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The Projects Abroad Human Rights Office ('PAHO') is an independent, non-political, non-religious NGO. Through primarily grassroots funding, PAHO was founded to promote and protect the human rights of the people of Ghana. We are here to help people understand their rights and empower the population; to speak out and to seek justice against human rights abuses. Through advocacy, monitoring and legal assistance PAHO seeks to improve the awareness and enforcement of basic human rights in Ghana.

February Project Staff

HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE

HR Director: Edward Tetteh
 HR Coordinator: Matthew Andrew
 Supervisors: Ebenezer Nii Adjetey Sowah,
 Ernest Adu, Listowel Nyemi-Tei
 Office Assistant: Evans Boateng

SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

SLUM PROFILING : HEALTH

Supervisor: Listowel Nyemi-Tei
 Liam MacAndrews
 Silvia Valente
 Sarah Weel
 Anthony Cau

FADAMA LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Supervisor: Listowel Nyemi-Tei
 Anthony Cau
 Emma-Rose Solomon
 Liam MacAndrews
 John Berke

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCAL PERSONS TRAINING

Supervisor: Ernest Adu
 Anthony Cau
 John Berke
 Silvia Valente

SLUM SCHOOL OUTREACH

Supervisor: Listowel Nyemi-Tei
 Lucas Marx
 Bethany Butchers
 Zoe Perkins
 Manon Bisdorf

CHILD PROSTITUTION ADVOCACY

Supervisor: Ebenezer Nii Adjetey Sowah
 Bethany Butchers
 Lucas Marx
 Liam MacAndrews
 Emma-Rose Solomon
 Silvia Valente

HUMAN RIGHTS CLUBS

Supervisor: Ebenezer Nii Adjetey Sowah
 Silvia Valente
 Sarah Weel
 Manon Bisdorf

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ADVOCACY

Supervisor: Ebenezer Nii Adjetey Sowah
 Sarah Weel
 Manon Bisdorf
 Emma-Rose Solomon

HUMAN RIGHTS JOURNAL

Coordinator: Matthew Andrew
 February Editor: Anthony Cau
 Assistant Editors:
 Zoe Perkins
 John Berke

PRO PLACEMENT: LEGAL AID

Supervisor: Listowel Nyemi-Tei
 Nicholas Brumer

Contact the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office

Koi Street, Osu-Ako Adjei,
 c/o Projects Abroad, PO Box 226, Accra North, GHANA.

Office Number: +233 302 766 514

ghanahumanrights@projects-abroad.org

<http://www.projects-abroad.com.au/destinations/ghana/law-and-human-rights>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.hro>

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Monthly Project Updates





Generating publicity and addressing the conflict between cultural beliefs and the law

Old Fadama is the biggest slum in Ghana, and is situated between Agbogbloshie market and Korle Lagoon. This lagoon has been cited as one of the most polluted bodies of water on the planet, due to the government sanctioned dumping of Western electronic waste within the lagoon. The government also owns the land on which the slums are situated, so the estimated 100,000 people living in the slums have settled there illegally. Thus, the government refuses to give them any services, such as, electricity, water, sewers, roads, or schools. Crime rates are high living conditions are poor; there is abject poverty and appalling literacy rates. The people within the slums are often unaware of their basic human and legal rights or do not know how to seek a resolution if these rights are violated. This is an area of Ghana which is in desperate need of help, so PAHO, in conjunction with WISEEP, has decided to set up a free legal assistance centre there. The goal is to set up a permanent, self-sustained fixture in the Old Fadama slums called the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP).

Mediation

It has been a goal of FLAP since its inception to be a place for members of the Old Fadama community to come for dispute resolutions. This service would fill a very important need for Old Fadama, as access to the courts is extremely difficult, if not impossible for many of the community members. Going to court requires access to attorneys, money, and free time. The lack of money should be obvious, but an outsider may not realize the extent to which people must work each day to make the money for their daily needs. The courts serving Accra are very inefficient and cases are often rescheduled on the day one appears for a hearing. Even if one could get free representation from legal aid, the mere commitment of time over the course of a case, creates a bar for so many.

The idea behind this project is to train a group of people to be mediators, who can then be a resource for the

community that can continue without any outside aid or assistance. Once a core group of mediators are trained and gain sufficient experience, they will be able to train others, thereby allowing this service to grow as needed and to continue indefinitely. Mediation can be used for all manner of disputes in Old Fadama. The most common are those concerning landlord/tenant issues, abuse of all nature, child maintenance and succession/inheritance.

Mediation is different from court in that it is entirely voluntary with the goal being to guide and assist the parties in reaching their own agreement. A good mediator can often get seemingly entrenched parties to reach a mutual agreement on a matter. The fact that people come to mediation is evidence that they do want to find a way to resolve a dispute, but simply cannot do it on their own. Often the problem is merely the parties' inability to communicate in a businesslike manner and have a way to safely move off their entrenched positions. When an agreement is reached, it gets written up and signed by everyone to ensure compliance. The agreement is in essence a contract that could be enforced in the courts. Mediation cannot be expected to be successful with all parties or disputes.

Getting the training program started faced some frustrating starts and stops. A short training manual was designed and then the training was rescheduled a few times. The last rescheduling was due to a heavy overnight rain that left most of the city just a little wet in the morning. In Old Fadama there are no drainage ditches or other infrastructure to handle heavy rains and it's not uncommon to find homes and shops where you must step down from the road to enter. As you can imagine, rooms get flooded and streets become impassable. The training was cancelled to allow the trainees to tend to the work caused by the rains.

The first day of training occurred the next day, February 26, 2014. The roads that day were still very muddy and filled with puddles. Four men have agreed to volunteer their time to train and serve as mediators. They come from all walks of life, an engine mechanic, a fashion designer/clothes maker, a weaver/cloth maker, and a scrap dealer. The first day went well and a lot of material was covered. It is hoped that by the 3rd or 4th session, the

trainees can start observing or participating in mediations, as experience is the best teacher for becoming a good mediator. Progress with the training will be reported in next month's journal.

Outreach

For the month of February, FLAP continued to conduct outreaches to the residents of Old Fadama. FLAP Community Outreaches serve a dual purpose; to increase awareness on the services of FLAP and to advocate for human rights.

As in previous months, the outreaches for February were focused on domestic violence and sexual violence. These are issues which are common in Old Fadama and which many of the residents are not aware of. A heavy focus was also placed on reporting issues of domestic and sexual violence. It has become clear that many residents, especially women, are reluctant to report matters of domestic and sexual violence as they are either afraid to do so or lack confidence in the police force. Some residents are not even aware that particular acts constitute domestic and sexual violence. The FLAP team, therefore, reiterated the free support that FLAP can provide to any victims of domestic and sexual violence.

The first presentation for the month of February was held at a private toilet block in front of approximately eight residents, with half being women. Due to the presence of males in the audience, the topic of rent disputes was also presented. Many of the residents in Old Fadama rent the premises in which they inhabit, meaning that many are parties to a rental agreement. The problem is that many of these are oral agreements and, therefore, the tenant is vulnerable when there are disputes with the landlord. The FLAP team placed a heavy emphasis on the need to have a written rental agreement which clearly states the length of the tenancy, the amount of rent to be paid and any landlord and tenant duties which are agreed to. The need to record in writing the amount of rent that has been paid to the landlord by the tenant was also discussed. The FLAP team emphasized that FLAP can assist in the drafting of a rental agreement and a rent card, which can be used to record rent payments.

The second Flap Community Outreach was conducted next to one of the main thoroughfares in Old Fadama. The presentation was initially conducted in front of eight men, however, this later swelled to approximately 15 residents, two of those being women. This highlights a problem currently being faced by the FLAP team. During the presentations, the audience is continually changing with residents coming and going. This is not only disruptive to the presentation but also means that many of the audience members miss significant portions of the presentation.

