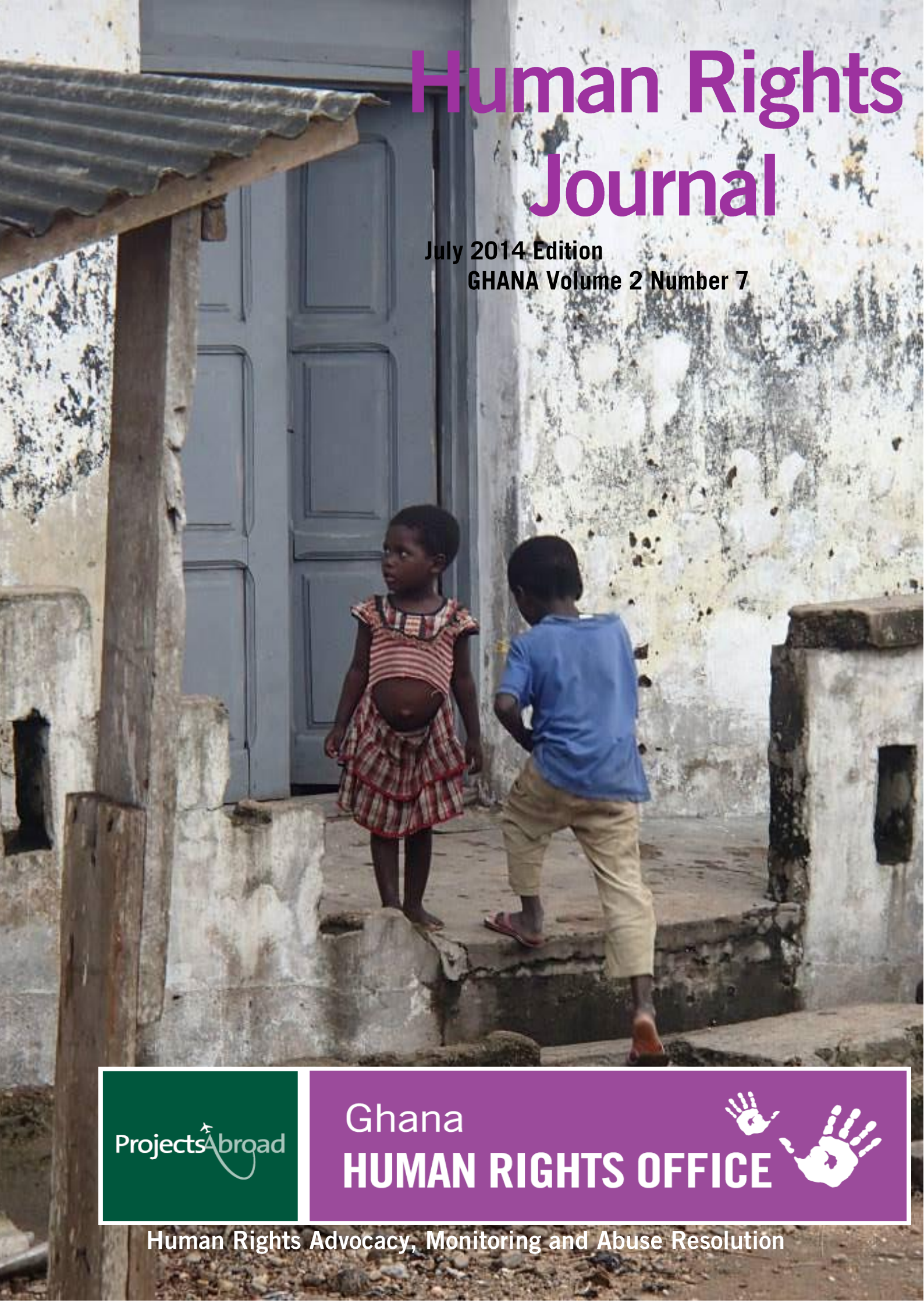


# Human Rights Journal

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**HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE**



Human Rights Advocacy, Monitoring and Abuse Resolution

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







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

*Old Fadama is the biggest slum in Ghana, and is situated between Agbogbloshie market and Korle Lagoon. This lagoon has been cited as one of the most polluted bodies of water on the planet, due to the government sanctioned dumping of Western electronic waste within the lagoon. The government also owns the land on which the slums are situated, so the estimated 80,000 people living in the slums have settled there illegally. Thus, the government refuses to give them any services, such as, electricity, water, sewers, roads, or schools. Crime rates are high living conditions are poor; there is abject poverty and appalling literacy rates. The people within the slums are often unaware of their basic human and legal rights or do not know how to seek a resolution if these rights are violated. This is an area of Ghana which is in desperate need of help, so PAHO, in conjunction with WISEEP, has decided to set up a free legal assistance centre there. The goal is to set up a permanent, self-sustained fixture in the Old Fadama slums called the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP).*

Domestic violence and suspects rights were the two main topics discussed on the weekly outreaches throughout the month of July.

As to the topic of domestic violence, the target group were women. From previous experience discussing the topic of domestic violence with groups within Old Fadama, the PAHO office realised that women were more likely to engage in discussions and ask questions if it was a single sex group. In the mixed sessions the women seemed more apprehensive to speak out and the men contributed to the discussion. Due to this the PAHO office decided it would be beneficial to discuss domestic violence with either a group of women or men, not both together. Although the volunteers never know the exact composition of the participant group before the session, the team had prepared to outreaches in case it was a group of women, men or mixed. For the session on domestic

violence the group consisted only of women.

Domestic violence is a very real issue for the communities living in the Old Fadama Slum. As the slum is effectively ostracised from the rest of Accra and the police presence is minimal, crimes including domestic violence often cannot be dealt with by the authorities. This heightens the importance of education regarding basic Human Rights, and the availability of legal assistance provided by FLAP and other NGOs. Although there was a language barrier and the team had to speak through an interpreter, the women did seem receptive to the ideas that were discussed. The session began with a discussion on the different types of abuse the women may encounter, these are: physical violence, emotional violence, economic violence and sexual violence. The team explained the different human rights that these actions violate and the importance of seeking assistance if any of these are violated. Emphasis was placed on recognising the signs of domestic abuse and what institutions are available within Old Fadama and Accra itself that can help women or men in this situation. Women are often apprehensive to speak to the police about domestic violence at the hands of their husband because they are financially reliant on their husbands and could not support their family without the husbands income. Additionally, there is a widespread problem of police corruption within Old Fadama so the women may not trust the police to deal with their problems sensitively or appropriately. Due to these factors the team provided additional information on other organisations, including the FLAP office, where women can go if they are victims of domestic violence.

The communication barrier did limit the interaction the team had with the women and so the questions were often not clear. Despite this the women did make comments on the topic, and also asked questions regarding other issues such as child maintenance. Overall the outreach seemed successful – there were undoubtedly at least some grey areas that the team managed to clarify, as well as information regarding what could be done in terms of legal assistance.

The second outreach covered the topic of suspect's rights as the participant group were mostly male. Several of the group understood English, yet an interpreter was used to translate the information to other members of the group and to ensure everyone was following the discussion. The session was split into three main sections: arrest and detention, bail and interrogation. Each member of the team discussed one topic and explained the different rights suspects have at these various stages. The team explained the need for police to have a warrant to arrest someone, and the instances where a warrant is not necessary- for example, if you prevent a police officer from doing their job. The rights of women and children were also discussed as there were several women present in the group, the team explained that women and men should be held separately, and that women can only be searched by a female police officer. Several members of the group were familiar with their rights when arrested and the conditions of bail but the team tried to reiterate the importance of these rights and how important it is that these are not violated. The session ended with information regarding institutions available to the communities in Old Fadama that can protect their rights as suspects and where they can report instances where these rights have been violated. After the session ended there were several questions from the participants- one question was regarding one man's personal experience of getting arrested and being made to pay the police officer and getting physically beaten by the officer. The man was asking whether this was against his human rights. The team explained what rights were violated and what the correct procedure was for the police officer to follow. The man stated that if it was to happen again in the future he would seek help from the FLAP office. This was very reassuring as it was clear the message from the session had reached the participants and they were aware of where to seek help should they need it.



Double the training. Womens groups receiving training on both knowledge of human rights and the skills to earn a living.

## Slum Womens Training

Income generation meets human rights training.

*The main objective of the Projects Abroad Human Right Office (PAHO) is to educate vulnerable groups in the population on their fundamental Human Rights and related subjects. This will enable them to assess whether they are subject to any violation of their rights and provide ideas on how to address their situation.*

*The idea for the specific women training in Old Fadama was to offer women who were participating in income-generating skills training, (such as printing fabrics or baking bread) additional education on several aspects of their daily lives. PAHO volunteers gave 30-minute presentations just before the practical skills training commenced or just after it was completed.*

PAHO Volunteers conducted five training sessions in total on the following topics:

1. General Human Rights and Child Maintenance
2. Domestic Violence
3. Family Planning
4. Rental Issues
5. Body Hygiene

### *First Session: General Human Rights and Child Maintenance*

The first session was a presentation on the background of human rights and child maintenance issues. The key messages the volunteers aimed to convey were:

- Human Rights are basic rights and freedoms to which everyone is

entitled regardless of age, sex, or religion. No one can take these rights from you.

- It is the parents' responsibility to look after their children until they reach the age of 18. Both parents share this obligation whether they are separated, living together or married.
- Parents are role models for their children.
- The court helps to solve custody disputes. The Fadama Legal Aid Programme (FLAP) office helps with mediations to avoid going to court.

The women seemed to be interested in the issue, but some of them got distracted by their children who were in the room. The session was quite short and the translation took a lot of time, so only basic information could be conveyed.

### *Second session: Domestic Violence*

The topic of Domestic Violence was meant to enable the women to understand their rights at home and what they could do if their situation becomes unbearable. The short presentation explained the types of violence and what steps women can take to reduce and avoid further exposure to violence.

Approximately 10 women attended the session. As usual Frederick, the head of the FLAP office, translated the presentation. At the end of the presentation a debate took place as to whether it was feasible and advisable for women to report their husbands to the police after violent acts at home. The women pointed out that violence is traditional in their lives and it is very difficult to stop abuse without losing

their husband and being forced to look after their children alone.

### *Third session: Family Planning*

The objective of the third session was to inform the women about the need for family planning and the methods of contraception available to them.

The presentation covered the following topics:

- What is family planning?
- Why is there a need for family planning?
- What types of contraception exists (a picture was shown to illustrate different types)
- Questions and Answers

The volunteers displayed pictures depicting available contraceptive methods and explained that each method has advantages and disadvantages. One important point was to raise awareness that contraceptive methods have varying levels of efficacy and safety which means there is no single option which suits every woman. The training was supported by a nurse, who encouraged the women to ask questions and was an excellent source of information.

### *Fourth session: Rental Issues*

Frederick, the head of the FLAP office, had asked the volunteers to talk about rental issues in one of the sessions, since this is an important issue in the slum.

