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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

Boys' Remand Centre

Dealing with emotional distress and maintaining optimism

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

In the month of September, the volunteers continued to divide their lessons into social skill training and teaching English, mathematics, and geography. This approach has proved successful as the boys clearly benefited from reflecting on their lives and individual qualities whilst also improving their knowledge of various subjects.

At the beginning of the month, the PAHO social workers continued run sessions about the different feelings every person experiences and how best

to deal with them. They encouraged the boys to share their feelings with someone they trust, as this can help them to glean a better understanding of themselves and help to prevent problems or the escalation of conflicts. The boys listened intently but were often too shy to talk about their feelings. The volunteers realized that it is difficult to develop trust in a group that is constantly changing. Consequently, the next lessons concentrated on creating an atmosphere of respect and friendship among the boy, while also strengthening their self-esteem on an individual basis. The boys enjoyed drawing pictures of themselves and talking about their strengths. The atmosphere, after this lesson, was very positive; and the volunteers emphasized the importance of being aware of one's strengths in order to feel safe even in the uncertain situations.

The teaching lessons concentrated on improving the boys' knowledge in certain subjects; particularly English, mathematics and geography.

During the English lessons, the team asked the boys to complete a personal profile and to write down some personal dates and preferences, as well as, their hopes and plans for the future. The boys were then asked to present their personal profile to the group. At the end of each presentation, the boys could ask questions, and thus, this exercise also served as practice for

speaking in front of others. It also helped to improve their self-confidence and encouraged the boys to never lose sight of their hopes for the future.

The team also placed much emphasis on geography and mathematics. The volunteers also noted that it was extremely beneficial to review details from past lessons in order to help the boys retain important information. In September, there were lessons on multiplication and division. Some of the boys did very well, and even knew how to multiply and divide two and three digit numbers. However, for others, it was very helpful to introduce the methods of how to multiply and divide and then to practise these methods with several worksheets. In geography, the team continued to talk about different countries in Africa, especially those surrounding Ghana. The boys were deeply interested in all the lessons, though the team needs to continue to focus on information retention.

The volunteers also took the opportunity to introduce alternative sessions, that were perhaps more easy-going for the boys. In one such session, the volunteers focused on the song *Let it be*, by the Beatles. They listened to the song, as a group, and then discuss its meaning and how it may relate to the boys' lives. It became clear that music was a good way for the boys to reflect on their feelings. In the future, it would be useful to integrate more songs that have a clear and hopeful message.

In the coming months, it would be particularly valuable to continue with the teaching exercises and the social work, and regular meetings with the local social workers regarding the needs of the boys. These practises will serve to strengthen the success of the bi-weekly sessions.

Overall, the team's involvement with the boys' remand home was successful this month. The boys were engaged and were willing to improve their social skills, as well as, deepening their knowledge in English, mathematics and geography.



The Boys' Remand Centre

Girls' Correctional Facility

Self-esteem, teamwork and anger management

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

This month, the team found out that the girls' correctional centre was combined with a girls remand facility. The correctional centre is for girls who have been convicted of a crime, while the remand centre is for girls who are still awaiting trial. Only three of the five girls have been convicted, while two of them are on remand. They receive lessons, such as, sewing and hairdressing, and they sleep in the same room. During this month, a new girl arrived but then left again after being found innocent. This girl had a large impact on the dynamic of the group. One of the PAHO social workers managed to speak, individually, with some of the girls whose backgrounds were unclear. This confirmed our suspicions of problems within the group. The team had, for some time, experienced a change in the attitude of the girls; they had begun treating each other poorly, with one girl in particular being ostracized.

In response to this issue, the volunteers targeted sessions on self-esteem, teamwork, and anger management. Every session is two hours on a bi-weekly basis. The first hour is dedicated to specific, predetermined topics, such as the issues previously mentioned. The final hour has been used for education in either English or mathematics. The social workers that have joined PAHO also ran a one-hour session each Wednesday. During one session, in an attempt to ameliorate the self-esteem of the girls, they were asked to draw a self-portrait detailing the things they like about themselves. The girls found this exercise difficult, as they protested that they were bad at drawing or could not identify their own positive traits. This difficulty is demonstrative of the exceedingly low self-esteem found in the young girls here. The social workers ran another session, which revolved

around the reading of a story in which a girl was told that she was 'rubbish' and, as a result, she began to believe that she was. One of the girls read the story out loud, in English, while another translated into Twi (one of the most prevalent local languages). This methodology worked very well in order to ensure that everyone understood the content, as well as, to help improve the confidence of those involved. This story was chosen in order to make the girls aware of several things: what bullying can do to you, how low self-esteem can affect your life, the importance of standing up for yourself, and the importance of having people in your life who appreciate you. The social workers' final session revolved around anger management. The girls were each asked how they would react in a specific situation, and the team also explained how they would personally react, as well. Some of the girls' solutions involved physical violence towards the person that had upset them. However, after hearing all of the responses, they saw the validity of a more forgiving approach, and revised their answers. Many of the girls are used to dealing with problems physically instead of verbally. In some cases, their previous environment fostered that violent approach. Many times they cited that they either had to 'hit first or get beaten themselves'. Therefore, it was success for the team to change their attitude towards violence as a solution. The volunteers will continue to facilitate this incremental change in the girls with their work at the centre.

As the social workers ran every Wednesday session, every Friday session the girls correctional team was in charge of the first hour. The topic of this month was teamwork and teambuilding. During the first session, the girls participated in basic teamwork and teambuilding exercises. Both the girls and the team enjoyed this time, and the whole hour was spent outside with physical activity. The session was a nice change of pace from the normal sessions. In one of the exercises, the girls were divided into two teams. One had to guide her other two blindfolded teammates through a small obstacle course. In the beginning, the girls cheated and looked through their blindfold. However, when one of the PAHO team members participated and demonstrated that they could complete the course without cheating, the girls were eager to try again. It is clear that the fear of failure makes the girls

anxious, but, when the team demonstrated that it was, in fact, possible, the girls realized that they too had the ability to succeed. There were other successful sessions in team building, and even the less successful sessions yielded good discussion afterwards. The girls began to realize that, if they worked well together, they were able to complete any of the challenges with which they were presented. The volunteers made it clear that the girls are a kind of team as well. If they stick together—as a group—and help each other, their lives in the centre will be easier.

In the final session, the girls evaluated themselves and each other. In these evaluations, one girl would leave the room with one team member, while the others stayed in the room with another team member. Each girl had to write three good qualities about themselves and one thing on which they could improve. The group then had to write the same about the girl outside. It was evident how happy the girls became when they heard positive evaluations from the other girls in the centre. Furthermore, a lot of the girls came up with some good improvements for themselves, such as, better anger management, an attempt at making more friends, or the potential to be more obedient. Their awareness of their own weaknesses has the potential to make them stronger, as women and as citizens, because then they can improve and develop their individual qualities.

This month, the team has continued the precedent of trying to incorporate a game into every session. Name games, UNO, cards, or Ludo have all been very successful. Sometimes, it is important to simply interact with the girls on a friendly and fun basis, in order to build that relationship of trust.

Regarding the education portion of the sessions, the girls are still on very different levels. The team tries to challenge each of them on their varying levels. The one girl, who wants to be an accountant, has been educated on the basic order of calculation, as a start to algebra. The two girls who are struggling in English are getting better at recognizing the sounds of different letters. The last two girls are being challenged with reading comprehensions in English and four-digit subtraction. During the next month, the team has considered making some of these education

sessions a bit more unconventional. For example, math lessons where they play grocer and have to calculate how much money they have spend in total. Games, like these, might make the lessons more tangible, interactive, and pertinent to the girls.

