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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.

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Monthly Project Updates



Boys' Remand Centre

HIV, colonialism and communities

The Boys' Remand Centre is one of the many Social Justice projects carried out by the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office. The boys in the Remand Centre are all awaiting trial. The crimes they have been charged with range from petty theft to gang rape. As the nature of the charges varies, so does the length of time the boys spend in the facility. For this reason some of the boys might only be present once, and others may be present throughout our time with PAHO. The team aims to educate the boys on the importance of human rights and social principals, as well as, to promote a positive and supportive learning environment in which they are equipped with the basic skills necessary for continuing citizenship upon their release.

This month, the team has been continuing the practices of past volunteers by delivering presentations and teaching basic skills to the boys in the centre. There has been an increase in class size within the past month, and there are now ten boys on remand in the centre. Although this has presented some unexpected challenges—in terms of the disparity in educational ability and heightened peer distraction—it has also enabled a range of viewpoints to be discussed during class and a vibrant atmosphere to develop.

The first session this month involved a presentation on HIV. The discussion included an outline of what HIV is, how it can be contracted, ways to prevent the spread of the virus, and how to live with it should a person become infected. The discussion of this topic was important, given the prevalence of HIV in Ghana. In addition, there is a need for sexual health education, as at least two of the boys have been charged with crimes involving sexual assault. Surprisingly, it also became apparent that some of the boys were unaware that HIV could be contracted from sexual intercourse, so both the boys and the volunteers present were grateful that preventative methods had been discussed.

The second presentation—as requested by one of the boys during a previous visit—concerned colonial history, including foreign occupation, subsequent trade development, and slave trading across various continents. More modern parts of Ghanaian history, such as, the independence movement and the present ethnic and religious conditions of Ghana, were also covered. Some of the boys, due to minor prior knowledge, were highly enthusiastic about the presentation and responded actively to the questions raised by the volunteers. The volunteers felt that the boys responded well to a discussion on topics that varied slightly from human rights issues; thus, going forward, they

decided that this variation between sessions would be beneficial in terms of encouraging the boys to positively engage with each other on a wide range of topics.

Another presentation delivered focused on living in the community. The volunteers explained what a community was, using relevant and relatable examples; such as, the remand centre itself, a football team, or a school to demonstrate this. They subsequently discussed community values, an individual's rights within the community and under Ghanaian law, and the responsibilities borne when living in a community. This was a particularly useful discussion, given that the boys will eventually be released back into their own communities, pursuant to an acquittal or after serving a prison sentence. The discussion regarding the importance of responsibilities within a community and the newfound awareness of the broader consequences of their actions was necessary in an effort to prevent the boys from committing other offenses.

Further presentations delivered this month have included a range of topics from a brief history of the airplane to an interactive discussion on the dangers of drugs, alcohol and smoking; which involved showing the boys a picture of the human body and collectively labeling the different areas that can be affected from abuse of these substances.

Following practices set by previous volunteers, this month's team has continued to divide the sessions into two parts. The second section is taught basic mathematics and English skills. At the beginning of this month, it was obvious that a number of the boys were struggling with simple addition, subtraction, division and multiplication problems. Hand-outs were, therefore, provided, giving the more challenging problems to the more advanced whilst devoting more one-on-one time to those who were struggling. Multiplication tables were also discussed, and a printed copy of the multiplication tables has been left in the centre in order for the boys to eventually learn them by heart. The weaker students responded very positively to this initiative. One boy even revised his two and three times table in anticipation of the next session.

This month, it was also decided that the team would focus on Basic English during the sessions. Those with a weaker grasp of written English were given more basic 'fill-the-gap' problems to work through with a volunteer, whilst the more advanced English speakers were introduced to concepts such as metaphors and similes, which led to some amusing examples from various boys.

Overall, the volunteers this month felt that the boys had responded well to the time spent with them and were eager to learn more from the volunteers with each new session. In the past, it might have been difficult to see an immediate positive

impact, particularly given the transience with which the boys arrive and leave the centre. This month, however, it has been noted by all volunteers that, the general feeling of the centre is one of optimism and ambition. The outgoing volunteers sincerely hope that the progress made this month will provide a good foundation to build upon for future volunteers.

Girls' Correctional Facility

Customising classes to specific needs

The Girls' Correctional Centre is a juvenile remand centre for girls convicted of a criminal offence, such as petty theft or prostitution. Although in a government institution, the girls are denied access to education, so the volunteers hold classes in basic mathematics and English, as well as training in human rights, responsibilities and life-skills.

In the month of July, the Girls' Correctional team continued to visit the centre on Wednesdays and Fridays. Before starting visits this month, the team analysed previous lessons done with the girls. Before, most lessons were done on a particular topic for each visit. The topics ranged from science, history, culture, English, mathematics, to life skills. While the team had tried this framework before, they recognized problems with this structure. While the girls were learning about a wide variety of topics and material, they were still struggling in basic skills. For example, two of the girls still struggled to identify letters and read basic words, while the other girls have not been challenged to develop the reading skills they possess. The team also found the same problem in the girls' mathematics skills. Therefore, this month, the team focused on the development of these skills.

First, the team worked on assessing the exact skill levels of each of the girls in both English and mathematics. The most advanced girl can read at a relatively high level, thus the team determined that she could begin reading chapter books. The next most advanced girl can read simple words and sound out harder words. Given the limited resources and books the team found at the centre, they decided to start her off with simple books and build up to more challenging chapter books. The other girls are at similar levels to one and other. Both of them have trouble recognizing certain characters, and mainly recognize a few words simply by memory. With these girls, the team focused on beginning to go through basic phonetics and letters.

The volunteers also worked on assessing their individual mathematics skills. The efforts of assessment have been frustrated by the fact that the girls are not always

consistent in their demonstration of knowledge. After a couple of sessions, it was determined that the most advanced girl could work with fractions and some basic algebra. This particular girl had expressed interest in becoming an accountant, so the team focused on developing mathematics skills that will help her succeed in this field. While she works on her more advanced mathematics, one of the other girls was quite eager to learn multiplication and division; and the other two girls started work on double-digit addition and subtraction.

To help develop these skills, the team began to break up each two-hour lesson with at least half an hour of English and half an hour of mathematics. The most advanced girl began to read a chapter book, which she seemed to enjoy. However—upon looking at the level of reading and speaking to the social worker, who is usually with them—the team realised that, for next month, this girl should probably read a book that is a little less challenging. The next most advanced girl at the centre also struggled with the level of texts given to her. However, she enjoyed the challenge of sounding out the harder words, so the teams' next goal for her is to find material that is challenging yet suitable. The other two girls worked on identifying letters, words, and sounds. In order to facilitate some fun group activities, the team involved the whole group in games of letter bingo and word bingo. From these games, the two less advanced girls were able to recognize more letters and words, and the more advanced girls enjoyed something that was not too challenging for them. The two less advanced girls were beginning to recognize words with similar sounds. For example, one of the girls read the word "bat" and then noticed that the sound was the same in the word "sat". For next month, the team is hoping to continue progressing through the sounds of each letter.

With mathematics, the most advanced girl worked through the beginning of basic algebra. She learned some of the concepts quickly, and was excited by the new challenge. Through next month, the team is hoping to introduce more algebra and fractions to this girl. The girl at the next level started with more complex addition and subtraction problems and simple multiplication. In the next month, the team is hoping that they can focus on her mastering the multiplication table and starting some more complicated multiplication and division. With the other two girls, the team started simple addition and subtraction to gain confidence, and gradually started to increase the difficulty of

the problems. Hopefully this month, these girls can master addition and subtraction and begin learning simple multiplication. Overall, they are also hoping to develop consistently progressive material, so that the team and the girls can truly observe improvement.



Outside the welfare centre

In addition to developing reading and mathematics skills, the team also focused on growing closer to the girls and helping them develop life skills. The girls began requesting lessons, such as, a session on STIs and HIV/AIDS. The team prepared presentations and discussions on these topics, accordingly. While discussions were decent for some of these topics, the social worker had informed the volunteers that they had already covered some of that material. Despite this, it always seemed that half the girls seemed interested in discussing the issue, while the other half were not as engaged. After one of these lessons, the team noted that this seemed to be a regular challenge with two of the girls. After analysing the problem, the team realized it could be an issue with self-confidence. These girls do not feel like they are as advanced as the other two and are, therefore, uncomfortable engaging with the material. The team had also noticed that one of the girls often says, "I can't" when faced with challenges. These two girls will often look to a social worker or a member of the Girls' Correctional team to give them an answer. Hence, one of the goals for the month was to build self-confidence.

The team attempted a women's rights presentation, however they felt that the girls did not really identify with the information presented. Thus, for the next lesson, the team decided to do some exercises in self-confidence. Each member of the team and each girl was given a sheet of paper to write positive aspects about themselves. Then, the group passed around the papers, and everyone wrote a positive comment about each person. At the end, the paper was returned to its original person. The girls appreciated the comments and reacted well to the exercise. The team hopes to continue activities like this to encourage positive self-

image and foster their newfound sense of confidence.

Finally, the team also spent about fifteen minutes each lesson playing and having fun with the girls. For a couple of sessions, the girls have danced with the volunteers and showed them traditional Ghanaian dances. For another lesson, the girls showed the team some of the games that they like to play. Both the team and the girls enjoy this brief deviation from routine of lessons, and it has helped the team build closer relationships with the girls. At the end of the day, the girls enjoyed teaching the team as much as the volunteers have enjoyed teaching them.

Children's Shelter

Where to even begin?

The Children's Shelter is part of the same welfare facility that encompasses the Girls' Correctional and the Boys' Remand centres. A majority of the children in the shelter have been abused and are either orphans or runaways. Projects Abroad has developed programs to develop their social skills, life skills and English in order to facilitate the development of the children into responsible, emotionally stable and well-equipped members of society. Volunteers build relationships with the children, allowing them to feel comfortable enough to talk about personal matters. This is vital for their growth, since many of the children have troubling backgrounds. Assistance and input from Projects Abroad volunteers is essential, as the shelter has limited resources, staff, and educational programs.

This month the structure of lessons was changed from previous classes. Before, the lessons were inclusive and encompassed the entire shelter. This tactic made for loud, chaotic lessons that provided for little learning. As the children are all at varying levels of English ability, it was decided to split the class into groups according to ability which allowed them to learn at their own pace.

This modification started with introduction of class notebooks. The volunteers provided one for each student, which excited the children. By ensuring that everyone got one pen and one notebook, there was limited chance of fighting over resources. The children responded well to the fairness and equality that was fostered by this process. One of the volunteers created alphabet worksheets, which had words beginning with each letter of the alphabet, pictures of the word, and sentences with that word. These were photocopied and distributed randomly around the classroom. The intention was that the beginners would copy out the letters, the intermediate in English would copy out and learn the words, and those more advanced would copy out the sentences and learn nouns, adjectives, and

verbs in the sentences. This proved quite successful over the course of the month. The whole class ethos changed; the children were more focused, better-behaved, quiet, and excited to have their work marked. This allowed the volunteers to go around the class, and provide some individual attention. It also allowed the volunteers to assess their reading skills. Whilst they could all copy out what was written in front of them, when the team came to correct their work, it became apparent that many of the children could not read what they had written.

When each child was given their notebook, the volunteers were able to note down the names and ages of all the class members. Through this process, the volunteers discovered that of twenty students, there was an age range from seven to nineteen. However, the number of students changes almost every class, which is the nature of the shelter.

The calm and quiet atmosphere in the class allowed the volunteers to enforce class rules. One of the previous classes had been dedicated to creating rules, which provided the foundations for much needed discipline within the shelter. The children helped the volunteers to cultivate rules, which included no talking over others, no grabbing, no harming others, listen to what you are being told, treat others how you wish to be treated and, finally, no gossiping—a rule which was both suggested and supported by many of the students. If any of the children were caught breaking the aforementioned rules, one of the volunteers dealt with it accordingly. The new calmness of the class made clear any misconduct. When a child was warned or reprimanded verbally for their behavior, it further served as an example for the rest of the class, which provided for an element of deterrence. In many cases the volunteers are not made aware of the backgrounds of the children, however it has become apparent that many of them have never had to follow rules before. Or—worse still—some may have been severely beaten or abused for disobeying their caretakers and guardians. Therefore, it was integral for the team to remain sensitive and understanding. The volunteers have begun treating bad behavior as an opportunity to discuss why the child chose to act in a certain way and correct the behavior for the future.

This month, the class was split into three sections according to ability: the yellow group, the red group, and the green group—which are the colours of the Ghana flag. After a few weeks of utilizing the Alphabet worksheets, the volunteers were better able to assess each child's ability in reading, writing, and speaking English. The volunteers then divided them accordingly. The yellow group was the most advanced in English. These children could speak, read and write English reasonably well. They had both the desire and the ability to progress farther. At first, they began learning new English vocabulary, utilizing photocopied

sheets from a dictionary in the local languages—Twi and Ga. The concept was to acquire textbooks and short children's novels, which the volunteers photocopied. These new resources facilitated the expansion of the children's education. The green group included the children who could speak a small amount of English, copy letters and words, but could not actively read or spell. The focus of that group was on reading, phonetics, and spelling. They continued to use the alphabet sheets to practice reading and began to learn pairs of letters such as "th", "sh", "oo" and "oa". Finally, the red group, which was the largest group of the class, consisted of those children who speak no English and have little or no knowledge of the English alphabet. They were the most challenging to teach, primarily because of the language barrier, but also due to the fact that they tended to be relatively disruptive and hyper.

One of the volunteers was assigned to each group for the duration of their time on the project. This allowed them to create bonds with the children in the group. These bonds facilitated relationships that became strong enough for the volunteer to assess and improve each individual child's education. When new students joined the class, they received a new notebook, were assessed upon ability, placed in an appropriate group, and introduced to that group's volunteer. It is important that the volunteers urged the existing class to welcome and encourage any new children, as they had just been brought to the shelter—potentially from highly distressing circumstances.

Unfortunately, one of the boys suffers from a mental disability, which prevents him from being able to learn any English or join in on the class activities to the extent of the other children. He receives none of the support that one would expect to be standard in a more westernized country; where he would undoubtedly be placed in a separate facility appropriate for his needs. It is very difficult to prevent him from disturbing the other children. He requires constant care, and, sadly, this responsibility has seemed to fall on the other children at the shelter. Provided there were enough volunteers, the team decided that, during each lesson, one volunteer would take the responsibility for entertaining and watching this boy. It was their intention that he enjoyed himself but did not disrupt any of the other children's valuable learning time.

Alongside English lessons, the volunteers have ensured that, at the end of each lesson, there is at least fifteen minutes dedicated to fun. This can come in the form of games, football, singing, dancing and playing. Some of the more successful games played included duck-duck-goose, ladders, and team races. Often, the social worker would lead the class in Ghanaian songs and dances. Whilst most of the children would get involved in songs and dancing, some of the class would sit on the side, silently watching. It was hypothesized that they did not speak the language of the songs or were

not familiar with them. They tended to be ignored, as they watched on unhappily. It is important that all of the children are included in the recreational part of the lesson. Therefore, next month, the volunteers hope to introduce new games, songs and activities in which the whole class can participate.

The shelter should be a place of refuge, rehabilitation, safety, education, and fun for the children. Many of them have never been educated properly; some of them may never have been cared for or loved in the way children ought to be. It has been extremely gratifying for those at PAHO, that the volunteers can provide the children with those basic necessities throughout the week. The children's pasts, before their arrival at the shelter, may have been dark and even violent; however, the volunteers hope and believe that their work with the children might provide for brighter futures, or even just a brighter day.

