

Monthly report – September 2011

ACCRA, GHANA

SOCIAL JUSTICE		LEGAL SERVICES	RESEARCH
Islamic Advocacy	Community Police Unit Training	Case Work	Suicide
Intestate and Property Rights	Child Trafficking	Resource Development	Human Trafficking
HR Clubs			International Protocols

Social Justice:

Islamic Advocacy

Islamic Advocacy recommenced on 15th of September following a break for Ramadan in August. Volunteers travelled with Mr. Hans to the Islamic community of Nima to continue advocacy on Domestic Violence.

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 the month of September PAHO visited 5 communities to provide education and service in the form of the Will's Clinic. This project provides the much craved 'grassroots' work volunteers enjoy.

As well as continuing our outreaches on Intestacy this month PAHO ran a series of impact assessment discussions in the area of Abokobi. The purpose of this project was to determine how much of a difference our Intestacy and Property Rights Project has made over the summer. The response was phenomenally positive and extremely encouraging for current volunteers who had the opportunity to see the results of their work first hand.

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. Rehabilitation began on 20th of this month when school recommenced.

Throughout September our volunteers prepared proposals and lesson plans to rehabilitate abused children in Osu's governmental shelter. Shelter Rehabilitation would be an adaption of our community program but run by PAHO volunteers (unlike the community, where we will engage local volunteers). As well as providing education and support to these children our team

will continue to profile cases of trafficked children for the benefit of the AHTU and our proposed database.

Community Police Unit Training

On 8th of September PAHO Volunteers invited representatives from all the Community Watch Committees in the Greater Accra region to discuss the training of these groups in collaboration with the Community Police Unit. Having visited some of the communities over the last two weeks of the month volunteers highlighted the importance of this project and its potential contribution to policing in Ghana.

HR Clubs

HR Clubs took off once again this month. This project is an initiative of Amnesty International aiming to promote Human Rights in the secondary schools of Ghana. Due to the success of our work with Accra High last term, PAHO have added two new schools to the project: Presec and Accra Girls.

HR Clubs began on 23rd of September. Volunteers facilitate weekly clubs 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.

Legal Services

Our legal service has been going well this month with an increase in the number of cases we have taken on.

Legal Seminars recommenced in house following the busy season. This month we discussed Child Labour and Mental Illness in Ghana. Volunteers really enjoy these seminars and find they greatly enhance their understanding of the work they are doing.

Volunteers have been attending court with Mr. Hans, visiting cells and various police institutions such as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit. Over the month of September PAHO managed to free a man who had suffered wrongful detention for six months and settle a custody dispute. Custody was granted to the mother when the court found that the father of the children was indeed a violent individual who beat our client brutally and regularly.

Resource Development

This month we began to develop PAHO information resources. The first booklet completed was 'Child Trafficking in Ghana' and was written by volunteers Camilla and Jennifer.

All research found on this topic including laws, publications, statistics and other information was organised into a comprehensive booklet and has already proved very useful.

Research

International Protocols

Over the month of September volunteers wrote and compiled reports questioning how well Ghana has incorporated international protocols to domestic standards concerning the rights of women and children, migrants, labour, discrimination and crimes against humanity. The

volunteers are eager to provide training at governmental level over the coming months to address the short-comings of domestic protections.

Human 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

Over the month of September PAHO wrote a legislative review on the Human Trafficking Act, 2005. The report was shared at a seminar held at UNICEF on 23rd of September alongside our proposed database.

The meeting was extremely interactive and well received. It has been requested that PAHO present their database once again before the Human Trafficking Management Board at the end of next month.

Suicide Research Project

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.

On 8th of September PAHO held a seminar to share the information they had researched. It was a very successful event and our volunteers are now discussing how to follow up with awareness and advocacy.

Other Work

Central Press Articles:

This month our volunteers began to write regular articles for Central Press Newspaper. The articles focus on the work being done by PAHO as well as discussing general human rights issues. Over September we produced two articles about our HR clubs project and suicide in Ghana. Our next write up will concentrate on intestacy and property abuses and resolve.