During the previous months, PAHO has made fundraising efforts, which will affect the girls correctional centre and remand. Two volunteers went with the **girls' sewing teacher to Makola Market** and bought materials for the girls to use. Furthermore, five of their sewing machines were fixed so that they all work. The girls, and their teacher, were excited and grateful for this gift, and the team can already see how the girls are embracing the new materials and equipment to better their skills and themselves.

Children's Shelter

Addressing misconceptions and integrating staff members

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

The last month in the Children's Shelter has been difficult, largely due to the decreasing number of volunteers and the increasing number of children at the shelter. Despite this challenge, the team continues to focus on **improving the children's English skills** through worksheets, reading, and plays. Currently, the team works with three groups of children; one group who have a high level of English and the ability to work with more challenging worksheets and books; one group have basic English skills, and one group that do not yet have the ability to read or write English. With the final group, the volunteers teach the alphabet and words through interactive games such as a picture lottery and alphabet bingo,

which are both entertaining and effective.

In September, the volunteers decided to employ the help of the staff at the Shelter to present some of the tasks, in Twi, so that all of the children could understand. The team also, wanted to include the shelter staff, so that they can interact with the children. One example of this inclusion involved asking the children to draw their dreams, fears, and family, in order to delve more into the personal experiences of the children. All of the children enjoyed having time to draw. Following this, they were asked to tell the group about their drawing, which thereby, led to sharing their dreams, fears, and feelings with the group.

The permanently employed teacher came back from her holiday in September, which had an immediate impact on the project and made the lessons much easier. The volunteers noted that the children have a close and healthy relationship marked by mutual respect. She has a calming influence over the children and also acts as a translator, which provides a much-needed platform for the team to communicate more fully with some of the children. This has also helped diffuse potential arguments stemming from misunderstandings among the children. The volunteers are for the return of the teacher, as it has greatly strengthened the bond between the children and the team. She has introduced some Ghanaian games and dances, in which both the children and the team can partake. The children are endlessly amused when the volunteers play the games and attempt the dances, with which they have been brought up, as they are such an important part of their childhood and culture.

After consultation with the PAHO social workers, the main focus for the past month has been on working with feelings, especially feeling safe and secure, which is, undoubtedly, extremely important for the children given the experiences in their past and the uncertainties surrounding their future. To do this, the team told an interactive story about a rabbit feeling unsafe, where the children played different roles to make them an active part of the play. After the story, the team talked about the places, in the body, where they could experience sensations associated with feeling unsafe; for instance, shaking hands,

sweating, or an increased heart rate. This was intended to help the children understand and accept the different reactions one can have when not feeling safe. The children actively participated in these discussions. The atmosphere in the classroom was full of confidence. Overall, the success of the lesson can be attributed to the interactive nature of the play, and the discussions. The team advises the continuance of lessons, such as this, in coming months.

The team used drawing in another lesson with the intent to demonstrate the differences in every person. The colour in different animal, and then discussed the strengths and positive qualities that certain animals have. For example, elephants are good at taking care of each other, and lions are very strong. These variances highlight the useful nature of being unique, yet equal in that uniqueness.

However, in September, the team noted certain problems at the shelter. One particularly concerning issue stems from the lack of education and acceptance of the presence of disabled children. Despite a lesson on being a good friend and helping each other, the children still lack understanding and tolerance of disabilities. The team wants to implement future work to continue to target this issue by working even more with themes, such as, **friendship and accepting each other's disabilities**, in an attempt to create a better atmosphere at the Children's Shelter. This could be done through teambuilding exercises with the children, or by showing them that the disabled children have the same worth.

Furthermore, there have been some problems with impatience among the children, as many of them believe that they are staying at the Shelter indefinitely. They are getting desperate to leave, causing some children to run away. The team decided to address the issue of patience, because, even though the progress is painstakingly slow, their case is being taken care of. The team emphasized that running away from the shelter puts them at risk, as they are very vulnerable in the street. It is, therefore, very important to keep emphasizing patience and safety.

Overall, in the month of September, the team has seen great improvement **in the children's English skills, as well as, development in the bond between the volunteers and the children.**

However, there is still much work to do at the children's shelter, and the team looks forward to continuing that work next month.

Gender Equality Project

Planning our Youth Social and Sexual Awareness Course

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

This month, the gender equality team will aim to address the prevalent issues of women disempowerment, as well as, the general lack of knowledge about domestic violence and sexual education. There has been controversy over whether or not it is appropriate to discuss sex education in schools, as sexuality is commonly regarded as 'sacrosanct'. In order to circumvent this potential controversy, the team has approached local Ghanaians and have learnt that current opinions are not as conservative as originally perceived and have progressed considerably over the last decade. Due to prior intolerance for sex education, mothers tend to lack knowledge on sex education and are, thus, less likely to discuss matters with their children. This fact makes PAHO's interjection even more crucial. However, the team will still ensure that they approach this matter with great sensitivity given its history as a very complicated subject.

Today, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death in Sub-Sahara African countries, such as, Ghana, with the number of HIV infections equally distributed between men and women. For this reason, PAHO sees it as necessary to address both men and women. However, the infection rates in young women are close to three times higher than those among young men, reflecting the degree to which gender inequalities are driving the epidemic.



Gender Equality Project team developing a proposal

This is an issue that will be addressed through the series of sessions. As Sub-Saharan Africa remains the hardest hit region in the world, with the overwhelming majority of HIV transmissions stemming from sexual behaviour, the gender equality team intends to give the young women an insight into the dangers of unprotected sex. In order to combat such issues, predominant focus needs to be placed on the younger generation, who is particularly unfamiliar with sexual issues and, thus, the most vulnerable. Setting up interactive exercises such as a 'Myths vs. Facts' board will engage children and alleviate common misconceptions. Following this, they will discuss other consequences of unprotected sex, predominantly pregnancy. By illustrating both the crippling economic and emotional effects of teen pregnancy, they will encourage the young adults to abstain from unsafe sex practises or to utilize contraception.

The team intends to begin with a simple questionnaire, which will help advise the sessions, while, at the same time, indicating whether the content of the sessions will need to be amended to reflect the audience's prior knowledge and opinions. By following this with an exercise on relationships--discussing their expectations and experiences--the team will be able to identify prevalent opinions that could limit progression towards gender equality in Ghana, such as, the domestic limitations placed on women. By creating a 'safe space', the volunteers hope to encourage women to confide in one another and share their own fears and personal issues. This will, ideally, give them more emotional strength and confidence. With this mutual trust established, it should also

help the women continue networking following the sessions. PAHO believes it will be beneficial to hear both the male and female perception of relationships and its demands so that the team can introduce women to sexual restraint, the ability to say no, and the respect that they—and others—should show their bodies. With this method, men can also begin to appreciate women's rights and recognize their own responsibilities within relationships.