Gender Equality Project

Access to education and economic empowerment for women

The issue of gender equality is an important one in Ghana, a nation anchored by the concept of 'the family' and the traditional gender roles that attach to it. There is a distinct tension between the modernising country and the conservative society that leads to unfulfilled potential, hardship and abuse. Our volunteers investigate gender roles in remote communities, holding focal group discussions with women and children to better understand the perceived role of men and women in today's Ghana, and coordinate training, advocacy and empowerment programs to address the major imbalances.

The team continued the process, implemented last month, of visiting communities in the Greater Accra region and asking a series of questions designed to promote discussion between the groups. It was unanimously agreed upon that the man is, without exception, the head of the household; and, as a result, he should be afforded more respect than women. This was the conclusion reached not only in groups of both sexes but also those which consisted of only women. This perceived superiority of the man was also evident in the nature of the discussion with the mixed groups. Even when there was only one male present, it was his voice that dominated the discussion, whilst the women stayed much more reserved. The team concluded that it may be helpful, in the future, to organise such groups by gender, in order to better understand the differing perspectives while allowing every voice to be heard. The disadvantage to that approach is that it does nothing to ameliorate the understanding

between the sexes. The presentations, which were created as a response to the focus groups, proved a more effective way of doing so.

A clear point of contention that emerged was the role of both sexes in the home. The men involved in the discussions often argued that they do a good amount to help around the home. However, the women in the focus groups were quick to disagree, as many were not only in charge of bringing up children and all the housework, but also have jobs in order to bolster the family's finances. Their argument was supported by the fact that, in all of the communities visited, many of the women had babies or young children with them for the session. This disagreement encapsulates the problems surrounding discussions of gender equality: namely that many of the men in the communities do not recognise the existence of a problem. From their perspective, the fact that women can get an education and have the legal right to acquire a job is equality enough.

A huge problem the Gender Equality team identified, despite theoretical equality to access, was the disparity between male and female education. Whilst there are facilities to educate both sexes equally, members of the Aboman community explained that the abundance of young girls falling pregnant before finishing their education means that parents are more reluctant to invest in education. As a result, female education was chosen as a topic to focus on in future presentations. The team suggested that education was a way in which to prevent pregnancy amongst girls, through sex education. Whilst some remained sceptical over the impact it would have, the team gained real insight into perceptions of gender through the discussion. This perception was demonstrated, for example, through the constant reference to pregnancy being almost exclusively the girl's fault. This is symptomatic of the pervasive opinion that men are superior to women, and, therefore, men can 'do no wrong'.

In order to support women in the implementation of their own businesses, the team chose to discuss the opportunities for loans through micro financing, during the first presentation they did in Aboman. Unfortunately, the women in the community quickly rejected this prospect, citing that they had heard about microfinance before, and the interest rates were too high. However, the team wanted to encourage women to recognise the opportunities afforded by starting their own businesses. Thus, going forward, the team developed a presentation which included information about group loans which lower the interest

rates. Community members in Pantang responded very well to this information. Each participant was interested in acquiring a copy of the contact details for micro finance organisations.

The most exciting development, this month, was the team's involvement in a Women's Empowerment Training Session at Felicia's Women's Development Centre in Pantang. The session involved discussions on the two main topics the team had focused upon this month: education and microfinance. The women in the training session were extremely enthusiastic about the different examples of inequality given at the beginning of the session and seemed more receptive to the notion of gender inequality than some of the women encountered in previous communities. The group discussed the implications of teenage pregnancy on female education and concluded that any embarrassment surrounding returning to school after the birth was worth the opportunities afforded by continued education. The team felt it was important to use case studies of successful African women to illustrate these opportunities. One such example was Joyce Bamford-Addo who was the first female speaker of a parliament in all of West Africa and wrote the draft for Ghana's 1992 Constitution. The women responded to this very enthusiastically, as it presented an actual example of what their daughters could achieve with the right education. The changes to the microfinance presentation also met a positive reception.



Women at a Gender Equality FGD

The team ended the month's work on gender equality by running a signature collection campaign. Having presented on education and microfinance, they went door to door to raise awareness and ask members of the community to sign their support. The volunteers collected over forty signatures on each of the topics, thus proving the interest and importance of progressing gender equality.

The difficulty has continued to be overcoming traditional customs and perceptions of gender roles. In the coming month, the team hopes to expand the training sessions to include presentations

with both men and women, to engender an enhanced dialogue between the sexes, and perpetuate gender equality within the community.

Human Rights Clubs

Accra Academy: bright new stars

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.

The Accra Academy HR Club is an addition to a pre-existing Civil Rights Club at the school. Thus the high school students were far more advanced in their learning and abilities than the previous clubs. This fact boded well for the success of the project. When the team asked the class what topics of human rights they would like to learn about, they came up with their own areas of interest, such as, freedom of speech, bribery and corruption, sanitation, dispute of land, domestic violence, and drug abuse.

The first lesson, therefore, was on the Freedom of Expression. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) was introduced to the class to begin the conversation on the right to freedom of expression. The students had little knowledge of the UDHR, but—with a very brief background and a promise from the team to dedicate another lesson to the background of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration in the future—the students quickly understood the fundamental concepts of the freedom. In addition to the UDHR, the team also covered the provisions of the Ghanaian constitution which protect that specific right. One of the students in the class had a small copy of the constitution with him already—a demonstrative example of the enthusiasm the students had for the subject at hand.

Once the meaning of the right to freedom of expression was discussed, the class quickly moved on to the controversial and crucial issues surrounding the limitations to freedom of expression. The students asked questions, began debates, and made statements that further demonstrated their passion for human rights.

The students initially said that there should never be limitations on the freedom, but once they were prompted with examples; such as, Doctor and patient confidentiality, they began to amend their previous views.

The issue of blasphemy and defamation also provided for some interesting discussions and debates. The team explicated the legal definition of defamation: when a false statement is made which negatively effects the public reputation of another. However, that seemingly simple premise lead to a lively discussion about the freedom to express ones opinions. They debated the entitlement to give opinions, regardless of their foundation or origin. The team provided the class with examples to contextualize this discussion: if one person writes an article about their hatred towards another person, photocopies said article, and distributes it across Accra. They asked the class whether this was a reasonable exercise of the freedom of expression. The example was not unlike the kinds of articles found in tabloids, magazines or online blogs in the West. The response was not as expected. One boy became particularly animated about the hate-mongering activity in countries across Africa. He spoke of Ghana's violent past, how there was a need to prevent wars, and to maintain peace and order. He argued that this was exactly the kind of hateful activity that triggers conflict; therefore, it should not be allowed. Instead, he continued, opinions about other people should be kept to oneself for the benefit of society. This was a good segway into a discussion on the limitations on the freedom of expression in the best interests of society, as a whole. The volunteers challenged the students to try to identify the defining point at which a statement or article shifts from being an acceptable expression of freedom to jeopardizing the interests of national security, health or public order. The difficulty in distinguishing between protecting the rights of the individual and protecting the nation then became clear. When relating the issue to opinions about political leaders, the team tried to emphasize that society must be able to scrutinize and hold accountable those in power. The students agreed on this matter, but again expressed caution in stirring public tension. The maintenance of order and peace seemed to be the most agreed upon limitation to freedom of expression.

The volunteers also broached the subject of religious blasphemy and whether or not an opinion or statement regarding religion should ever be limited. The team provided the example of Islamic countries that have called for international regulations of religious blasphemy in response to films, cartoons, and actions which were found offensive to practicing Muslims. Many in the class displayed deep concern for maintaining peace within communities and contended that respecting other people's religious beliefs was integral. However, one boy in the class said he disagreed, to an extent. He said that whilst it is important to respect another's rights to freedom of

religion, it is also important to scrutinize religion. He explained that he is a Christian and that he makes a point to question his own beliefs and the beliefs of other Christians because he wanted to know that he was choosing to truly believe in God as fully and as consciously as possible. It was an entirely unexpected but inspiring argument for a seventeen-year-old high school student.

In just one short lesson, the students discovered and explored new material, debated and considered many new ideas, and identified some important current concerns. The team is excited about the future of the HR Club initiative at Accra Academy and will be returning next month to discuss a variety of new material in relation to human rights issues.

Fadama Legal Assistance Program

Access to justice and first client intake

Old Fadama is the biggest slum in Accra. As the government owns the land the 100,000 people living there are doing so illegally. There is no electricity, water, sewerage, education or transport infrastructure. Crime rates are high and living conditions are poor.

The Fadama Legal Assistance Program ('FLAP') intends to become a self-sustaining institution over time, able to run without Projects Abroad or other volunteer involvement. PAHO hopes to achieve this by teaching citizens of Old Fadama how to mediate disputes and access justice. FLAP also strives to create awareness of human rights issues and abuses that are pertinent to this community.

Throughout the month of July, FLAP has been present in the slum two times a week, often with two different teams. At each session, the teams spoke with small groups of men and women. Due to their different backgrounds, religions, and tribal cultures the team often amended the content and delivery of the presentation so that it was most pertinent and most appropriate for the demographics present. Because of this vast diversity in the audience members, a translator is always necessary. However, despite the time consuming nature of constant translations, the team noticed the added value of having a local translator present. He provided the community



FLAP members in Old Fadama

members with additional information and examples, with which has helped familiarize and contextualize aspects of the presentation.

The range of topics covered is highly sensitive and must be approached as such. No matter the demographics present, domestic violence has remained a constant topic in the presentations, as many people in the slums are not aware that abuse of this nature is illegal under Ghanaian law. The volunteers made sure to explain this fact, as well as, to define the cycle of violence and the four different categories of domestic violence that are prevalent in Ghana: physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence. Besides education on what constitutes domestic violence, the team always emphasized the importance of reporting abuse and gave out the contact details of Victim support organisations.

When discussing domestic violence, it was important to be aware of the background of the women, because it could influence their reaction to the presentation. Most women in the slums were not aware of the fact that rape can also occur within a marriage. A common response to this information, during presentations to Muslim women, was that the wife has no right, under the religious laws of the Quran, to refuse sex to her husband. Moreover, the women present admitted that most women fear that their husband will leave them if they ever refused sexual intercourse. In cases such as this, cultural sensitivity is extremely important. It is integral to tread carefully in order to ensure that it does not seem as if the team does not value or respect the culture of the audience, no matter how foreign their beliefs may seem. In this situation, the team explained that the intention of the presentation is to elucidate the laws of Ghana and the resources available—should they ever choose to utilise them—and not to infringe on their cultural or religious beliefs. They continued to say that, while they respect the beliefs of those present, everyone has the right to their own body under both international and Ghanaian law.

In the Month of July, the Fadama Legal Assistance Program took on its first clients.

One of these clients was a victim of domestic violence named, Celine. Celine had been beaten by her husband for over a decade. When she finally left him, he took her to children and refused her visitation. The FLAP team began aiding her in her navigation of the courts system in order to gain legal custody of her children. During this time, her husband assaulted her again. But this time, it was different. After a decade of abuse, Celine reported her husband for domestic violence due to the knowledge she had gained from team's educational session. Celine has now been referred to Legal Aid—where PAHO also has volunteers—for further procedures. On Tuesday 23 July, there was a court date scheduled. Unfortunately, Celine was delayed and court was adjourned. The next court date will be on 16 August 2013, and one of the FLAP volunteers will be there to help guide her through the procedures.

Many women in the slums are not aware that the father of their child, whether they are married or not, has a financial responsibility to their children. Even if they are aware that they are entitled to financial assistance, they are unaware of how to seek child maintenance if the man refuses to pay. The Fadama Legal Assistance Program intends to aid these women by setting up mediations in order to come to an agreement with the negligent party. Should satisfactory terms not be reached, FLAP will refer the women to Legal Aid and help them to navigate the Family Tribunals so that they can obtain an order of maintenance.

Another client taken on by FLAP is dealing with issues of child maintenance. Sarah is a seventeen year old girl who's three year old son is the product of a sexual assault that occurred when she was fourteen. Her rapist passed away not long after her son was born. As she has no family of her own, Sarah desperately needs financial assistance from the family of the father of her child. Unfortunately, the child maintenance laws of Ghana do not stipulate a legal obligation of the family of a deceased parent. However, FLAP has resolved to utilise mediation in order to solve the issue. Mediation is a practise typical in tribal communities, in which elders arbitrate the cases brought to them. A letter will be sent to the brother of the deceased, and a mediation will be set up in order to ensure support for Sarah's child.

Rental disputes are extremely prevalent in Old Fadama, as most people in the slums are party to a rental agreement. Therefore, this topic, along with the rights of a lessee and how to prevent rental disputes are pertinent to the community. Often times, the landlord will verbally agree upon a price with the person renting their property and, after the amount has been paid, either demand more money than the agreed upon price or insist that the amount has not been paid. As there is no written agreement or record of transaction, these events end with the renter paying more than what they had agreed upon or being forcibly removed from

the property. Until the existence of FLAP, there was never any preventative measures for rental disputes, nor were there resolutions. Once the team has trained both intake personnel and mediators, they intend to implement the use of rental cards. These cards will serve as a written record of the payments to date and will also require the signature or thumb print of both rental parties. If a rental agreement devolves into a dispute, FLAP will seek to resolve the issue through mediation.

The training of permanent intake personnel will begin next month, with the completion of an extensive human rights and legal training manual, which the team has been working on over the course of the month. The trainings will ideally be done in conjunction with the HR Defenders, as the FLAP personnel will truly be the defenders and arbitrators of human rights in the slums. The inception of trainings will be a step towards the sustainability of FLAP. One of the previous volunteers donated their Ghanaian phone and sim card, so the team is now in possession of a phone which can be given out as a contact number. The number has been added to the flyers that are given out at the end of each session. While the team's work within the community continues to gain traction, this contact number will further help to progress FLAP as a resource which the community can utilise for their benefit. The entire FLAP team is eager to continue their work in the month of August in order to solidify the Fadama Legal Assistance Program as a successful initiative and a beneficial resource to the Fadama community.

Vacation Human Rights School

Manhean Junior Secondary School

The Human Rights Vacation School is an initiative of the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office to broaden the reach of Human Rights education amongst local high school students. The program, consisting of six interactive sessions across three weeks, focuses on fostering knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with recognised human rights. By equipping young people - citizens now and leaders in the future - with knowledge and skills, the program plays a significant role in encouraging students to live their lives according to human rights values and to take action on human rights

issues affecting themselves and their communities.

The first session with the class took place on the 5 July 2013. The team members introduced themselves and the Program Manager of PAHO, Edward Tetteh. He provided an inspiring opening to the program stating that, "just as you expect much of us, we expect so much of you and your futures". It was obvious that all those involved were excited for the next three weeks and looked forward to the range of subjects that the program would be covering.



Our first Vacation Human Rights School

The 9 July 2013 marked the beginning of the actual course and was based upon an introduction to fundamental human rights. Though only fourteen students attended, those who were present were conscientious, and each student engaged with the information prepared for them. They were provided with a booklet which encompassed the relevant information for the session and could be kept and utilized as a reference point for independent study. This was a practice which was repeated for each class. The team gave a basic introduction to international human rights treaties which was followed by a more specific focus on African human rights. It was a subject that stoked a passion in those present, and, within twenty minutes, a heated debate had begun regarding the difference between international and African human rights treaties. Seeing the students engage so readily with the material was excellent for the volunteers, and demonstrative of the importance of an outlet for enthusiastic students to use during their summer vacation.