Therefore, a short presentation was prepared which discussed:

- the issues that could be faced during rental situations



- the advantages of a written contract
- elements of a written contract
- possible steps to be taken in the event of a dispute between the tenant and the landlord

In the discussion with the women it became clear that none of them has a written contract with a landlord. One woman shared information about the conflict she has with her landlord, who regularly complains about the noise coming from her home. For instance, the landlord complains about the tenant's baby crying and does not allow Fufu preparation after 6 pm.

The volunteers suggested using present conflict situations with the landlord to turn verbal agreements into written contracts. The FLAP office offered assistance to the women to make this a possibility.

The women followed this topic with great interest. In the end they suggested that the volunteers should repeat this session with their husbands, since they are the ones who actually do the contracts with the landlord. Meanwhile, they will inform their husbands about the session.

#### *Fifth session: Body Hygiene*

At an interview with one of the Community Leaders in Old Fadama made it apparent that hygiene is a topic the residents lack adequate information about. It was believed that they could benefit from further education on the matter.

The presentation contained the following sections:

- what is hygiene
- hand washing as one of the most important measures of hygiene
- body hygiene
- hygiene items supporting body/personal hygiene

The volunteers learned that the word hygiene translates to the local language as "keeping your place clean".

The women were very responsive to the questions. One participant was particularly knowledgeable on the topic. Frederick's demonstration of the correct procedure for washing hands or how to sneeze caused lots of laughter

amongst the participants. All in all, it was a positive and humorous session.

#### Next steps

Since the income-generating skills training came to an end, the PAHO training was also forced to end. Therefore, a planned sixth session on Household could not be conducted. The volunteers suggest that similar training sessions are conducted in the future because it was felt that all of the sessions were well received

## Slum School Outreach

### Expanding to Bethel ECD

*In a yearlong project, PAHO is profiling Old Fadama, Ghana's largest slum with a population of approximately 80,000 people. In December 2013 PAHO began profiling the schools of Old Fadama, and conducting an Educational Needs Assessment of eight of the twelve schools within the boundaries of the Old Fadama Slum. All of the new PAHO projects that will derive from this Educational Needs Assessment will fall under the umbrella of the Schools of Old Fadama Adequacy Improvement Drive (SOFAID).*

*In accordance with the recommendations of that report we began running the Slum School Outreach with the aim of broadening children's understanding of Human Rights through an interactive form of education amongst the students that attend one of the schools in the slums*

In March 2014, PAHO volunteers ran a series of outreach sessions at the Queensland School in Old Fadama. The sessions were designed to educate students about their basic human rights and what to do if these rights are violated. These sessions proved to be highly successful. Students were engaged in the chosen topics and were eager to learn more about their rights. The volunteers ended the outreach with the belief that the students had benefited from the sessions and would continue to think critically about their human rights.

Due to the success of the previous Slum School Outreach, it was decided that the programme would be continued in Bethel ECD, the largest school operating in Old Fadama. Over the course of six weeks in June and

July, volunteers from PAHO visited Bethel ECD. The volunteers split in to two groups, with each group teaching approximately 25 students aged 12 to 15. The volunteers delivered sessions on a variety of human rights issues and topics which may be relevant to children who are growing up in the slums. These topics included:

- General human rights and child labour
- Domestic Violence
- Child marriage and child trafficking
- Water and sanitation
- Sexual health

It was decided that the first session would involve a basic introduction to the concept of human rights and children's rights, with a focus on child labour. It was believed that these topics would be relevant to the students as many children in the slums are forced to work to support their family. In addition, the first session was conducted on World Day Against Child Labour and so the topic was also topical in nature.

The volunteers were surprised to find that the children were already quite well versed in the topic of human rights. When asked to provide a definition for the term human rights, they gave intelligent answers such as "things that we are entitled to." They could also name numerous important rights such as the right to education and health care. The children were particularly interested in the topic of child labour. They were asked to consider specific situations and to discuss whether they would fall under the heading of child labour, such as working alongside your parents. The use of questions and discussions made the session very interactive and lively. The children came up with many questions of their own and seemed truly interested in the Ghanaian rules and regulations against child labour. As the students enjoyed the interactive elements of the session, volunteers decided to ensure that further presentations included many interactive aspects.



Children of Bethel ECD with the slum school team. Campaigning against child labour.

Unfortunately, the session was interrupted several times by external noise. The classrooms overlook the playground and are bordered by other classrooms, meaning that the volunteers and the children had to shout over one another to be heard. This made small group discussions impossible, but luckily it did not deter the students from asking questions. Volunteers made adjustments to future sessions to allow for the unexpected noise levels.

The second session discussed domestic violence. Once again, this is common in Ghanaian society. Many of the children may have witnessed abuse or been the victims of it. Women are often scared to report their husbands for domestic violence as patriarchal violence is a traditional element of West African culture.<sup>1</sup> This was reflected in the answers given by the students when they named obedience

as a characteristic of a healthy relationship.

The children once again gave intelligent and thoughtful answers to the questions asked by volunteers. They could think of many negative effects of domestic violence, such as death and homelessness. The volunteers continued the interactive nature of the session by providing the class with scenarios and asking them to identify the type of abuse featured. The volunteers were further inspired by the enthusiasm of the class. The students asked difficult questions concerning specific cases of abuse which challenged the volunteers and made it clear that the students were truly absorbing the information.

The topic of Children's Rights was returned to for the third session, which focused on child marriage and child trafficking. These are also topics of major concern in Ghana and West Africa and so it was considered important that the children have a basic understanding of these topics. The students surpassed expectations when discussing child marriage. They

could define the issue and name many possible consequences with little prompting from volunteers. The topic was framed with reference to the Ghanaian human rights legislations discussed in the first session, and the children remembered these laws surprisingly well.

The topic of child trafficking proved more difficult to understand. The children were confused as to the relationship between child trafficking, sexual exploitation and child labour. Luckily, they were not afraid to ask questions to clarify their knowledge and so the volunteers felt that the students ultimately obtained the necessary level of understanding.

The fourth and fifth sessions concerned health matters: the fourth session focused on water and sanitation while the fifth session focused on sexual health. Both of these topics are important for those living in a slum. Members of the Old Fadama community have reported that they have been denied access to water by the government, leading to the use of

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, "At a glance: Ghana", 26 December 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_statistics.html)



contaminated water.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the quality of sexual health education varies across the country and many adolescents who fall pregnant or contract a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) report that a lack of awareness of sexual health was partially responsible for their choices. The topic of water and sanitation was related specifically to the situation in Old Fadama to which the children seemed responsive. The volunteers informed them of many diseases they can obtain from poor sanitation, such as cholera and typhoid. Some of these illnesses were unfamiliar to the students, while more high profile diseases such as malaria were widely known. The children were told how to prevent the spread of these illnesses by washing their hands, cleaning their food thoroughly and boiling water, amongst others. The volunteers continued the interactive nature of the sessions by ending with a quiz concerning various elements of health and sanitation. By the end of the session, the knowledge of the children was at a far higher standard than at the start of the session.

The penultimate session, which discussed sexual health, ended up being similar to the previous session. Several STDs were discussed with the students with special mention given to the causes, symptoms and treatments for each. The children were aware of the most predominant STDs in Ghana, particularly HIV/AIDS. However, their knowledge on some of the less common or less serious STDs was rather basic. In their discussion on family planning, they were familiar with some of the more common methods of contraception such as condoms, but their knowledge did not extend far beyond that. The volunteers designed a quiz to end the session which tested the understanding of the children and created discussion on delicate issues regarding sexuality.

The final session was a summary session designed to ascertain the knowledge gained by the children throughout the programme. A short summary was given of every session and then the children were asked questions to reinforce and test their understanding. This included such

questions as “who has human rights” and “what would you do if you suspected someone was being abused at home?” These questions were answered enthusiastically by the students which impressed the new volunteers to the project. The children displayed a lot of knowledge of the topics and seemed to have benefited significantly from the programme. Unfortunately, the interactive nature of the session served to momentarily distract the students when volunteers asked them to design a poster about the importance of washing your hands. This created much hilarity, but meant that the answers given for the final session (sexual health) were quite poor.

On the whole, the slum school outreach was hugely successful. Despite the limited resources and chaotic atmosphere in the classrooms, the volunteers developed a positive relationship with the students due to their willingness to learn and their boundless enthusiasm. Their knowledge was surprisingly strong from the outset, which gave the volunteers a solid foundation to work from. The students were never afraid to ask questions and were always willing to discuss their opinions. This made for a positive learning environment in which the children learned about their human rights and the volunteers learned about the perspective of young people in Old Fadama. The success of the Slum School outreaches to date suggests there is a place for further sessions at other schools which can improve awareness of human rights and enrich the experiences of volunteers themselves.

## Human Rights Vacation School

### Expanding to Bethel ECD

*The Human Rights Vacations School is aimed at Junior High grad students with the purpose of increasing the students' knowledge on different human rights topics both globally and domestically. The outreach took place in two different areas- on a Monday and Tuesday in Abokobi and on a Thursday in Nungua. The outreaches in Abokobi were with the same set of students and covered six sessions, the outreach to Nungua covered four sessions. Both outreaches covered similar topics but also catered to the specific interests of the students which we identified during the first introductory session.*

The first outreach for both groups focused on the general topic of human rights. The aim of the session was to identify how much the students already knew about human rights and to provide them with basic information which would provide a platform for the following week's topics. The first session covered the following topics: what are human rights; characteristics of human rights; categories of human rights; the development of human rights; African human rights treaties; and institutions within Ghana that aim to protect human rights. Both groups were very engaged in this session and the students appeared to have a basic knowledge of fundamental human rights as they were able to provide examples of human rights and human rights abuses. From the first sessions we were able to gauge that both groups of students were very intelligent and interested in learning more in depth information about human rights. Due to the different interests of both groups the two teams followed different schedules in the following weeks. The Abokobi outreach covered topics on child rights/child labour, child marriage/teenage pregnancy, gender equality and child trafficking/slavery. The final session involves the students presenting to the team in groups on different topics that we have discussed over the previous weeks. The Nungua outreach covered topics on gender equality, child marriage/teenage pregnancy and democracy.