Following this, the team plans to discuss domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the rights to which they are entitled as women. After outlining the four types of domestic abuse (physical violence, sexual violence, economic violence, and emotional violence), the volunteers want to facilitate the understanding that, while domestic abuse is commonplace and sometimes seems culturally acceptable, it should not be tolerated, as it is an infringement on basic human rights, as well as, illegal under Ghanaian law. Furthermore, in discussing defilement (which was found particularly relevant in the focus group) the team proposes to aid in protecting young women from forced sexual encounters and sexual exploitation. From discussing different situations and case studies, the volunteers hope to establish ways to avoid and deal with such abuse, as well as, the appropriate legal action victims can take pursuant to these instances. The volunteers will also give the information for the institutions that can assist victims in cases of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and defilement, such as, DOVSU. In a show of cultural sensitivity, the team will make it clear that reporting these matters is completely voluntary, as there is often communal resistance in reporting these

matters. PAHO recognizes that the dispersal of information and the perpetuation of knowledge and resources is an important first step and that change can only be made in continued, steady increments.

The gender equality team hopes that these sessions will strengthen the understanding of the boys and girls in regards to relationships, sexual precautions, and domestic violence. They look forward to meeting the children of Abokobi and incepting this new initiative.

Fadama Legal Assistance Program

FLAP is launched

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

The month of September was another month of impressive growth for the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP). September saw the completion of an intensive round of training sessions, the continuance of the FLAP team's regular presentations, as well as—and maybe most importantly—the official opening of the FLAP centre in the heart of Old Fadama.

The FLAP team advised on the trainings with the PAHO Human Rights Defenders team. To read more on these trainings, see the HR Defenders article.

The FLAP office has been financed largely through PAHO volunteer's

fundraising initiatives. The opening of the centre took place on the 19th September 2013. The opening was organised by the FLAP team with help from Mr. Fredrick Opoku, the assistant director of WISEEP and the director of FLAP. To prepare for the opening of the office, the FLAP team spent the beginning of September organising the event and sending invitations to guests, which included a Justice of the High Court of Ghana, the Country Director of Projects Abroad, national news media, as well as, the Australian high consul. All of the esteemed guests were supportive of the FLAP initiative as well as impressed with the new centre. The FLAP team also spent some of the month organising and preparing invitations for the client intake officers and mediators whom the FLAP team had trained.

The FLAP team's regular activities also took place in the month of September, however due to the other requirements demanding attention of the volunteers, these educational presentations and informational sessions were reduced.

The FLAP team typically delivers two types of presentations: educational sessions and informational sessions. The informational sessions inform community members of FLAP's role within Old Fadama and how it can assist community members with various legal issues. In a slum of an estimated 100,000 people, it is important that FLAP does outreach so that people are aware of its existence.

FLAP has also continued its educational presentations, as the team feels it is their duty to continue to educate the community of Old Fadama on human rights abuses and legal issues. These legal issues include domestic violence, sexual violence, suspect's rights, rental disputes, and child maintenance, as these are the most prevalent legal issues in Old Fadama.

In September, the FLAP team delivered two presentations. The FLAP presentations were adapted in September from the usual presentations to give a brief outline of FLAP's role and how they can be of assistance. This was to encourage community members to utilize FLAP's services and to come visit the office.

The first presentation was delivered in the FLAP office; the first of its kind to take place there. This presentation was given to a group of predominately young males, with only one female present. The group responded well to the adapted presentation. The FLAP volunteers felt this was because the adapted presentation removed any confusion about legal issues, which often arises when a more complex presentation is delivered. After the presentation, the FLAP volunteers, as per usual, asked the community if they had any questions. This allowed for those members of the group who wanted further clarification of FLAP's role or more in depth questions about legal issues to be answered. This



Official launch of the Fadama Legal Assistance Program

group was particularly interested in learning more about rental disputes, which gave the volunteers an opportunity to further discuss how FLAP can assist the community with mediation and rent cards. The group was also concerned with finding employment, an issue incredibly prevalent in Old Fadama. Unfortunately, FLAP does not have the capacity to find employment for community members. The group was engaged, and the presentation was successful.

The second presentation was given by two FLAP volunteers to a mixed group of slightly older community members. The adapted session was delivered, but due to the fact that the group was better educated, a more in depth presentation would have been more suitable. The group was interested in FLAP's role in the community, but were eager to find out how FLAP could assist them in their own time. Many of the women were more interested with the location of the FLAP office, so they could visit it and see how FLAP could potentially help them. The group did not have many questions, but the questions they did ask concerned serious legal issues, such as rental disputes. One gentleman was concerned with how long he would be able to live on his property once his lease had expired. This highlighted the importance of community education and awareness; and, given how prominent rental disputes are in Old Fadama, it was also an opportunity to inform the community about how FLAP can assist in these areas.

In the month of October the FLAP team will continue to deliver these adapted presentations, as well as working with the FLAP office. On Mondays, the team will do informational outreach, in order to notify the community of FLAP's existence. On Wednesdays, the team will do its educational sessions. After these sessions they will conduct client intake for any people who have legal issues. On a bi-monthly basis, Legal Aid will conduct mediations in the FLAP office in order to facilitate legal remedies for the community. Weekly, the FLAP team will continue to meet in order to discuss the current clientele and how best to assist them, as well as, to reevaluate the current structure.

FLAP looks forward to another month of growth, and to implementing this new schedule.

Vacation Human Rights School

Youth of Odorkor

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

This month's Vacation Human Rights School was based in Odorkor, with students coming from different schools in this area. The average age of the students was younger, compared to the ones in previous months, but the team quickly realized that age and engagement is not necessarily related. Initially, there were six, three hour lessons spread over three weeks but, due to school starting earlier than first assumed, the lessons had to be more compact and only spread over two weeks. However, the intensity of lessons did not seem to frustrate anyone, and were successful nonetheless.

To keep a comfortable atmosphere, based on mutual respect and confidence in the classroom, the team made sure that at least two of the same volunteers were attending all of the lessons. This generated a close bond between the volunteers and the students, whereby many students felt that the lessons were a safe space where they could speak their mind and ask questions without getting laughed at or judged. This emphasized the importance of having the same volunteers attending the school as much as possible.

Each lesson had a central topic, such as, gender equality or civil and political rights. Every lesson started with a summary written and read out by two of the students, which explained the most important points of the previous lesson. The point of this exercise was to improve the individual's presentation skills, as well as, to review information previously given in order to improve the retention of information. One of the children attested to the fact that the summaries helped him to both remember and understand the information more effectively. After these summaries, a readymade booklet was handed out. The booklet will serve as a valuable reference for the students in the future. Although the volunteers led the lessons and presented the information, the lessons were purposefully made very interactive in order to keep the students attentive



September's Vacation Human Rights School, Odorkor

and encourage participation.

In the last lesson, the roles were reversed, and the students were given the opportunity to show how much they had gained from the lessons by preparing a presentation individually or in pairs. The students, thereby, got the chance to prepare a presentation on a self-selected topic from one of the lessons and present it in front of the rest of the class. While the children were aware of how to give presentations, they were very insecure about their capabilities. However, it was also evident that the children, who were more active throughout the lessons, were the ones who produced better and more cohesive presentations. The volunteers were especially pleased to hear that one of the students wanted to be a gender equality activist when she grows up. The same girl has also written an article on gender equality for this edition of the Human Rights Journal.

Compared to the last vacation school, the students were much more **respectful during their peers'** presentations, which greatly improved the overall atmosphere of the sessions.