The second lesson revolved upon the topic of civil rights and responsibilities. The students were similarly enthused about this topic. It is worthy of note that sixteen students attended the session, exhibiting the success of the first class. It was clear from the previous session, that the students possessed the maturity necessary to cover the topic of domestic violence. The students recognised the importance of the topic and were grateful to have been made aware of

the process of reporting abuse. The team also covered the rights and responsibilities of a citizen. The very purpose of the Human Rights Vacation School is to provide students with the tools to become model citizens, so this topic was particularly emphasised by the team. Afterwards, the team felt strongly that this session, and the school itself, had a positive effect on each student, thereby greatly increasing the likelihood that those students involved would be a contributing member of society and will perpetuate the principals of human rights within their community.

The third class session involved the rights of the child and young adults in society. Once again, the team witnessed an increase in the amount of students. At first, the issue of child labour was tackled, and every one of the eighteen students seemed to engage well with the variety of resources that were utilised, ranging from work sheets to video footage. The class, as a whole, was exceptional in terms of empathising with those less fortunate than themselves, and it was apparent that many of them wanted to make great changes when they are older – perhaps even relating to child labour. The second half of the session was used as a more informal discussion on the difference between cultures and the importance of culture to society. It was both interesting and gratifying to watch the variety of cultures present within the student body interact, learn through each others' differences, and celebrate one and other.

The session that took place on the 18 July saw the most students yet, with 19 attending. This was more than the original number signed up for the program. It is validation for the team that their work was having a positive impact, as the students had been spreading word of the program's benefit. It is possible that such word of mouth will continue, in regards to the human rights issues covered this month. This session saw a focus on gender equality in terms of economic, social and political issues. Students were passionate during a controlled debate, where various conflicting opinions and thoughts were well-articulated by the students present.

Although there was a gap week in between the following session on the 30th July, 18 students attended. The lesson was focused on career preparation and life skills, including how to write an effective resume and basic interview skills. A strong curriculum vitae will merely enhance the already bright futures of the young people who partook in the Human Rights Vacation School. The students were once again very engaged and responsive towards the topic and particularly enjoyed a mock interview. During this

interview, a volunteer posed questions which would be commonly asked in actual job interviews, and constructive feedback was given. As the final class session will involve a presentation from the students that will reflect what they have learned during their time with PAHO, a short session was given on how to produce a captivating speech and key tips in public speaking.

In the last session of the cycle, it was very gratifying to see how much effort the students had put into their posters and presentations. It was obvious that the students had fully comprehended the information that had been delivered over the course of the entire cycle. In particular, it was notable that many of the boys decided to cover topics relating to discrimination against women, such as, genital mutilation. The efficacy of the Human Rights Vacation School is clearly demonstrated by the fact that there are now young boys fighting for the rights of young women. This also confirmed the progression in the students' views towards society. At the end of this final session, certificates were awarded to congratulate the students on their efforts, achievements, and the completion of the program.

Without question, the past month has witnessed the birth of a program which will continue to be a great success. Due to its triumph as a project, the concept will be expanded to other local educational institutions during the Ghanaian school holidays—starting with Abokobi School in the second week of August. It has been an exceptionally positive experience for both the team and students. The pupils of Manhean Junior Secondary School will take away a strong understanding of what human rights are, the Ghanaian legal system and how they can and will make changes to the world they live in. As one of the students so eloquently stated – “the change starts with us!”



The Community Advocacy Team in Old Fadama

Community Advocacy

Domestic violence and the rights of suspects

The Community Advocacy Project reaches out to communities to effect change through education in pertinent human rights and legal issues. It provides an excellent opportunity to offer both informational and practical advice to those who are otherwise unaware of their rights or the resolution processes. The purpose of the Community Advocacy project is to empower Ghanaian citizens through education.

During the first half of July, the Community Advocacy team focused on rural areas outside of Accra. The first presentation was held on 10 July 2013, in a place named Kongo, and was received extremely well, with approximately forty audience members in attendance. The presentation circulated around the issue of domestic violence—a topic that the team has deemed both extremely necessary and highly sensitive. After the team introduced themselves, definitions of human rights and domestic violence were given. The team utilised a variety of resources during the presentation to better contextualize domestic violence. They used visual aids, such as, a poster illustrating the concept of the “Cycle of Violence”—whereby violence in the home is often cyclical and intergenerational. The audience clearly recognised the pattern of abuse; however, there were mixed responses from the community. Whilst some understood that such violence is wrong and vocally expressed such feelings, other members seemed almost distressed and withdrawn. This reaction is arguably demonstrative of the need for such community outreach.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 was discussed, and information was provided on the four types of domestic abuse: physical, sexual, economic and emotional violence. It was a good opportunity to demonstrate that such categories are encompassed in Ghanaian law and should thus be adhered to. Whilst it was vital to be able to give a background to the basic principles of domestic abuse, the audience clearly recognised the last section regarding reporting domestic violence as the most important. Many members of the community seemed to be well aware of the emergency 191 number; however, they were also well aware of its ineffectiveness as a form of aid. The team emphasised the usefulness of the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU). Most of the audience had not

been previously aware of such a service and were grateful for the leaflet, which stated all of the appropriate contact details.

After the presentation the team encouraged attendees to ask questions, which provided for a good reflection of peoples' understanding and reaction to the information given. One man raised his hand and questioned whether or not it was "too late" to report sexual violence if a certain amount of time had elapsed. The team informed the community that no matter how long ago the crime may have been committed. It was clear that the presentation had been extremely successful in not only clarifying what constitutes domestic abuse but also the practicalities of how to report such matters. Also noteworthy, is the sense of gratitude that was displayed by the community.

The advocacy team went to another rural town on the 17 July for a similar presentation on domestic violence. When over fifty people came to the session, the team was informed by the translator that news of the project and its positive impact had spread around the area. With experience from the previous presentation, the team was able to deliver a confident and concise session; once again receiving a positive response from the community members in the form of questions. The purpose of the project was further highlighted when a member of the audience enquired after the care of his daughter—a rape victim who had been left paralysed by her attacker. The victim had reported the crime and her attacker had been sentenced to thirty years imprisonment. It reflected that the effects of sexual violence are still permeable even when the crime has been reported and gone to trial. Steps have since been taken to provide the family with some financial support, as led by the local Assemblyman, who is greatly involved with PAHO. It was a sobering thought for all those present that, without the project, such a case may never have come to light.

Before leaving, the project team posed the question: "now that we have provided you with the relevant information, how many people would be prepared to report domestic violence?" Only twelve women raised their hands, arguably reflective of the way in which domestic violence is still considered, to some extent, a family issue and not a legal issue. As the team left the community, there was a sense of both deflation and elation: deflated that domestic violence is such a prevalent issue but equally elated that through the project, some members of that community will go and report such crimes and successfully achieve justice and protection.

This month the community advocacy team also focused its attention on the issue of suspect's rights. On 18 July, the team gave a presentation for the community of Old Fadama, the slum area of Accra. Members of the police department had been invited to attend the session in order to facilitate a

better dialogue between the officers and the people within the slums, as they have a notoriously strained relationship. Unfortunately, the officers were unable to attend; however, their absence did not negate from the importance of the information that the volunteers were presenting. There were about twenty people present; the majority were men—only two women attended. This is evidence of the perceived pertinence of suspect's rights to a specific demographic; however, in actuality, it is an integral topic for all genders and age groups. The team was welcomed to an informal area, which had clearly been chosen due to the sensitivity of the topic and poor relationship between the citizens and police. After providing a basic summary of the concept of human rights, the audience and team were able to discuss the ten rights that every citizen has when being interrogated, including 'the right to remain silent'. Information was also provided regarding legal aid. Most of the attendees were not aware of their entitlement to legal aid, and it was gratifying to be able to provide such information.

The team gave a brief description of bail and the process of acquiring it. Surprisingly, the majority of the community appeared most interested with this section of the presentation and recognised the importance of the topic. Leaflets were provided with relevant information including what to do if they feel their rights as a suspect have been violated and who to contact. The leaflets were gratefully received and were spread out to others. The attendees began handing the leaflets to other members of the community who had not been present, thereby demonstrating the power and necessity of such presentations—especially in the slums—due to their extreme lack of resources.

It was during the question and answer session, that the tense relationship between the citizens and police was fully revealed. The question that best summarises the relationship was, "What if the police only allow me bail if I bribe them?" Whilst advice was offered in terms of whom they should contact in regards to such a violation, it reflected the way in which due process can easily be usurped by corruption. It also demonstrated the extreme mistrust that the people have for the police. At the end of the presentation, the audience thanked the team and were grateful the volunteers had come. It became apparent that the community was primarily focused on practical information, such as, "what

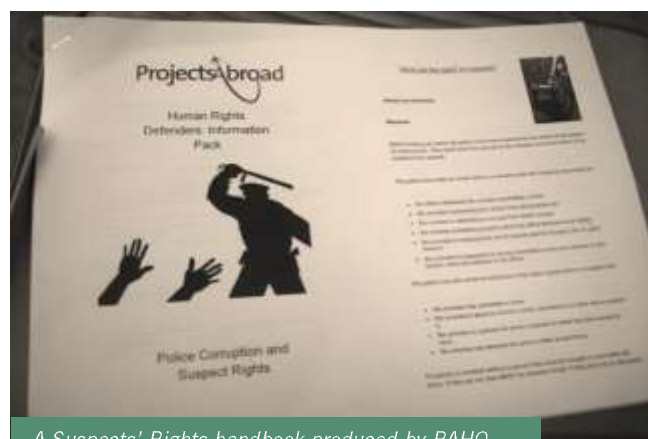
happens if I am not allowed to talk to anyone during my arrest?". Thus, the presentation has since been adjusted to provide a primarily practical—as opposed to a theoretical—guide to suspect rights. July was a highly successful month for the Community Advocacy Project. Whilst many obstacles still lie in the spheres of domestic violence and suspect rights, the presentations given by the team have, without a doubt, provided both rural and urban communities with educational opportunities and resources to facilitate pervasive change within Ghana.

Human Rights Defenders

Perceived roadblocks to justice

The Human Rights Defenders team visits vulnerable communities to run courses on human rights and responsibilities. Community members who attend all sessions receive a certificate of completion of the program and dubbed 'Human Rights Defenders'. Once they earn their certificate, they are entrusted with the duty of sharing their newfound knowledge and skills with the rest of the community. The intention is to empower those who have sought to increase their own knowledge on the subject, and help them become focal members within their communities in regards to human rights.

The work of the Human Rights Defenders was minimised this month in order to make adequate time available to prepare for the PAHO outreach week in Dodowa that took place at the end of July. The team was, therefore, only able to visit the slum of Old Fadama on one occasion, where they delivered a presentation on the rights and responsibilities of Ghanaian citizens and the rights of suspects under the law.



A Suspects' Rights handbook produced by PAHO

The presentation was attended by 16 participants in total, all of whom were men between approximately twenty and thirty years of age. Each attendant was given an

information booklet, compiled by the volunteers, which contained information on the basic concept of Human Rights, the current laws concerning Human Rights in Ghana, the rights of suspects, a copy of the Police Handbook, and a list of details of organisations and individuals that can be contacted should a violation of any of the aforementioned rights occur. This is common practice for each HR Defenders session, as volunteers feel it is important for each attendee to have access to a clear source of information and a reference point to consult when they are discussing these issues within their communities.

The basic discussion of Human Rights was well received by the audience, who quickly gained an understanding of the topic and demonstrated this comprehension through the various questions they asked. These questions include the principle of universality, regardless of race, sex, or religion; the importance of protecting disadvantaged groups, such as, women and children; and Ghana's international obligation to comply with the protection and enforcement of fundamental human rights.

There was further enthusiasm from the audience as the presentation embarked upon the controversial issue of conflicting rights. Using the conflict between the 'right to life' of a thief versus the 'right to property' of a home owner as a hypothetical example, a discussion developed as to what degree of violence could be legitimately employed for self-defence. One of the attendees shared his own experience of being held in custody, following his decision to collect a debt owed to him by way of

which they could use as evidence should a disagreement arise. Another PAHO initiative, the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP), will be available to help them with such preventative measures, as well as mediation.

The presentation then moved on to a discussion of the rights of suspects in which the volunteers highlighted the potential dangers that might be faced by suspects whilst they are in custody. Violence, invasion of privacy, or threatening behaviour by police officers during questioning are well established issues in Ghana. The volunteers were able to collect some interesting statistics from this discussion. When asked whether the participants would report a crime, only 12.5% of the audience said that they would. In addition, around 60% of the attendees agreed that they had, at some point in their lives, felt a lack of confidence in the police. This was the first statistical data which the team has collected; however, the results were unsurprising, given the known levels of corruption within the Ghanaian police force. They are notorious for demanding bribes or using excessive violence during interrogations. Furthermore, there is a particular lack of attention given to crime within the slums of Old Fadama; therefore, the only interaction that many of the participants had with the police was negative.

Overall, the volunteers were pleased to see such a high level of interaction and engagement from the audience during the presentation and discussions. The team agreed that it was difficult to deliver straightforward answers to certain hypothetical scenarios, given the nature of the police force and lack of accessible and independent support available when a violation of rights occurs. It was concluded, however, that a thorough discussion during the sessions, in addition to the distribution of contact details for regulatory institutions, would always be beneficial. The team also noted that, when doing sessions within the slums, volunteers should continue to make attendees aware of FLAP.

Next month, the HR Defenders team will be taking a step back from their outreach initiatives in order to carry out research into new communities in and around Accra who would potentially be interested in attending HR Defenders sessions. They will be making contact with such communities and will begin registering potential attendees. There will also be a drive to reinvigorate the HR Defenders program by delivering a range of new topics and altering the time scale in which the sessions will be delivered and

completed. The team will also be working closely with FLAP to train intake personnel and mediators as HR Defenders.

Professional Legal Placement

The Children's Act 1998

The Professional Legal Placement is a section of the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office that is geared specifically to volunteers who are already legally qualified, with at least two years post-admission experience. In this way they can utilise their skills to benefit the people of Ghana, while also giving them critical practice in the legal field. Our Pro Lawyers are currently placed at Legal Aid, a government-funded legal assistance organisation providing free legal services to those who would be otherwise unable to afford them. The Pro Law volunteers also work in conjunction with our Fadama Legal Assistance Program to advise on legal matters.

The *Children's Act 1998* (Act 560 of The Republic of Ghana), being in large part the manifestation of Article 28 of the 1992 Constitution of The Republic of Ghana, sets out an ideological and somewhat arbitrary set of rights to which each Ghanaian child is entitled.

It speaks of non-discrimination; a right to a name; a right to grow up with one's parents in a caring and peaceful environment; a right to education, adequate diet, healthcare, clothing, and shelter; a right to refuse marriage; protection from exploitative labour; and protection from cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. The ideological statements in the Act even extend to a right to social activity and a right to an opinion. Additionally, incorporated into the Act is the now familiar Western principle of 'a child's best interests'. Consequently, provision for child rights in the Act appears comprehensive.

As a natural extension of the listing of rights, the Act also apportions responsibility for the protection of these rights, saddling parents with the primary responsibility of ensuring that their children's rights are respected¹. Indeed, so wide-ranging are the prescribed parental duties that, in describing them, the Act specifically avoids providing an exhaustive list of duties, and explicitly describes the duties of parents as existing "*whether imposed by law or otherwise*"². Children are given a specific right to life, dignity, respect, leisure, liberty, health, education, and shelter from their



Jen Croker handling a variety of legal issues

taking the money from the debtor's house without the debtor's consent. He questioned the volunteer as to how he could safeguard his own assets and interests without committing an offence when the police were either unwilling or unable to assist him. Knowing the law was flexible on situations such as this, the team advised him to seek legal advice, when in doubt. Moreover, they stressed the importance of preventing such situations by observing simple legal practices, such as, obtaining a written record of agreement for any transaction,

¹ Section 6 of The Five Hundred and Sixtieth Act of the Republic of Ghana entitled The Children's Act, 1998.