The session on gender equality was particularly interesting for both groups as it was a mixed group of students who are very vocal and opinionated. The team in Abokobi began the session by discussing the different meanings of the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ and beginning a dialogue with the group on what they thought gender equality meant. When the team presented facts on gender inequality in Ghana the students were very interactive and provided us with examples- generally men in Ghana go to school and women are expected to stay in the home. When the team asked whether women and men were equal in Ghana the students answered no, but felt that this was not fair. The students were very surprised to hear examples of gender inequality from the volunteer's home countries, the team tried to emphasize that the issue of gender inequality is not solely present in Ghana but is an issue faced worldwide. After discussing the issue of gender inequality in more detail the

<sup>2</sup> Charles Addo Darko, “Waiting for water in Accra- Old Fadama,” Modern Ghana, 22 September 2012, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/419287/1/waiting-for-water-in-accra-old-fadama.html>

team organized an activity which focused on inspirational women and role models. Each volunteer provided an example of their own role model and the students then identified their own personal role model which could be someone famous, or a member of their family or community. One of the students identified a member of their church who teaches them about human rights issues within Ghana and the student emphasized the importance of educating young people on this topic. Several students identified nurses and journalists as these were the careers they wanted to pursue. The session culminated in a debate, the topic of which was "Gender equality would benefit society". Teams argued for and against this statement. The debate was really interesting and was very student led as they were able to come up with their own key points for their argument, and passionately defend their team. The team that argued against the motion had a more difficult task but managed to argue their points very well and identified some of the issues that encourage gender inequality in Ghana. Some of the points identified were: traditionally it is disrespectful for men if women were to be treated equal, there would be more competition for jobs if women were not discriminated against, it would cost employers more money to pay women the same wage as men. Although the groups recognized the importance and need for gender equality they were able to identify why some individuals do not want gender equality to be realized in Ghana.

The outreaches on child rights and child labour were of particular relevance for some of the students that were under the age of eighteen as they are not yet legally adults. The initial focus of the outreaches was on the additional rights that children are entitled to because they have not yet fully developed into adults. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child these are: the right to a childhood, the right to be educated, the right to be healthy, the right to be treated fairly, and the right to be heard. The students were able to identify instances where these rights are violated, especially child labour which infringes on almost every right that children are entitled to. The team led an activity whereby the students filled out a clock identifying how many hours a day they spent in school, working, playing and sleeping. Although none of the students appeared to have a job some helped in their parents

businesses and every student helped around the house and looked after younger siblings if their parents were busy. The students were able to identify the difference between child labour and helping their family around the home, the team explained that they all helped their families as well. The students provided examples of what individuals and institutions are responsible for protecting the rights of children: parents, teachers, police and the courts. Both sessions on this topic were met with a similar response from the students, they appeared to be very knowledgeable on the subject of children's rights and understood that child labour is very prevalent in some other regions in Ghana.

The discussion on child labour was continued with a session on child trafficking and slavery. The topic was introduced with a brief history of the slave trade. This was a particularly relevant discussion point as Ghana was a hub of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the children had visited Cape Coast, an area known for its connection to slavery, and so they were well informed on the subject. The session then moved in to a discussion on contemporary slavery. The topic was introduced with a short quiz. Many of the students were surprised to hear that there are as many as 27 million slaves world wide as they did not realize the problem was so widespread. The team discussed the origins of child trafficking, the effects on the child and methods of ending slavery. The session involved several interactive elements during which the students readily gave their opinions. The students once again proved to be very knowledgeable. They could identify many potential causes of trafficking and the ways it may damage the child. The children were divided into groups and asked to brainstorm ways they could help their community to eradicate trafficking. They came up with insightful suggestions such as writing to their assembly man or creating a platform to educate others about the issue. By the end of the session they fully understood the topic of child trafficking and recognized the importance of raising awareness of the matter within their own community.

*Delphine is one of the pupils who attends the Human Rights Vacation School in Abokobi. She is 15 years old. Upon her own initiative, Delphine wrote an article on one of the topics which*

*captured her interest. She asked for this article to be included in PAHO monthly journal. Delphine is a prime example of the enthusiasm and promise displayed by all students of Abokobi Human Rights Vacation School.*

### **The Challenges of Children** *By Delphine Mensah*

I would like to ask for space to comment on the challenges of children. To begin with, children are the future leaders and every child has a right to enjoy life as a citizen of a nation. People turn out to abuse the rights of children which is very bad.

The main challenge of children is child labour. Child labour is defined as giving children difficult work to do which could be harmful to their health. Effects of child labour on children include serious illness because of the harmful work given to him or her and through that the child can die. I am encouraging all children to report when their rights are abused.

Also, girls are forced into child marriage. This results when children under 18 years are forced into marriage. The cause of child marriage is poverty. Poverty is the main cause of child marriage because most parents do not have money to take good care of the child, so they take money from people who are rich in exchange of their daughter. I entreat all girls to take their education seriously and achieve their aims in the future so that their rights will not be abused.

Moreover, child trafficking and slavery are some other problems faced by children. Slavery took place in the olden days but has stopped. However, in these modern days a new form of slavery is still taking place. Usually children are sent to other countries telling them that they are going to be educated, but instead are forced into difficult work which affects children seriously.

These are a few of the challenges I have come to know. I hope that parents and children especially will help to curb these challenges for the betterment of society. I also encourage all girls to report when their rights are infringed upon.



## Slum School Book Drive (Italian)

What Does a Book Mean To You? Una campagna per le scuole di Old Fadama

*I Guarda al futuro dei bambini di Old Fadama la nuova campagna solidale di Projects Abroad Ghana che parte dalla domanda: «What does a Book mean to You?» ovvero «Che cosa significa un libro per te?», disponibile al seguente indirizzo.*

<http://www.justgiving.com/whatdoesabookmeantoyou>

L'obiettivo è duplice, da una parte ci si riallaccia a quel concetto di universalità su cui si fondano i diritti umani internazionali, ovvero l'innata consapevolezza che dimorino in tutti noi idee capaci di renderci uguali di fronte a determinate questioni sociali. L'altro obiettivo è quello di spingere la comunità del web a condividere il messaggio secondo cui "everyone deserves a book" ( "ognuno merita un libro" ), attraverso l'utilizzo dei social networks.

La campagna è stata lanciata sulla piattaforma JustGiving.com mercoledì 30 Luglio dall'ufficio diritti umani di Projects Abroad di Accra. Il lancio è stato accompagnato dal rilascio di un video sul canale ufficiale di YouTube della stessa organizzazione che potete trovare al seguente indirizzo web: <http://youtu.be/OYMQVaVeseQ>

La risposta è stata estremamente positiva, tanto che si sono raggiunti i 700 dollari di donazioni in 24 ore ( il 17% dell'ammontare totale a cui punta la campagna ).

Il Ghana è situato nel nord-ovest dell'Africa e ha una popolazione di circa 25 milioni di persone. Anche se si tratta di una delle nazioni più sviluppate dell'Africa, molte questioni in ambito di diritto umano rimangono ancora aperte e smuovono la comunità internazionale.

Agbogbloshie, più comunemente chiamato Old Fadama, si trova a nord-ovest del Central Business District di Accra. L'area è coperta da circa quattro ettari di slum ( baraccopoli ) ed è una delle aree più densamente popolate in Ghana e una delle più inquinate del pianeta.

A causa della povertà estrema, i

residenti si trovano a dover lottare quotidianamente per la propria sopravvivenza. Il governo si rifiuta di fornire loro i servizi di base a causa del loro status di residenti illegali.

Indipendentemente da cultura, razza e credo, è opinione universalmente accettata e protetta dal settimo principio della carta universale dei diritti del fanciullo, che ogni bambino abbia diritto a ricevere un'istruzione.

I figli di Old Fadama dovrebbero avere la possibilità di uscire dalla povertà attraverso una giusta educazione. Ma purtroppo non è così.

Ci sono dodici scuole in Old Fadama, tuttavia, nessuna di queste ha risorse sufficienti per fornire ai bambini una formazione decente. Vi è una chiara mancanza di mobili, libri di testo, spazio, servizi igienici e insegnanti. Senza il nostro aiuto, questa situazione difficilmente muterà in tempi brevi.

Projects Abroad Human Rights Office ha attualmente in corso vari progetti in Old Fadama, come una settimanale 'Slum School' che cerca di introdurre ai bambini i principi base su cui si fondano i diritti umani.

Projects Abroad lavora anche a fianco del Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP), per educare tutti i residenti di Old Fadama sulle questioni legali e sociali che riguardano direttamente la loro comunità.

Condurre queste sessioni non è sufficiente quando si ha una tale assenza di risorse.

Il nostro obiettivo è di fornire ai bambini e all'intera comunità, un'opportunità di cambiamento attraverso l'educazione e il corretto funzionamento del sistema scolastico.

Donare attraverso JustGiving è semplice, veloce e totalmente sicuro. Per donare un libro alle scuole di Old Fadama basta un click...

<http://www.justgiving.com/whatdoesabookmeantoyou>

Winneba Outreach





## Combating child trafficking in Winneba

Projects Abroad supports Ghana Immigration Service in Winneba in their 3-year project.

*During her investigations in the Effutu Municipality, Mrs Mary-Lois Amo Richmond of the Ghana Immigration Service in Winneba found that nearly every family has sent, or is going to send, at least one of their children to work elsewhere. The reasons behind this decision include poverty due to a high number of children, and ignorance, i.e. they don't know what child trafficking is or that it is illegal.*

*These findings triggered the set up of a 3-year project designed to combat child trafficking for labour exploitation in 5 Effutu municipalities in Winneba. In April, a delegation from the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) discussed with Mrs Amo-Richmond how PAHO can support her in this project.*

*Key activities of the programme include educational presentations to community leaders, schools, the neighbourhood, radio and talk shows.*

*Finally, in July 2014, preparations for the project were completed and volunteers from PAHO were invited to spend four days in Winneba to launch the project.*

### Workshops on Child Trafficking

A small team of PAHO volunteers conducted four 2-hour educational workshops on child trafficking. The target groups were: Security Officers (including Ghana Immigration Service, Police and Prison Department), Community Leaders, Religious Leaders and Nurses from the public health department.

The objective of the workshops was to present and discuss with the participants the latest information and insights on the topic of 'child trafficking' and discuss ways to reduce and - if possible - abolish the practice.

The workshops covered the following topics:

-Definition of child trafficking



**Volunteers present their findings and discuss solutions to child trafficking with members of the security forces in Winneba.**

- Legal background in Ghana
- Situation in Ghana/Winneba
- Causes and driving forces behind child trafficking
- Consequences of child trafficking
- Potential ways to reduce/abolish child trafficking

#### What is child trafficking?

Child trafficking is the illegal movement of children, typically for the purpose of forced labour or sexual exploitation. Human trafficking has taken root in Ghanaian culture for two primary reasons: Throughout Ghana's history, parents have sent their children to live with extended family members to strengthen family ties and enhance their children's education or skills development.

For a variety of reasons including urbanization, poverty, and the breakdown of family ties, this system is now regularly abused.

During the workshop the participants learned that more than a million children world-wide are trafficked every year to serve as cheap workers. Both boys and girls are trafficked within Ghana for forced labour in the agricultural and fishing industries, for street hawking, forced begging by religious instructors, as porters and even as prostitutes. Over 30,000 children are believed to be working as porters in Accra alone. These children live and work under slave-like conditions. Human rights experts believe that more people are treated as slaves today than in the era of the slave trade between Africa and the New World.

#### Why do parents give their children away?

Parents sell their children for a small amount of money in the hope that the children will have a better future. The root causes of trafficking are complex and often differ from one country to another. There are, however, some factors that tend to be common to trafficking in general or found in a wide range of different regions, patterns or cases.

