people formed to witness the horrible scene. The Minister of Security showed up as well. At this moment a man loudly stated that there is no security in Togo, because if so, something of this nature wouldn't happen. He was immediately seized and imprisoned. This case was brought to the LTDH by the man's brother. Katherine and her supervisor visited him in prison, and shortly afterwards, he was released.
- ❖ **Right to education:** Several university students have sought help at the League after being rejected their right to education at the University of Lomé for no apparent reason. The league is collecting information in order to appeal to the Minister of Education about this recurring issue.
- ❖ **Right to heritage:** A man has had his rightful land and goods taken over by other family members after his father's death, which occurred when he was still a minor. The league will investigate.

- ❖ **Police violence:** 4 people had trouble with their land, an alleged story of fraud. This is not usually a case of Human Rights, except that the gendarmerie threatened them and arrested them in the middle of the night. Cleo interviewed them at the prison along with her supervisor.
- ❖ **Police violence:** Several students were wounded during a demonstration at Aného. According to students the police was shooting bullets directed at the crowd. According to the police they were shooting into the air in order to disperse the crowd. The facts are that several students have bullets in their legs! The league will investigate by finding other witnesses in Aného.
- ❖ **Violence/police indifference:** In Lomé, a man said to a hairdresser that certain voodoo beliefs are ridiculous. He was later beaten severely by voodoo followers that were persuaded to do this by the chief of the neighbourhood. The gendarmerie says that they can't investigate voodoo cases! The man, heavily wounded, sought help at the League. They will call out to the chief, the gendarmerie and inform the Minister of Security.
- ❖ **Police incompetence:** A woman sought help at the League because her husband is in prison. He is there for the sole reason that his face resembles a certain murderer. There is plenty of evidence obviously to support this man's innocence. Hopefully, this should be an easy case!
- ❖ **Workers Rights/corruption:** Three workers have been hugely exploited over several years and appealed to the League for help. The League has noticed that the workers' own lawyers stood in the way of their case, which hugely complicates an otherwise rather simple affair. This case is being passed directly to the President of the League, as authority is a very important aspect in Togo, especially when other lawyers (and possibly corrupt judges) are implicated.

Prison rights

When Katherine visited the prison she noted the extensive use of corruption. She wrote a report about the numerous fees one is forced to pay the guards in order to visit a prisoner. This is completely against the law and makes family visits difficult. These family visits are particularly vital in Togo, where prisoners are usually kept alive by the nutrition that their family brings them (prison food is of extremely poor value). The league will circulate this report.

Human Rights club

Cleo kicked off Human Rights lessons in the public secondary school CEG ATTIKPA. She is introducing the students to basic notions of Human Rights, inspired by the similar structure begun by PAHO volunteers in Ghana (I gave her the lesson plan from last summer as motivation).

Human Rights seminars

We had two great seminars in October. The themes were *Discrimination against women in Togo* and *Rights of the disabled and the difficulties they face in Togo*.