² Section 6(2) of The Five Hundred and Sixtieth Act of the Republic of Ghana entitled The Children's Act, 1998.

parents; and parents have additional responsibilities to protect their children from neglect, discrimination, violence, abuse, and exposure to physical and moral hazards and oppression; as well as, responsibilities to provide good guidance, care, assistance and maintenance for their children. Parents are also specifically responsible for registering the birth of their children.

Furthermore, pursuant to the Act, parents have a duty to supply for their children the necessities of health, life, basic education, and reasonable shelter, which necessarily requires financial contribution.³ Persons with “custody” of a child are empowered to apply to the Family Tribunal for financial child maintenance orders in cases where a parent is reluctant to provide, or resistant to providing, the necessary financial support.⁴

Through the enactment of this piece of legislation, Parliament fulfilled its constitutional responsibility to :

“enact such laws as are necessary to ensure that- every child has the right to the same measure of special care, assistance and maintenance as is necessary for its development from its natural parents ... [and] parents undertake their natural right and obligation of care, maintenance and upbringing of their children...”⁵

However, despite the existence of this legislation, the end which it purports to achieve is far from realised. There is little point having legislation if the people to whom it applies are unaware of the rights and responsibilities it creates. Many Projects Abroad volunteers, through their experience in Legal Aid and in various other programs, have found that one of the most—if not the most—significant legal issue concerning Ghanaian citizens is child maintenance. There appears to be a significant lack of knowledge about, and appreciation for, the legal responsibilities that parents owe to their children, and the remedies available if those responsibilities are not met. Moreover, there appears to be a significant need for this knowledge, as one of the most common concerns expressed to Projects Abroad volunteers is about fathers not providing financial support for their children. This is alarming given the far-reaching implications that inadequately maintained and educated children can have for Ghana's future.

Perhaps the drafting of Article 28 of the Constitution has contributed to the seemingly widespread failure to uphold children's rights by creating distance between the Constitution and the enactment of child rights. Curiously, Article 28 is the

only article in Chapter 5 of the Constitution (named “Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms”) that begins with the words *“Parliament shall enact such laws as are necessary to ensure”*, instead of beginning with a statement of rights. The result is that the Constitution itself does not enact child rights. This could either be viewed as diminishing the importance of child rights, or as giving Parliament a tool to use additional measures to enforce them. If the latter is the case, then Parliament should, indeed, enact legislation to bridge the gap between the information that exists and the information the citizens of Ghana possess.

Pending such legislation, Projects Abroad volunteers will continue their work to narrow the gap between available legal remedies and the Ghanaian population by disseminating information about child rights and parental responsibilities to communities in need.

Italiano: Rifugio di Bambini, Osu

Sara Pelicci

Il progetto “Children's shelter” è uno dei programmi portati avanti dal gruppo di volontari che si occupa di human rights. Il children's shelter è una struttura, a circa cinque minuti a piedi dall'ufficio, che ospita bambini che per diversi motivi non possono stare con i propri genitori: alcuni di loro sono orfani, altri sono stati allontanati dalla famiglia a causa degli abusi subiti, e così via.

Al momento ci sono tra i quattro e i sei volontari ad occuparsi del progetto; questo si svolge tre volte alla settimana, il martedì, il mercoledì e il venerdì, per circa due ore, ma il numero di bambini presenti è variabile, e così anche quello dei volontari di cui c'è bisogno. I ragazzi, di sesso misto, sia maschi che femmine, sono, a seconda dei giorni, tra i dieci e i quindici, con età anche molto distanti tra loro, all'incirca tra i sei e i quindici anni.

L'obiettivo del progetto è di insegnare loro a leggere e a scrivere, ovviamente in modo non prettamente scolastico, utilizzando disegni, colori e quanto altro possa risultare utile; il modo per avvicinarsi a loro non è chiaramente uno solo, e ogni volontario cerca il suo posto e il suo compito. Come in ogni altro progetto, la flessibilità e la voglia di mettersi in gioco sono assolutamente indispensabili per “sopravvivere”. Ci sono alcuni “passi obbligati” (gli orari sono predeterminati, i quaderni e le penne non vengono lasciati ai bambini ma custoditi dai volontari), ma per il resto è tutto lasciato alla fantasia e all'entusiasmo dei volontari.

All'arrivo vengono distribuiti penne e quaderni, ognuno ha il suo, e il lavoro comincia! Sono state disegnate delle

schede, ciascuna con una lettera dell'alfabeto e delle parole, accompagnate da un disegno, che cominciano con quella lettera. Alcuni di loro conoscono l'alfabeto, e stanno imparando a leggere e a scrivere, mentre altri no, quindi il lavoro da svolgere varia a seconda del bambino con cui si viene a contatto. Si impara copiando le schede, imparando a scrivere le parole nel modo corretto e facendone lo spelling, dettando loro frasi da scrivere o da leggere, o scrivendo e ripetendo l'alfabeto.

I diversi livelli di conoscenza giustificano la presenza di diversi volontari: si può così dividere i ragazzi in gruppi, e cercare di mirare il lavoro, cercando di occuparsi di ognuno di loro in modo specifico, delle sue conoscenze e delle sue esigenze. Il più delle volte è un lavoro molto gratificante, i bambini si mostrano assolutamente interessati e pieni di entusiasmo all'idea di imparare, cercano aiuto per migliorarsi, e vederli fare progressi, giorno dopo giorno, è una straordinaria esperienza. Ci sono, ovviamente, anche momenti frustranti. Alcuni di loro non parlano, si rifiutano persino di far conoscere il proprio nome, e risulta più complicato stabilire un contatto, oppure non riescono a progredire; ma non si perde la voglia di aiutare e provare, ancora e ancora, cercando nuovi modi per raggiungerli.

Tutto si svolge in un'aula, ma un po' prima della fine del tempo a disposizione ci si sposta nel grande giardino fuori, a giocare insieme. E' sicuramente un modo divertente di entrare in contatto con loro, e fare in modo che si sentano a loro agio con noi.

Possono essere i volontari a proporre loro dei giochi, o loro ad insegnarli; in quest'ultimo caso, si tratta spesso di cantare e ballare insieme, ed è bellissimo sentirli intonare una canzone e muoversi a tempo.

Si tratta insomma di due ore di impegno, insegnamento e divertimento, di immersione in un'atmosfera di allegria, in cui si può davvero essere utili, provando a regalare un futuro ai grandi di domani.

Nederlands: FLAP – een introductie

Carina Olsthout

FLAP staat voor Fadama Legal Assistance Program, een initiatief van PAHO (Projects Abroad Human Rights Office) en WISEEP (Women In Slums Economic Empowerment). Het project is in juni 2013 gestart en vindt plaats in Old Fadama, een sloppenwijk aan de rand van Accra, gelegen tussen de Agbogbloshie markt en de Korle Lagune. Op dit stuk land wonen ongeveer 100.000 mensen, veelal vluchtelingen.

Het stuk grond is eigendom van de staat en de mensen wonen er dus illegaal. Om deze

³ Section 47 of The Five Hundred and Sixtieth Act of the Republic of Ghana entitled The Children's Act, 1998.

⁴ Section 48 of The Five Hundred and Sixtieth Act of the Republic of Ghana entitled The Children's Act, 1998.

⁵ Article 28, 1992 Constitution of The Republic of Ghana

reden weigert de overheid hen iedere vorm van dienstverlening. Er is geen stromend water, geen electriciteit en de leefomstandigheden zijn erbarmelijk. Bovenal, Old Fadama dient als stortplaats voor westers elektronisch afval. Overal in de sloppenwijk ziet men overal dikke zwarte rookwolken van elektronisch afval wat verbrand wordt, de rivier is ernstig vervuild met giftige stoffen zoals lood en kwik, en de inwoners zijn niet op de hoogte van enige rechten die zij hebben, laat staan hoe zij deze kunnen afdwingen. FLAP is er daarom om deze mensen te helpen.

Het FLAP-team gaat twee keer per week de sloppenwijk in om mensen te onderwijzen over hun rechten. Dit varieert van huiselijk geweld, verkrachting, seks met minderjarigen (in Ghana is dat iedereen onder de zestien jaar, ongeacht instemming van de minderjarige), kinderalimentatie, huurgeschillen en erfrecht. De presentaties duren ongeveer een uur, wat door het team als vrij kort wordt ervaren. Niet alle onderwerpen worden daarom iedere keer behandeld. De gespreksonderwerpen zijn afhankelijk van de doelgroep waarmee we die dag discussiëren. Wanneer de groep voor het merendeel uit mannen bestaat, wordt kinderalimentatie waarschijnlijk achterwege gelaten, terwijl dit voor een groep met vrouwen erg belangrijk is.

Een bevinding van het team is dat het algemene kennisniveau betreffende mensenrechten van de aanwezigen laag is. Huiselijk geweld is een term die niet in de lokale talen vertaald kan worden (ondere andere Gha en Twi). De term komt daarom niet bekend voor en zal vanaf de basis uitgelegd moeten worden. Ter verduidelijking van de brede betekenis van deze term wordt het opgesplitst in vier categorieën, te weten fysiek geweld, emotioneel geweld, seksueel geweld en economisch geweld. Hierbij gebruikt het team veel voorbeelden ter verduidelijking. Er wordt ruimte gegeven voor het stellen van vragen, zodat op ad hoc basis toegelicht kan worden of iets onder huiselijk geweld zal vallen.

Ondanks de inspanning van de vertalers blijven de gesprekken op sommige punten moeizaam. De vertaling neemt veel tijd in beslag en indien er een heftige discussie ontstaat kan de vertaler dit niet letterlijk voor het team bijhouden. Toch heeft een lokale vertaler ook voordelen. Bij het vertalen gebruikt hij zelf ook voorbeelden om een helder beeld te schetsen voor het publiek. Deze voorbeelden sluiten vaak goed aan bij het dagelijkse leven van de aanwezigen en hebben daarom grote toegevoegde waarde.

Naast de vertaling dienen ook andere problemen zich aan. Er moet keer op keer een balans gezocht worden tussen een heldere uitleg van hun rechten aan de ene kant, maar ook erkenning van hun sociale en culturele leefomstandigheden aan de andere kant. Huiselijk geweld vormt hierbij een goede illustratie. Traditioneel gezien

bezit de man de macht in de familie. Daarnaast is hij vaak de kostwinner. Doordat veel sociale zekerheid voortvloeit uit familiale relaties, staat de familie centraal in de samenleving. Laatstelijk kan een algemeen wantrouwen tegen de politie en officiële overheidsinstanties opgemerkt worden. Wanneer men al deze omstandigheden combineert ziet men de oorzaak van het bestaan van een zeer sterke aversie tegen het aangeven van een man wegens huiselijk geweld of enig ander delict. Het is daarom uitermate belangrijk bij deze presentaties om een realistisch oogmerk in acht te nemen en bewustzijn onder de gemeenschap te creëren wat aansluit bij hun leefwijze.

De juridische desk vormt een onderdeel van FLAP. De presentaties vormen de prikkel voor de inwoners om zich bewust te worden van hun rechten. De juridische desk vormt hierop het vervolg indien zich een daadwerkelijk juridisch probleem aandient. Deze service bestaat grotendeels uit het analyseren van het probleem en daarna het vinden van een oplossing door middel van bijvoorbeeld mediation. Indien mediation geen oplossing biedt kan de cliënt eventueel doorverwezen worden naar de rechtsbijstand. Afgelopen maand hebben meerdere cliënten zich gemeld bij de juridische desk en daarvan zijn er twee doorverwezen naar de rechtsbijstand.

In de aankomende maand zullen er twee keer per week presentaties worden gegeven, met aansluitend aanwezigheid van de juridische desk. Daarnaast zullen er presentaties op zondagen plaatsvinden, die door het tijdstip ietwat uitgebreider zullen zijn. Het FLAP-team hoopt op deze manier een waardevolle bijdrage te kunnen leveren aan de strijd tegen de rechteloosheid in Old Fadama.

Social Welfare Campaign: Dodowa



A History of Dodowa

Jess Etherington

The chief of Dodowa shares the unwritten history of his land and people with the Projects Abroad Human Rights volunteers.

On Monday 22 July 2013, the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office commenced a week long human rights outreach to the area of Dodowa. For the duration of this week, the entire team was stationed in Dodowa and ran various initiatives; such as, community advocacy, school advocacy, a human rights girls empowerment school,



Meeting Chief Nene Okukurubuor Kwesi Tei Agyemang V

gender equality, human rights defenders, institutional advocacy, and a legal clinic.

When the PAHO team arrived, they were welcomed by the chief of Dodowa, and were given a history of his people and the area in which they live. This account was an invaluable resource, as there is very little recorded history of the region of Dodowa.

Chief Nene Okukurubuor Kwesi Tei Agyemang V was enstooled (the equivalent of being crowned) when he was twenty-seven years of age, and has reigned for a difficult thirteen years. He rules over the *Se* people, more commonly known as the *Shy* or *Shai*. Nene strives for the welfare of the people of Dodowa, saying that, "the King should be the first out of bed and the last to bed everyday".

It is said that the *Se* People, who have come to settle in Dodowa, originally migrated from Israel, through Nigeria, Benin and Togo. In Togo, there was a 'wicked king', whom they eventually managed to escape by finding their way across the Volta River and finally settling in the Hills of Ghana. The Tribe discovered inhabitable caves within the hills. In those caves, there is evidence that the *Shy* lived there from as early as 10,000 BC, until the British arrived in the 18th

Century. The British attempted to coax the Tribe out of the caves and down onto the plains below; however, they had trouble communicating or even finding people of the Tribe. If the British encountered any of the people and attempted to speak to them, they would fall silent, thus inspiring the nickname 'Shy' People.

After struggling to find a way in to the Shy's impenetrable cave system, the British Colonial Government resorted to serving a warrant upon the Tribe, which ordered them to move to the plains. This was affected in 1892. The plains soon became the main farming area of the region, and Dodowa developed into the biggest market place in Ghana. People from all over Ghana would come to Dodowa, bringing salt and gold amongst other goods to sell. Because of the blossoming fortunes of the region, another tribe—the Ashanti People, who were the 'great warriors' of the time—became interested in the Shy region, and endeavoured to "capture the land".

The Ashanti People were "few but strong", but, despite their best efforts, Nene maintained that, "they could not defeat the Shy People". The Ashanti planned meticulously, because they knew that "when you kill a thousand [Se], a thousand more will come". The war

between the tribes concluded in a battle at Dodowa Forest, after the Shy People discovered that the Ashanti had planned to attack by coming through the hills. When the Ashanti people attacked, the Shy were waiting at the bottom. They were so well prepared that the few Ashanti warriors that did escape could not bear to return to their people, so they settled in other regions.

Chief Nene and the Shy People believe that the forest of Dodowa is part of the key defence and protection of the people from Ashanti attacks. Being great warriors and protecting their people is still a theme still prevalent in the Shy Community. The chief wears an impressive scorpion ring, representative of one of the two symbols of the throne of Dodowa. The King explained that the scorpion has claws in the front and a stinger in the back, thus it is unable to be defeated, whether attacked from the front or the rear.

The other symbol is the crocodile, respected for a similar reason.