The main factors include:

- Poverty
- Child trafficking is particularly prominent in areas struck by natural disasters when there is a humanitarian crisis - children who lose their parents are ideal victims for traffickers.
- The most threatened children are those whose births were never registered.
- Child trafficking is an extremely lucrative business in particular for traffickers, the parents often do not get a lot.
- Insufficient law enforcement, an unclear legal situation or corruption in government agencies; there is no threat to traffickers from law enforcement.

#### Why should child trafficking be stopped?

The abuse and trafficking of children, in particular, has severe consequences both at the individual and community level.



Launch day. PAHO volunteers present a talk on children's rights

Firstly, trafficking is a violation of Human Rights and Children's Rights. Children have a right to be free from physical, mental and emotional abuse, i.e. to live a healthy and happy life. This is violated by forced labour.

Moreover, child trafficking is illegal. The Parliament of the Republic of Ghana adopted the Human Trafficking Act (2005) which concerns the prevention, reduction and punishment of human trafficking, as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked persons. In addition, the Children's Act and the Labor Act provide conditions under which child labour is illegal. Violation of these pieces of legislation may result in 2-20 years imprisonment.

#### What are the consequences of child trafficking?

##### 1. Individual Consequences for the Child:

**Physical abuse**- including heavy labour and violence- can lead to pain, injuries, health risks and chronic diseases such as hepatitis, tuberculosis and, in the worst case, death. **Sexual abuse**, such as rape, can result in sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS/HIV, unwanted pregnancies, forced abortions and abortion-related complications. **Psychological trauma**, due to isolation, is the source of mental and emotional problems, including nightmares, insomnia, depression, and suicide. There is also a **social impact** to consider. Trafficked children have a fear of being unsafe or unprotected. They have lost trust in others. If children can return to their home village they find it difficult to reintegrate and are often stigmatised.

Children who are forced to work have no chance to attend school. Thus they will not be able to escape the vicious circle of poverty when they are an adult. If children are trafficked outside the country, they are sometimes prosecuted for illegal border crossings, being undocumented migrants, and for crimes associated with prostitution.

##### 2. Consequences for the community and the nation

When the community loses a child to trafficking they lose their future potential to prosper. When trafficked children return they often bring health issues into the community, including AIDS/HIV. Their reintegration may cause issues and further costs, which can increase poverty.

In addition, a growing influence of criminal organizations can be observed alongside an increase of other criminal activities connected to child trafficking, including money laundering, drug trafficking and weapons trade. The huge transnational industry of trafficking in human beings generates approximately 10 billion USD per year.

A further consequence of trafficking is the increase in irregular migration. This creates problems for national security. These issues are routinely ignored by corrupt government offices which serves to support child trafficking and leads to declining public confidence and trust.

#### What can be done to stop child trafficking?

As mentioned before, child trafficking is illegal according to Ghanaian

legislation. The question is, however, does the Act adequately address the Ghanaian human trafficking problem nine years after its passage into law?

The Ghana Police Service (GPS) maintains an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) in its Criminal Investigation Division, which opened 31 trafficking investigations in 2009. The government initiated 15 trafficking prosecutions during that year, an increase from the five prosecutions in 2008, and convicted six traffickers in 2009, six times more than in 2008. The AHTU claimed credit for repatriating 20 child victims of trafficking to neighbouring countries. According to the AHTU, 61 percent of all trafficking cases reported in Ghana were labour-related, while 39 percent were sexual exploitation cases. While it is laudable that the police has a specialised unit that deals with child trafficking, the aforementioned activities and successes appear to be very modest given the extent of the problem in Ghana and West Africa. It is therefore of high importance that there is an increase in resources and efforts to find and prosecute child traffickers. A strict approach by law enforcement and lengthy prison sentence may deter criminals. As trafficking is international by nature, collaboration with other countries and international organisations including Interpol would also be beneficial.

Exact numbers of trafficked children are hard to pinpoint since child trafficking is mostly hidden and victims are often fearful of coming forward. One estimate is that 50 percent of all trafficked victims are children. The revival of an existing databank that tracks trafficked children could help to obtain a better overview of the situation and may enable the rescue and return of child victims.

In this context the systematic birth registration could be useful in tracking and tracing trafficked children. The most vulnerable children are those whose birth was never registered. Each year, 40 million children world-wide are born without an official record, which not only constitutes a violation of the Right to Identity but also makes them more vulnerable to traffickers because they can easily 'slip through the cracks' in the system.

The most important and effective measure to combat child trafficking, however, is educating parents,



teachers, community leaders, religious leaders and other people of authority about the illegal nature of child trafficking and its devastating effects on children and the community. Instead of sending children away, the families and communities should do their best to ensure education for vulnerable children which will help the communities to escape poverty in the long term. In addition, income-generating skills training for parents which allows them to pay for child's education is an additional aspect to consider.

It was with this in mind that PAHO volunteers held workshops with members of the community in Winneba. All workshops were accompanied and supported by Mrs Amo-Richmond, Ghana Immigration Service Winneba, and Mr Richmond Mensah. At the workshop for the Security Officers, the Municipal Chief Executive Mr Hon. Nii Ephram gave a welcome note in the beginning. The workshops went very well. Participants were engaged in the topic and made many valuable contributions to discussion.

### Conference to launch the project

At the end of the week, a conference took place to officially launch the 3-year project "Combating the Trafficking of Children for Labour Exploitation in Effutu Municipality." Important policy makers and decision makers, such as the Municipal Chief Executive, Member of Parliament, Head Immigration Service Ghana, high rank militars, traditional Chiefs etc., were invited to the conference.

Two volunteers from the Projects Abroad Human Rights office had the honour of giving brief speeches about child rights and child labour, which were very well received.

### Next steps

Within the next few weeks discussions between the Ghana Immigration Service Winneba and the Projects Abroad Human Rights office will clarify the nature of the PAHO's involvement in Winneba as the project develops.

Depending on the progress and success of the project in Winneba, the Head of the Immigration Service Ghana intends

to extend the project to other regions in Ghana.

## Intestacy laws and suspects rights

Legal Education for community members.

*In June, volunteers from the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) conducted research within the community of Winneba. During their visit volunteers conducted discussions regarding potential topics on which community members would like more information. Two of the topics identified were the rights of suspects and intestacy law. Throughout June, volunteers researched and prepared presentations on these topics.*

The issue of suspect rights is a prominent one within Ghanaian society. The majority of the population are unaware of their rights and as a result lack sufficient access to justice. It is this lack of knowledge, combined with the constant presence of corruption within the Ghanaian police force, which obstructs the assertion of fundamental human rights. The protection of the law therefore does not extend to many of the people within Ghana.

The people of Winneba sought to remedy this situation, asking the Projects Abroad volunteers for information regarding their rights as suspects. The Winneba community described their fear of police as officers used their position to intimidate them. It soon became clear that the police were taking advantage of the fact that many people do not know their rights. An example of this was alluded to by a community member when they asked if they were legally required to pay money to the police in order to report a crime. Clearly it was imperative that the people were made aware of their rights as suspects.

As signatories to the multiple human rights instruments which detail the rights of suspects, Ghana is required to respect and defend the rights of suspects. Volunteers conducted research into these relevant human rights instruments, endeavouring to find provisions regarding suspect rights which were applicable in Ghana. It was discovered that the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, The African Charter on Human and People's Rights and also the Ghanaian constitution all contain articles on the rights of suspects which Ghana is bound to uphold.

Following this research, volunteers focused on four main areas of suspect rights which were considered relevant to the community of Winneba. These areas were arrest, detention, interrogation and bail. These rights are given legal reinforcement through the Ghanaian Constitution. Article 14 (4) outlines the right to bail, requiring that if a suspect is not brought before the court within 48 hours of his arrest he must be conditionally released.

Furthermore, with regards to arrest, article 14 (2) outlines the need for a warrant and also the right to a lawyer. Rights regarding detention and interrogation are contained within article 15 (2) (a) of the Constitution. Under this section suspects must not be subject to torture or degrading punishment whilst incarcerated. Volunteers presented these themes to the community members in more detail, emphasising the requirement for police to treat suspects fairly.

Institutions to contact were also included within the information presented to the Winneba community. It was considered important for people to know their options should they feel their rights have been violated. Information was provided on institutions such as the Police Intelligence Professional Standards Bureau, The Centre for Human Rights and Administrative Justice and also the Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre. The community members were informed of the purpose of these organisations and how to contact them.

The Winneba community were very receptive and were clearly engaged in the discussion. By the end of the session, community members were aware of their rights and also the remedies should these rights be infringed upon. Whilst the effects of the session were not immediately apparent it was considered imperative for people to know their rights and report any violations. Through this collective awareness people are able to make their voices heard, resulting in authorities having no choice but to act to ensure the protection of these rights.

The second topic discussed with the Winneba community was intestacy law. The laws of intestacy outline the succession of property should the deceased die without leaving a will. Upon initial meetings with the community this was identified as a common problem. Through the presentation, volunteers emphasised the importance of writing a will in order to avoid succession problems. It was communicated that having a will is the best way to control the succession of possessions after death. Volunteers advised community members to see a lawyer should they wish to write a will.

However it was realised that inevitably many people in Ghana will die without a will. It was for this reason that it was important for the community to understand the laws of intestacy. The presentation focused on the two main areas which influence the laws of intestacy: customary law and statutory law.

Whilst statutory law will override customary law, the court may still give regard to customary law in the event of a dispute. It was therefore necessary for this to be explained. Customary law is comprised of traditional and religious customs within Ghanaian society. It generally favours patrilineal inheritance, with the property of the deceased passing to the eldest son on the father's side. Under customary law the spouse of the deceased is offered no protection, as they have no claim to the property of the deceased. However, statutory provisions seek to remedy this.

Under statutory law (specifically the *Intestate Succession Law 1985*) possessions are divided between the spouse, children and parents of the deceased. The community were made aware of the various percentages to which each party is entitled. The use of visual aids in the form of pie charts was particularly useful when explaining this.

The questions which surrounded the topic of intestacy generally regarded specific situations to do with succession. Community members wanted information on such issues as whether it was possible to disinherit children and what would happen in the event of a dispute. Upon reflection, more information was needed on the legal processes which take place if there was an inheritance dispute. However, these questions served to

reinforce the central message which was the importance of writing a will. It was emphasised that when a will has been made these disputes can be avoided.

It can be said that the sessions with the Winneba community regarding suspect rights and intestacy law were successful and productive. The awareness raised regarding the fundamental rights of community members allowed them to assert these rights and in turn generate change within their community. Furthermore, people were educated on the importance of writing a will. By showing the undesirable alternative of succession via a will (intestacy) this message was reinforced.

However, there were questions regarding legal processes which volunteers found themselves unable and unqualified to answer. It was discussed amongst volunteers that future projects should have a more legal basis. This may be done through the presence of a legal aid representative or through a separate project run by the legal aid office. Provisions are being made for future projects to include these measures.