The discussion on sexual violence proved to be contentious among the audience members and gave rise to a heated discussion. One interesting question pertained to women who wore revealing clothing and whether this implies sexual consent on the woman's behalf. The justification was that if a woman objects to sex then she should not have worn revealing clothing. The FLAP team discussed with the audience that women have a right to wear any clothing that they so desire and that consent is always required for sex to not constitute rape.

Many of the audience members were interested in the law on defilement and, specifically, what happens if they are mistaken over the age of their sexual partner. Several members of the audience argued that Ghanaian girls often appeared more mature than what they actually are. This can lead to men becoming innocently mistaken over their age.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the audience members showed concern over police mistreatment and suspect's rights. The audience outlined how the police rely on information elicited from paid informants to arrest suspects in Old Fadama. Many of these allegations are often fabricated by the informants as a means to obtain food. The audience appeared to be very concerned over this issue and demonstrated to the FLAP team the dissatisfaction of residents in law enforcement. As a result of this, an outreach educating and informing residents on suspects rights will be presented to those concerned residents.

A highlight from this outreach was the positive reception that was received. Many of the audience members requested the contact details of FLAP

and stated that they would pass this on to family and friends. This supports one of the aims of FLAP Community Outreach as a means to communicate to the residents of Old Fadama about the free and independent services and assistance provided by FLAP. To assist with this, the FLAP team decided that it would be beneficial for information flyers to be created and distributed at each outreach which provides the contact details for FLAP and information on the services which it provides.

Overall, FLAP Community Outreach has enjoyed a successful month in continuing to educate residents of Old Fadama on domestic and sexual violence issues whilst increasing awareness on the services which FLAP provides.

Human Rights Focal Persons Training: Teaching

Discussion and training on the rights of the child in the classroom.

Focal Persons Training is dedicated to engaging with important members of the community and providing them with different perspectives, and further insight into various human rights issues. It aims to discuss current practices, beliefs and thinking within Ghanaian institutions and looks at how these can be adapted, improved and generally better informed of their human rights responsibilities.

February saw the continuation of the newly formed Focal Persons Training Project (FPT) which involves a group of volunteers travelling to schools and discussing with teachers alternative approaches to education. The FPT team for February visited two primary schools, both located in Tema.

The central focus of our presentations was over the use of corporal punishment within the classroom. Under Ghanaian law, corporal punishment in schools is lawful. Pursuant to the Education Act (1961), the Ghana Education Code of Discipline for second cycle schools provides for caning up to six strokes by the head teacher or someone

authorised.¹ Additionally, under s 31(i) of the *Criminal Code 1960* (ACT 29), the use of force or harm on the authority to correct a child is justified.² As a result, it is now the situation in Ghana that corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for crime and in prisons but is lawful in schools.³

It is widely acknowledged that the use of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools is a common method of punishment. 75% of children involved in a 2012 study by Plan International said that teachers were the main perpetrators of violence in schools. Government research involving 4,164 children found that at school, caning was the main punishment, experienced by 71% of children.⁴

Corporal punishment in schools is entrenched within the Ghanaian education system and proves to be extremely difficult to remove as teachers' primary method for discipline. The Ghanaian Education Service (GES) simply states the country is divided on this issue and notes the difficulty of issuing a complete ban on corporal punishment. Rather, the GES has left the responsibility to the various heads of schools to set limits.⁵ With this in mind, the FPT team were mindful not to appear to be lecturing the audience but rather to educate the teachers on the adverse outcomes of corporal punishment and to share alternative approaches to classroom discipline. This conforms to the aim of FPT to foster interactive discussion and debate.

The presentation was carefully split into three main categories; the physical rights of the child in the classroom, the emotional rights of the child in the classroom and alternative approaches to maintaining discipline within the classroom. A common theme operating throughout the presentation was the teacher as a role model. This is particularly so in low socio-economic areas where children may spend more time with their teachers than their

¹ *Education Act 1961*

² *Criminal Code 1960* (Act 29) s 31(i).

³ Sharon Owen, "Briefing for the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review – 14th Session 2012" *Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children*, 2012.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Deborah Wiafe, "Corporal punishment cannot be banned- GES", *My Ghana Online*, 20 June 2013, <
<http://www.myghanonline.com/1.14276891>>.

parents due to the long days people put in for work and the amount of toil required to run a home. Teachers are in a position of power and authority. Through their words and actions, they show their students how to behave. The lesson that teachers demonstrate when they use the cane in the classroom is that violence is the way to solve problems. Not surprisingly, this message is readily learned by the children, thereby creating even more disciplinary problems.

In order to support the adoption of alternative methods of punishment in the classroom, the physical and emotional rights of the child in the classroom were discussed. It was stressed by the FPT team that even in the classroom, children do have rights. These rights are slightly different as to adults as children often need special care and protection that adults do not. Additionally, the FPT team discussed with the teachers the adverse effects on a student's mental and social development as a result of being hit by a cane. Emotional abuse of a student was emphasised as the emotional rights of a child are often neglected compared to physical rights due to emotional abuse being far more difficult to detect. As was highlighted in both presentations, emotional damage from such events can cause problems that last a lifetime. For example, children who suffer from emotional violence often have low self-esteem, which often leads to depression, anxiety, anger and poor social skills.

The difficulty with phasing out the use of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools is that it is considered to be an effective method of punishment. The typical Ghanaian classroom has considerable differences from a typical first world classroom. It is not uncommon for the teacher to have 50 or more students in their under resourced classroom. The teacher is faced with a daunting task of keeping control of the classroom and using the cane is a quick and easy fix from the teacher's point of view. The FPT asked the teachers what they do if a child answers a question incorrectly and were told that they cane him.

In view of this environment, it was integral for the FPT team to provide alternative disciplinary methods that can be used as an alternative to corporal punishment. In fact, these are considered to be more effective than

corporal punishment because they emphasise proper or good behaviour rather than just emphasising bad behaviour.

Such alternative methods include:

- *Time outs – where the misbehaving student is removed from the group;*
- *Creating extra work for the student to complete as a consequence for their bad behaviour.*
- *Positive reinforcement – involves devising a system where points or some type of marks are issued or for good behaviour, such as completing a task or simply for behaving well. A reward can also be offered for getting a certain number of points which thereby creates an incentive for students to behave correctly.*
- *Confiscating an item of the misbehaving student.*

It was also explained to teachers the difficulty of children concentrating in school in an environment of fear and intimidation, i.e., if any error leads to caning, and emphasized that it is as much the teacher's duty to get each child to understand each lesson as it is the student's duty to learn it.

It was continually stressed that it is essential that with every form of punishment, that the student is told exactly why he or she is being punished and what they should have done differently and that the classroom should be a safe place for the student, one where they feel comfortable and confident to learn.

What was a highlight of both presentations, especially in the second visit, was the passionate discussion that followed. The teachers in the audience challenged the ideas that the FPT team put forward by sharing their reasons for using corporal punishment in their classrooms and why they considered it an effective method of punishment. Many questions centred on the fact that using the cane is a quick and effective method to punish misbehaving students, especially for teachers with a large number of students. The FPT team reiterated the importance of trying to adopt alternative approaches to using the cane, especially for small behavioural matters. One response which was of

importance was that teachers use the cane to punish children who answer a question incorrectly in class. The FPT team again reiterated the point that the classroom should be a safe place for the student which fosters positive learning. Therefore the teacher should endeavour to explain to the student why their answer was wrong and how to solve it correctly.

The use of corporal punishment in schools is a controversial issue within Ghana and one that is deeply entrenched in the education system. It is obvious that change will be a slow and evolutive process. It is important that through presentations such as these that the teachers will begin to consider the adverse consequences of caning on the long term development of children and think about and, hopefully, begin adopting the alternative approaches instead.

Child Prostitution Advocacy.