Peace has now been made between the Shy and Ashanti People of Ghana. Chief Nene observes that "Ghana is one person". He demonstrated this universality by giving his own family as an example. He would not attack the Ashanti people because one of his wives is Ashanti, and he has daughters residing there. The Ashanti King also has married into the Shy People.

Nene went on to explain the role of the chief in the community. In the past, an important role of a chief was to lead his people to war to defend, protect and extend their territories. However, the nature of warfare for the chief has changed in contemporary times. The enemy is now poverty, hunger, disease, squalor, illiteracy, crime, injustice, environmental degradation, depletion of resources, greed, ignorance, and other societal conflicts.

The Chieftaincy Act 1971 gives the chief the power to utilize the customary laws of Dodowa, and adjudicate on issues that arise in his land. The chief often deals with land matters, minor criminal matters e.g. petty theft and stealing, and community issues. Resolution is achieved through arbitration performed by The Council of Dodowa, which consists of the chief, other local chiefs, and select others. The process of arbitration often settles matters in the hopes of "trying to bring the people together." Customary laws are also sometimes utilized in preference to state law.

Nene gave the real-life scenario of a young woman who was raped. Her rapist was caught, tried in the Ghanaian court system, found guilty, and is currently serving a thirty-seven year prison sentence. However, the victim—who was left crippled in the attack—cannot provide for herself and was never financially compensated. The chief stipulates that victim support is far better achieved through means of the Council's



The secret entrance of the Adwuku cave

arbitration, as opposed to State Courts; which "must imprison, and cannot settle". This viewpoint is a reflection of the perception often observed in Ghanaian communities. This trepidation to report

crimes, is an issue which PAHO tries to remedy through its outreach.



The courtyard of the Adwuku cave, just in front of the King's chamber

The customary arbitration process is as follows: the complaint is registered, the Council extends invitations to the defendant, both parties are heard, and the matter is decided upon. The decision is reached on a case-by-case basis. Punishments range from an apology – hopefully accepted by the complainant in good faith – to a fine. If the issue is more serious, The Council refers the matter to the police. This, Nene informed the group, is a considerable progression from the “olden days”, in which punishment took the form of public shaming, being chained in public, or some form of community service.

The knowledge gleaned from chief Nene served as an invaluable resource for the teams outreach over the course of the week, and the PAHO office thanks him for welcoming them into the Dodowa Community.

Community Advocacy in Dodowa

Kristine Mikkelsen

During the Dodowa Outreach, the Community Advocacy team did three separate sessions on domestic violence in various locations around Dodowa. The intent was to educate the people of Dodowa on the basic concept of domestic violence as well as how to report instances of domestic violence to the police.

Leading up to the Dodowa Outreach, the community advocacy team composed a presentation on domestic violence. The team was aware of the fact that the people they were going to address would be different than the audiences they interact

with in Accra, due to their more rural backgrounds. They were also aware that each audience was going to vary greatly from one and other, as each community is significantly different. Many people in Ghana—especially in more rural areas—are not aware that domestic violence is a legal issue or a human rights infringement. Thus, the community advocacy team approached the extremely sensitive topic with a careful but firm hand. They began with a broad definition of domestic violence and then asked each group if they were aware of how

to report this. In each session, not a single person had prior knowledge of an ability to report domestic violence. The team then went on to explain the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 which elucidates the cycle of violence. The community advocacy team went into detail, explicating the four types of domestic violence, as well as, giving examples of each. In order to contextualize this information, they presented statistics from a study done in Ghana in 2011. For example, one out of every four Ghanaian women have divulged that their husband forced sexual intercourse upon them, yet only 5% of the women who experience sexual abuse report the matter to the police. After supplying the audience with knowledge of domestic violence, the team went into detail about how to report these instances to a unit of the police called DOWVSU—The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit. As they were aware that reporting to the police is both uncommon and undesirable to many people—for a plethora of reasons—the team gave out the number of the assembly man (and translator), Brother Daniel, who would facilitate mediation and legal assistance where necessary. At the completion of the session, the advocacy team asked two final questions: Who thinks that domestic violence is a problem in Ghana, and who would report issues of domestic violence to the police now that they know how? Once the results were counted, the volunteers encouraged people to ask any questions that they might have, and to see the Legal Clinic team members afterwards for specific personal concerns.

The first presentation occurred more than an hour outside of the “centre” of Dodowa, in the extremely rural Mecaithi Kopi. There

were sixteen men, twelve women, and—despite the fact that it was a school day—a large number of children present. The nearest school is a seven mile walk away, so this session was one of the only educational opportunities available to the community. The presentation was in a ramshackle Evangelical church, and a majority of the participants were Christians. Out of the sixteen men, about half were tribal elders and community leaders, which would prove to be daunting presences during the session. Though the audience seemed to comprehend the information, they were not very responsive to the presentation. They seemed keenly aware of the presence and expression of the unmoving tribal elders, whose scepticism was apparent. At the end of the presentation, when asked whether or not anyone would report issues of domestic violence, not a single person was willing to raise their hand. When asked whether or not domestic violence was a problem in Ghana, only three people raised their hands. Out of the three people, one of men was a lawyer who bore heavy influence in the community. It was only after he displayed his opinion that the other two acquiesced; however, his influence was greatly outweighed by that of the tribal elders. It would seem that, when in the presence of such powerful traditionalists, people are often dissuaded from expressing any sort of alternative opinion. Culturally, domestic violence is widely accepted as a common practice. Even in instances of severe domestic violence, women and children are encouraged not to report and—in many cases—forbidden from reporting in order to protect the family structure, which is seen



The Shai Plains from the Adwuku cave vantage point

as integral and invaluable in Ghanaian culture. It is exactly that cycle of violence, denial, and silence that the community advocacy team is trying to slowly deconstruct through their sessions. Though it was an honor to meet such distinguished people from the community, the team felt that the presence of the tribal elders was a hindrance to that process.

The next two sessions were much more successful. Both were held in schools within slightly less rural environments. There were twenty seven people present at the second of the three presentations, which also had a majority Christian background. They were much more responsive, often nodding their

head in agreement. Fifteen out of twenty-seven people acknowledged that domestic abuse was a problem in Ghana and would report these instances. After the presentation was over, they asked a variety of questions which displayed both comprehension and interest.

The final session was also very successful and very telling. This presentation featured an audience that was more than 2/3 female, and had people of both Christian and Muslim backgrounds. They were excited to welcome the community advocacy team and begin the presentation. In total, thirty-seven people came to the session, and expressed their agreement and support through out the presentation. The one exception to this was the Muslim men, who sat stoically, not betraying their thoughts. When asked the final two questions, they did not answer in the affirmative. It has been the experience of the Projects Abroad volunteers that the Muslim community is much more unlikely to report instances of domestic abuse. However, their scepticism was more than overshadowed by the reaction of the other audience members. When asked who would report, eighteen of twenty-seven women raised their hand, and one older woman stood up in a show of excitement and enthusiasm.

Proportion of community that acknowledges domestic violence as a problem in Ghana



In aggregate—ignoring the first session as a small anomaly—the data is very informative. After the presentations were complete 100% of the people had the information necessary to report, even if they were unsure about whether or not to use their new knowledge. Simply giving people the resources—so it is an option for them—is a step towards progress. In total, there were sixty-four members at the sessions. Forty of them, or 62% believed that domestic violence was a problem in Ghana. This acknowledgement of abuse as an issue in their society is indicative of the fact that progress can be made to amend the problem. When asked whether or not they would report issues of domestic violence, now that they were aware of both its existence and the reporting structures in place, thirty-six people responded affirmatively. That is a 56% increase in the ability and interest in reporting instances of Domestic violence.

Overall, the community advocacy team had a very effective and informative week during the Dodowa outreach. It is their hope that their sessions yield further results in the future, and that the understanding that they

gleaned in Dodowa can both enhance and substantiate the efficacy of PAHO as an organization.

School Advocacy in Dodowa

Jess Etherington

The goal of the School Advocacy Initiative in Dodowa was to educate and raise awareness of basic human rights topics at Hillview Academy in Dodowa. Over the course of the lessons the team introduced a series of subjects involving human rights in both the international and Ghanaian context.

In total, seventy-one students, mostly in their mid teens, attended the first session. This was an encouraging start to the session. To begin the lesson, the volunteers asked the class if anyone knew what human rights are. None of the students raised their hands. The team dissected the term “human rights” in order to simplify the question. This encouraged answers, and the general consensus was that human right are a “basic entitlement to something for all people”.

Once human rights had been defined, the volunteers asked the students to give examples of things that they think qualify as human rights. Most suggestions were sensible such as: the right to water, to work, to an education, to housing. However, the team decided later that, in order to effectively teach basic human rights, the issue of ‘needs vs. wants/privileges’ should be expressed at the outset, so as to solidify in the students’ minds that human rights are fundamental and inalienable. Not something that a person can live without.

The volunteers then proceeded to talk about World War II, they used emotions that the students expressed during this discussion to illustrate the need for a universal standard of human rights. Then the team introduced the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Because of the time limitation, the volunteers read through the UDHR with the students and asked them to discuss their thoughts on the convention and its stipulations. The responses were rational, such as, “we need a right to work, so that we can obtain money in order to buy food to live.”

The end of the lesson was promising, as one student stood up and gave a sound definition of what are human rights. Thus the objective of teaching ‘fundamental human rights’ was achieved. In addition to the lesson, the volunteers left



Hillview Academy school

an information packet, which was a compilation of a definition of human rights, a brief history, why humans need them, and the UDHR.

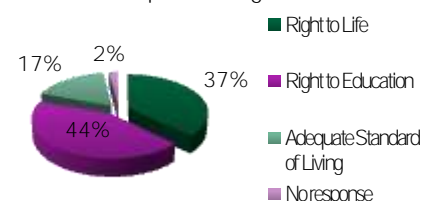
Eighty-one students attended the second and last session. The beginning of the lesson was a re-cap on the last lesson for the benefit of the new students, as well as to facilitate repetition for the students who had been present at the first session.

The overall aim of the lesson was to solidify the concept of fundamental human rights within the students’ minds. The team wanted to encourage more independent thinking about what this concept means to them directly.

The activity for the lesson was to list certain rights on the board under the heading ‘rights’ and a corresponding ‘responsibilities’ column. The volunteers then prompted the students to think of, and shout out what responsibilities would correlate to what rights. This was largely successful, and the correlation between rights and responsibilities was made.

Over the course of the lesson, the team asked a variety of questions in order to provoke thought in the students, as well as, to gain insight. When asked which was the most important right, thirty responded with the right to life, thirty-five responded with the right to education, fourteen responded with the right to an adequate standard of living. Two students did not vote, because they said that it was too difficult to choose, as some rights are equally as important as others. When asked which right needs the most protection in Dodowa—and Ghana, as a whole—forty-eight answered the right to

Advocacy opinion poll: Most important rights



education and twenty answered the right to an adequate standard of living. When asked if human rights was a valuable topic for students to learn, all of the students replied in the affirmative. The answers to these questions are sweepingly demonstrative of the premium that the students put on their education and access to schools. They understand that this right is vastly important to their futures and the future of Ghana.



The School Advocacy team with some students

Most students asked when the volunteers were returning to teach them more about human rights and expressly stated that they would tell their friends/fellow students about what they had learned. This was an extremely pleasing conclusion to the outreach. The volunteers feel strongly that there is great potential for more school advocacy outreaches to the Hillview Academy in Dodowa, and other schools in the area.

Girls Empowerment Course

Lucy Picton-Turbervill

On the outreach trip to Dodowa, the Girls Empowerment team was involved in an educational program that aimed to facilitate young local girls knowledge on women's rights and gender equity, as well as, self confidence.

The team worked in the Presby Basic B School, with a class of twenty girls, aged between fourteen and eighteen. The program was aimed at teaching the girls about their rights as women and individuals—rights that would hopefully protect against harm and lead them to command self-respect and empowerment. The team identified two main issues relevant to teenage girls living in this community, and prepared presentations accordingly. One pertinent issue was the different types of abuse and the other was reproductive health and the prevention of STIs. The presentations were written with a teenage perspective in mind and aimed to

illuminate any perceptions or correct any misconceptions that they may have. Each session ended with time for the girls to write down 'confidential questions' and hand them in to be discussed.

Due to the personal nature of the topics, it was essential that the girls felt comfortable with the volunteers—that is, the team needed to build as much of a relationship with the class as possible in three days. As expected, the girls became increasingly comfortable and relaxed over the course of the outreach. Their confidence in the process and themselves also grew.

On the first day, the team covered four types of abuse: sexual, physical, emotional and economic. This session circulated around family issues, and one girl asked how to tell parents about a boyfriend. In this community, it would be unacceptable for a daughter to have a boyfriend while at school. The parents would assume that the daughter would become pregnant and would have to drop out of school. The girls also alluded to the fact that they would be beaten by their parents, if they admitted to having a boyfriend. Thus, the topic of abuse provoked questions about how to avoid this. Due to this being a problem specific to each situation, the team offered guidance to individual girls, should they choose to come after the session.

The presentation on sexual health seemed to spark more interest in the class, perhaps because they knew less about it, and it was particularly relevant for them. The presentation discussed different types of STIs and symptoms, then focused on prevention and contraceptive methods. The questions that emerged at the end of the session illuminated some problems faced by these girls. It was clear that several of them were concerned about their having HIV, perhaps realising after the presentation that they have had unprotected sex. Some of the girls believed that they could only contract STIs through rape, not through consensual sex. Most of them did not know some contraceptives do not prevent STIs.

While the team had emphasised the importance of self-respect and the ability to say 'no' to a boyfriend, many of the questions asked for a simple way to reject sex, or protect oneself from rape. There was an emphasis on forced or obligatory sex. There were questions that asked what to do if a man pays for sex or if a boyfriend buys gifts. One girl asked "what if your parents force you to have sex with a man for money because they don't have any? Should you

report them to someone even if you don't want to?". It seemed that the aversion to reporting a family member interfered with the decision to report crimes to the police. These questions were not simple, and the team spent much time considering the options and answers. It is clear that the girls in these sessions desperately needed a resource such as this.

Overall, the three days spent with the girls were illuminating for the team, and also, hopefully, for the class. Their response was fantastic through all three days, and they engaged with the program enthusiastically. Through the 'confidential question' system, they were able to ask personal questions and express anxieties or fears, which allowed the team to more effectively tackle problems. The volunteers felt that the overarching problem was a lack of confidence in the young women. Living in a community where they are submissive first to their parents and then to a boyfriend or husband, it seemed that a program advocating self-respect and self-confidence, with a view to owning your own body and being able to reject male attention, was both foreign and necessary.

As the team left Dodowa, the feeling was that the program had gone well, but had perhaps only addressed half of the issue—that is, the team wanted to conduct similar sessions with a group of boys (the 'boyfriends'), in an attempt to gain another perspective. The conclusion was that it was particularly important to educate the whole younger generation in these communities, in the hope that a sensitisation project may redirect attitudes towards girls' independence and self-respect.

Gender Equality

Lucy Picton-Turbervill

The Gender Equality team ran two focus groups, using questionnaires, to explore the perceptions about gender and surrounding issues in the community

The first session was a male group, while the second was mixed. There were eleven questions, targeting areas such as disparity between the sexes, jobs, interaction, business, property and land, money, education, voting and feelings.

When the groups were asked what they believed to be the difference between women and men, both gave the response that the sexes are equal, but men are more highly valued in their society. When justifying this, seemingly contradictory, response, they asserted that the male is traditionally superior in Ghanaian society, because the male child 'continues' the family—a daughter marries into a different family. The first group explained that a man is expected to go further than a woman in





society. This was rationalized by religion, because, in the biblical tradition, the woman should always be submissive to her husband. The Bible states, “wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:22-24). In this community, both groups claimed, the female contribution can never equal the value of male contribution.