International Day of Democracy:

On 15th of September PAHO celebrated International Day of Democracy. To mark the day we carried out intestacy and Islamic advocacy outreaches.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

This month has been very productive for PAHO with new ideas and new projects, adding to the already successful projects currently running. Volunteers have been planning new soccer tournaments, developing new relationships with other organisations, organising a jewellery sale for the women at St. Anne's, and working hard on a variety of different legal cases. The office continues to evolve and grow as do the volunteers working in the office.

Social Justice

Bonnytown

The volunteers have been very busy at Bonnytown over the last month, and are facing the challenges that are posed by a lower number of volunteers in the Human Rights Office, which is inevitable at this time of year. Volunteers have been getting the boys involved with a lot of work on life skills, trying to encourage them to develop and nurture a positive outlook on their future prospects, and rewarding their efforts with some outdoor sports, when the weather has permitted. We have also uncovered a lot of hidden artistic talent among the boys, and are hoping to present them with opportunities to showcase their skills.

The Women's Shelter: St Anne's

We have had an interesting few weeks at St Anne's. The volunteers have been running a series of workshops with the ladies on various topics including marriage, divorce and child maintenance, sexual offences, legal assistance and counselling services. It has been great to exchange experiences with the ladies and we have enjoyed coordinating lively discussions with them about how these issues affect their lives. In addition to the workshops, St Anne's has also hosted a jewellery sale this month to raise money for the home. The sale came about after some of the ladies at St Anne's revealed to the volunteers that they make some stunning pieces of contemporary jewellery. When the human rights volunteers saw how beautiful the jewellery was, they thought it would be great to hold a jewellery sale for the rest of the Projects Abroad volunteers. The sale was a success and we are now hoping to make the St Anne's jewellery sale a regular event.

Isibane

This month we started a new program in Nyanga East. ISIBANE is an anti-crime organisation that works in various communities in the townships and aims to empower street communities so that crimes can be reported in the appropriate way as well as looking at ways to teach vital skills to youth and parents. PAHO volunteers attended a two-week conference hosted by ISIBANE and went to various communities with ISIBANE volunteers. A week later, ISIBANE volunteers came to our office to discuss PAHO's involvement with their organisation. We are looking forward to further developing this relationship and working with them in the future.

Manenberg Girls

We are currently recruiting new participants for the Manenberg Girls program. Once we have a sufficient number of participants we will begin planning workshops focussing on life skills and self-empowerment.

Manenberg Boys

For the Manenberg Boys, we are currently in the process of establishing an indoor five aside football league at the Silvertree Community Centre. We are in the course of registering players and teams at present, with the league hoping to be under way by Monday the 17th of October. We hope the league will last for approximately four weeks, with a Finals Day to be scheduled immediately afterwards with all teams participating. We feel this competition will be an excellent way to benefit young males in Manenberg who are particularly at risk of being absorbed into the

local gang culture. Our long term aim is to build stronger ties with the Silvertree Community Centre, extending the sports available to the people of Manenberg and improving the facilities as a whole. We are hoping to do this by gaining both council and local business support, and we have had some success so far in contacting the South African Football Foundation who will be able to supply equipment and additional coaching for junior age groups.

Mock Trial/Debating Workshop

The last month has been a very exciting time for the Mock Trial program. Our new mock trial program in Ruyterwacht has stabilized with regular members. The kids are older and knowledgeable about the state of their country and passionate about their beliefs. We have been honing in on developing logical and coherent arguments which they have been very receptive to. We will kick off their study of the South African legal system by a visit to the Wynberg Magistrate's Court where our the Athlone mock trial group will have their final presentation of their court case hearing in front of Advocate Mr. Ruiters. The Athlone group has worked very hard to perfect their arguments and speeches, and this is a great accomplishment for them. The kid's will get individual certificates recognizing their dedication to the Mock Trial program.

Legal Services

Lavender Hill

We continue to get many interesting cases from our Lavender Hill clinic. One of our volunteers had a client named Gertrude. Gertrude is trying to divorce her husband (and father of her children) because he is abusive and controlling. Moreover, he is a police officer (so who knows the extent of the control he exerts). Gertrude is a qualified teacher and manager; yet she has not been able (or allowed) to find employment in these fields. She has been trying to leave her marriage for the past 10 years, but to no avail. Gertrude told one of our volunteers that she "...came into this marriage a poor person, and I don't care if I leave a poor person. I just want my independence".