## Teacher Training

### Discussing Corporal Punishment with teachers in Winneba

*In July staff of the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) visited the town of Winneba to conduct various outreaches with different groups in the community. After visiting Winneba in June, volunteers recognised several issues which affected the community and used their observations to shape the structure of future outreaches. One of the issues identified was the use of corporal punishment by teachers in schools and the need for teacher training on child maintenance and development.*

The teacher training outreach took place over two consecutive mornings with the same group of teachers. The discussion on the first day centred on corporal punishment and alternative forms of punishment, with the focus of the second day being child maintenance. We started the first session by briefly discussing the rights of the child outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and education rights as

outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Ghana has signed up to both of these charters. Although they are not legally binding, they provide a guide for signatory countries to implement their own legally binding documents which enforce these rights.

In addition to a child's right to education the UN CRC states that a child has the right to be treated fairly and has the right to be heard. Volunteers placed emphasis on these rights and the importance of classrooms being an open environment for a student to develop their opinions, creativity and independent thought. Teachers often use their position of authority to intimidate children at school; this is primarily done through the use of corporal punishment. We discussed the meaning of the term corporal punishment through this definition- "a kind of physical punishment that involves the deliberate infliction of pain as retribution for an offence, or for the purpose of disciplining or reforming a wrongdoer, or to deter attitudes or behaviour deemed unacceptable"<sup>3</sup>. Through the use of visual aids we explained the short term and long term consequences of the use of corporal punishment on children. These included: loss of self esteem; disturbed relationship with punisher; aggressive and anti-social behaviour; and long term developmental damage. The group seemed very interested in this aspect of the session and were unaware of most of the long term consequences of corporal punishment.

The teachers believed that corporal punishment was the only 'proper' way of punishing bad behaviour and that other methods would not work on their students. Corporal punishment is widely practised both in Ghanaian classrooms and in the home by parents. A UNICEF survey conducted in low-middle income countries in 2005-6 found Ghana to have the 7<sup>th</sup> highest rate of children between the ages of 2-14 who had experienced violent discipline in the preceding month<sup>4</sup>. In many regions in Ghana violent punishment is viewed as normal

<sup>3</sup> Princetown University, "Corporal Punishment", [http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Corporal\\_punishment.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Corporal_punishment.html)  
<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, "In Ghana, changing the belief in violent discipline", [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana\\_70138.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_70138.html)



as “it is believed that children need to be trained and controlled, and that they will learn from the pain they receive.”<sup>5</sup> This is largely associated with religion, which was a topic that came up in the group discussions. One teacher quoted a verse in the bible stating- ‘spare the rod, spoil the child’. The team tried to explain that the bible should not always be literally translated and that the rod was metaphorical. It does not mean to beat a child with a rod but highlights the importance of teaching a child the difference between right and wrong. The group appeared to understand and agree with our response.

The team suggested that the teachers could write a classroom code of conduct with their students. Incorporating students into this process ensures they understand which behaviours will not be tolerated, therefore allowing them to avoid acting in that way. One of the teachers explained that the students would only consider corporal punishment as real punishment as it is ingrained in their heads from a young age. The team explained that this increases the importance of education against corporal punishment. If children and teachers understand the negative consequences of corporal punishment and the fact that it is against a child’s rights then this message may spread and corporal punishment will no longer be culturally acceptable. Children learn new lessons a lot quicker than adults; no real change happens overnight but the classroom is a great platform for changing minds. Children are at school to learn not just English, maths and science but also how to behave in society and develop into adults. Basic human rights knowledge is inherently important in this element of their education. To end the session the group brainstormed appropriate punishments that were applicable to this particular school environment. It was clear that the teachers had learnt something from the discussions as they were very engaged and asked questions throughout.

The second session was more interactive as the group were now familiar with the team. The session focused on child maintenance in the home and the responsibility of teachers to identify if any of their students are being neglected. We again spoke of the extremely important role a teacher

plays in a child’s development and upbringing. Teachers are the adults that students spend the most time with, second only to family members. In addition to educating their students, teachers can be inspirational and can help students to realise their potential. Teachers will educate our future leaders and this is no small feat.

The team then discussed some of the signals that can indicate if a child is being neglected at home. Some of these were: if a child does not bring money for food or eats food very quickly when they get it; the child is dirty or unsuitably dressed; the child seems ill a lot; the child is often late or regularly misses school. The group recognised these signals and were able to offer more from their own experience. We asked what they would do if they saw any of these signs in one of their students. The head teacher of the school explained that she would speak to the child first to find out more information and then speak to the parents of the child. We emphasised the importance of this approach as parents often do not neglect their child intentionally, but simply do not have enough money or resources to sufficiently maintain them. It is important in situations like this that the parents do not feel like they are being accused of abusing their child, but they are able to recognise that they need extra help and that their child’s rights are being violated. The team explained some institutions in Ghana which provide child support for families struggling to cope, and specific authorities that deal with cases of intentional child neglect. There were a lot of questions when we finished the session, some of which were promising as it demonstrated that they had listened and were engaged. However, one of the main issues of confusion was the difference between child labour and a child helping around the home. The team explained that child labour “is work that children should not be doing because they are too young to work, or – if they are old enough to work – because it is dangerous or otherwise unsuitable for them.”<sup>6</sup> We explained that if the work interferes with the child’s health or education then it is against their human rights, however helping to do chores around the home is expected of most children around the world. After a

lengthy discussion most of the group appeared to understand the differences and were able to produce their own relevant examples.

The teacher training was a very interesting outreach to take part in as the adults were engaged and interested in the topics we were discussing and recognised their importance in shaping their students futures. The topic of corporal punishment is sensitive as it is so widely spread and ingrained into the mindsets of many Ghanaians and, more worryingly, younger generations. Through outreaches such as the teacher training sessions at Winneba, positive steps can be made towards reducing the normality of corporal punishment.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, “Child Labour”, <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/childlabour/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

## School Advocacy

Interactive sessions on child labour, child trafficking and children's rights.

*As part of the wider outreach during our week in Winneba, the PAHO team conducted presentations to Primary and JHS (Junior High School) students with a specific focus on engaging them in discussion about their human rights and raising awareness of child trafficking in their area. The team aimed to equip these children with the knowledge to act as future advocates for their own rights.*

The Children's Advocacy team visited Solocom Educational Centre to give the students a presentation concerning their human rights and related issues which might influence their lives. The group aimed to educate the children about their basic human rights and how to take action if these rights are violated. The team separated into three groups who each presented to a different age group within the school.

The project was spread out over two days, each day containing one 2-hour session with a group of students. The presentations covered the same topics but due to the differences in the target audience, the information varied in complexity and depth.

The first team (Simeon, Hannah, Anna, Sagal) gave their initial presentation to junior high school children (age 11-15). The chosen topic was child labour, including its effects on a domestic and international scale, and preventative measures against it. The session began with a discussion about child labour and its relation to Human Rights – how child labour takes away a child's right to education, liberty etc. The team engaged the class in an interactive discussion about these issues, asking them why they think child labour is sometimes unavoidable. On the whole, answers were well reasoned and insightful with students citing poverty and the parents' reliance on children for extra income as the root causes. The team then discussed forced labour and slavery, and what can be done to prevent it; this linked back to the topic of basic Human Rights on which the children lacked knowledge. They were, however, very receptive to what the team told them: they are entitled to a freedom from slavery and exploitation, and that



Lower Primary team with their class.

reporting violations to authorities is always an option.

The following day featured a discussion about domestic violence with the same class. Again, they were generally well informed about the topic. The class divided into groups in which they discussed different scenarios pertaining to domestic violence and what they think the best options would be if faced with such a situation. Some of the answers reflected the generally socially conservative attitude of Ghanaian culture. Many of the children appeared to firmly believe in a male-dominated household and absolute patriarchal authority, even regarding an abusive father. This seemed particularly evident when discussion focused on emotional and economic abuse, and what the father desired his children/wife to do. Despite this they did seem responsive when we discussed their freedom of choice and they agreed that the concept of physical or sexual abuse did not seem so acceptable. Overall the outreach was very productive. Although some of the children lacked knowledge in key areas and held some views which are perhaps not reflective of an equal and fair society, they remained open minded and responsive to what the team discussed with them.

The second team (Leo, Frankie, Claire) were tasked with educating slightly younger children in the upper primary school on their human rights. Once again, session one focused on the subject of child labour. The objectives were to raise awareness on the topics and provide a platform for discussion and issue resolution. The children seemed to be intrigued and receptive to the subject. The first topic in this session was basic human rights, with a specific focus on the rights of children. The students were asked to share all the rights of which they were already aware. Their existing knowledge was impressive and they managed to recite and cover the most well-known rights. The right to education was frequently brought up by the students and they stressed its importance. The discussion then moved on to the responsibilities that come with human rights. For example, the right to education is only legitimate if the students take responsibility regarding punctuality, attendance, work, respect etc. The team played games between sub-topics to give the children a break and to keep their spirits high. The volunteers moved on to the main theme of this session - child labour - first by giving a short history of child labour and its contemporary effects both in Ghana



and abroad, and then moving on to a more detailed discussion.

On day two the focus switched to domestic violence. The group started with a discussion concerning the key elements of a happy relationship including basic concepts like trust, faithfulness, patience and love before discussing how these are absent in an abusive relationship. The team then went on to give information on domestic violence and how it can be divided into different categories. The session was concluded with an activity where the children were given scenarios and had to assign them to the different kinds of domestic violence they represented: physical, emotional, economic and sexual. Overall the students were engaged, interested and knowledgeable. The topics presented were serious but the children participated with maturity considering their young age. Nevertheless the cultural differences between the western views on such matters and the Ghanaian ones were apparent.

The third team (Alex, Kai, Katherine) went to the lower primary school. The main aim of the project was to introduce to the children to the topic of human rights and domestic violence as well as their rights as children. Due to the young age of this group (between 5 and 7 years old) this group aimed to give a basic introduction to the topics rather than an in depth discussion. On the first day, the session began with the volunteers giving a brief introduction to human rights. The children appeared to be very active and enthusiastic in learning. The team handed out some pictures of needs and wants and grouped the children in threes. Then, they were instructed to identify which of the pictures were needs and which were wants. The concentration levels seemed to waver but not more than expected. After the introduction to general human rights, the team moved on to the topic of the rights of the child. The team began by asking what type of rights the class thought a child should have. Once again the children responded with confidence and insight. On the second day, the team started the session by defining domestic violence and then introducing the different type of child abuse and what to do when faced with an abusive situation. The session was ended with a summary of the day's lesson. Although concentration was still an issue, the students participated in

the question and answer activity very well and were excited to learn more.

The groups faced a considerable challenge when discussing human rights with these age groups. The children had little previous experience with the concept of human rights, but they were keen to learn and were able to provide examples from their personal experiences to better understand the topic. Regardless of the age of the target audience, the volunteers felt that the children interacted well and ended the session with a good knowledge of their rights.