Having established that they believe a woman must be submissive to the man, the team questioned male submissiveness in the home. The answer was that male submissiveness to his wife grows with his love – they claimed “when love crosses over, submissiveness happens”. The men thus become submissive by providing for and supporting their wives, and in their responsibility towards the family as the head of the home.

A theme, which seemed to arise from the responses, was practicality. While the western ideal of ‘gender equality’ envisages men and women as absolutely equal and treated as such, the community of Dodowa emphasised many issues in which a woman might be treated differently for pragmatic and unavoidable reasons. Women are generally encouraged to start their own businesses and to own their own land – the exception to the latter was a situation in which a father might divide his land between his children. If a daughter owns a piece of that land, she is likely to sell it once she moves to her husband’s home, and thus she is not protecting the family property.

The pragmatic perspective appeared again with the question of whether husband and wife should look after the family’s money together. For the first group, it seemed to be an issue of trust. A wife would not chase up her husband’s expenses with separate accounts, and they cannot overspend. For the second group, the emphasis was on the woman’s overspending. The men in the group claimed that women cannot control their spending; whereas, a man would always be aware of the money needed to support the family. When the question of the woman’s right to education was asked, the groups both agreed that both sexes are entitled to an education, but it may be that some girls get pregnant during their school years, and many choose not to return to school.

Having discussed the responses to the equality questionnaires, the team found that it was difficult to fit an ideological gender equality system to the preconceived notions of the people in Dodowa Township. They have chosen religion and perceived pragmatism over idealism. While it seemed, at first, that women are not treated with as much respect as they should be, it emerged that much of this is based on assured pragmatism – that is, that the ‘ideological’ version might not work for this community. The belief in the man as head of the home, justified with excerpts from the Bible, is

deeply rooted and guides the development of the family. Many of the responses, for example, concerning education and jobs are based on the reality of the situation, a reality which jars with the ideal version. For example, it is unavoidably true that many girls become pregnant and drop out of school, regardless of being encouraged to join again. The team found that the difficulty lay in collating the Ghanaian system of living with a western ideal in which the sexes would be equal.

HR Defenders in Dodowa

Megan Leitch

The Human Rights Defenders team perpetuated their normal work by educating and training a group of people in Dodowa so that they can advocate and protect human rights within their own community.

The group consisted of around twenty students, ranging from sixteen to twenty-five years old. The team soon learned that all of the students were either still in school or completing undergraduate degrees, meaning they were all well educated and eager to learn.

The first session the team presented was an introduction to human rights, which enabled them to give a general overview of rights and lay the foundations of knowledge for the sessions ahead. To begin with the students were asked if they could define the term “human rights” and name any of the rights they believed they were entitled to. Although none of the students could define human rights, some of them named rights, such as, the right to life. One student also said that he believed human rights were “rights given to everyone from God”, showing the influence of religion on the community.

The team explained the origins of human rights and gave a background on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This sparked discussion of human rights in a global context, and the students were very interested to know whether people in other countries, across the world, were entitled to the same rights as one and other. The students asked what would happen if a country did not comply with the UDHR, asking specifically about the Syrian crisis.

The team then gave examples of some of the rights all humans are entitled to, making a mind map of different categories. Although the volunteers emphasised that, in theory, each of the rights hold equal importance, the students asked whether some rights could be regarded as more important than others. To answer this question the team split the rights into “primary” and “secondary” rights—the primary ones being civil rights, such as,

right to life and freedom from torture; the secondary ones being economic, social and cultural rights. The students recognised that if a primary right is infringed upon, it can have then inflict upon a secondary right. For example, if the right to life is lost, the other rights cannot be fulfilled.

The categorisations of rights then lead to a discussion on the conflict of rights. The students were eager to know what happened when the rights of two people clashed and how this could be resolved. One example that was given was the right to life versus the right to property. The students asked if, for example, someone was breaking into their house, would it be okay to kill them in order to protect their family and possessions?

The team then split the class into smaller groups to engage in a more focused discussion. The students were asked to discuss examples of human rights violations, particularly with specific reference to their communities. Each of the four groups then presented the ideas that they had discussed, as well as, possible solutions for the problems they had identified. The team was very pleased to see how receptive the students were, they were very willing to share personal experiences which fostered the development of relationships between the students and the volunteers.

One group focused on the right to education and identified that many young people are denied this right by their parents who force them to work. Many of the students could relate to this problem and identified that this violation happens more often with girls than boys. They suggested that the core issue stemmed from the fact that parents are not aware that their children have the right to education. The direct solution to this infringement would, therefore, be to raise awareness amongst parents and the community. The students said they were very willing to help with this awareness within their local communities—already fulfilling their potentiality to be excellent HR Defenders.

Another group focused on health care. They discussed how the right to life is violated when ill people cannot afford the medicine or treatment they need. The group said this was a particular problem in rural areas. This sparked discussion on the fact that, even within the different areas of Ghana, there is seemingly a disparity in rights between different geographical areas. Many of the students recognised that this was inherently unjust given the theoretically equal nature of human rights.

The day concluded in a debate that displayed the talents of the students during the fast-paced and highly intellectual discussion. They were asked which rights they would idealistically like to exist and which rights they would like to be observed more within Ghana. One topic was the right to die, with particular regard to euthanasia.

This caused a split between the students. Half thought that life is a God-given right; therefore, it should only be taken away by God. The other half believed that freedom of choice meant that people should have the power to decide if they want to die, in some situations. One student then suggested that there should be a “right to love”, which sparked interesting discussion. Surprisingly one boy stood up and asked why—if there is a freedom of thought and expression—is homosexuality illegal in Ghana? Almost the whole class said they believed sexuality is a personal choice; therefore, no one has the right to discriminate against this. It was refreshing to see the changing attitude of the younger generation, giving hope and optimism for the future.

In the second session of the week the team focused on domestic abuse. To start the presentation, the students were asked if they knew what domestic violence was and whether or not they believed that it took place within their communities. The examples that the class identified were mostly cases of physical abuse such as “hitting”. Although their knowledge of domestic abuse was limited, it allowed for a good session. The team began by identifying the different types of Domestic Abuse, including physical, sexual and emotional.

As it had worked so well in the first session, the students once again split into groups to have more focused discussions. Each group were given a different type of domestic abuse to focus upon. They had to give an example of the type, as well as, how it could be resolved. The students were able to provide various instances of where domestic abuse occurs; however, solutions were much more difficult to identify. Domestic violence tends to go unreported within communities, as people are unwilling to report their loved ones. There is also a general view that the police are corrupt, thus problems go unsolved.

It was fascinating to see the students identifying examples of their own culture and traditions contradicting domestic violence laws. One of the students gave the example of when a man in Dodowa wants to marry a woman, it is acceptable for him to continuously harass her until she says yes. Although the team said that this is was form of domestic abuse, the students—both boys and girls—believed it was an acceptable part of their culture that should not be changed.

In order to help the students formulate solutions for their problems, the team emphasised the importance of reporting issues to the relevant organisations, such as DOVSUU. The practical advice—such as, phone numbers and office locations—was received well by the students, who all said they were eager to share with the rest of their communities. Once again proving their efficacy as HR Defenders

For the final session of the week, the team focused on suspect's rights. From the

outset, the students expressed their discontent towards the police; however, they seemed unable to identify the rights they were actually entitled to.

By exploring and explaining the rights available, the students were able to quickly identify breaches of these rights that they had either suffered personally or seen within their communities. When engaged in smaller group discussions, the students were willing to share these injustices. One boy talked about his sister, who was arrested and then driven around for four hours by the police before being taken to the police station.

The main part of the session revolved around the use of case studies to illustrate violations of suspect rights. The team had prepared two case studies for the class to use. The first focused on general suspect rights, whereas the second was specific to women. The use of case studies allowed for the students to see suspect's rights in real scenarios. Splitting the class into groups again, the volunteers asked them to explore the case studies and then answer three questions on specific issues which were raised in the text. The students then presented their ideas. It was clear from the presentations that they had engaged well with the text, identifying all of the key issues which were raised. The thoughtful responses to the questions showed that the students had understood and processed the information well.

At the end of the final session, the students were officially dubbed as HR Defenders. Their enthusiasm for the subject matter as well as their desire to effect positive change within their communities can only be a harbinger of the progress to come.

Institutional Advocacy

Megan Leitch & Carina Olsthoorn

The institutional advocacy team was responsible for providing education for church members on either child maintenance or intestacy laws. During the outreach week the institutional advocacy volunteers gave two presentations to local church communities in Dodowa.

The first presentation, which was given in a church in a village near Dodowa, focused on child maintenance. The locals were very welcoming to the volunteers and seemed eager to hear the presentations. The group consisted of about fifteen people, both men and women. Due to the rural location of the project, many of the audience members spoke little English, thus the presentation was translated. On the whole, the translation went well, but the team hoped that, next time, they could prepare with the translator before hand in order to make sure

the legal and technical terminology was conveyed accurately.

The presentation first discussed the theory of child maintenance, informing the audience of the responsibilities they were bound to uphold, as a parent. Regardless of family situation and whether or not the parents are together, both mother and father have a duty to provide for their child. This came as a surprise to some of the audience, especially those who believed that they only had a responsibility if they lived with their child. The volunteers then discussed the consequences of what would happen if child maintenance was not paid. The legal clinic was on hand after the presentation to answer questions regarding the presentation. The attendees had clearly comprehended the presentations, demonstrating this by asking insightful questions based on the information that had been provided. Many of the questions entailed a situation that either has occurred in the community, or people have heard occurring in other communities. One question, for example, if the father could enforce certain visitation rights when he was obliged to pay a certain amount of child maintenance. Afterwards, one person approached the legal clinic team for some personal advice.

The second presentation of the week focused upon intestacy laws. This session was also based in a church, but in a different area of Dodowa. The attendance for the session was higher than expected, with about thirty participants. The audience was quite young, around twenty to twenty-five years old. Although traditionally intestacy laws affect the older generation, the audience was eager to learn in order to prepare for the future.

The main message the volunteers tried to convey throughout the presentation was the importance of writing a will. The audience also learned about what happens when you don't write a will and how customary laws can influence the distribution of possessions. The audience seemed to fully appreciate the information they were given and the important nature of writing a will so as to avoid possible family conflicts after bereavement. It was particularly helpful to have a lawyer on the team to give the audience the correct legal procedure to create a will.

The session concluded with an interactive question and answer session again with the legal clinic. It became apparent that some of the audience had faced problems relating to intestacy and wanted to know how to rectify these. Other questions included practical advice on writing a will best suited to their family and property interests.

On the whole, the institutional advocacy sessions were very well received by both audiences. They were eager to learn and then implement this practical knowledge in their lives and communities.

Legal Clinic Dodowa

Carina Olsthoorn

During the outreach, two of the PAHO volunteers with law degrees set up a legal clinic, in order to address the legal issues in the community. The legal clinic attended all advocacy sessions. In the morning, the team joined the community advocacy team for presentations on domestic violence. For two nights, the legal clinic accompanied the institutional advocacy team to two different churches to present on child maintenance and intestacy. After every presentation, the legal clinic took questions and offered legal advice to those present.

On Monday evening, the team was officially welcomed by the Chief of Dodowa and he provided an insight in the relationship between Ghanaian statutory law and local, customary law. In Ghana, there exist multiple influences of law such as the aforementioned laws, as well as, religious and international law.

The first clinic ran in conjunction with the the community advocacy team. Some of the frequently asked questions concerned the reporting of domestic violence. It has come to the team's attention that there is little to no knowledge about how to report this. Some of the community members asked if domestic violence had to be reported right after the incident, or whether it was still possible when a certain time period had passed. The answer involved not only the importance of reporting, but also the importance of gathering evidence from the incident. Some situations pointed to the importance of family ties and the effect that filing a report could have on this. Other questions concerned whether the age of the perpetrator made a difference, if women could commit acts of domestic violence and which legal processes are involved in obtaining an order for child maintenance or reporting an incident regarding domestic violence. The questions were various and widespread amongst the audience.

The legal clinic team also attended a presentation on child maintenance given by the institutional advocacy team. Child maintenance is subject to various laws in Ghana, which complicates the practical side of the topic. It is also a topic that led to discussion amongst the community. The team got the impression that child maintenance problems occur quite often, which was reflected in the personal questions that the audience posed. The round of questions began with the question of why and how the legal clinic team was qualified; and whether the team possessed knowledge of the Ghanaian legal system. This has been answered by explaining the tasks of the legal clinic team as well as their various qualifications. Many of the other questions entailed a situation that either

has occurred in the community, or people have heard occurring in other communities. One question, for example, is whether the father could enforce certain visitation rights when he was obliged to pay a certain amount of child maintenance. Afterwards, one person approached the legal clinic team for some personal advice.

The legal clinic also attended a presentation on intestacy. This is a very sensitive topic in Ghana as multiple legal systems can influence it. When a person dies without leaving a will, this situation is called intestacy. Creating a will is not common under a large part of the Ghanaian population, which often leads to disputes. Officially, the intestacy situation is governed by the 1985 Intestate Succession Law.⁶ This Act has been amended in 1991 but is considered to be somewhat outdated. Therefore, a new bill has been introduced in 2009, but this has not been passed by Parliament as of yet. Many of the questions that were posed after the presentation concerned the practical issue of writing a will, when it is advisable to write a will, and if certain people remained protected under Ghanaian law despite the content of a will. With regards to the first question, the legal clinic team explained the core requirements of a will, according to the Wills Act.⁷ The main focus points were that a will needs to be written, it needs to have an exhaustive clause, and it needs to be updated once in a while. The testator must be at least eighteen years old and needs to bring two witnesses who are of minimum age twenty-one. The team emphasized the importance of writing a will, especially due to the protection it may offer to the nuclear family over the extended family. It does not matter how little valuable belongings a person has, because a will also provides the possibility to leave certain personal belongings to a loved one. The question regarding protection of certain people under statutory law implied an underlying issue of protection and arose probably out of tradition that spouses and children receive very little protection due to the importance that is assigned to the extended family. Ghanaian law grants complete and total freedom of writing a will to every Ghanaian citizen, without limitations arising from law. Therefore, under statutory law, there are no protected persons and there is the possibility to disinherit certain family members, such as a spouse or children. Of course, the confluence of multiple legal systems in Ghana complicates matters. Different customary rules apply throughout Ghana and these rules may lay down certain obligations despite the freedom of customary law.

A question which drew attention was how a person could know if what he/she wishes, was for certain written in the will in case a lawyer draws up the document. This question demonstrated to the legal clinic that corruption is not only a deep-rooted

problem with regards to the police, but also with regards to other professions. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that there is a rather high rate of illiteracy in Ghana, meaning that the testator is not able to check the correctness of the content of the will. The advice that has been given is to try and take a witness with you who is literate and whom you trust. Via this witness, the testator is able to check the content of the will.

Overall, one of the observations of the legal clinic team was that the general understanding of the audience attending the presentations was good because they were able to process the information and apply it to their own daily lives. It has also come to our attention that a legal clinic might be more suitable as a separate part of an outreach program. This way, people will be given the time to rethink the information that they have received and possibly more practical problems would be submitted to the legal clinic.