Results of the Fact Finding Research

The issue of child prostitution is a major challenge facing all of West Africa. In response to increased reports in the media and a growing concern in Ghana of a problem that still fails to be resolved, the Human Rights Fact Finding Team set about investigating the prevalence of child prostitution, its causes and potential solutions. The team conducted background research as well as its own field investigations in the area of Nungua. This project has resulted in the development of recommendations for future projects to be created which can best assist the local communities tackle this challenge. One of the findings by the team was that many young girls first become exposed to the dangers of child prostitution during school years. This aspect of child prostitution was the area that was identified to be the focus of the follow on project- Child Prostitution Advocacy.

The Teacher Advocacy Sessions

Following the work of the Fact Finding team in January, the Child Prostitution Advocacy team chose to target its efforts in February towards addressing child prostitution by collaborating with schools in Nungua. In conjunction with Mr. Nicholas Atiogbe from the National Commission for Civic Education



Teachers in Nungua discuss Child Prostitution and share experiences from within their schools

(NCCE) Projects Abroad was able to organise a series of advocacy sessions with teachers from the surrounding area who held roles within their respective schools which related to girls education and child protection. The sessions were conducted once a week, each week in a different cluster of schools. Each advocacy began with the team of volunteers presenting the details and findings of the field research conducted in Nungua to the teachers in attendance. Following this, the session's objective was to engage the teachers in a discussion about their own thoughts and experiences with the issue at their schools. Subsequently, both teachers and the team would share their ideas on initiatives and strategies to possibly implement in schools in order to address and combat child prostitution in the community. The teacher advocacy sessions were facilitated by the Coordinator of Girl Child Education in Lekma. The Coordinator was able to arrange different groups of teachers to attend each of the meetings which made the advocacy possible.

The team conducted its first advocacy on the 10th of February and followed this with another on the 17th. On the first of these dates the team took the approach of running the meeting in the style of a workshop. The volunteers regularly asked questions and opened the forum for the teachers to offer their own experiences and thoughts on the issues being discussed. Rather than a one way presentation, the sessions

were intended to be as interactive as possible to ensure all parties were collaborating and sharing their knowledge.

The second advocacy outreach was conducted in a different format to the first at the suggestion of the Coordinator. In this session the team of volunteers presented the entirety of their research, findings and ideas for potential ways to address the issue at the outset of the meeting. This was then followed by an open forum where each teacher offered their own experiences, perspectives and thoughts on how to best address and combat the problem in schools.

From the combination of the team's field research and their collaboration with the teachers during the advocacy sessions, the major contributing factors for children entering the sex trade in Ghana were identified. These factors are as follows:

Poverty - Financial desperation is the overwhelmingly dominant factor pushing young Ghanaians into prostitution. Selling sex is recognised by many as the fastest way to earn money for young children in Ghana. This fact works in conjunction with the hard reality that many children have little or no financial support. When children are left wondering where the money for their next meal will come from, it is hardly surprising that many would seek any means of raising money possible, even one as extreme as prostitution.

Lack of Parental Influence – Due to a variety of reasons, many parents in Ghana are not able to exert their influence to protect and shield their children from the danger of becoming lured into prostitution. In a number of cases the extent of parents' working hours makes it impossible to maintain control over their children's activities. Additionally, several teachers raised the point that the subject of child prostitution is often a very uneasy issue to talk about in Ghanaian culture and therefore is often shied away from by parents.

Peer Pressure - A factor that featured in both secondary literature and when speaking with school students was the role that peer pressure plays in child prostitution. Particularly the strong influence of other students and older sisters involved in the sex trade. The school girls indicated it was well known that there were certain groups of other students involved in prostitution who would pressure others to enter the trade that associated with their group.

Challenges

As this particular project was commenced in February, the volunteers needed to navigate certain challenges in order to ensure the team worked as effectively as possible with the teachers during the advocacy sessions. In the meeting held on the 10th of February the team found that during the earlier parts of the session, when questions were posed to open up discussion, the teachers were very reluctant to contribute to the conversation. This meant that initially, the session did not run as smoothly and interactively as planned. However, as time went on, all the teachers eventually began putting forward valuable insights and suggestions regarding the topic. In the debrief, the team was informed that the teachers had expected to initially just listen to the findings of the volunteers and as such were not prepared to contribute early in the session.

In preparation for the second child advocacy session the team had made some adjustments to the plan for the second meeting. However just before the commencement of the second advocacy the volunteers were informed of the format change that was detailed earlier. This meant that the team was required to adjust the presentation at short notice. However, this ended up resulting in a session that flowed better

and allowed for maximum contributions from the teachers themselves.

The Way Forward - Findings and Outcomes from the sessions

A major theme that permeated the child prostitution advocacy sessions with the teachers was 'the way forward' in terms of what can be done within the school environment to combat the issue of child prostitution. From drawing on the research conducted in the Nungua area, the team developed a range of potential ways to combat the major problem of child prostitution that is facing the entire community. What proved extremely valuable in the sessions were the contributions and suggestions from the teachers of both proactive and reactive ways to counter child prostitution from within the school environment. The wisdom and experience provided by the teachers during the first advocacy was able to be incorporated into the subsequent presentation in order to ensure that the broadest set of ideas was offered to each group. Whilst dozens of strategies were put forward by both volunteers and teachers, several of the recurring and most prominent are listed below:

Trading skills workshops - An idea proposed by a teacher was for workshops to be run to teach the girls basic skills like arts and crafts from which they could earn an income. This would then eliminate the need to resort to the sex trade for financial survival.

Engage with parents - All parties to the discussions firmly believed that actively engaging with parents is an essential step teachers need to take in this issue of child protection. This engagement can take several forms. The first is raising awareness amongst the parents about the prevalence and risks of child prostitution. The other proposals for the parents included putting child locks on TVs/computers and changing the mindset of parents so that they feel willing and comfortable to discuss the issue of prostitution with their children.

Positive peer pressure - Students would be encouraged to support each other in staying away from prostitution and talk about the issue so that they can draw strength from their group of fellow students.

Positive role models - Another proposal from the teachers was that the children should be presented with people to look up to and aspire to as positive influences. These people should be from Ghana or the local community.

Teachers as support for the children - Something recognised before the sessions and further reinforced during them was the valuable role that teachers can play in protecting and supporting the children. The importance of teachers as role models for the students was stressed as well as making themselves available for the children to confide in if they are facing difficult situations.

Tackling the issue of child prostitution in Nungua, and in general Ghana and West Africa, is undoubtedly a huge challenge and one that will certainly take some time. Just as the factors driving this problem are diverse, the strategies and avenues employed to combat it will need to be equally as broad. The school environment is a tremendously influential place for children and as such, it is somewhere where the fight can be taken to child prostitution on the front line. This project will carry on in the month of March and will hopefully continue to receive a positive response from the teachers it engages.

Slum Profiling: Health

Assessing the needs of the residents of Old Fadama.

In a yearlong project, PAHO is profiling Old Fadama, Ghana's largest slum with a population of approximately 80,000 people.

In January 2014 PAHO began investigating the health and sanitary conditions within the slum.

This included an assessment of its sanitary conditions, its available health facilities as well as the prevalence of illness and disease. The findings and recommendations of this research will form a new health based project for future volunteers to work on to appropriately combat the issues faced.

During the month of February, the Slum Profiling Project continued its work in profiling the health situation in Old Fadama. After reviewing the data gathered during January through interviews with local residents, businesses and community groups in Old Fadama, it was clear that access to healthcare within Old Fadama remains a critical issue for residents.

For a community of approximately 80,000 people, there is no dedicated medical clinic. Therefore, the community nurses and NGO's which provide valuable assistance to maternal health matters and sexual health matters are the only external providers of medical assistance. As a result, a significant amount of dependence is placed on the chemical stores operating in Old Fadama to diagnose health matters and to provide relief.