In order to ensure that the vacation school provides the most valuable experience, the team conducted an evaluation, at the end of the last session. The students were asked if there was anything they would change for future schools. The volunteers were encouraged by the fact that none of the

students would change anything, with all of them stating that they now know their human rights and would be able to educate others about this topic. One of the students declared that *"I can help someone who has been abused"*, which was a very satisfying statement for the volunteers, and only served to re-affirm the worth of this project to the younger generation of Ghanaians.

However, it is important to note that although many of the students had a healthy and modern view on human rights and gender equality, the team also experienced some statements that contradict these views. For instance, during an exercise where the students had to decide whether a case was "abusive", "borderline" or "not abusive", some of these opinions came to the fore. One of the boys thought it was acceptable for him to decide what clothes his girlfriend should wear. Further, in the scenarios where the abuser showed remorse, some of the students found it "borderline" or "not abusive" simply because the abuser was sorry. On these occasions, the team referred to the cycle of violence, informing the students that just because a person is sorry it does not make it acceptable and that it will most likely happen again. This experience highlighted the importance to reach out to children at a young age and make them aware of general human rights.

Overall, the volunteers found the

students curious and engaged, and the project was a huge success for all involved, as can be shown by the fact that many students asked for the additional lessons after the final session.

Community Advocacy

Tachie Kope, Drivergah & Akporman

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

During the month of September, the Community Advocacy team focused on domestic violence and child maintenance issues in the communities of Abokobi and Dodowa, which are located north of Accra.

The first presentation was delivered on 5th September in the village of Tachie Kope in Dodowa and addressed domestic violence. The community advocacy team talked to an audience of approximately twenty people with a relatively even spread of men and women. Since Domestic Violence can be a very difficult topic to talk about, the volunteers made sure to address this subject with cultural sensitivity in mind, and they encouraged the community members to speak freely about their concerns and questions.

Though the national language of Ghana is English, there are various prevalent native languages. A large part of the community, which PAHO addresses, does not speak English. The community advocacy team works in conjunction with a local contact person who functions as a resource for information on the community, as well as a translator.

At the beginning of the presentation, the volunteers asked the audience how many of them knew how to report issues of domestic violence. Starting with this question usually provides an idea of how much the community already knows about the topic, and, thereby, makes it possible to adjust the presentation by explaining some details



Louise with our youngest VHRS student

more explicitly. It also helps to serve as a watermark, for the work that PAHO does. The response was very clear: none of the members of the community raised their hands, meaning that they did not know how to report instances of Domestic Violence.

The first part of the presentation focused on general information about domestic violence. The team explained important terms and familiarized the audience with the legal situation in Ghana by introducing the 2007 Domestic Violence Act. Additionally, a brief overview of the different types of domestic abuse were given and illustrated with examples.

To support the presentation with statistics, some numerical facts about domestic violence were given from a survey done in Ghana in 2011. For example, statistics reveal that eight out of ten women have been forbidden from earning money, a demonstration of the economic abuse that occurs in Ghana.

The team then refocused the discussion to concentrate on how to report domestic violence. They introduced the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), which is a unit of the police that provides free support to victims of violent and sexual crimes.

Generally, the members of the group seemed to respond well to the volunteers' presentation. Upon completion of the presentation, the team asked the audience if they were willing to report a case of domestic violence, now that are aware of both the problem and the potential remedy. About one third of the people agreed that they would report issues of domestic violence to the police or DOVVSU. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, this number is encouraging as the changes within these more rural communities have to be incremental.

A week later, the team returned to that same village. The PAHO contact arranged for the team to address people who wanted to function as mediators within their community. Potential mediators tend to be among the more well-educated members of the community, so they all spoke English relatively well, though in some instances, the team relied on a translator in order to clarify issues.



Community Advocacy addressing child maintenance in Abokobi

After both of the presentations a lot of questions were asked, which is a positive indication that the community has internalized the information and is interested in the topics presented. Most of the questions focused on identifying cases of domestic violence.

It is very common, within the communities, to avoid court due to the financial strains that court proceedings create. This is a contributing factor in the importance and prevalence of mediation as a respected legal remedy. The Community Advocacy team emphasised that all people have the same rights and that mediators should listen to everyone and take their problems seriously, no matter what age, sex, or religion they are. The team also focused on the importance of privacy in order to facilitate trust.

Due to the positive reaction of the community, PAHO will be conducting other informational sessions in order to continue the dialogue on the prevention and resolution of domestic violence.

The second subject, which the team focused upon, was child maintenance. The community advocacy team gave the first presentation on this subject on the 12th September, in the village of Drivergah, Abokobi to about twenty participants. At the outset of the presentation, the volunteers provided general information about human rights and children's rights. Also, relevant Ghanaian laws were cited, such as, the **Children's Act, which contains the right to child maintenance**. The team explained the parental responsibilities that guardians have, including the duty to provide their children with shelter, education, and safety from violence and exploitative work. It was further

emphasized that this was the duty of both parents equally.

Further, DOVVSU was introduced as a remedy for people seeking child maintenance, and the procedure of applying for financial aid was explained to ensure that the community members know their options in regard to obtaining support.

Throughout the presentation, it was stressed that both parents should be involved equally, and that the focus should always be on ensuring the child's best interests. It became clear that child maintenance issues were pertinent to the community as one woman revealed that she was currently having trouble obtaining support from the father of her child.

The second presentation on child maintenance was given on the 26th September in the village of Akporman, Abokobi. This presentation further demonstrated the importance of child maintenance issues in Ghana. Word had spread about PAHO's prior work, and nearly fifty participants attended the presentation.

After each of the presentations, the team encouraged the audience to ask questions. While some of the questions pertained to the court procedure for child custody, many questions focused on providing better lives for children through the potential of microfinance. Many of the questions were also more personal in nature. It was obvious that most of the difficulties faced by the community are financially related. This ignited the idea that future volunteers should try to focus on microfinance and business opportunities in order to educate and alleviate the strains of financial burdens.

It was encouraging that the Community Advocacy team was continually welcomed in all of the communities, despite the sensitive nature of many of the topics. Further, the interest and the questions that were produced by the participants validated the work of the PAHO community advocacy team. They look forward to continuing their work next month.

Human Rights Defenders

FLAP Training

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

On Thursday 19th September 2013, the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) together with Women in the Slums for Economic Empowerment (WISEEP) opened the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP) office in Old Fadama. FLAP is a legal assistance program for the residents of Old Fadama which aims to be self-sufficient. FLAP will assist the residents of Old Fadama with issues relating to rent, contract law, wills and intestacy, child maintenance, domestic abuse and sexual violence, whilst also helping with reading and writing legal documents. The Program is to be run by trained residents of Old Fadama.

In the month of September, PAHO volunteers selected and trained a group of Old Fadama residents to staff the FLAP office.

FLAP is the brainchild of Fredrick Opoku and PAHO, and it was their vision that the program be self-sustainable. Thus they decided it should be staffed by members of the Old Fadama community and not solely reliant upon outside sources. Mr. Opoku selected residents of Old Fadama to work as client intake

officers and mediators. However, before the five client intake officers and six mediators could begin working in the FLAP office, they needed to be trained.

In the months leading up to the training sessions, the FLAP team devised a comprehensive legal manual. The manual was completed in early September and was used as both a training aid and a day-to-day reference manual for FLAP staff.

The trainings for FLAP were held in the month of September at the WISEEP office, as the FLAP office was still under construction. FLAP volunteers, along with Legal Aid staff, delivered the training sessions. The training sessions were given to mediators and client intake officers, separately, over a course of two to three weeks, on each section of the manual.