## Teenage Pregnancy

Tackling reproductive health issues in schools

*During the PAHO outreach to Winneba, two groups of volunteers visited Essuokyrir School to discuss leadership, teenage pregnancy and sexual health with students. The first group of volunteers- Hannah Kelly and Anna Kopec- focused on teenage girls while the second group- Alex Barbour, Simeon Crossley and Jessica Brennan- focused on teenage boys. The volunteers aimed to work with students to educate them about these issues and to discuss their importance in Ghanaian society.*

The topics of teenage pregnancy and sexual health were chosen due to their importance in Ghana. They are issues which have had an undeniable impact on the development of Ghana as a nation, and will continue to do so in the future. This outreach recognised the importance of educating young people so they can take appropriate action to protect and empower themselves.

Teenage pregnancy is commonplace in West African culture.<sup>7</sup> According to the Ghana Health Service 750,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19 become pregnant annually.<sup>8</sup> Twelve

percent of girls in this age group are either pregnant or have already given birth.<sup>9</sup> This figure is higher in rural areas of Ghana.

The consequences of teenage pregnancy can be damaging for both the individual and for the progress of the nation. Adolescents risk their education, health and economic security when they become pregnant. Young people expecting the birth of a child are often forced to postpone or abandon their education due to the additional demands resulting from parenthood. Some reports have suggested that as many as 86% of pregnant adolescent females are forced to leave education.<sup>10</sup> The lack of education damages future job prospects and potential earning power, and leaves the child more vulnerable than their educated peers.

The strain of childbirth on a body which is not fully developed can lead to significant health issues for adolescent mothers. Hundreds of thousands of teenage girls die each year as a result of complications associated with pregnancy and childbirth. The child itself can often be born premature or with developmental defects.<sup>11</sup> Even mothers who successfully deliver a healthy infant often find themselves lacking adequate nutrition for themselves and their child.<sup>12</sup> The lack of nutrition is exacerbated by the financial difficulties typically faced by teenage parents. Pregnancy can force parents to drop out of school which reduces their earning potential. The lifetime loss of earnings is 26% of annual GDP in Ghana's neighbouring nation of Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> The economic

November 2013,  
<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/2012-02-08-08-32-47/features/3828-adolescent-pregnancy-a-hindrance-to-harnessing-the-development-potential-of-young-people-in-ghana>

<sup>9</sup> Nana Yaa Konadu Gyesaw and Augustine Ankamah, "Experiences of pregnancy and motherhood among teenage mothers in a suburb of Accra, Ghana: a qualitative study," *International Journal of Women's Health*, 5(2013): 773-780.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Gyan, "The effects of teenage pregnancy on the educational attainment of girls at Chorkor, a suburb of Accra," *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(2013):53-60.

<sup>11</sup> Imoro T. Ayibani, Opt. Cit.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Population Fund, Opt. Cit.

<sup>13</sup> Jad Chaaban and Wendy Cunningham, "Measuring the economic gain of investing in girls: The girl effect dividend",

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Population Fund, "Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy," 2013, <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp2013/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Imoro T. Ayibani, "Adolescent Pregnancy: A hindrance to harnessing the developmental potential of young people in Ghana." Government of Ghana, 18

problems faced by teenage parents will in turn damage the economic situation of the Ghanaian nation as the young parents will be unable to contribute financially and are less likely to become leaders in their field. Reports have suggested that teenage pregnancy is due to a lack of sex education. The outreach in Winneba was designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic which is currently lacking in many classrooms.<sup>14</sup>

The lack of adequate sex education also leaves adolescents vulnerable to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). One of the most well known STDs in Ghana is HIV/AIDS. There is believed to be an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 0.4% in adolescents.<sup>15</sup> While this rate is lower than other countries in West Africa, it is still significant. HIV/AIDS and other STDs can lead to infertility, damaged relationships and even death. Educating the youth as they become aware of sexual matters is crucial to continuing the effort to improve the sexual health of Ghanaians.

The Winneba programme was designed to educate young people about the aforementioned issues to ensure that they can safeguard their future. Unfortunately, the first session was cancelled. A miscommunication meant that the volunteer teams arrived after the school had closed and the pupils had returned home. It was decided that the second session would be extended to include condensed versions of both presentations.

However, when the volunteers arrived at the school the session did not go as well as planned. PAHO Volunteers had been informed that the children in the school could speak English. When the first volunteers began to speak to their respective groups, they were met with silence. It was soon realized that the students were either unable or unwilling to engage with the volunteers in English. Due to the complex and sensitive nature of the topics, it was decided that the supervisors would translate the information in to the local

language. The children seemed reluctant to engage at first but the use of their native tongue created a noticeably more relaxed environment.

Unfortunately, the use of a translator created a language barrier between the volunteers and the class. The volunteers could not contribute for several minutes at a time as they did not understand what was being said. As a result, the presentations had to be significantly simplified to ensure that none of the important points were lost in translation. Sexual health is a complex topic and so the presentation included medical and biological phrases. These phrases had to be simplified, or even abandoned, which significantly damaged the educational impact of the outreach.

On a positive note, the boys group did seem interested in the presentation once they became familiar with the format of the session. They actively engaged with the translator when asked questions and were eager to learn about certain topics such as HIV/AIDS. The girls group was not as responsive. Many of the female students seemed confused as to the purpose of the session and did not actively engage as the boys had done. The teacher of the class performed some of the translation and attempted to interact with the class. She reported that she had previously given the class lessons on HIV/AIDS which meant the students have a basic knowledge of sexual health matters in their community.

The volunteers agreed that the outreach to Winneba suffered from a lack of planning and communication. The flaws within the presentation served to emphasise the importance of knowing your audience and being engaged with the community to which you are presenting.

Future outreaches and fact finding groups should ensure that they know the community so this does not happen again. The flaws within the presentation meant that the important message of sexual health had only a limited impact. However, it is clear that the volunteers made the best out of the situation and managed to interact with a handful of interested students.

## Business and Entrepreneurship Workshops

Building skills and knowledge of the self-employed in Warabeba.

*In June volunteers from the Projects Abroad Human Rights office visited the small fishing village of Warabeba. Volunteers conducted discussions with community members in order to discover which areas of their community they would like to improve. Business and entrepreneurship were identified by both the men and women within the Warabeba community. It was discovered that the industry within the community relied upon fishing and therefore after the conclusion of the fishing season people struggled for income. Through the volunteers, the people sought more information on self-employment and how to build a business which would provide for them after the fishing season. Throughout June volunteers gathered information regarding the development of a business and subsequently presented it to the community.*

Self-employment is common within the Ghanaian workforce, with many opting to build their own businesses rather than gaining employment through a company. Within rural areas such as Warabeba self-employment through activities such as farming and fishing is one of the only profitable forms of business. It was therefore important for the community to understand how to start a business and the methods of expansion. It is these themes which the presentation centred upon.

Volunteers went through the six basic steps of how to start a business. These included; having an idea, making a business plan, financing, establishing infrastructure, getting customers and getting paid. Volunteers then discussed methods of expansion with the group. For example expanding into a related market. Whilst each community group was engaged and attentive, it soon became apparent that a lack of financing was obstructing the establishment of businesses.

During discussion the community emphasised their need for funds in order to start their own businesses. Through a miscommunication, it was thought the Projects Abroad volunteers

(Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011), 20.

<sup>14</sup> Sylvia Phaphali Adzitey, Frederick Adzitey, and Laar Suuk, "Teenage pregnancy in the Builsa District: A focus study in Fumbisi," *Journal of Life Science and Biomedicine*, 3(2013): 185-188.

<sup>15</sup> UNICEF, "At a glance: Ghana", 26 December 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_statistics.html)



were there to provide funding for these ventures. It can therefore be said that the presentations were not particularly successful as the community were not able to gain what they wanted. However, the sessions did raise the important issue of access to funding within rural areas of Ghana.

The rural areas of Ghana are heavily populated, with 70% of the population living outside the major cities. Economic activity within these areas is clearly problematic as 86% of those who live below the poverty line live in rural areas.<sup>16</sup> Also, it can be said that urban areas rely on the economic success of rural areas. As Nelson Oppong states, the 1990's saw a serious economic crisis within the urban areas which can be largely attributed to the failure of the rural economy to generate employment and local development. In an attempt to remedy the inequality of rural areas the government has produced various schemes in order to boost their financial status. The most notable of these schemes is the Rural Enterprise Programme.

Initiated in 1996, the REP emerged as a response to the poverty and inadequate living conditions of rural areas. It was realised that a lack of access to funding was preventing rural businesses from flourishing, which was in turn affecting the entire Ghana economy. The programme sought to improve the livelihoods and incomes of rural communities fostering the development rural business and employment.<sup>17</sup> Focusing on small and micro entrepreneurs, the programme promoted causes such as the reduction of poverty, use of appropriate and advanced technologies, skills improvement and improvement of access to capital resources for rural businesses. From 1996- 2012 the programme was implemented in 4 components.

Through the implementation of these components the REP sought to generate 100 000 additional jobs, establish 36 000 new businesses and provide skills training to 30 320 craft

persons.<sup>18</sup> In terms of skills training REP exceeded its targets, providing training to approximately 40 000. 71% of the target for the establishment of new businesses was achieved.

However, despite the positive initiatives and successes of the REP, it can be argued that a sizeable gap still exists between rural communities and access to funding. This gap can be attributed to the physical realities of rural communities, including a lack of education and also a lack of banks and financial services. It has been suggested that \$320 million worth of agricultural financing has not been utilised due to the lack of banks in these areas. Furthermore, only 27% of the targeted micro and small businesses under the REP had access to available loan funds.<sup>19</sup> Evidently there are barriers to credit access and business expansion within rural communities.

The Northern Rural Growth Programme is one programme which seeks to remedy this problem. The NRGP is a \$104 million agricultural support project funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the African Development Bank and the Ghanaian government from 2008-2015. The programme recognises the struggle which many rural communities face with regard to funding, seeking to establish rural and community banks which focus specifically on the needs of these communities.

People living in districts without these banks are at a clear disadvantage as they lack access to the aforementioned \$320 million worth of agricultural funding schemes. The NRGP emphasises the need for various district leaders to work towards establishing rural banks. These banks are the key to increasing rural production, creating employment opportunities and also reducing the poverty of rural areas.

Through the Warrabeba presentation on business and entrepreneurship it became clear that although community members aspire to start their own businesses access to funding is a major issue which inhibits this ambition.

Although there are numerous governmental schemes which aim to promote the interests of rural communities and provide support, it is clear that these schemes are often out of touch with the communities they try to help. Available funding goes unclaimed and rural businesses remain stagnant.