February proved to be a slower month in terms of visiting Old Fadama and conducting interviews. The Slum Profiling team was only able to visit Old Fadama twice for interviews. Interviews were conducted with three single mothers, three public shower and toilet operators and Frederick Opoku, the Secretary of Fadama Showers Operators Organisation.

Although these were not the targeted groups as outlined in last month's journal, their contribution and insight into the health situation in Old Fadama was very beneficial.

Single Women

Due to the nature of Old Fadama as a slum marred in poverty, single income families are even more vulnerable. It was therefore important to try and gain some understanding of how such women accessed health care within Old Fadama and what their options are when they or their children become ill. The ages of the three women interviewed ranged from 24 – 40 and each of the women have been living in Old Fadama for at least six years. The data gathered from these interviews provided a significant insight into their daily lives. All of the women agreed that the biggest health problems facing residents of Old Fadama are mosquitos and malaria, the heat from overcrowding and the smoke from the burning of electronic waste by the various scrap dealers. The issue of malaria has been a common concern among a majority of the people interviewed thus far. According to the women, it is not uncommon for someone to contract malaria seven

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times during the course of the year. Indeed, one woman had already been sick three times this year with what she suspects is malaria. This high rate of malaria can be attributed to the fact that the woman did not possess and use mosquito's nets.

In terms of access to healthcare, it was made clear that the only option for these women in times of medical emergencies was to visit the nearest hospital, despite the fact that two of them were not registered with the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). As ambulances do not travel into Old Fadama, the sick are often required to be carried to the roadside where a taxi can be taken to the hospital. As can be imagined, this process would be significantly difficult during the middle of the night where visibility is poor and the number of available taxis is significantly reduced. The women were also not able to quantify the amount of money spent on their own and their family's health. Due to the fact that two of the women were not NHIS registered, they often viewed this expenditure as a 'waste' due to always being required to pay money before any medical assistance was administered. Therefore it was not surprising to hear that they will only seek medical help when they are seriously ill.

Shower Operators

Exactly how clean water was made accessible to the residents of Old Fadama was a question of intrigue for the Slum Profiling Team. According to Mr Opoku, there are over 500-600 public showers and toilets operating in Old Fadama. These are all privately owned and a fee is charged for their use. Currently, the price for the use of a toilet is 30 Ghana Pesewas. The price of 1 bucket of water from the shower operators is 50 Ghana Pesewas which is set by the Fadama Showers Operators Organisation. Operators are highly discouraged from charging more than the set price. Due to the nature of Old Fadama as a slum with informal housing, these showers and toilets remain the only way for residents to bathe and use the bathroom. Therefore, these are hugely popular with most shower and toilet blocks each being used by more than 200 people per day.



Slum Profiling team talk with mothers in the slum on access to healthcare

The water for the showers flows directly from the government-owned Ghana Water Company into Old Fadama. Operators who receive running water are charged between 180-250 Ghana Cedis per month. The flow of this water is unreliable and it is common for the water to not flow at all. When this occurs, the price for one bucket of water increases to 2 Ghana Cedis, which in a low-income settlement can be severely detrimental.

Shower operators are also the main way for residents to obtain clean drinking water. However, this can also have severely adverse health effects. In order to reach operators within Old Fadama, the water travels through narrow pipes. A high number of these pipes either pass very near or in Korlee lagoon. This lagoon is severely polluted and is classed as one of the ten most polluted areas in the world.⁶ It is not uncommon for these pipes to sprout leakages which causes polluted water from the lagoon to mix in. This obviously severely contaminates the water that then flows to the shower operators to be used for showers and for consumption. The only other alternatives for clean drinking water are the water sachets sold throughout the community. However, these pose a significant financial burden on most residents.

Although the charges for the use of a toilet or a bucket of water may seem

small, daily use of these facilities for some residents add to their financial concerns. Therefore the only alternative options are for residents to relieve themselves in public areas. This not only contributes to the terrible sanitary conditions of Old Fadama but increases the vulnerability of residents to serious illnesses and disease. However, the operators interviewed said that for those who cannot afford to pay, they are able to pay their debt at a later time. According to the operators interviewed, approximately 98% of customers are able to pay.

Both the showers and toilets are routinely cleaned. In fact, toilets are cleaned twice a day with disinfectants and the waste is disposed fortnightly by a dedicated waste truck. This service currently costs \$250 Ghana Cedis and is expected to increase by those operators interviewed.

What Next?

Due to the broad scope of health in Old Fadama, the interviewing process will continue into next month. While already a wide array of people and groups have been interviewed, it is crucial that we talk to the scrap dealers of Old Fadama. Pollution from the toxic smoke is regularly cited as a significant risk to the health of residents and therefore it would be highly beneficial to have an insight into the scrap dealer's perspective on the situation.

At the conclusion of the interviewing process, a detailed report will be tabled which will offer an in-depth analysis of the Slum Profiling teams findings whilst also recommending possible

⁶ David Biello, "E-Waste Dump among Top 10 Most Polluted Sites", *The Scientific American*, 17 December 2013, <<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/e-waste-dump-among-top-10-most-polluted-sites/>>.

projects to be adopted by PAHO that can help assist on some of the issues addressed in the report. At this stage of the project, there are two project proposals; the first being community outreaches which educate and provide advice to residents on both general health and sexual health issues. This can be held in co-operation with both the community nurses and the Pro-Link clinic. Secondly, a mosquito net 'drive' could be organised in which mosquito nets can be donated to residents in a bid to help reduce the risk of malaria, especially among woman and children.

Human Rights Clubs

Accra High School

HR-Clubs is an Amnesty International initiative whose intent is to work in cooperation with local partners to develop after school clubs dedicated to human rights education in various schools. The goal is to eventually have an HR Club in every school across the globe. PAHO acts as Amnesty's partner in Accra. Volunteers from all over the developed world come here to give lessons in local schools on human rights. Each club has a supervisor, but the students organize a majority of the activities by themselves. There are also student club-executives who act as the leaders of the HR club and are monitored by a volunteer. Violence Against women

The HR Club was held in Accra High School, where students demonstrated an overwhelming passion and enthusiasm for the human rights issues that were discussed each week. For the volunteers involved in the club, it was an immense pleasure to teach and interact with these very intelligent and eager students.

During each session, the students were presented with a different topic in order to highlight some of the gross human rights violations that have occurred in Ghana. The first session comprised of approximately fifteen to twenty five students. As it was the volunteers' first encounter with the pupils, the presentation was designed to gauge the extent of the students' knowledge of human rights, by discussing it generally. This was achieved through an activity where students were shown different rights, such as the rights of religious freedom and to live with a family that cares for

you, and then asked to stand next to the right which they believed to be the most important. Students were then required to discuss their reasons for the choice.

The volunteers were amazed by the extent of the students' knowledge, energy and willingness to share their opinions. There were two rights presented and the children were asked to advocate for one versus the other: the right to play and rest and the right to work. The volunteers were hesitant to mention these two rights, as they, mistakenly, thought that no student would advocate for their right to work. However, the volunteers were happily astonished to see how many children believed in the importance of this right relative to the right to play and rest.

the mentally disabled. Mental disability is a huge issue in Ghana, with people often sent to only two places to receive support: prayer camps and hospitals. Prayer camps are places that have been set up by the church to give people care and support. The volunteers explained to the class that these prayer camps do not meet their objective, as they believe that people with mental disabilities are possessed by evil spirits, and therefore treat them inhumanely. It has been reported that the mentally disabled are chained to trees and forced to fast for days. Since most of them are chained, they are forced to do everything in the same spot (eat, sleep and go to the toilet), and can only leave after they have received permission.