In order to ensure that the information was accurately disseminated, the volunteer who had a background in each topic or had researched and prepared each specific section of the manual, delivered the training session on that section. Many areas of Ghanaian law are a mix of legislation and customary law, so clarity in delivery is of utmost importance. The volunteers prepared interactive presentations on each section to deliver to the trainees. Most volunteers used PowerPoint presentations to aid the delivery of their section, whilst posters were also used. This was to keep the staff engaged; however, the staff were eager to learn so it was not difficult ensure that they were focused.

The PAHO volunteers delivered training sessions on the Ghanaian legal system and its history, rent law, contract law, domestic and sexual violence, child maintenance, divorce, wills and intestacy, the National Health Insurance Scheme, education, **suspect's rights, taking instructions** and client intake training. Although most FLAP volunteers have legal backgrounds, they are not trained Ghanaian mediators. The mediation training was given by Legal Aid staff. The assistance they provided during the training sessions was invaluable, and they have promised to continue to support FLAP and work closely with the staff to ensure that the mediations take place with the professionalism that they deserve.

The FLAP centre will assist real people with real problems, and both PAHO and WISEEP understand the importance of having professionally trained staff. Each session was successful, however some subjects were more difficult than others for the FLAP staff to understand. For example, rent law is an extremely prevalent issue in Old Fadama, but is regulated by a mix of legislation and customary law, which are conflicted. However, the FLAP staff always asked for clarification whenever they were uncertain about a certain topic. Other difficulties faced during the trainings included long sessions, which were draining for both the volunteers and the FLAP staff, in the hot WISEEP office. However, in order for the FLAP staff to complete their training prior to the FLAP office opening, the long training sessions were necessary; and the PAHO volunteers do not feel this affected the success of the training sessions.

Another area that was necessary to address, in order to ensure professionalism amongst the FLAP staff, was to emphasize the need to be impartial and non-judgmental. Old Fadama, although home to some 100,000 people, is a close-knit community, thus FLAP staff might be familiar with the people who are utilizing their services. If situations, such as this, should arise, PAHO encouraged the FLAP staff to hand the matter off to another staff member, in order to ensure that their relationship with the community member does not affect their role as a client intake officer or mediator. Additionally, FLAP is a non-religious organization, so the PAHO team encouraged the FLAP staff to not allow their own personal religious beliefs to interfere with their work at FLAP.

The volunteers at PAHO are confident these messages were well received by the FLAP staff during the trainings; however, the FLAP staff will continue to be assisted by Mr. Opoku, PAHO, and staff from the Legal Aid Scheme. The client intake officers and mediators will have access to the FLAP manual, as well as, having the weekly assistance from PAHO volunteers until the program becomes self-sustainable.

PAHO has no intention of leaving the FLAP office without assistance now that the training sessions are completed. In the month of October those volunteers working on the FLAP

project will visit Old Fadama twice a week, as well as, being contactable via phone and email. The volunteers will visit Old Fadama to deliver informational and educational presentations to community members, informing them of the services that FLAP offers and raising awareness about prominent legal issues. PAHO and WISEEP will also continue to work in a supervisory capacity, in order to ensure the lasting success of the Fadama Legal Assistance Program.

Projects Abroad PRO Social Work Placement

Social Welfare: Educating local staff

This month the PAHO social work team continued the work that it began last month by promoting personal safety and educating children in the social welfare centre. In conjunction with the previously implemented programme, the social work team began working on improving the education and approach of the locals on staff at the social welfare facility.

In many Ghanaian institutions, children and juveniles are taken care of by previously uneducated caregivers. Employees in schools and orphanages get a low salary for the important and difficult job that they do. The social reputation of education and childcare is poor, and the education that social workers receive is not very structured by western standards. Because of these issues, people do not often remain employed in fields, such as this, for a long period of time. This transience is detrimental to the field of social work and the children therein. A lot of acknowledgement gets lost, and it appears common for the team model of task management to suffer. The most important subject in Ghanaian orphanages is often the basic necessities, such as, food, clothing, and shelter. Due to this necessary preoccupation with physical essentials, children's care and education becomes subsidiary. Often children are given tasks to keep themselves busy and not to improve their education. For instance, one of the PAHO social workers witnessed a child that was made to write, "The sun is shining" fifty times in order to preoccupy them and keep them quiet for an hour. Someone trained in child education or social work might have found a more

suitable exercise for the child. The teacher's lack of knowledge was a detriment to the child in this circumstance – the goal was to occupy time rather than to educate.

Assistant teachers or caregivers often lack the necessary support of the institution and its leadership. The constant response to this lack of support is that the government is to blame, as the government provides these social institutions with little to no money. Thus they cannot afford well-educated employees or even, frequently, the correct amount of employees.

Evidently, awareness regarding the education, development, needs and behaviour of the children in the centre is substandard. For a child to experience stability and, thus, feel safe, it is essential for daily routines to be structured and reliable. Unsurprisingly, as this is lacking in Ghanaian social welfare facilities, the uncertainty is palpable. This is a contributing factor in the lack of enjoyment that many of the local social workers derive from their job.

Children living in orphanages are often already traumatized by previous events that have led to their placement there. These children are in critical need of professional help and support.

PAHO's professionally trained social work team set out to provide training for the staff of different orphanages and schools. The goal was to achieve the awareness and sensitization for children's behaviour as well as to improve their teaching abilities.

The first thing that the PAHO social workers noticed on their visits was the lack of positive reinforcement and acknowledgement given to the children. In the classrooms, children were loud, the atmosphere was chaotic, and the children moved from classroom to classroom without permission. There was no structure, and the teachers were overextended. Subsequently, the teachers' behaviour tended to be repressive, as they experienced a loss of empathy and joy. Teachers were not well prepared for the lessons; under these conditions there was an understandably bad atmosphere, and children were unable to learn or motivate.

In order to rectify this set of circumstances, the team confronted the basic issues: timeliness and preparedness, coupled with the ability to delegate tasks clearly and calmly. The volunteers wanted it to be clear that, when children are given a safe and clear environment, they are able to be focused and concentrated.

The team also demonstrated that, if the staff worked as a team—by helping and supporting one and other—it makes the day both more productive and more enjoyable. The team detected, early on, that the local staff were eager for change and were willing participants in the programme. For example, the teachers decided to organize a trip with all of the children, something which had never been done before. The desire to effect this monumental change is demonstrative of the impact which the PAHO social work team has had.



PRO Social Work volunteers Isabella and Lindsey at New Life Orphanage

Moreover, PAHO social workers conducted training sessions focused on the topics of “positive reinforcement” and “anger management”. The positive reinforcement session provided definitions and examples of various ways they could give the children the positive acknowledgement that they so desperately need. The team also explained how positive reinforcement can build up self-esteem and create higher self-confidence in a child. The anger management session discussed appropriate ways to handle various situations, for example, when a child is extremely upset and may be acting out in a harmful way. The staff seemed open to the trainings, and they agreed to work on providing more positive reinforcement to the children. In addition they discussed other ways to manage a child’s anger that may be more appropriate and more effective than their current methods.

The team also conducted staff training on positive reinforcement at BASICS International, a multi-national foundation located in Chorkor. BASICS is committed to fighting child labour, child abuse, child trafficking, illiteracy, hunger and poverty. Their goal is to protect the basic human rights of children through education, shelter, food and safety.