Dodowa Project Teams

Community Advocacy

Kristine Mikkelsen
Kate Macleod

School Advocacy

Jenny Mill
Jessica Etherington

Gender Equality and Girls' Empowerment

Maddy Thimont Jack
Anna Rimpf
Emma Horton
Lucy Picton-Turbervill
Simon Holmes

HR Defenders and Institutional Advocacy

Maryann Verghese
Charlie Evans
Ellie Mackereth
Megan Leitch

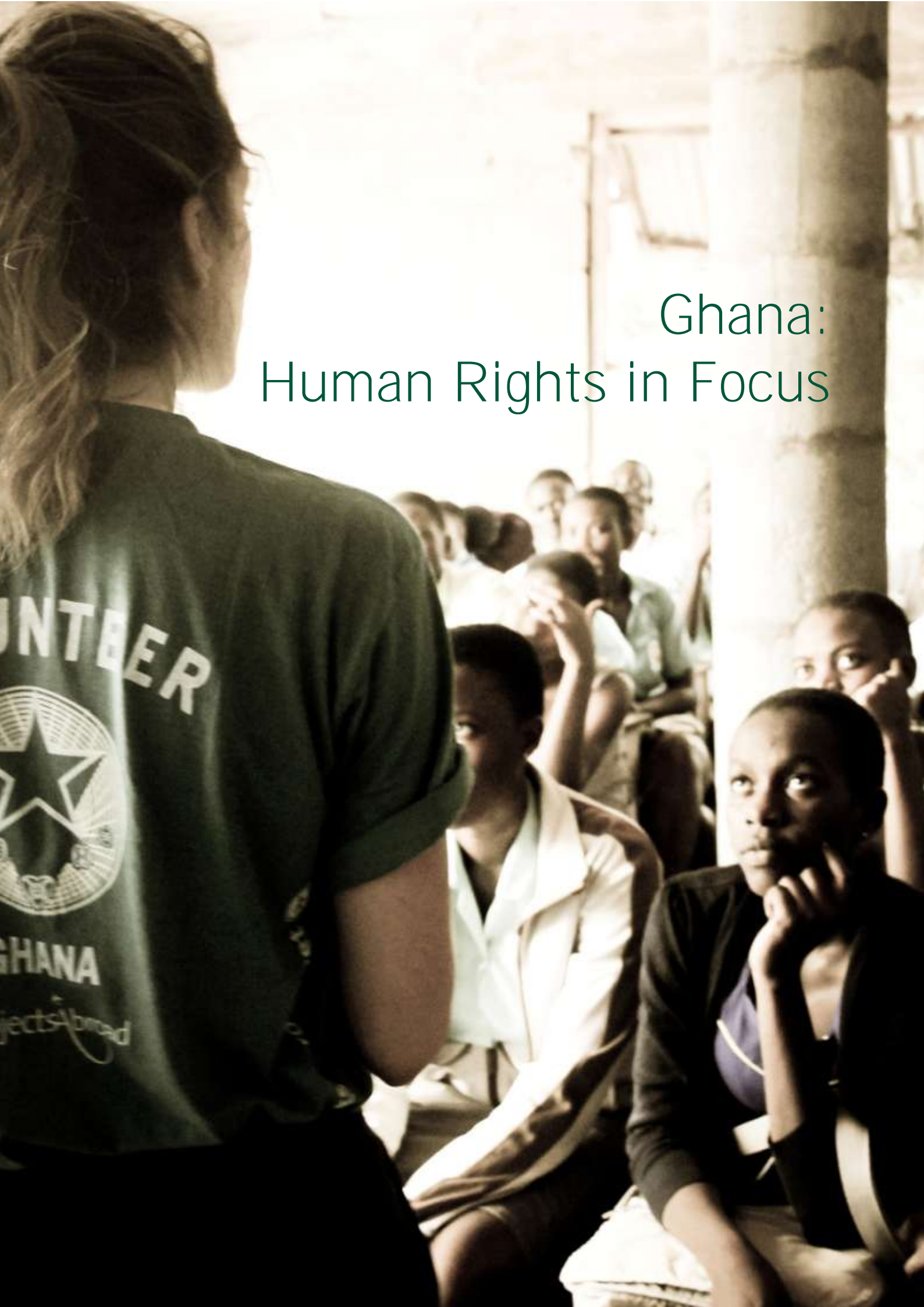
Legal Clinic

Jen Croker
Carina Olsthoorn

⁶ Intestate Succession Law, 1985 (PNDCL 111).

⁷ Wills Act, 1971 (Act 360)

Ghana: Human Rights in Focus



Human Rights in the media

Katie Brown and Maryann Verghese

Kidnapping, police corruption and access to healthcare

In July, a variety of human rights issues were reported in the media. PAHO keeps abreast on the current human rights issues pertinent to Ghana, as the media is a reflection of Ghanaian thought and culture.



Our Old Fadama associate Mr Frederick Opoku

The *Daily Graphic* reported a story on a sixteen-year-old girl in the Upper West Region who was rescued twice by the Community-Based Anti-Violence Team (COMBAT)⁸. The first time, a man promised the girl that he would pay for her school needs, and then abducted her with the intention of forcibly marrying her. Four days later, four men abducted the girl again with the same intent. The story of this girl highlights the issue with marriage by abduction in Ghana. Girls are often abducted between fourteen and sixteen years of age, and are forced into marrying an older man. According to data collected by COMBAT in the Upper West region, fifty-seven girls were abducted in 2011 and fifty-one girls were abducted in 2012. One representative of Action-Aid, the organization that advocated the creation of COMBAT, called for a punishment of men who attempt to abduct girls for marriage in order to abolish the practice.

Another human rights issue that was heavily reported upon was police corruption. Within the month of July, *The Daily Graphic*, the *Ghanaian Times*, and *The Daily Guide* all presented different articles regarding the issue of police corruption. A 2013 Global Corruption Barometer survey of 2000 people in Ghana reported that police and political parties are perceived to be the country's most corrupt institutions. Out of the 2000, fifty-four percent of the respondents believed that corruption has increased in

the last two years.⁹ This article called for amendments to the Whistleblower Act to provide adequate protection for civilians who report corruption. Another article was an editorial claiming that corruption extended to all levels of Ghanaian society. The editorial cited the pervasive nature of corruption.¹⁰ One of the other articles discusses the reaction of the Ghana police force to the Ghana Integrity Initiative of the 2012 report that the police are the most corrupt institution in Ghana.¹¹ The police administration has criticized the report as superficial, claiming that there is no accuracy of the report. The police claim that they have made increased initiatives over the last couple of years to help alleviate corruption. Nevertheless, the prevalence of police corruption in the news is reflective of the fact that corruption remains an issue throughout the country.

The rights of pregnant women also came into focus in the media. A woman from Torgone, in the Volta Region, went into labor this week.¹² During the labor, she started to suffer from uncontrollable bleeding.

When her husband, Sammy, attempted to drive her to a hospital, they encountered a problem. It was three in the morning at the time, and the only exit out of the village was chained shut and the guard was nowhere to be found. It took him over an hour to find the guard and convince him to open the gate to the bridge. By the time they arrived at the hospital, it had been three hours since the bleeding started. There was no doctor on duty, so the nurses attempted to resuscitate her. Though a doctor finally did arrive, he was too late, and she died at the hospital. Unfortunately, this story is one of many in Ghana. Around 4,000 women die annually from pregnancy complications. Bleeding is a common problem with pregnancies, and this is further extenuated in Ghana, as there are issues getting to a hospital in the first place. Usually the problem is not associated with a locked gate, but lack of transport and the absence of easily accessible hospitals. In the future there needs to be an onus on maternal health and the rights of the mother to adequate healthcare.

PAHO will continue to keep a watchful eye on human rights issues in the media and utilise these articles to inform current and future programs.

⁹ Della Rosa Ocloo, "Corruption barometer: Police, political parties indicted", *Daily Graphic*, July 10th, 2013

¹⁰ "State of the Nation's Corruption", *Daily Guide*, July 12th 2013

¹¹ "Ghana Police" *Ghanaian Times*, July 15th 2013

¹² Dr. Kwesi Owusu, "Maternal Death at Torgone", *Daily Guide*, July 29th, 2013

Human Rights Court report

Jaya Pradhan

LGBT Rights, unlawful detention and the role of Human Rights NGOs

During the month of July, volunteers from PAHO attended sessions at the Ghanaian High Court and spoke with the presiding judge, Kofi Essel Mensah, on four separate occasions. It was an invaluable opportunity to witness, first hand, the Ghanaian legal system in practice. Though all witnessed different cases, some overarching themes were consistent from every trip. All groups shared surprise at the casual nature of the court by comparison to its western counterparts, all the groups found the court to be somewhat disorganized or—at the very least—slow, and for two of the groups there was considerable tension when the subject of homosexuality in Ghana was raised.

This Human Rights Court branch of the High Court saw a wide variety of cases. However, it was also apparent that a common occurrence amongst these cases was the delays, and rescheduling. The groups witnessed cases that varied from bail hearings to noise complaints.

The first group of volunteers to visit the court noted that there were considerable delays and that progress was slow. They attended two cases during their visit. The first of which concerned a countersuit launched by 23 applicants against the police and District Court for wrongful suit. The second case was brought against The University of Ghana and Methodist University College Ghana by 389 students for wrongful dismissal. The applicants sued the universities for dismissing them in spite of having achieved the academic qualifications set. The universities blamed the National Accreditation Board for placing unreasonable requirements and communication error instead.

The next group of volunteers most notable case concerned a bail application in response to a breach of human rights. The appellants were fighting a year-long detention, with no new evidence being brought in that time. The appellants had been arrested for planning an armed robbery. However, their theoretical crime was prevented crime when a third party went to the police. Their lawyer argued that it was necessary for the appellants to receive bail, however the appellee contested this. The lawyer for the appellee argued that they should not receive bail and should be treated as though they had fully committed the offence. He argued that there should be no distinction between a defendant who commits a crime and a defendant who is unable to carry out his crime because the police have intervened. He stated that, had it not been for the intervention, the

⁸ George Folley, "Marriage by Abduction Violates Women's Rights", *Daily Graphic*, July 10th, 2013

defendants would have successfully committed their planned armed robbery.

The third group of volunteers saw a case that involved a nuisance complaint concerning a church that was allegedly being too loud during their evening services. Their services after 8 PM in the evening incorporated loud singing, instruments, and yelling. The law in place states that an establishment, public or private, may not generate noise levels that are above a certain volume, measured in decibels. In order to bring a successful claim for nuisance the appellant must prove that this level of volume was surpassed. The judge had to constantly reiterate that proof was required. While the appellants were adamant that their word was sufficient and that logic dictates action should be taken, this was not considered a valid legal argument. The judge elaborated and explained the subjectivity of a topic such as sound sensitivity and that is why a factual and objective level has been set to define an actionable breach.

In addition to the cases observed, each group had the opportunity to spend some time privately with the judge and to ask him their questions. The focus of these questions varied in nature; however, there was a general focus on equality and social welfare.

One group questioned the judge about the advancement of homosexual rights in Ghana. The judge believed the communities are entrenched with religious influences and traditional customs, hence he is not optimistic about the legalization of homosexuality in the near future. Human rights, in his point of view, is merely a relative concept and decades of time would be needed before decriminalizing homosexuality is possible. The task lies in the hands of future generations, he said.

Another group enquired as to what the most common cases in the Human Rights Court were, which interestingly raised questions about the police. He replied by saying that bail applications are the most common type of case heard – many contending indefinite detentions or disproportionate detentions of defendants. This was followed by the question of whether the majority of human rights cases concerned an ignorance of the law or deliberate breaches of the law. He pointed out that you cannot presume that a policeman is in ignorance of the law. He should be aware of the correct procedures and prevent breaches of fundamental human rights. He was also asked whether he believed that these breaches should be dealt with internally, or if he believed that the help of International law should be employed. He stated that you cannot turn your back on help from International Organisations – help should always be welcome. He also noted that collaboration can be effective, especially when you are unable to deal effectively with situations yourself. One of the members of the group then instigated a discussion concerning

juvenile detention – she asked whether it was right for them to be classed as defendants for stealing food due to hunger. The judge believed that it was important to employ social justice – it is more important to ask why the child became a delinquent and punish parents through fines in order to deter parental neglect.

The third group similarly raised the question of homosexuality in Ghana. In the future, it would perhaps be more appropriate to approach all questions with respect and sensitivity in mind. The topic of gay rights was of particular contention this month. The judge seemed frustrated at being asked, yet again, for his opinion on the topic. At first, he gave a constructive answer of his opinion, stating that, in time, Ghanaians would come to accept homosexuality. When further pressed he became visibly agitated. In retrospect, it would have been more appropriate to approach the topic differently, as many of the volunteers are considerably more liberal than even the most open-minded of Ghanaians. PAHO volunteers, can come across as almost militantly supportive of the perpetuation of all human right; however, that approach was not conducive to the conversation.

This group also engaged in discussions regarding education, the role of private enterprise in the realm of human rights, family planning, and social welfare. The judge gave interesting insight into the strain placed on families by insufficient consideration for how family size could impact the wellbeing of children. He explained that Ghana could not sustain a social welfare system where families were having a large amount of children. It is to expensive both for the country and for the individual families, as they cannot afford to maintain this many children. Ultimately, it was agreed that it was the children who suffered; thus, further promotion of contraceptives and discussions about family planning is important in Ghana. When pressed on the role of private enterprise in protecting or promoting human rights, he explained that society, as a whole, has a responsibility to ensure human rights are respected. This raised the question of the role the police play in the economic state of Ghana. He explained that the infrastructure was not sufficient for the Government alone to enforce human rights; therefore, parents, teachers and NGO's have an important role to play. The most emphasized point in the meeting was that the education of girls and women is fundamental to Ghana progressing as a country.

The court visits this month helped to contextualize the current state of human rights in the legal system in Ghana. The volunteers relished the opportunity to ask questions and gain insight from a High Courts Human Rights. The visits next month will focus on the interaction between customary tribal law and Ghanaian law; as well as, how this interaction effects the arbitration of human rights issues in Ghana.

Energy For Old Fadama

Charlotte Evans

The slum of Old Fadama, located in South West Accra, has long been a focus area for PAHO. It is home to an estimated 100,000 residents who, every day, go without access to the most basic of resources; are subject to a myriad of human rights, legal, and, environmental violations; and live in constant fear of eviction by the Ghanaian government. One specific issue, identified by former PAHO volunteer, David Boyd, was the continuous threat of electrical fires within the community and the lack of a reliable source of power. Since returning to the UK after his time with Projects Abroad last summer, he and a group of students from Queen Mary, University of London, have worked in collaboration with other organisations and NGO's to form 'Energy for Old Fadama'.

The community of Old Fadama largely consists of refugees and run-away's from across Ghana and other areas of West Africa. The land is government owned, so the expansion of the community in recent years has pushed the Ghanaian government into a difficult legal situation. This has led to the issuance of a number of forced eviction notices on the residents, and the implicit order to abandon the community altogether. These orders have been refused, as the abjectly poor community has nowhere else to go. The infrastructure and social welfare of the slum therefore depends entirely upon the help and maintenance work of NGO's and other local organisations, such as the Old Fadama Development Organisation (OFADA), Women in Slums Economic Empowerment (WISEEP), and the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO).

Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family." Despite the there are provisions for this right under Chapter 5 of the Ghanaian Constitution, the inhabitants of the 31.3 hectare slum of Old Fadama are denied these rights every day.