Other cases

- (i) Elaine came to us at PAHO as she needed assistance in appealing a sentence for a criminal conviction against her. Elaine had been the victim of an attack and attempted rape by an ex-boyfriend (in which she suffered multiple wounds, on her body and even genitals, inflicted by him with a beer bottle). The attack was executed in the presence of her son. In self-defence, Elaine had reached for the bottle and struck back. Because of the seriousness of her injuries, Elaine was hospitalised for a few days. Upon being discharged, she was arrested by the police. Due to certain connections that her ex-boyfriend had within the community (and, therefore, with the police), Elaine was beaten by the police and charged with the attempted murder of her ex-boyfriend. The charge was downgraded to assault, but not before Elaine had spent the better part of 3 years in prison. She is currently serving a 3-year sentence under house arrest, which means she risked a lot even leaving her house to come to our office.
- (ii) We have had some interesting results in some of our cases. In one case, our client had been bitten by a dog. He believed it to be a racially motivated attack and chose to seek justice instead of a financial payout. Unfortunately, the dog owner left the

country before the case went to trial and the prosecutor dropped the charges. We are currently in the process of writing a letter to the prosecutor, asking why he dropped the charges and to see if they can be reinstated. In another case, we were able to assist our clients in getting their child returned to them after the child was taken from their home on charges of neglect. The police failed to follow proper procedure which resulted in our clients not being able to see their child for months. We wish them all of the best.

LOME, TOGO

LTDH

In September we've had 2 volunteers working at the league.

Refugee rights

Our volunteers have been very eager to set up an awareness project in the camp, but they've had two unfortunate meetings with the UNHCR. They claim that they are doing their own awareness and don't need our help. This project is put on hold for the moment.

Democratization project

Franziska went to Kara, the North of Togo for the final leg of the project. As opposed to her and the other volunteers' overall experience in August, she had a very successful trip. The lawyers working in this group were very passionate and she was allowed some influence. She also found that the audiences asked many worthwhile questions. She was responsible for the extensive report on the 5-day seminars, which helped alleviate her colleagues' workload. She was highly praised for the quality of the report.

Children's prison

Katherine and her colleague monitored the *Brigade pour mineurs* on the 28th of September. Contrary to the last visit in August, there were now two prisoners of 8 and 11 years old. As this is *not* a just solution for street children, the Ligue will put mild pressure on the director for their release to a suitable orphanage or centre.

The next step in this project is finding out what happens to the teenagers after their release and what we can do to help them rehabilitate.

Meeting with KAIPTC

The Kofi Annan foundation *KAIPTC* had a +20 person formal visit at the league on the 20th of September. Nobody at the league speaks fluently English, so they were grateful to have Franziska and Katherine working with them. The girls introduced the league, describing its basic view on democracy, peace and Human Rights and how it deals with violations of Human Rights. They also translated when questions were asked. They were very happy to see this type of encounter in action and felt that this type of cross-border partnership is important.

High profile case of Kpatcha Gnassingbé

The presidents' brother Kpatcha Gnassingbé and his co-accused were finally tried in court this month for coup d'état. Franziska followed the case in the high court of Lomé. This gave her rare insight into the nature of this case, which is filled with holes and seems entirely fabricated in the

opinion of most Human Rights organisations in Togo. Kpatcha Gnassingbé was found guilty and condemned to 20 years in prison, those tried guilty of conspiring with him to respectively 10 or 15 years.

Franziska only participated a couple of days as the extensive body search upon entering the court and the descriptive, repetitive accounts of torture became too much for her.

CNDH

Cleo began work on the 21st of September. At the moment she is still in the midst of her theoretical introduction. As aspects of law such as criminal defence and protection intrigue her, she is glad to work at the CNDH.

On her first day she attended a full-day seminar about the responsibility of corporations, sustainable development and the right to basic healthcare. This is a fresh topic in Togo.

In-house seminars

We have hosted two Human Rights seminars at the office this month. 1st seminar was presented by the network RELUTET about *child trafficking* and the 2nd seminar by the collective CACIT about *corruption in Togo*. We had a great turn-up and some interesting discussions.