Future PAHO programmes should aim to provide rural communities, such as the Warrabeba community, with better access to the funding that is available to them. Information should be provided on how to access this funding and any requirements which may apply. Furthermore, volunteers should work with community leaders in order to establish banks and other financial services within rural areas.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson Oppong, 'Ghana's Rural Enterprise Project: A Model for Rural Development in Africa', Think Africa Press, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012, <<http://thinkafricapress.com/ghana/rep-model-rural-development-africa-ifad>>

<sup>17</sup> Kwasi Attah-Antwi, 'Rural Enterprise Programme', IFAD Africa, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012, <[http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique.php3?id\\_rubrique=152](http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=152)>

<sup>18</sup> Kwasi Attah-Antwi, 'Rural Enterprise Programme', IFAD Africa, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012, <[http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique.php3?id\\_rubrique=152](http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=152)>

<sup>19</sup> Rural Enterprise Project, Phase II (Interim Evaluation) October, 2011.



**Human Rights in Focus**



## Jamestown, Accra

By Ben Gerhardt

*"Jamestown: Westernized Ideals do not Measure Happiness"*

Members of the Projects Abroad team visited the slum of Jamestown with the aim of exploring the social, political, and economic factors in an effort to better assess this region within the capital of Ghana, Accra. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a slum is a densely populated- usually urban- area marked by crowding, dirty run-down housing, poverty, and social disorganization.<sup>20</sup> Heading into the study of this region, many of the team members were expecting the definition to fit this area but, after a thorough case-study, it

### Figure 2

was found to not be entirely accurate. The "slum" was crowded, with somewhat dirty and close quartered housing, but it was not socially disorganized. The definition of poverty, according to Webster, is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.<sup>21</sup> An idea that has been instilled prominently into western society is the accumulation of material wealth. Exploring other areas of Ghana, the team found ordinary citizens (i.e. living outside the slum) considered material goods to be a measure of happiness and satisfaction. However, life in the slum seemed very simple. An area such as Jamestown was not defined by a "socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions." These factors were not important to the functioning of their society and overall happiness.

The team was taken on a guided-tour of the region and their expectations of a "slum" did not adequately capture the area. Some of the aspects of this definition did indeed fit the area. For example, Jamestown was very crowded and dirty. However, the residents seemed genuinely happy. The tour



Volunteers from PAHO visiting Jamestown

guide explained to the team that the people of Jamestown were essentially outside the jurisdiction of Accra, which in turn meant out of Ghana all together.

The same laws and institutions that govern the citizens of Ghana do not apply to the citizens of Jamestown. Many of the volunteers came from a westernized background where the rule of law and the application of institutions are paramount to their communities but in Jamestown these aspects do not necessarily exist. Therefore, the team wanted to find out if institutions were entirely necessary to operate a successful society.

In Jamestown, most men were brought up to learn the trade of fishing. Economically speaking, the fishing industry provides the means to function in this society. These men not only fish, but they build the boats as well. The boats are made out of fiberglass or wood but, as the tour guide explained, wood is used more for its sturdiness and quality. Women are responsible for curing the fish and taking it to the market for sale. The system is simple. There was a feeling amongst many volunteers that the atmosphere within Jamestown felt entirely different to the areas of Accra where other outreaches take place. It was very tranquil as the people of Jamestown were happy with the situation they had been given.

The essentials to life may include food, water, shelter, and some clothing but not to excess. These items were essential to the livelihood of the region,

but goods such as electronics are not necessary for the sanctity of life. They are merely a want rather than a need, which is often forgotten by the West. Life in Jamestown was simple, with the absence of corruption within institutions such as the government or police.

The government does not recognize this area meaning that the laws of Ghana do not apply to the Jamestown residents. Therefore it was interpreted that the people enjoyed true freedom. There was no struggle for power, or more specifically political power, because there was an absence of politics. Society relied on the economics of the region because of its placement on the coast of Accra. The fisheries provided the means to life, and the residents seemed genuinely happy to stay in Jamestown with no real desire to live outside of the slum.

Political power can be defined as the ability of one political actor to get another actor to do what he or she wants.<sup>22</sup> The struggle for power was non-existent because the residents seem to keep to themselves in a sense that they provide for themselves with the absence of institutions. Family life was the central aspect of this region. As explained before, men were responsible for the fishing while a woman's responsibility relied on making the money from the product

<sup>20</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slum>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poverty>

<sup>22</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/467681/political-power>. See spec. section of "Political Science."

that the men had taken. There was no set of laws that explicitly forbade or allowed certain actions within the community. It was assumed that each person will take on their role willingly for the betterment of themselves, which in turn meant for the betterment of their society as a whole. This willing acceptance was reflected in the peaceful nature of the area.

Another interesting dynamic to this case study was the presence of schools on site, suggesting education was not overlooked. Formal education took place in the school, but simply living in the slum ensured maturity from a very young age. Maturity and education were tied in a way that could only be seen by exploring the slum. The team saw children, no more than 3 or 4 years old, learning to cook by actually preparing meals by themselves. There were no parents present in this specific situation which allowed for quicker maturation as they had to learn on their own through practice.

Overall the team's exploration of Jamestown provided new information that may contradict the traditional meaning of a slum. The very word "slum" tends to give off a negative connotation which meant that, prior to exploring the slum, members of the team held a narrow, one-sided perspective. After exploring Jamestown, the team saw their perspective altered in a way that negated the traditional understanding of a slum. The team was provided with a new perspective that saw Jamestown as a tranquil, happy area of Accra where citizens enjoyed freedoms that many, if not most, ordinary Ghanaian citizens do not enjoy. Jamestown will remain an area with very little resources, but the way in which these resources are used provides a simple lifestyle for its citizens, which in turn allowed for overall happiness with life within the slum.

## Ghanaian prison conditions: rights forgotten

By Alex Barbour

Prison conditions in Ghana are harsh, sometimes life-threatening. Police brutality persists and prisoners are often housed in old colonial forts or

abandoned public buildings with poor ventilation and sanitation, substandard construction, and limited space and light. Custodial conditions in Ghana lead many, such as Amnesty and the UN, to question whether prisoners' rights are being upheld.

Since gaining independence in 1957, Ghana has been an active member of the United Nations, ratifying several instruments concerning human rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture. Ghana has also incorporated most of the provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights into its 1992 constitution.

The 1992 Ghanaian constitution entrenches a number of fundamental rights and freedoms to the people of Ghana. Some of the rights and freedoms guaranteed include the right to life, fair trial and equality before the law. Article 15 relates to persons in custody, and sets out:

(1) *The dignity of all persons shall be inviolable.*

(2) *No person shall, whether or not he is arrested, restricted or retained, be subjected to -*

(a) *torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;*

(b) *any other condition that detracts or is likely to detract from his dignity and worth as a human being.*

(3) *A person who has not been convicted of a criminal offence shall not be treated as a convicted person and shall be kept separately from convicted persons.*

(4) *A juvenile offender who is kept in lawful custody or detention shall be kept separately from an adult offender.*

In practice, however, these fundamental rights of prisoners are being overlooked and violated.

The majority of the problems with Ghanaian prisons stem from overcrowding, which is a direct result of Ghana's tendency towards the imposition of lengthy prison sentences, coupled with strict appeals and relief processes. Under Ghanaian law, only 10 percent of a lengthy prison sentence may be remitted for good behavior.

Prison Service statistics from October 2013 indicated that 14,101 prisoners were being held in prisons designed to hold a third of that number,<sup>23</sup> with some prisons reportedly having a capacity-to-population ratio of nearly 500 percent.<sup>24</sup>

Such serious overcrowding means food and medical care are inadequate, with many prisoners relying on family members for additional food, medicines and other necessities.<sup>25</sup> While some prisoners have beds, some are forced to sleep on their sides on the floor, packed together in lines. In Kumasi male prison in 2011, Amnesty International observed a cell approximately 4 metres by 5 metres holding 45 inmates, all of whom lay on their sides in a top-to-toe formation in order to sleep. Gross overcrowding affects sanitation and hygiene, with prisoners having to sleep, urinate and defecate in the same place. Cell conditions in many of Ghana's prisons can be seen as a violation of the prisoners' right to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment under Article 15(1) and (2) of the 1992 constitution.

There is no capacity to deal with mental health illness in Ghana's prisons, with no staffing specifically focused on mental health. The problem is not just in prisons, however, with the numbers of mental health staff in the whole of Ghana dangerously low. According to the Director of the Accra Psychiatric Hospital, DrAkwasiosei, "the existing number of psychiatrists in the country gives the ratio of one psychiatrist to 1.7 million people".<sup>26</sup>

Contrary to international standards, corporal punishment is legal in Ghanaian prisons under the Prison Services Act. Although Amnesty

<sup>23</sup>United States Department of State, "Ghana 2013 Human Rights Report"

<sup>24</sup>Juan Mendez, "Ghana's criminal justice and mental health practices need critical attention to be more humane" UNOHCHR, accessed 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13990&LangID=E>

<sup>25</sup>Amnesty International, "Ghana: 'Prisoners Are Bottom Of The Pile': The Human Rights Of Inmates In Ghana" <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR28/002/2012/en>

<sup>26</sup>DrAkwasiosei, "How effective will the mental health bill be when passed?" *The Chronicle*, 17 August 2011: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201108190866.html>



International observed that complaints of ill treatment were not frequent in Ghana, in one prison most of the inmates reported beatings of some kind. One prison officer told Amnesty, “we give good treatment to the prisoners who behave well and we give bad treatment to the prisoners who behave badly”. The most common form of corporal punishment is caning, but there have been reports of fists or bits of rubber being used. At the heart of the problem is an inefficient complaints procedure and a general lack of privacy when inmates meet with a visitor of any kind. Prisoners rarely get an opportunity to speak in confidence, with many not even being able to speak to their lawyer without a guard being present.

Poor management of paperwork relating to prisoners in remand has increased the already high number of remand prisoners who contribute a large amount to the overcrowding problem in Ghana. As a result, Articles 15(3) and (4) of the constitution are clearly being overlooked, as remand prisoners are being held with convicted prisoners in the most overcrowded prisons. Death penalty prisoners, however, are kept separate from others, and male and female prisoners are housed separately.

The Government, however, is making positive steps with the implementation of the Justice For All programme, which aims to combat overcrowding by having judges hold temporary courts at the prisons to review cases for those who have been held in remand for months or years. UN Special Rapporteur Juan Mendez, who recently conducted a visit to Ghana, recommends the Government expand the scope of the project to also review the lengthy sentences imposed for possibilities of appeal and other review. The Special Rapporteur met inmates who had been sentenced to 50, 65 and up to 145 years with no way of seeking appellate review. Mendez also recommended the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture immediately, which, he argues, would allow national prisons to be regularly monitored by independent experts.

Prison conditions in Ghana do not meet national and international standards, and much more still needs to be done to ensure compliance with the constitution and international obligations ratified by Ghana. Despite

positive steps, the future is still bleak for Ghana's prisoners, whose rights continue to be forgotten.