The Students at Accra High in mid-debate

Following the presentation it was evident amongst the children that two opposing sides to the issue had formed. One group argued that everyone had the right to work and earn money, including children, who should not play and rest, but rather earn money to help their parents and home. This group clearly valued hard work, believing it to be their duty to help with the household chores, despite it requiring a 4am start. In opposition, other students argued that their right to work should be limited to their education, and not be extended further until adulthood.

The second session was conducted with a focus on the rights of

The team thought that this would've been the most interesting topic, but surprisingly the students did not show much interest. Even though they acknowledged that these actions constituted human rights violations, they also possessed similar beliefs to the prayer groups: that two out of ten of the people with mental disabilities are possessed by evil spirits. Indeed, one pupil recounted a priest who told his congregation that someone would lose their mind on the following day. A couple of days later a girl, during the mass, started screaming and the priest, "to make the evil spirit leave her body" began to slap her. The team was astonished by the story but even more

surprised seeing that the students seemed entertained by it. The volunteers eventually learned that the students were not interested in the mental disability discussion because it did not directly affect them. They prefer to discuss about issues that are present in their lives on a daily basis. With this knowledge, the team decided to discuss corruption in the third session.

Corruption continues to be a global menace in spite of the many campaigns aimed at combating it. In 2013, Ghana was ranked 63rd out of 177 countries, with the police service being the most corrupt institution. Moreover, the perception of corruption in this country has worsened in the past two years. The citizens acknowledge that the same institutions which are perceived to be corrupt are actually the same institutions mandated to address the problem of corruption. Because of this, citizens do not report corruption because they do not expect any serious actions against the perpetrators.

On the third session the volunteers had prepared different activities for the students, who seemed eager to share their opinions. They were divided into three groups, with each to briefly give an example of corruption that they have experienced, witnessed or read in newspapers. Once again, the team was amazed by how much the students knew about this issue and how frequently they encounter it. They were then asked to share their thoughts and experiences with the class. The volunteers were stunned by one girl's frank admission that, indeed, her father is a corrupt policeman; and even though she knows it is wrong she cannot vocalise her opinion because he's her daddy. This student showed great courage to speak up because, given their age, most children have a propensity to tease each other.

The team explained to the class the different kinds of corruption, starting with bribery which is the most common, followed by nepotism, embezzlement and fraud. The class then discussed what they believed were the reasons for the rampant corruption in Ghana. All agreed that it is a normal part of Ghanaian life, and an easy way to bypass difficult situations and avoid bureaucracy. It is easier for a taxi driver to pay five Ghana cedi to a policeman instead of losing his driving

license and livelihood. Another student added that bargaining for a fair price occurs even when it involves bribery. Moreover, the student affirmed that this common issue is a by-product of poor education, weak governmental institutions and poverty.

Overall, the volunteers were pleasantly surprised to see how much interest and knowledge the students had. The three sessions went extremely well, and both the students and volunteers made considerable gains from their involvement in the HR Clubs.

Violence Against Women Advocacy

Discussions on sexual violence in domestic settings.

Violence Against Women Advocacy sends volunteers out to speak with groups of women in various different communities on their rights. The team aims to educate women on the various types of violence, learn about their experiences and inform them of their human and legal rights. The volunteers also seek to gain a wider understanding of the impact of the social and economic problems facing these women, and what prevents them from achieving their basic rights. Through this we hope to create a safe and open forum for discussion of sensitive issues, and in the future develop ways to combat those problems.

In the month of February, the Violence Against Women Advocacy project dealt with the issue of sexual violence in domestic settings.

Statistics show that in Ghana one in three women suffer physical violence by a current or former partner.⁷ The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (UN, 1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private".⁸

⁷Amoakohene, M., 'Violence Against Women in Ghana: A Look at Women's Perceptions and Review of Policy and Social Responses', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 59, 2004, p.1.

⁸United Nations., 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women', 20th December 1993,

Physical and sexual spousal abuse is a common occurrence in Ghana with a wide array of violent acts committed against women including rape, defilement, assault, threats, murder and psychological abuse.⁹ Outreach programs have revealed that many women are not aware of their rights and accept their circumstances as hopeless. Reported cases of violence against women are on the rise,¹⁰ indicating that awareness is increasing, but there is still a huge gap that this project is trying to help fill.

On February 7 of 2014, the Violence Against Women Advocacy team went to Abokobi, a district in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, where approximately twenty women attended a discussion on violence against women. Interestingly, the woman raised the issue of economic violence as a leading concern for women in their community. Economic violence is a human rights issue, facilitated by personal, socioeconomic, socio-cultural and environmental factors.¹¹ This includes life situation factors such as low education, low income, financial dependency, poverty and resource-scarce environments and problems associated with childbearing and child maintenance. Outreach has found that much economic violence against women is justified and accepted by Ghanaians as normal practice. While customs make it illegal for women to have more than one partner, men can, and often do, have more than one sexual partner, wife or family.¹² As a result, women routinely find themselves left to maintain an autonomous economic role in order to support themselves and their

<<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>>, [accessed: 24/02/2014]

⁹Amoakohene, M., 'Violence Against Women in Ghana: A Look at Women's Perceptions and Review of Policy and Social Responses', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 59, 2004, p.2.

¹⁰Amoakohene, M., 'Violence Against Women in Ghana: A Look at Women's Perceptions and Review of Policy and Social Responses', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 59, 2004, p.3.

¹¹Amoakohene, M., 'Violence Against Women in Ghana: A Look at Women's Perceptions and Review of Policy and Social Responses', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 59, 2004, p.4.

¹²Ankomah, A., 'Ghana' <<http://www.sexarchive.info/IES/ghana.html>> [accessed: 24/02/2014]

children.¹³ This scenario is contrary to the customary or expected role of women as standing in an inferior position in making financial decisions within the household and dependent on men as the predominate provider of capital in the family.¹⁴

On February 11th and February 20th 2014, the Violence against Women Advocacy team visited two different communities in Abokobi to raise awareness of violence against women. About twenty women attended both meetings. The discussion focused on sexual violence, specifically spousal rape and its illegality in Ghana. For many years, the Ghana Criminal Code 1960, under section 42(g), protected husbands so they could not be found criminally responsible in cases of marital rape.¹⁵ The reasoning for protecting men in these circumstances was that it was presumed such protection for men was needed to preserve the sanctity marriage. In 2007, the Domestic Violence Act was passed stating that husbands can be criminally prosecuted for marital rape if they have sexual intercourse short of their wife's consent. Nonetheless, a woman's standing under statutory and customary law maintains the continuance of their treatment as their husband's property.¹⁶ Volunteers sensed that in terms of the legal treatment of marital rape, Ghana has made a move towards prohibiting marital rape. Nonetheless, the majority of the women who attended the Violence Against Women Advocacy, retained the customary view that a wife cannot ever refuse any advance by her husband. Marital rape is a devastating occurrence committed by a husband or wife who has vowed to love the other spouse through marital pledges.¹⁷

Notwithstanding, marital rape is a debilitating reality in Ghana which stresses the need for Government to expose sexual violence as an issue, and prosecute it whenever it occurs in Ghana.¹⁸

Violence against women is a violation of human rights with devastating consequences. Volunteers noted that violence against women often occurs in intimate relationships, and is considered to be a private issue between a man and a woman. Additional advancement needs to be made in progressing women's human rights and their rights against violence generally in Ghana

¹³Ankomah, A., 'Ghana'
<<http://www.sexarchive.info/IES/ghana.html>
> [accessed: 24/02/2014]

¹⁴Ankomah, A., 'Ghana'
<<http://www.sexarchive.info/IES/ghana.html>
> [accessed: 25/02/2014]

¹⁵Archampong, A., 'Marital Rape- A Women's Equality Issue in Ghana', September 2012,
<http://theequalityeffect.org/pdfs/maritalrapeequalityghana.pdf> [accessed: 25/02/2014]