The director, Patricia Wilkins, is engaged, passionate, and very impressive. She is aware of the issues that are faced in Ghana and is deeply committed to affecting change. She has made sure to hire a staff that is just as motivated as she is. Patricia is a great role model for all, the staff and the children. Her staff was very professional and engaged during the training. They were taking notes and asking questions, as well as, providing examples or requesting support in certain situations. Everybody seemed appreciative of the training and also agreed to be sure they were implementing positive reinforcement in their daily routine to encourage their children. The staff at BASICS is a shining example of the success that should be striven for in social welfare institutions throughout Ghana.

If staff members are not well educated in their field, they are not able to support the children. The sad consequence is that, instead of being part of the solution, they become part of the problem. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to provide people interested in social work or teaching

with an education in order to facilitate their success in the worthwhile work that they do

The PAHO social work team is hopeful that all of the local staff at both institutions will focus on the trainings and apply the skills that they have learned into to their daily routines in order to improve the different facilities.



Human Rights in Focus

Human Rights in the Media: Reproductive and maternal health

Pippa Mulvey

In September, a vast array of human rights issues was once again addressed in the media. As is normal, police misconduct, the rights of the disabled, and access to healthcare were all prevalently reported. However, after a close monitoring of the daily newspapers in September, it was abundantly clear that the media had placed the issue of maternal health at the forefront of its concern. Reproductive and maternal health was, by far, the most heavily reported human rights issue for the month and, thus, is of particular concern to PAHO.

The World Health Organization defines maternal mortality as:

“the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of the pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes.”¹

The Fifth Millennium Development Goal (MDG5) calls for committed countries to reduce their maternal mortality rate by 75% by 2015. For Ghana, this means that the number of maternal deaths must fall from the 740 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 185 per 100,000 live births by 2015. The 19th September 2013 edition of the *Daily Guide* quotes the Director of the Family Health Division of the Ghana Health Service (GHS) as expressing hope that the country will meet the target for MDG5 by 2015. According to Dr.

Asare, the GHS are vigorously pursuing the attainment of this goal and are giving trainings, providing new-born intensive care and other needed facilities, and trying to change attitudes in terms of family planning. In any event, the GHS asserts that if the country does not attain MDG5 it will at least get very close.²

However, the majority of articles concerning maternal health, and more specifically, the maternal mortality rates, are less optimistic about Ghana's likelihood of attaining MDG5. For instance, in the *Daily Graphic* on 25th September 2013, Dr. E.K.P Kwarko, who is a specialist Obstetrician-Gynaecologist at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, expressed deep concern that the country will miss its MDG5 target.³ Further, George Earnest Asare highlighted that there has been very little improvement of the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Ghana since 2010, with the MMR standing at 550 to 100,000 at the end of July 2012.⁴

In September, there was a great push for advocacy concerning public education about reproductive health and contraception in an attempt to reduce the number of maternal deaths. For instance, the *Daily Guide* on Tuesday 24th September asserted that, if a woman's need for contraception was met, the maternal death rate would decrease by around one quarter to one third. This would be achieved because more accessible contraception would reduce the number of pregnancies and abortions as well as the number of high-risk births. The article rightly points out that reducing the number of maternal deaths, implementing an improved framework for family planning, and making contraception more readily available in Ghana will provide a whole array of other benefits including slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS, promoting gender equality, reducing infant mortality and poverty, and ultimately leading to more socio-economic development.⁵

According to the 2011 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Ghana, 26.4% of sexually active women between the ages of 15-49 who do not want to get pregnant or want to delay having a child for at least two years are not using any form of contraception, thus, indicating that Ghana's need for family planning is largely unmet. Pleasingly, the *Daily Graphic* reported that, in order to combat this, the Ghanaian delegation at the most recent female parliamentarians' meeting stated its intention to advocate for a specific budget line for family planning within the Ministry of Health's budget. According to the author of the article, a specific budget line, such as the one suggested by the Ghanaian delegation, is essential for reducing the problem of family planning, as much of the funds allocated to reproductive health services get used for other programmes unrelated to family planning.⁶

Additionally, in an article published on 30th September in the *Daily Graphic*, public education about adolescent reproductive health and access to contraception was addressed. Clearly, the issue of reproductive health, including family planning in Sub-Saharan Africa, has been a taboo, particularly for adolescents. This has led to a great need for family planning among young women. Pregnancy and childbirth-related complications are now the leading cause of death among teenage girls in developing countries, which is a devastating effect of the lack of access to family planning and education. In fact, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world. The authors of the article, Sheffield and Shawa, called for a dual approach, consisting of public education programmes as well as increased access to contraception.⁷

Therefore, it is extremely encouraging that the Ghanaian Government, at the July 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, committed itself to making family planning free in the public sector. Additionally, it has stated its intention to reduce the stigma associated with sexually active adolescents and will push for contraceptive services to be available for young people.⁸

¹ “Health statistics and health information systems”, *World Health Organization*, <<http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/indmaternalmortality/en/>>, [accessed: 31/09/2013]

² Jamilly Akweley Okertchiri, “MDG5 on Target – GHS”, *Daily Guide*, Thursday 19th September 2013

³ George Ernest Asare, “Sustain public education on maternal deaths”, George Ernest Asare, *Daily Graphic*, Wednesday 25th September 2013

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gender Desk, “Family planning gets boost at Kampala meeting”, *Daily Graphic*, Tuesday 24th September 2013

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jill Sheffield and Remmy Shawa, “Empower youth on sexual, reproductive rights”, *Daily Graphic*, Monday 30th September 2013

⁸ Ibid.

As always, PAHO will continue to keep abreast of the human rights issues mentioned in the media. Further, PAHO will pay particularly close attention to the maternal health situation in Ghana in the coming months. Volunteers from the office will attend a CHRAJ conference on maternal health on 10th October to further increase PAHO's awareness of the issue.

Gender Equality: A student's perspective

Isabel Nyinkah (VHRS student, age 15)

Gender can easily be understood as the roles and identities attributed to individuals based solely on them being male or female. In most African countries, there is a great lack of gender equality. It has been estimated that women perform two thirds of the world's work, but yet only earn one tenth of the income and own less than one percent of the world's property.

Men and women are seen to be different when it comes to their gender. Most of the good and strong qualities are assigned to men, and weak and

feeble qualities are attached to women. In Ghana, for instance, men are made to work while women stay at home and this can be economic violence, as women become dependent on men for their basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter.

Furthermore, many girls are restricted from going to school, because it is believed that they should stay in the kitchen. Nevertheless, to quote Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, "if you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family." This informs us that what a man can do, woman can do too. There is a high rate of gender inequality in most African countries, which needs to be stopped. In my point of view, both boys and girls should be educated.

Also, microfinance can be used to empower women, as it helps them to become financially stable. Although many educated women are doing great and marvellous things all around the world, it is harder for a woman to become successful than it is for a man, and therefore, women should use microfinance to help them become successful.

My hope and aspiration is that those who will read this piece of writing will be inspired and see the facts and reasons why gender equality is necessary all around the world.

Human Trafficking: Community Interviews

PAHO Human Trafficking Research Team

In its 2013 Human Trafficking Report, the United States government cited human trafficking as a major issue within Ghana. PAHO set out to do its own research and draw its own conclusions. The results of PAHO's human trafficking research were published in the previous Human Rights Journal. Below are the one on one interviews and which were conducted with various people throughout the duration of the research.