## Female Sex Workers in Ghana

By Jessica Brennan

There are approximately 60,000 female sex workers (FSWs) in Ghana. The Ghana AIDS Commission reports that this number could rise to 100,000 by 2015.<sup>27</sup> Each of these 60,000 women is entitled to the basic human rights afforded to them by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, yet these rights are routinely infringed upon by clients, family members and even law enforcement. The Ghanaian perspective portrays sex workers as criminals, with little consideration given to the extenuating circumstances which often force individuals into this line of work. The recent attempts to remove prostitution from the country have been largely unsuccessful. By protecting the rights of sex workers we can help them to form a new life which can benefit Ghana as a whole.

Commercial sex work is illegal in Ghana under the Criminal Offences Act 1960 (Act 29).<sup>28</sup> However, the practice is still rampant and comes in many forms. According to Dr. Richard Amenyah, there are two major types of sex workers in Ghana: The first, known as “seaters,” are typically older women who operate from brothels; the second, known as “roamers,” are younger women who travel to local hotspots to ply their wares.<sup>29</sup> While the sex worker's method of prostitution may differ, the struggle to maintain their rights remains the same.

The causes behind prostitution are a complex web of social, economic and political factors. As such, considerable misunderstanding remains within the Ghanaian public perception of FSWs

and their trade. It is often believed that women choose to enter the industry willingly, typically due to a sexual addiction. This belief diminishes the importance of the factors which truly push women into sex work. Arguably the most important is poverty, stemming from restricted economic opportunities. In a survey conducted with FSWs, 70% of respondents reported having little or no education.<sup>30</sup> As these women lack the necessary education to obtain highly skilled jobs, their earning potential is limited. Sex work is often one of the few sources of available income.

This argument is particularly poignant when the number of child sex workers is considered. There are no figures available on the number of child prostitutes, but the Women and Children's Affairs Ministry estimates it is in the thousands.<sup>31</sup> Females as young as 12 years old have been arrested by Ghanaian authorities for prostitution. Children do not have a comprehensive understanding of sexuality and cannot make decisions regarding their sexual welfare. When considering these examples of FSWs, it becomes obvious that the argument that prostitutes largely choose their career is vastly oversimplified.

In addition, there is a public misconception that sex workers receive a high income which acts as an incentive for staying in the industry.<sup>32</sup> This is far from the truth. Reports have suggested that women in the sex industry can earn as little as 4 GHC per customer, which is equivalent to just over 1 USD or approximately 0.66 GBP.<sup>33</sup> While a nightly income may be more than the minimum Ghanaian wage, the struggle involved in obtaining that money and the fines associated with arrest far outweigh the slim economic benefit. As summarised by Mensah Richard Obeng, prostitution is

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> IRIN, “Profile of a child sex worker,” 20 March 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/77388/ghana-profile-of-a-child-sex-worker>

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Ofori, “HIV/AIDS is not an excuse to legalise prostitution in Ghana,” Ghana Web, 2 October 2007, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=131488>

<sup>33</sup> “Sex workers set high standards,” Ghana Districts, 19 February 2014, <http://ghanadistricts.com/news/?read=32689>

<sup>27</sup> Richard Amenyah, “Responding to the challenge of sex work in Ghana,” The Chronicle, 24 May 2013, <http://thechronicle.com.gh/responding-to-the-challenge-of-sex-work-in-ghana/>,

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Advocacy Centre, “Submission to the UN Human Rights Council,” January 2008, [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session14/GH/JS3\\_UPR\\_GHA\\_S14\\_2012\\_JointSubmission%203\\_E.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session14/GH/JS3_UPR_GHA_S14_2012_JointSubmission%203_E.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

usually a “survival strategy” rather than a choice.<sup>34</sup>

The reality of the sex industry is not worth even the most exaggerated financial benefit. Health risks are a primary concern for sex workers. While the HIV prevalence in Ghana is 1.5%, the prevalence rate for FSWs is 11.1%.<sup>35</sup> The most effective way for a prostitute to protect herself and her clients from STDs is through the use of condoms. However, such precautions are not always readily adopted. A study by UNAIDS found that 47 out of the 86 countries surveyed (more than half) reported rates of condom use by sex workers with their last client to be below 80%; 17 of these countries reported a rate of less than 60%.<sup>36</sup> The reluctance to use protection may be due to clients demanding, or offering to pay more for, unprotected sex. It may also be due to the woman's own lack of awareness as many sex workers will not have received adequate sexual health education.<sup>37</sup>

Even those women who wish to protect their health may not have the resources or the power to do so. As these women have been denied their fundamental right to education, they are often unaware of the dangers of unprotected sex with multiple partners. They may also fear being judged as a result of Ghana's Christian society. Attempts to protect themselves from STDs or receive sexual health tests may be met with hostility from a society which judges prostitution as morally reprehensible. The Christian values entrenched in the Ghanaian public opinion often lead to the vilification of sex workers for their career “choices.”<sup>38</sup> This creates a feeling of shame attached to obtaining condoms and undergoing the regular STD screenings necessary to protect a FSW

and her clients. Therefore, despite all her best efforts, she may struggle to protect herself from the deadly consequences of her profession.

The dire status of the rights of the FSW is exacerbated by the lack of protection from figures of authority. The corruption within the Ghanaian police force is widely known. Workers in the sex industry face bribery, discrimination and even sexual assault at the hands of those tasked with protecting them. 87.3% of FSWs reported that police had demanded a bribe from them, often in the form of sexual favours. Young females are particularly vulnerable, with 100% of 15-19 year olds surveyed reporting they had been asked to pay a bribe to police in comparison to just 50-60% of 30-44 year old FSWs.<sup>39</sup>

Child prostitutes in the 15-19 year old age group are the most vulnerable victims of police corruption: 66% reported regular verbal abuse by the Ghana Police Service (GPS); 85.7% report being poorly treated while arrested or detained; and 57.1% reported having unprotected sex with a police officer against their will.<sup>40</sup> These are only a handful of the statistics regarding the abuse of FSWs by men in positions of authority, but the specific targeting of teenagers is particularly noticeable. Forced sexual activity is a direct contradiction of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which pledges to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. While the police are running raids on brothels specializing in child prostitution,<sup>41</sup> they are often the very individuals targeting these vulnerable girls.

The current approach to tackling prostitution in Ghana focuses on the aforementioned police raids. Women who are suspected of being sex workers are arrested in large groups with the hope that strict enforcement of the law will act as a deterrent. However, police raids rarely work in practice as they fail to address the underlying causes of prostitution and merely serve to remove income while the suspect is in custody. The involvement of the police in anti-prostitution movements is a glaring example of hypocrisy. 20.9% of FSWs report that police or military men are regular paying clients.<sup>42</sup> Even those

members of the GPS who are not clients are often ill equipped to tackle prostitution. In a survey of GPS officers, less than half are aware of the laws and procedures governing arrest of FSWs, which may explain the frequent acts of abuse faced by women in police custody.<sup>43</sup> While sex workers should see the police as their protectors, they are often forced to see them as clients or abusers. This must be corrected if we wish to help prostitutes in Ghana escape their industry. If the GPS work with sex workers, they can protect the women while also receiving better intelligence about ringleaders of sex trafficking operations.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, the most effective way to prevent the spread of prostitution is to promote an attitudinal change. Gender advocate Angela Dwamena-Aboagye has argued that Ghana should look to countries such as Sweden, where sex workers are seen as victims of exploitation rather than willing criminals.<sup>45</sup> These women have often been denied a decent education and have been forced in to sex work to earn a living. This does not mean they are morally corrupt or that they are incapable of contributing positively to society. If the focus were to be placed on providing FSWs with alternative livelihoods through vocational training and similar projects, the women would be able to escape the industry and contribute fully to Ghanaian society. These schemes are already in place in some areas of Ghana and have proved highly successful in rehabilitating vulnerable women.<sup>46</sup>

A shift in attitude is not going to happen overnight, but the human rights abuses perpetrated against FSWs must be addressed. Each night they face the risk of HIV, arrest and rape in a career which largely brings them shame and discrimination. As Ghana progresses, people must turn their attention to this hidden industry and help the women of their nation to flourish regardless of their past.

<sup>34</sup> Mensah Richard Obeng, “Should prostitution be legalized?” Ghana Web, 30 March 2008, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=141499>

<sup>35</sup> Esi Awotwi and Jones Blantari, “Rights abuses of female sex workers by law enforcement agencies,” UNFPA, 21 July 2012, <http://unfpa.org/assets/user/file/PosterPresentation21-07-12.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> UNAIDS, “UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic,” 2010, [http://issuu.com/unaid/docs/unaid\\_globalreport\\_2010?e=2251159/2047939](http://issuu.com/unaid/docs/unaid_globalreport_2010?e=2251159/2047939)

<sup>37</sup> “Sex workers and HIV/AIDS,” Avert, 27 March 2014, <http://www.avert.org/sex-workers-and-hiv-aids.html>

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Ofori, Opt. Cit.

<sup>39</sup> Human Rights Advocacy Centre, Opt. Cit.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> IRIN, Opt. Cit.

<sup>42</sup> Human Rights Advocacy Centre, Opt. Cit.

<sup>43</sup> Esi Awotwi and Jones Blantari, Opt. Cit.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Amenyah, Opt. Cit.

<sup>45</sup> Edwin Appiah, “Ghana must treat prostitutes as victims not criminals- Ark Foundation Ghana,” Joy Online, 11 June 2014, <http://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2014/june-11th/ghana-must-treat-prostitutes-as-victims-not-criminals-ark-foundation-ghana.php>

<sup>46</sup> Richard Amenyah, Opt. Cit.



# From the HRJ Coordinator

Winneba

July 2014

Due to the greater numbers of volunteers this month the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office was able to undertake a major piece of outreach work and connect with one of our partners to help set up and run a new 3 year project.

On 14<sup>th</sup> July all 7 staff members and 18 volunteers relocated to Winneba for the week. While one of the primary aims was to work with the Ghana Immigration Service on the establishment of anti-child trafficking project; it also gave other volunteers the opportunity to engage in wider human rights work, on a longer term and more focussed basis. The projects, detailed in the 'Winneba Project' insert, ranged from human rights education in schools and teacher training, to focussed topics on legal rights and business and entrepreneurship skills.

What really emerged from the week though was that volunteers were placed in a situation where they were faced with the realities and wider context of human rights work. While we discuss a persons 'rights' it can often be dismissed that there are many social and economic barriers to achieving these, that need to be heard, understood and accounted for. Only when you fully understand the multitude of factors that make up a persons daily life, can you truly acknowledge how human rights can work for them.

On this note then, it is essential to give credit to that group, who remained organised, proactive and flexible throughout the outreach and really built a strong team. Most of all, they actually listened to the people that they spoke to, avoided imposing their own ideas and discussed ways forward together. Although longer term plans will need to be made to see any great changes here, these volunteers have set a great framework as to how this work should proceed.

**Matt Andrew**

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