¹⁶Archampong, A., 'Marital Rape- A Women's Equality Issue in Ghana', September 2012,
<http://theequalityeffect.org/pdfs/maritalrapeequalityghana.pdf> [accessed: 25/02/2014]

¹⁷Amoakohene, M., 'Violence Against Women in Ghana: A Look at Women's Perceptions and Review of Policy and Social Responses', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 59, 2004, p.4

¹⁸Archampong, A., 'Marital Rape- A Women's Equality Issue in Ghana', September 2012,
<http://theequalityeffect.org/pdfs/maritalrapeequalityghana.pdf> [accessed: 25/02/2014]



Human Rights in Focus

Human Rights in the Media

Promoting Children's Rights in Ghana

Zoe Perkins

February saw the media highlighting the importance on children's rights issues in Ghana with many articles reporting on Ghana's progress in supporting these rights. One of the more important topics was the signing of a grant contract between the European Union and Ghana for an amount of 600,000 Euros (GH¢ Two million). The funding from the grant will be distributed between three beneficiary organisations to enable them to promote human rights issues and the well-being of children in Ghana. The grant, which falls under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), was signed by Mr. Claude Maerten, Head of EU Delegation to Ghana and representatives of the three beneficiary organisations namely, Maata-n-Tudu Association based in the Northern Region, International Needs Ghana (INGH) in the Central Region, and the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre.

Mar. Konlan Lambongan from the Maata-n-Tudu Association said that they will use the funds allocated to implement the action "*Lifting Social Barriers to the Application of the Children's Rights Act*"¹⁹ in the Northern Region of Ghana. The contract began on the last day of January and will run until 2016. The association will use peer education to mobilise community support in lifting social barriers, implementing Ghana's *Children's Act* and other relevant legislation aimed at protecting children and reducing the occurrence of child rights abuse in mainly three districts of the northern

region of Ghana; Tamale, Bunkpurugu Yunyoo and West Mamprusi.

The INGH, also receiving a share of the grant, will promote an enhanced safe and protective environment for children that will help prevent and respond to child abuse and exploitation at the community level. This will be carried out through capacity building and networking within informal community level child protection structures. The districts to benefit from the program include the Gomaa West, Gomaa East and Effutu municipalities.

The third beneficiary of the grant contract is the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre. Mrs Dorcas Coker-Appiah, said the Centre will implement the action "*Reducing the prevalence of early/forced marriages amongst adolescent girls in the Nkoranza North district and Kintampo*".²⁰ The EU is providing about €180,000 towards the project to promote and protect the rights of adolescent girls in Nkoranza north and Kintampo municipal in the Brong Ahafo Region. Specifically, the project seeks to reduce the prevalence of early/forced marriages among adolescent girls in the Nkoranza and Kintampo districts by 30 percent over the two year period.

Head of EU Delegation to Ghana, Mr. Maerten, said that "*the objective of the EIDHR was to contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, consistent with the EU's foreign policy as a whole*".²¹ He explained that the instrument was also designed to help civil society become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights. In doing this, it aims to complement programs that cooperate directly with governments and focus largely on developing public institutions. Mr. Maerten noted that the EIDHR offers independence of action, which is a critical feature of cooperation with civil society organisations at both local and national levels, especially in areas of democracy and human rights.

Executive Director of the Gender Centre, Mrs. Dorcas Coker-Appiah, spoke on behalf of the beneficiaries and said there were many good human rights laws in Ghana but implementation of such laws had become a problem, particularly due to weak institutions. She commended the EU for helping support children in Ghana and called for more financial aid to assist the government's effort at building stronger institutions in order to protect and defend the human rights of children.²²

The issue of Children's rights in Ghana was further highlighted in a number of media articles in early February, with the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on the 6th of the month. The day called on Ghanaians to fight this human rights violation of girls and women and marked this with the aim of further educating the public about child abuse.

FGM is a human rights violation that affects an estimated five girls each minute worldwide with another 180,000 girls at risk of being subjected to FGM each year. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection stated that "*The practice of FGM is still ongoing in Ghana in spite of national and international laws that prohibit it*".²³

FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure, which has no health benefits for girls and women, causes severe bleeding and problems urinating. Others include cysts, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth with an increased risk of newborn deaths.

¹⁹European Union signs contracts with three beneficiaries of Grants under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights', *Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Ghana*, 31 January 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ghana/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140131_01_en.htm, (accessed 25 February 2014).

²⁰*Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Ghana*, 31 January 2014,

²¹'EU Signs Grants to Promote Children's Right', *World News*, 3 February 2014, http://article.wn.com/view/2014/02/03/EU_Signs_Grants_To_Promote_Children_s_Right/, (accessed 25 February 2014)

²²D. Coker-Appiah, 'EU Signs Grants to Child's Right', *Ghana News Agency*, 30 January 2014, <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/eu-signs-grants-to-promote-child-s-right-70145>, (accessed 21 February 2014).

²³A. Brown, 'Ghana Celebrates Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation', *AFK Insider*, 9 February 2014, <http://afkinsider.com/41792/ghana-celebrates-day-zero-tolerance-female-genital-mutilation/>, (accessed 24 February 2014).

More than 125 million girls living at this moment have been affected by FGM with Africa being where the practice is largely performed. National statistics show that an average of about 4 per cent of Ghanaian girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 years have gone through the practice. While this percentage is lower compared to other African countries, the actual numbers of girls translates into hundreds of thousands.²⁴

The ministry further stated that current statistics in comparison to those 30 years ago indicate a decline in the practice. However, even though a majority of Ghanaian communities were now shunning the procedure, parts of the country still practiced FGM. In the upper west region of Ghana where FGM is most prevalent, 60 per cent of women aged 45 to 49 have undergone FGM while 16 per cent of girls aged between 15 to 19 years have been affected.²⁵

The ministry stated that FGM continues to be a worrying concern and that measures were being put in place to ensure a total end to the practice. In recognizing the practice as a violation of women's human rights and as a form of child abuse, the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions urge states to pursue a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, systematic approach to address the problem. (The) *"Government of Ghana is promoting interventions that will help end the practice and this includes improving support for victims, protecting women and girls at risk as well enforcing anti-FGM laws"*.²⁶

In addition to the legislation that criminalises FGM, there is the need for a pragmatic intervention that will influence the social dynamic of the practice and bring about behavioural changes towards its eradication. *"In this regard the government, through the Ministry and its Stakeholders, is collaborating with the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture to work systematically with traditional*

authorities and community leaders to ensure that attitudes and conformity to FGM is not condoned among some cultures".²⁷

It would also intensify the campaign for behavioural change by highlighting attitudes that favour the abandonment of FGM. The main aim is to create a negative public reaction against FGM whilst improving the relationship with other actors in order to improve the status and opportunities for girls through formal education, skills training and economic opportunities. The Ministry is commending civil society organisations, the media, local communities, development partners and individuals for their efforts towards the eradication of FGM over the past decade in Ghana.

"As more needs to be done to achieve total eradication, the Ministry reiterates its commitment to a deepened coordinated collaboration with significant stakeholders to champion the total eradication of FGM and all forms of violence against women and girls to guarantee them a dignified life".²⁸ The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is mandated to ensure the promotion of gender equality through the mainstreaming of gender considerations to all persons, especially the vulnerable.

Overall, the national media reported on a number of pressing human rights issues, with children's rights being particularly prevalent this month. The significance of the EU grant and the heavy reminder that FGM still occurs in Ghana were issues of interest to the PAHO. In conjunction with outreaches and the independent research that the volunteer's conduct, media monitoring is an instrumental tool for PAHO to keep up to date and well informed of important human rights issues present in Ghana. Indeed, the PAHO have

been involved in various projects concerning children's rights and welcome any additional information on the issue that may add to the volunteers' knowledge and understanding.