PAHO was able to conduct an interview with Ben Trifo, a Station Officer of the Anti-Trafficking unit of the Police.

Trifo explained some background information on human trafficking. He states that, "it is the second most lucrative business after dealing drugs. They [traffickers] make substantial amounts of money each year. Human trafficking occurs both locally and across borders. Ghanaian law does not distinguish between child trafficking or the trafficking of men or women, all are treated as human trafficking."

He explained that, "the age of victims of human trafficking can range from young to old—there is no age limit." When asked about how victims of human trafficking are exploited, he revealed that they are often made to, "carry out sexual acts, for their organs, labour exploitation, used in servitude, work overtime contrary to the ILO requirements." The ILO requires that if a person is to work overtime, the employer and the employee need to negotiate. This is not the case here.

The team asked Trifo about the logistics and profitability of human trafficking in Ghana. He responded that the agents hired by the beneficiaries make money off the beneficiaries as well as the victims. He asserted that, "some prominent Ghanaians are the beneficiaries of the trafficking." Trafficking occurs via air, land and sea. A common form of trafficking is through stowaways hiding on ships with the hope of gaining work in a better place. He concluded this thought with the assertion that, "human trafficking is modern day slavery."



Volunteer Louise with VHRS student Isabel Nyinkah

Trifo went on to detail how human trafficking is perpetuated: [Advertisements] are usually placed on unregistered posters. These advertisements promise employment with large salaries for women abroad. Agents also approach potential victims everywhere; in the market and on the street. The beneficiaries usually hire an agent to bring them people. This is relatively easy given the poverty which is prevalent in Ghana. There is also the mentality that going abroad means that they are going to become resourceful. Trifo believes that, "Every African wants to go abroad". Once the victims decide to go ahead with the plans, there is nothing that can be done, despite warnings from the police.

The agents also go to orphanages and foster or adopt children to provide workers for the beneficiaries. The children tend to work on cocoa farms.

When asked how best to report advertisements to the police, Trifo suggested, "that if you see a flyer which you suspect of trafficking, call the number, find out the name and the office of the person who put up the flyer so you can give the information to the police."

The team asked Trifo how they are proactively trying to eliminate this criminal behaviour. He responded that, "it's difficult to investigate overseas trafficking. Internally, Interpol does a lot of arresting and some officers go undercover to try and work with other agencies. The children are then sent to their families and put back in the education system."

When asked whether or not trafficking was a priority for the Ghanaian government, Trifo explained that, while human trafficking was a priority for him and his unit, he could not speak to whether or not it was a priority for the government.

Many people have to escape their captors on their own. "Some fake pregnancy, fake madness, successfully plan to escape, fake diseases such as Hepatitis B or malaria which are hated in the gulf countries."

The team asked Trifo about the success rate of his unit. While he had just moved to this department earlier in 2013, so he didn't know the exact numbers, but he stated that they "convict a lot of criminals".

He explained that they had done a lot of work in the Volta region and made a lot of arrests; however, he believes criminal activity in those places continues despite their efforts.

The team was curious as to how these cases proceed once brought to court. Trifo expressed frustration with the way the court handles these proceedings. The distance and frustration with the courts impedes the process of prosecuting criminals. Courts may adjourn a case more than twenty times. "It requires a lot of energy and money. The victims become frustrated with the process and abandon the trial – refuse to pick up their phones or come to court and refuse to speak."

He went on to say that, "it is also possible that the victims get compensated or paid off by the perpetrators so that they will co-operate in court." It is a "well-organised mafia". The police cannot force the victims compliance when this occurs.

The PAHO team asked how he thought they could best ameliorate the human trafficking situation in Ghana. He suggested going to schools, churches, beaches, and wherever there are large conglomerate of people to "educate them on the dangers of human trafficking." Outreach programmes on the issue would also be helpful, and "we [the unit] would be willing to bring victims on the programs to tell their stories."

PAHO conducted a ten question interview with local Ghanaians from various socio-economic backgrounds in order to glean a better understanding of human trafficking in Ghana. Their names are not used to protect their privacy. The ten questions are listed below, and then each individual's responses are detailed.

- 1) Have you seen this poster or similar ones around? Do you know what this is? (The poster referenced in this question was a suspected human trafficking advertisement which promised employment abroad for women)
- 2) What kind of work do you think is involved in this poster?
- 3) Do you think going overseas to an unfamiliar country is a good employment opportunity for women?

- 4) What would convince you to accept this kind of work abroad?
- 5) Do you understand the term "human trafficking"? What do you think it consists of?
- 6) Have you heard of any cases/do you know any victims of human trafficking?
- 7) Do you think there is enough information available about the issue of human trafficking?
- 8) Do you think you are protected by the government against human trafficking? Do you know of any rules/laws?
- 9) Do you have confidence that the police solve these cases?
- 10) What would you do if you heard or saw someone involved in trafficking? (victim or otherwise)

Interview #1

Subject of Interview: Student (Male)
The subject said that he had seen similar ads in the newspapers, especially on the daily news. He also said that he had heard them on the radio too. He explained that these announcements referred to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Libya, and concerned jobs, such as, housekeeping and construction.

He also discussed child trafficking in the Volta region and gave an example of women forced to sell water on the streets as human trafficking.

He asserted that, generally, the reason people accept this type of work is financial in nature. This is due to the fact that the proposed pay is very high, so most people living in poverty consider this type of work as a good opportunity. The people are then usually committed to that job for around two or three years, and are required to pay a large sum of money (\$3000) to go abroad. However, frequently after two years of work these people usually do not have enough money to come back home, which is hugely problematic.

When the team asked the man what the position of the government was on this matter, he said that it was very involved in trying to limit the

trafficking of women by providing them with economic support, which in turn helps to ensure the protection and education of children.

The man stated that he trusted the government and also the police, informing us that they actively pursue arrests after complaints have been made. However the problem lies in the lack of complaints from the public. He asserted that, although they may be aware of the presence of trafficking, they prefer to accept it because they desperately need the money and employment. Thus, while what is happening is clearly trafficking, it is not recognised as such by the victims. He concluded by stating that, frequently, due to their poor living conditions and destitution, they willingly allow themselves to be exploited.

Interview #2

Subject of Interview: Middle-aged woman

When shown the poster, the woman appeared evasive. She explained that she did not know very much about this type of announcement. In her opinion, the fact that many women decide to go to Saudi Arabia, could be determined by religious reasons. She stated that it is frequent, in the Muslim community, for people to organize trips abroad to visit religious places.

She believed that human trafficking is a real and large-scale problem in Ghana. She thinks that the areas most affected are the smaller communities and villages, especially the ones in the North; she stated that this was perhaps due to the lack of money and employment. In these areas, children are regularly taken from parents, who **can't provide for them, to large cities**, such as, Accra. The parents accept the separation from their children because it is the only way to ensure that the children are provided with a better education and standard of living.

The woman appeared to be suspicious of the government when asked about the position of the government on the matter of human trafficking. In her opinion the government is aware of human trafficking cases but it prefers not to deal directly with the matter. Also the police, subordinate to the government, do the same.

Interview #3

Subject of Interview: High Court Judge (Male)

The Judge recognised that human trafficking is a real problem in the country, but he explained that it was difficult to fight the trafficking of women. He stated that, most of the time, the victim agrees to travel with the trafficker voluntarily. Whether they have been tricked or whether it is due to a desperate lack of money, the police, and therefore the government, is restricted in what it can do. This makes it very difficult to detect and prosecute the crime. A second reason is that there is a lack of reporting of trafficking. It is often reported too late and the crime has been committed.