A major environmental and health issue in Old Fadama is the government sanctioned dumping of the vast majority of European and American electronic waste within the slum and along the neighbouring Korle Lagoon. This waste disposal, though a detriment to their health, has become one of the only economic mainstays in Old Fadama. The people of the slums burn off this e-waste and deal in the scrap metal. The combination of the heat and the release of toxic chemicals caused by electrical burning not only affects the young men who

deal in this business, but also the children and families who live in the slums and who are subject to the daily barrage of thick, black smoke that billows into their community and surrounding environment.

Alongside the issue of e-waste is the lack of a safe, reliable and legal source of power to the local residents. Currently, community members tap into the electricity supply of the National Grid in order to channel some of this power into the slums. Aside from the fact that this is illegal, it is also extremely



Charlie Evans at the launch of Energy for Old Fadama

dangerous. This practice leads to the outbreak of fires, often causing vast, irreparable, avoidable and often fatal damage to the locals and their community. The nature of the overcrowded wooden shacks and transient buildings throughout the community also exacerbates the issue.

Energy for Old Fadama was created to address the issue of energy supply. Their intention is to equip buildings in the slums with a sustainable, cost effective, and safe source of electricity through the installation of solar panels. EOF has funded the initial installations which have been set up in community buildings, such as, schools and religious centres. The long-term aim is to install the panels throughout the residential buildings in the slum. The organisation hopes that by safely and sustainably energising the slum in a legal manner they will be able to facilitate the positive development and progress of living conditions in the slums.

On the 19th of this month, members of the PAHO office; Program Manager, Edward Tetteh; Country Director, Emmanuel Abaja; and Charlotte Evans, a current PAHO volunteer who is involved with Energy for Old Fadama at university, were invited to attend the official launch of the installation of the first solar panels within Old Fadama. The event was attended by an audience of pupils from two local schools (who will soon be receiving solar panels), some community members, in addition to various different media outlets; such as, Africa TV and The Daily Graphic. Frederick Opoku—director of

WISEEP, who has been bridging the gap between Energy for Old Fadama and the inhabitants of the slums—gave an opening speech. Short addresses and thanks were also given by Impact Energies, who provided the solar panels; Charlotte Evans, on behalf of Executive Director, David Boyd and the Energy for Old Fadama team; Jennifer Croker, on behalf of the Projects Abroad Fadama Legal Assistance Project; and the Chief of the Fadama police station. The panels were successfully installed within the Police Station, two schools (including Bethel ECG School), two mosques, and a church. The illumination of the first solar powered light in the slums is the first step towards a more efficient and sustainable electricity source for the community.

It is without question that the work of David Boyd and Energy for Old Fadama demonstrates the high calibre of driven, ambitious and forward thinking volunteers that work at Projects Abroad Human Rights Office. The Public Relations Officer for Energy for Old Fadama, Jaya Pradhan, arrived later this month to complete his PAHO placement. It is hoped that, moving forward, PAHO will continue to inspire, motivate, and support similar initiative. The extraordinary work of EFOF to achieve the long term aim of reinvigorating, energising and empowering the slum of Old Fadama is demonstrative of the both the ability to effect change, as well as, the incredible achievements of PAHO volunteers both during their time in Ghana, and when the return home.

(For further information on the work of Energy for Old Fadama or to donate to this social enterprise, please visit the official website at 'www.energyforoldfadama.org')

Jacob's Story

Jennifer Mill

Jacob was one of the children the team visited at the Children's Shelter three times a week to teach English and play games. He had always been very quiet and shy, and seemed to always keep distance between himself and the other children. The only child he did speak to was Salem*, a young boy with severe mental disabilities who constantly needs looked after. He would*

leave his work and be first on hand to help Salem, and stop him from putting pens, chalk and paper into his mouth. Occasionally he would leave the class and one of the volunteers would have to go outside to speak to him and encourage him to come back in and participate in the class activity. At the back of the classroom he seemed to be a million miles away.

On Tuesday 6th July, the team had its usual couple of hours at the shelter in the afternoon. It was a usual chaotic lesson with a car window smashed during playtime. Towards the end of the lesson one of the volunteers noticed Jacob heading towards the gate of the shelter grounds with a determined look and a backpack on his back. Sam quietly slipped out of the classroom and rushed to ask Jacob where he was going. Jacob informed Sam that he could not stay at the shelter any longer. He was going to leave and return to working and living on the streets because that would be better than living at the shelter. Sam had to make a decision: give Jacob a couple of 20 Cedi notes and wish him good luck, force him to return to the shelter or take him to the projects abroad office. Thankfully, Sam decided to take Jacob to the office to try to talk to him, find out exactly what had happened to him and see what could be done. Little did anyone know how involved with Jacob we were soon going to be.

Meanwhile back at the class the rest of the team wondered where Sam and Jacob were. When they asked the social worker if she knew where they had gone she informed him that Jacob had tried to hang himself the night before, and that the police ordered the Shelter staff to let Jacob leave the facility. The team left the class very concerned and hurried back to the office to find out what happened.

Jacob spent most of the rest of that day talking with Edward at the PAHO office, talking about his background and what happened that night. As with most of the children at the shelter, Jacob had no ordinary background. It is impossible to verify certain details, but from our investigations we suspect that Jacob was born in Accra to a Cameroonian father and a Nigerian mother. They divorced when Jacob was seven years old. He left Accra with his father and headed to Cameroon, where his father died and Jacob found himself homeless and alone. His uncle raised him for a short time, until one day he abandoned Jacob at a busy market. For the next five years he made his own way back to Ghana, begging on the streets of Yaoundé and selling sachet water in Lagos, Nigeria, sleeping rough the whole time. He somehow saved enough to get back to Accra this year. He was picked up by the police and placed at the Shelter for processing in April. Jacob had been unable to locate his mother and because he has no money and does not speak Twi, Ga or much English, it was almost impossible for him to try.

By the end of the working day on Tuesday, the PAHO team tried to get in touch with the department of Social Welfare to see what they could do for Jacob. The hope was that they would be able to move him to an orphanage where he would receive the much needed care and support he needed. He was obviously in an extremely fragile state of mind and therefore we were very conscious of his vulnerability.

The team managed to arrange a meeting with social welfare for Wednesday and so until then the team took Jacob under their wing rather than let wander the streets of Accra. After dinner and some soda at a small restaurant beside Oxford street, the team was satisfied that Jacob was in a more contented state and therefore was not so much of a risk to himself. It must have been a very strange experience for him because there was little idea of what was going on, no plan as to what was going to happen, all he knew was that the team were feeding him for now and this was enough to make him smile. Ollie, Sam, Jenny and Simon took him to the Salvation Army hostel. All dorm rooms were full, or at least that they what we were told, so they paid for a private room with a huge double bed, a non-functioning television and an ensuite bathroom with a shower. They also bought him some toiletries and biscuits ensuring he would be safe, clean and well fed. However, the team was very unsure as to what to say to Jacob. All they told him was that they were going to speak to Social Welfare and he should come back to the office tomorrow by taxi. They gave Jacob a phone, a new sim card and some money for the taxi and made sure Jacob knew all the instructions: "lock the door", "say this to the taxi driver", "brush your teeth", "have a shower", "eat these biscuits for breakfast", "play on your phone" and "don't worry, we will see you tomorrow". The team left the hostel with a desperate hope that Jacob would trust us and come to the office tomorrow, but there was a worry that he may take the money and head out onto the streets alone. He had clearly managed it before and there was nothing to stop him doing it again.

Despite our worries, the next day Jacob called Ollie from his new phone at 5.50am to say that he was up and was coming in to the office at 2pm. He was clearly very excited to come back. Sure enough at 2pm he arrived and after a couple of hours playing on some of the volunteers' laptops, Rachel, Jenny and Rhoda took Jacob to the Department of Social Welfare as arranged. However, at 4pm all the offices in the entire building were shut; there was a football game on, Ghana versus France under-21 quarter finals, and everyone had left work early. Frustrated and tired, the team headed back to the office, unsure of what to do with Jacob for another night. The safest solution was simply to go back to the Salvation Army

again, and so Jenny and Rachel took Jacob for pizza, the first pizza Jacob had ever tried in his life. Although, the girls ate the pizza as normal with their hands, Jacob proceeded to eat the chicken from the top, then roll up the rest into a ball and rip off pieces as if it were banku. It was quite funny and yet humbling at the same time.



Jacob's crane

On the walk back to the salvation army hostel, Rachel and Jenny tried to figure out how they were going to tell Jacob that they were not sure what the projects abroad team were going to be able to do for him and there was a very small chance that he may have to go back to the shelter. They waited until he was settled in and relaxed, then sat down and told him:

"Jacob, you cannot live in this hostel forever; it is not your home. The shelter is not your home either. Our home is in Scotland, it is not here and it is not Accra. We will find you a home too, the man at social welfare will find you somewhere else soon but just now you cannot stay in this hostel."

He seemed to understand. They continued:

"Until we figure out where your home is, Jacob, you might have to go back to shelter just until we find somewhere else. Only for very short time"

The change in his face was utterly chilling. He would not accept it. He looked down at the ground, his face completely cold and would not look at either of the girls. After what happened on Monday night, the girls knew they could not leave him in this state and so had no choice but to promise him that they would make sure he never had to go back to the shelter. This was a very difficult situation because if he did not go back to the shelter, and social welfare provided him with nowhere else, he would have to return to living on the streets. Once Jacob heard the promise that he would not have to return to the shelter he gradually came back to reality and was able to talk to the girls. In a quick moment of sorting his

belongings, Rachel stumbled upon a pair of shoelaces tied together in his bag, a sudden reminder of how important it was that Jacob never return to the shelter. To the emotional desperation that led him to tie those shoelaces together and attempt what no person should ever feel the need to attempt, let alone a thirteen-year-old boy. The girls left Jacob with a notepad and paper for him to write anything he wanted or draw some pictures. They left the hostel with unshakable worry about what tomorrow would hold.

On Thursday Jacob again returned to the office and spent the day playing on some of the volunteers' laptops and drawing pictures, seemingly unaware of how critical his situation was. In the early afternoon, Social welfare returned the verdict that they could not do anything for Jacob so soon. Even although we had stressed Jacob's critical emotional state, it did little to help his case. In the UK there would have been immediate upheaval and Jacob would be taken to a care facility where he would be constantly on watch and would receive the mental rehabilitation he needed. In Ghana that kind of facility and treatment is simply non-existent. These kinds of moves involve a lot of work and the process takes time. In the mean time he could go back to the shelter or fend for himself. The team spent the day brainstorming solutions. At this point projects abroad could no longer assume responsibility for him because of the possibility that it might amount to legal responsibility, not to mention the unhealthy emotional dependence that was forming. Sam, Rachel and Jenny tried to think of ways they could fundraise from friends and family at home to be able to support Jacob until he could be moved to an orphanage, but they soon realized the gravity such a move would entail. Sam and Rachel were leaving the next week, Jenny was leaving Ghana in a month; how could they continue to care for him in the way a legal guardian should? They were ill-equipped, and if anything were to happen to him they might be held responsible. It was an impossible situation.

That night Sam, Rachel and Jenny took Jacob to Oxford Street for dinner and then back to the Salvation Army. They told him that this was the final time he would be staying there because this was not his home, but that he would not have to go back to the shelter. However, at this point they had no answers as to where he was going to go. Of course the team could feel good that they had cared for him and provided him a few days and nights of food, peace, relaxation and good nights of sleep. That was probably the nearest thing to luxury he had experienced in some time. However, the question of where Jacob would go tomorrow loomed over their heads. Going back to the shelter was not an option, he would refuse and if he were forced he would

leave. The team was not equipped to care for him themselves and was awaiting action by the Department of Social Welfare. There was a high chance that they might have to leave him to fend for himself once more. This was an unbearable thought.

They could not give up. Sam, Jenny and Rachel spent all night and all morning, as much as the internet signal in Accra would allow, researching charities, orphanages and aid organizations. Dozens of emails were sent out titled: "HELP URGENTLY NEEDED", to any organization or person that might be able to help or know someone who could. The team called as many Islamic charities, schools, institutions and mosques as they could find from online directories in Ghana, and even called the Iranian embassy to ask for numbers of local Imams. It was entirely desperate. Of the few replies to emails most of them said that this kind of case had to go through the Department of Social welfare, legally, before any institution or charity could take a child in. Of course this was already being done.

At the eleventh hour Edward managed to contact an important Imam and arrange a meeting at one of his charitable institutions in Nima, about thirty minutes from the Human Rights Office. The team quickly rushed there with Jacob, hoping for some kind of miracle. It was. The institution's representative took Jacob into the community and agreed to look after him until at least Monday and promised that they would consider looking after him for longer and teaching him there. Furthermore, the Imam had indicated to Edward over the phone that Jacob would most likely have a home there indefinitely, or at least until they could find a more permanent solution.

The Projects Abroad team also discussed working in collaboration with the institution in the future, with talks of running human rights and life-skills classes for the boys there this year. The team felt overwhelming relief; relief they had never experienced before.

Not all children in Accra will be taken in and looked after as Jacob was. He was very fortunate, but of course the previous five years of his life had been such a struggle. The kind of struggle that most, if not all, volunteers will never understand. Thousands of children in Ghana live on the streets and beg for money or food to survive. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of children live on the streets and beg to survive in Africa. They are entirely alone and entirely dependent on themselves. In the United Kingdom these children would be cared for in the social welfare system, and any child who tried to take his own life would immediately be given appropriate care and constant monitoring. Ghana simply cannot afford this kind of service and so the children who find themselves in this horrific situation learn quickly that they are on their own.

For Jacob, the team hopes for a brighter future for a very promising and charming young boy. For the rest of Accra's street children, they hope for more miracles.

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved*

Osu Welfare Centre Appeal

Volunteers at PAHO are currently trying to raise money for the Welfare Centre in Osu which consists of three institutions:

- the Children's Shelter,

which houses abandoned, run-away, homeless or abused children ;

- the Girls Correctional Facility,

where girls who have been convicted of crimes are imprisoned ;

- the Boys Remand Centre,

where boys who are awaiting trial are held in custody and have been denied bail.

We hope to raise enough money to pay for:

- a carpenter to repair ceilings, fix new mosquito nets and mosquito trap doors in the children's shelter;

- nappies and other basic toiletries for the disabled children in the Shelter;

- textbooks, story books, stationery, resources and teaching materials for all three facilities in order to make our time teaching the children worthwhile.

The more money we receive, the more we can improve these facilities.

Donations can be made online via our 'Just Giving' page. The address is as follows:

www.justgiving.com/PAHO

Any donations must specifically state:

"Intended for PAHO for the Osu Welfare Facility in Accra, Ghana"



From the HRJ Coordinator

Frustrations and celebrations

July 2013

July was difficult. July was physically and emotionally draining for most. But July was very satisfying for the staff and volunteers at PAHO.

The story of Jacob, the homeless migrant orphan whose life was **undefended by Ghana's Social Welfare** touched all volunteers to some extent. I will never forget the palpable relief and subsequent elation when we managed to find a solution with the Islamic community in Nima at the eleventh hour.

We held our first official Social Welfare Campaign, with all volunteers spending a week in Dodowa at one of the residences of the chief, who passed on the unwritten history of his people and his land, out of which has grown the idea of an anthropology project for future volunteers.

Domestic violence, gender equality and **children's rights** remained our points of focus, with increasing activity in succession, property and customary law. Next month I intend for our law-minded volunteers to investigate the relationship between statute law and customary law in greater detail, to better inform our Fadama Legal Assistance Program and allow the team provide more accurate and practical advice to Ghana's most vulnerable citizens.

As usual I would like to thank all of our volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the important, often frustrating mission they chose to undertake at the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office, Ghana.

I wish you all a happy and prosperous August.

- Oliver Shepherd

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