Perceptions of difficulties accessing justice in Ghana at both ends of the social scale

Liam MacAndrews

A topic that is synonymous with Human Rights is that of justice. Justice, at least in its legal context, is at the heart of no less than seven of the 30 articles of the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The prominent and forthright presence of justice in the Declaration, a document which so many in the international community look to as the foundation of fundamental human entitlements, is evidence of the extremely high value given to the idea of justice across the world. Human experience however, can attest that so often justice remains just that, an idea. Accounts of human struggles which attempt to see true justice is ensured, are neither unique to, nor exempt from any nation or any part of the world.

It would be impossible to hear the story of every Ghanaian who had come upon difficulties in their own search for a just outcome when it was needed most. The perception that one gains from spending time with people who devote their days heavily involved in the justice system is that there is no shortage of struggle for justice. The aforementioned challenges appear to be faced at both ends of the social scale, from citizens amongst the nation's poor right up to circumstances where wealth and power are involved. It should be noted that at least in terms of perceptions of corruption as formulated by Transparency International, Ghana ranks as the world's 63rd least corrupt country of the 177 scored by the index. In the context of West Africa, Ghana scores far better than other nations in the region (except perhaps Senegal, which is ranked 77th).

The 80,000 residents of Old Fadama, Ghana's largest slum, face an uphill

²⁴Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 'Ghana marks Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM', *Business Ghana*, 8 February 2014,

<http://ghanabulletin.com/2014/02/09/ghana-marks-day-of-zero-tolerance-for-fgm/>, (accessed 24 February 2014).

²⁵A. Brown, 9February 2014.

²⁶*Business Ghana*, 8 February 2014.

²⁷Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 'Ghana marks Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM', *Ghana Bulletin*, 8 February 2014, <http://ghanabulletin.com/2014/02/09/ghana-marks-day-of-zero-tolerance-for-fgm/>, (accessed 24 February 2014).

²⁸ 'Ghana Marks Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM', *Ghana News Agency*, 7 February 2014, <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/ghana-marks-day-of-zero-tolerance-for-fgm-70487>, (accessed 24 February 2014).

battle in almost every aspect of daily life. The need for law assistance is as real in Old Fadama as in any other community. However the stark reality for the residents of the slum is that access to justice is almost always either elusive or non-existent. As to be expected, the residents of Fadama cannot afford to pay for legal services and 79% of the general Ghanaian population have no knowledge of the free Legal Aid services available to them. The Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP), opened in 2013 and is located in the community of Old Fadama. FLAP has begun to provide people with access to legal aid free of charge, yet knowledge of the work FLAP does is still limited amongst the residents of Fadama. The services FLAP provides are in civil disputes, however criminal law matters must be referred to the police. The director of FLAP, Frederick Opoku, says that people from Fadama face an uphill battle in their pursuit for justice if they are involved in a criminal complaint. He says that action will often not be taken to seek the proper administration of justice unless the relevant party can make some sort of a facilitating payment to the police. The inevitable result is that situations are not resolved in a manner through which justice would dictate.

Challenges in seeking the administration of justice in Ghana are not only faced by the poor of nation. In fact, great frustrations are also very much felt by those at the other end of the social scale. The former Executive Director of Ghana's Serious Fraud Office and prominent Accra lawyer, Mr. Theophilus Codjoe says that investigating and prosecuting matters of corruption and serious fraud involving members of the public service or government is at its best a very difficult task and at its worst an exercise almost in futility. Mr Codjoe points to Ghana's lack of an independent public prosecutor as a major obstacle in effectively policing the integrity of the nation's public bodies. Section 88(3) of the Ghanaian Constitution states that "the Attorney-General shall be responsible for the initiation and conduct of all prosecutions of criminal offences." This subsection gives a member of the government ruling at the time total control over which persons to put to trial and perhaps even more tellingly, whom not to pursue. It is precisely this state of affairs which Mr. Codjoe says resulted in a situation where by the

time he left the Serious Fraud Office, he had no less than seventy receipts in the office of Ghana's Attorney-General regarding matters to be prosecuted which never went to court. Mr Theophilus Codjoe headed the investigation which led to the first successful prosecution of any past or present government minister in Ghana since the end of the first republic in 1966. However, according to Mr Codjoe the circumstances which made this possible was a change of government in Ghana where the new administration wanted to appear tough on corruption and as such put ministers of the former government to trial. Nonetheless, there are many people, including Theophilus Codjoe, who say that it is imperative to the credibility of the Ghanaian legal system for an independent public prosecutor to be established so that matters as serious as corruption and fraud are dealt with properly.

Although in many situations, the major battle is to simply have a matter heard in court, it is evident that challenges faced in the pursuit of justice in Ghana do not end once the parties have their day in court. After spending time attending a number of matters in the various courts in Accra, from the Magistrates Court right up to the High Court of Ghana, one cannot help but be slightly taken aback by the various anti corruption signs and posters visible in and around the court precincts. When there are large government signs on display outside two of the three highest courts in the nation profoundly declaring "Justice is NOT for sale!" there can be no doubt that integrity in the administration of the law is a major issue confronting Ghana. Outside certain courts, the last thing one lays eyes on before entering is a poster instructing all persons to desist from offering or accepting 'gifts'. It is somewhat confronting from the perspective of someone totally unaccustomed to these messages that are being presented in such a frank manner while in close proximity to places which should be the most uncompromising upholders of justice and integrity. It would be extremely hard for those seeking justice to maintain faith and not become wholly disenchanted with the entire legal system.

Whilst justice (along with freedom) is one of the two fundamental ideologies

which are enshrined upon Black Star Square in Accra, the reality is that it is very often difficult to attain. This struggle is by no means confined to the poor of Ghanaian society, as challenges in seeing justice served are also faced by the people who deal with large scale fraud and corruption. Those in Ghana who take up the fight every day to see true justice prevail in the legal system are invaluable to the nation and its citizens. It will surely only be through determined and persistent efforts that the road to justice for each person in Ghana will be made an easier one to walk down.

Hausliche Gewalt gegenüber Frauen in Ghana und Deutschland

Manon Bisdorf

Häusliche Gewalt gegenüber Frauen in Ghana und Deutschland

Weltweit sind sechs von zehn Frauen innerhalb ihres Lebens mindestens einmal Opfer häuslicher Gewalt gewesen.²⁹

Ghana bildet dabei keine Ausnahme. Alle vier Formen, die häusliche Gewalt ausmachen, treten hier auf. Denn neben der allseits bekannten physischen Gewalt, zu der z. B. auch das Fernhalten von Essen und Trinken zählt, und psychischen Gewalt, gibt es noch wirtschaftliche und sexuelle Gewalt.

Wirtschaftliche Gewalt liegt vor, wenn jemand die Einnahmen und Ausgaben von Frauen kontrolliert, ihnen den Zugang zu Bildung verweigert oder Druck auf sie ausübt, um ihr Einkommen zu erhalten.

Sexuelle Gewalt hingegen bezeichnet jeglichen sexuellen Kontakt oder Berührung, die nicht einvernehmlich geschehen. Auch wenn Vergewaltigung und sexueller Missbrauch innerhalb einer Ehe vorkommen, ist das eine strafbare, den Menschenrechten widersprechende Handlung.

²⁹

<https://www.womankind.org.uk/2013/03/effects-of-violence-in-ghana/>

In Ghana wird jedoch kaum eines dieser Verbrechen angezeigt, da die kulturelle Vorstellung verankert ist, dass die Ehe dem Mann das Recht gebe, über den Körper und das Leben seiner Frau zu bestimmen. Zudem wird den Frauen oft das Gefühl vermittelt, selbst für die Taten des Mannes verantwortlich zu sein, sei es wegen der provozierenden Kleidung, falscher Worte, Fehler im Haushalt oder der Verweigerung von Sex. Opfer jeglicher Gewalt schämen sich deshalb, der Polizei Bericht zu erstatten und für die strafrechtliche Verfolgung der Täter zu sorgen. Erschwerend kommt hinzu, dass für einen Prozess Zeugen benötigt werden, die die Frau z. B. während der Vergewaltigung schreien gehört oder die Tat beobachtet haben.