Unfortunately the interview with the judge was cut short, and the team was not able to continue to delve into the issue with this subject.

Interview #4

Subject of Interview: Graduate in Business and Marketing (Male)

When the team asked if he knew anything about the trafficking of women in Ghana, he immediately began to talk about the trafficking in Saudi Arabia. He explained that, in many cases, young girls decide to work abroad as waitresses on a very low rate of pay because they are so desperate for a job and cannot get one in Ghana. He also alluded to the fact that men are often sent to work in construction.

During the conversation, the man raised another important problem of trafficking into Accra from countries such as China and Nigeria. This problem seems to be more widespread than just trafficking out of Ghana.

Then he introduced the problem of the exploitation of the children in Volta Region as fishermen.

In his opinion the government and the police are very involved in attempting to limit these abuses by arresting the traffickers.

When asked how to decrease these cases, he said that the only way to do this is increasing the availability of employment opportunities for young women.

He stated that the level of public knowledge about trafficking is limited as the media only reports a handful of stories. He said that this might be due to the fact that people do not believe trafficking is a problem.

Interview #5

Subject of Interview: Street Seller (Male)

The subject said that he didn't know a lot about the type of advertisement that the team showed him, but he was very interested in talking about human trafficking.

That is due to the fact that he pedals his goods and the streets and comes into contact with other street sellers, some of whom are unfortunately victims of trafficking.

He explained that most of the victims are boys without parents who beg in the streets. Most of them are from Senegal and are taken to Accra by men who say they will provide for them, give them shelter, clothes, food, and the possibility to go to school. They promise these boys to treat them as children of their own. Unfortunately, most of these men force the children into labour.

The man was very concerned with this issue because he said he knew a lot of case of human trafficking and was sorry that he could not give more specific and detailed information.

Interview #6

Subject of Interview: Electrician (Male)

The subject was aware of numerous cases of human trafficking into Accra from poor Ghanaian communities, as well as from destitute communities in nearby countries like Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso.

He told us that these women, who **don't have enough money to subsist** in their own community, come to Accra mainly to work and live with their relatives who promise to provide them with shelter in exchange for work. But when they arrive in Accra, their relatives exploit them and force them to sell vegetables, in particular tomatoes, on the street without any

type of payment. The lack of money prevents them from returning home.

He said that another work in which trafficked women engaged is selling water on the streets.

When asked what his opinion was on what the government could do to solve this problem, he answered that it was difficult to defeat human trafficking because, a majority of the time, women are trafficked within their own families. That is the reason why it is difficult to identify and intervene in these cases of human trafficking.

PAHO Friday Fruit Fund

Jackie Saunders



Gladys the fruit lady

The Projects Abroad Friday Fruit Fund will commence on the 4th October 2013.

The plan is to buy fresh fruit for all the children in the Children's Shelter, the Boys' Remand home, and the Girls' Correctional Facility every Friday.

This project is being funded by Sandy Jay, a psychotherapist from UK. Sandy has been to Ghana twice, working for Projects Abroad with staff and children at the Welfare Centre. She has raised enough money to fund this effort for the next year and hopes that more funding will become available through

other sources in the future. It will make a real difference to the diet and nutrition of all the children, which will, in turn, greatly improve their well-being.

The idea has been developed and implemented by myself. I am a Social Worker from the United Kingdom and a friend of Sandy, who inspired me to come to Ghana.

The fund will be managed by PAHO, who will oversee the purchase of fruit every Friday from Gladys, the local fruit seller, who visits the office every day. Volunteers will take the fruit to all of the children in the three centres, each Friday, so that they can eat it during the sessions.

The idea originated from work done by Isabella, a Swiss Social Worker, who set up a student council in the Boys Remand home to engage them in talking about how to improve their lives. The three things they wanted most were mosquito protection, more food, and fresh fruit.

It is hoped that the Friday Fruit Fund will directly benefit all the children in the welfare facility. Madame Georgina, the head of the facility, is fully supportive of the project.

Anyone interested in funding this project could consider a similar idea to provide purified drinking water to the children, who currently only have untreated, polluted water to drink. You are encouraged to contact the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office at ghanahumanrights@projects-abroad.org or consider setting up a charity drive at through Projects Abroad's charity 'the Reconstruction Project' at: www.justgiving.com/reconstructionproject

Jacob's story: Two months later

Oliver Shepherd

Many of you will remember the story of young Jacob, a homeless boy who attempted suicide in the welfare centre. Volunteer Jenny Mill detailed his story in the July 2013 edition of

the Projects Abroad Human Rights Journal.⁹

At the eleventh hour we managed to find a temporary home for Jacob in the Islamic community of Nima, where he could grow up in safety, practicing his own religion and speaking his mother tongue.

Jacob came to visit me at the Human Rights Office in mid-September. The change in him was obvious – smiling and confident from the moment he walked through the door. He told me that his temporary home had become his permanent home. In his new family he has a younger brother and sister. His adoptive father gives him a small allowance, half of which he spends on food and mobile credit, and the other half he saved for a taxi-fare to pay me this surprise visit. But the best news I heard was that his new family had just purchased him a school uniform, and that he would be starting school in one week's time.

We spent two hours talking and getting in touch with the volunteers that had worked with him in July, as well as getting some lunch together and introducing him to the new volunteers. I know that those volunteers who worked with Jacob were very worried about what might become of this young man whose life nearly ended only 2 months ago. I am taking this opportunity to let them know that he is happy and healthy, and that he misses you all.

⁹ 1 PAHRJ 2, 29



OUTREACHES AND OFFICE LIFE





FLAP LAUNCH, OLD FADAMA

From the HRJ Coordinator

Welfare Centre Donations: Repair work update

September 2013

Over the last two months our volunteers and staff have raised over GH¢5000 (£1400 or \$2300) through their own donations and the donations of friends, family and colleagues from all over the world for the benefit of the Social Welfare Centre in which our volunteers work. I would like to take this opportunity to summarise how that money was spent –

Children's Shelter Dormitories and Library:

- Window repairs
- Mosquito mesh installation
- Door repairs
- Ceiling repairs

GH 840

Boys' Remand Centre Dormitories and work-room

- Roof and ceiling repairs GH 624
- Lavatory repairs
and plumbing GH 260

Girls' Correctional Centre Dormitories and work-room

- Roof and ceiling repairs GH 935
- Lavatory repairs
and plumbing GH 120
- Sewing machine repairs GH 170
- Sewing equipment GH 186

General

- Friday Fruit Fund (1 year) GH 2030

Total GH 5165

I'm sure I don't have to say how much of a difference this has made to the lives of the children. The rain no longer seeps through at night. The mosquitoes no longer bite them while they sleep. Their toilets now have seats and can be flushed. Their library is now functioning and secure, and their sewing classes now have working machines, needles, pins, fabrics, irons, elastic, scissors, buttons, zips, markers and everything else they could possibly need. On top of this, every child will now receive a large portion of

pineapple, banana and pawpaw once a week for a whole year.

On the following page you will see photographs of some of the items your donations have purchased, and the conditions in which the children lived before work began. These photographs were all taken with the permission of the head of the institution.

On behalf of the children, I would like to thank you all once more.

- Oliver Shepherd

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