Deshalb landen nur wenige Fälle tatsächlich vor Gericht. Von 12.706 gemeldeten Fällen von häuslicher Gewalt wurde in 954 Anklage erhoben und in nur 118 Fällen kam es zu einer Verurteilung. Zudem muss man davon ausgehen, dass die wirkliche Anzahl von Gewaltausübungen gegenüber Frauen deutlich höher ist.³⁰

Auch in Deutschland ist häusliche Gewalt ein Thema, dass oftmals totgeschwiegen und tabuisiert wird. Daher befindet sich die Dunkelziffer der tatsächlichen Gewalt ebenfalls über den 40% der Frauen in Deutschland ab 16, die angegeben haben, Opfer körperlicher oder sexueller Gewalt zu sein.

Laut einer Studie des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend bestätigten 25% der befragten Frauen zwischen 16 und 85, Opfer von Gewalt im häuslichen Umfeld zu sein oder diese erlebt zu haben. Demnach seien Frauen durch Gewalt innerhalb ihrer Beziehung bzw. Familie mehr bedroht als durch andere Verbrechen wie Einbruch.³¹

Das weit verbreitete Vorurteil, Frauen aus unteren sozialen Schichten seien stärker bedroht als andere, erwies sich ebenfalls als falsch. Auch das Leben in höheren Gesellschaftsschichten bietet keine Garantie für ein gewaltfreies

Leben, häusliche Gewalt ist dort keine Seltenheit.

Anders als in Ghana ist es für die meisten Frauen in Deutschland jedoch einfacher, ihre Lebenspartner zu verlassen oder ihren Tätern zu entkommen, da sie wirtschaftlich unabhängig sind und alleinlebende Frauen gesellschaftlich genauso anerkannt werden wie Verheiratete. In Ghana werden Frauen jedoch ausgeschlossen und stigmatisiert, wenn sie ihre Ehemänner anzeigen oder sie verlassen. Auch die Versorgung und das Wohlergehen der Kinder, die oft der Anlass für Gewaltdelikte sind, kann leichter gewährleistet werden, da staatliche Unterstützung in Anspruch genommen werden kann und es mehr Möglichkeiten der Kinderbetreuung gibt, sodass die Mütter ihrer Arbeit nachgehen können.

Doch selbst wenn, weitere Gewalt verhindert werden kann, die psychischen Folgen für die Opfer sind fatal. Angst, mangelndes Selbstvertrauen, Bindungsängste bis hin zur gesellschaftlichen Isolation sowie Depressionen können Konsequenzen für Opfer sein. Diese psychischen Folgen wirken sich wiederum auf den Erfolg im Job aus, sodass es wahrscheinlich ist, dass Frauen, die Gewalt erlebt haben oder immer noch erleben, ihre Arbeit verlieren. Die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass Opfer ihren Mann anzeigen oder sich von ihm trennen sinkt dadurch drastisch, vor allem in Ghana, wo täglich ein Kampf ums Überleben stattfindet und sicher ist, dass man ohne Job und Mann kaum eine Chance hat.

Um das Problem der häuslichen Gewalt in Ghana zu verringern, muss deshalb zuerst die wirtschaftliche Unabhängigkeit der Frauen sichergestellt werden. Zudem muss die Gesellschaft zu der Erkenntnis gelangen, dass die Ehe nicht das Überschreiben aller Rechte der Frau auf den Mann bedeutet und sie immer noch über ihren Körper und ihr Leben bestimmen kann. Auch die Akzeptanz für alleinlebende Frauen sollte erhöht werden, sodass die Möglichkeit besteht, Täter anzuzeigen oder sich von ihnen zu trennen, ohne seinen Platz in der Gesellschaft zu verlieren.

Um dies zu erreichen, besucht eine Gruppe der Freiwilligen regelmäßig verschiedene Kommunen rund um Accra und hält Präsentationen zum Thema Gewalt gegenüber Frauen. Ziel

ist es, das Thema in den Fokus der Dorfförmlichkeit zu rücken, Diskussionen anzuregen und die Menschen so zum Umdenken anzuregen.

Eine Initiative der ghanaischen Regierung zur Bekämpfung des Problems ist eine Unterabteilung der Polizei, die DOVVSU. Die Aufgabe der **“Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit“** besteht darin, sich mit allen Fällen häuslicher Gewalt zu befassen und die Opfer z. B. durch die Bereitstellung kostenfreier Anwälte zu unterstützen. Problematisch ist jedoch, dass der Service der Einheit an sich kostenlos ist, doch die Ratschläge oft mit Folgekosten verbunden sind, die die Opfer nicht tragen können. Dazu zählen beispielsweise ärztliche Untersuchungen im Krankenhaus, die für den Prozess als Beweismittel wichtig sind, zu denen ohne Geld jedoch der Zugang verweigert wird.

Bis zur Bekämpfung der häuslichen Gewalt in Ghana ist es noch ein langer Weg, auf dem sich gesellschaftliche sowie kulturelle Vorstellungen ändern müssen, damit die Gewalt gegen Frauen nicht mehr gerechtfertigt werden kann und die Diskriminierung von alleinstehenden Frauen verringert wird und so den Frauen, die Opfer von Gewalt sind, ein Ausweg aus ihrer Situation ermöglicht wird.

Weltweit sollte deshalb immer wieder an die Rechte der Frau erinnert werden, um Täter davon zu überzeugen, dass ihr Handeln gegen die Menschenrechte verstößt und Opfer selbstbewusster zu machen, damit sie ihren Peinigern entkommen und in Fällen von Gewalt Anzeige erstatten.

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<https://www.womankind.org.uk/2013/03/effects-of-violence-in-ghana/>

³¹

<http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/gleichstellung>

From the HRJ Coordinator

Mediation Training begins

February 2014

As Coordinator here at PAHO I am often talking with the volunteers on some of the frustrations of working on human rights projects, coupled with that of still trying to understand a work and life culture totally unlike that of our own. February has brought with it an introduction to those frustrations, with adverse weather, lack of attendance and last minute changes all contributing to some project interruptions.

That being said, the strength from the office has come through the volunteers' positive attitude and perseverance. With the help of our volunteers, we have been able to begin the vital work of training a new group of mediators within the FLAP office, we've continued our research into the health issues within Old Fadama, developed our human rights training for teachers, and ran two additional projects, despite fewer numbers than last month.

We've also began work on our 'Book drive' fundraising efforts to help the schools in Old Fadama in such desperate need of extra resources. We'll be calling out for the support of organisations and donors in the month of March.

We've had some good news this month too, as PAHO have now reconnected with the Osu Welfare Facility which many volunteers have worked in over the past. We will once again be able to send volunteers with an interest in Social Work into the Centre to support the work they do. The Centre looks forward to welcoming their first volunteer there in mid-March. Updates to follow in next month's Journal.

There are challenges to come in the month ahead, with very few volunteers joining us in the office there will no doubt be a knock on effect to the amount of work we can take on. However, if February has taught us anything, it's that these challenges can be overcome with the right attitude. It highlights the potential we all have to achieve something in however short a time we have.

Matt Andrew

HRJ Staff

Coordinator

Matt Andrew

February Editors

Anthony Cau
John Berke
Zoe Perkins

Project Report Contributors

Human Rights Focal Persons Training

Anthony Cau

Fadama Legal Assistance Programme

Anthony Cau
John Berke

Slum Profiling: Health

Anthony Cau

Human Right Club

Silvia Valente

Child Prostitution Advocacy

Liam MacAndrews

Violence Against Women Advocacy

Sarah Weel