

ProjectsAbroad

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**HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE**



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

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# Monthly Project Updates



## Boys' Remand Centre

### Addressing fear and uncertainty

*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 August, the volunteers amended the format of their bi-weekly sessions in order to better suit the needs of the boys in the centre.

At the beginning of the month, each session consisted of teaching the boys English and mathematics and the boys were eager to improve their skills, as they seemed aware of how essential it is for their future.

The levels of English and mathematics varied greatly among the boys, thus the volunteers adapted each teaching session to suit these differing abilities. To ensure the needs of each individual boy were met, much effort and preparation was required before each session.

Additionally, the team closely monitored the standard and progress of each boy with regards to their levels of English and Mathematics, to ensure they provided the most relevant education and assistance possible.

While the boys were interested in learning during these sessions, it became evident that the boys were equally eager to get to know them personally. The boys opened up to the volunteers about their lives outside the remand home, discussing their family, friends, and school lives.

Subsequently, the team placed a greater emphasis on understanding the boys better, thus improving the relationships between them. Once the volunteers began to learn more about

the boys, they were able to prepare each session accordingly. This helped to foster an environment in which the boys participated more actively in individual and collective discussions.

Once the relationships between the volunteers and the boys began to solidify, many of the boys began confiding in the volunteers about their apprehension over their imminent trials. This highlighted the boys' limited knowledge about the legal system in Ghana. They were highly underprepared and unaware of their court cases and what was going to happen to them in the near future. For instance, some of the boys were under the impression that, if they pleaded not guilty at court, they would be found innocent and acquitted, despite the serious nature of their crimes.

Given the boys lack of awareness about their impending court proceedings, the decision was made to suspend the teaching of English and mathematics in order to focus more specifically on educating the boys on their rights as suspects and the judicial process as applies to them.

Furthermore, during the course of the month, the volunteers wanted to research the general situation of the boys, their conditions, and the reasons for their detention. Thus, the team had a meeting with the supervisor at the centre. He assisted the volunteers by allowing them to access the boys' files, so they could gather information on their lives and their crimes. However, it must be noted that some of the files were lacking key information, for example, information about their parents and families. While the information in the files is confidential, the data gathered will be used in the future to help prepare lessons.

Following this process, it was important to provide an introduction on human rights to the boys, so that the team could dedicate future sessions to addressing their respective situations. The team felt it was necessary to explain to the boys that the crimes they had been accused of were wrong both morally and in the eyes of the law. The volunteers explained what it means to respect one and other so that they can act consciously and become responsible members of the community.

The activities of this month proved to the volunteers how exceptionally

important the visits are to the centre. The visits provide an escape for the boys from their everyday routine at the centre and give them someone they can confide in and trust. The project also helps the boys to understand the court proceedings, whilst attempting to ease their apprehension about the future and create a better environment in the present.

The supervisor at the centre explicitly told the volunteers that their sessions are beneficial and that the boys are less likely to abscond or act out because of them. This response reinforced the belief that this project has been successful, and will continue to operate in this manner next month.

## Girls' Correctional Facility

### Domestic violence and gender equality

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

In the month of August, it was decided to focus on human rights issues with the girls for the first hour of each session, with particular attention being paid to domestic violence and gender equality. The remainder of the sessions was used for tutoring the girls in English and in Mathematics.

The volunteers decided to focus on human rights as applied to domestic violence and gender equality because these are issues pertinent to the girls in the center. Many of the girls have been victims of both domestic violence and inequality.

Taking into consideration the advice of previous volunteers involved in this project, the team decided to introduce the human rights topics as informally as possible, as the girls become disengaged very quickly if the topics are too complex. Thus, topics for each session were introduced by a discussion, and the volunteers made an effort to incorporate small activities or questions to maintain the girls' focus. For the most part, this approach was successful. However, from the outset

it became clear that two of the girls dominated the conversation, while the other girls were less engaged. Clearly, these two girls participated more because their level of English was much more advanced than the other three girls. While their participation was appreciated, it frustrated the efforts of the volunteers to encourage the other girls to participate in the discussion.

It is important to note, however, that the three other girls were much more willing to engage in conversation with the volunteers during the teaching sessions. This subsequently provided a clear indication to the team that much of the reason for their lack of participation was their apprehension over speaking English in a group setting. It seemed to help when the volunteers explained to the girls that some of them could not speak a second language and were thus already extremely impressed with their level of English. However, this is something that will need much more work in the coming months.

**The girls' motivation changed from session to session.** On the occasions when the two girls who were most adept at speaking English, were disengaged, tired, or frustrated, it became very difficult to have a meaningful discussion. In these circumstances, the decision was made to shorten the length of time dedicated to human rights, and move on to teaching.

From a human rights perspective, the **girls' responses during the discussions** concerning both domestic violence and gender equality were encouraging. For example, regarding gender equality, all of them agreed that a man and a woman should be equal and have the same opportunities. Furthermore, they stipulated that women do not need to submit to men. However, during the discussion, one of the girls mentioned that men were cleverer than women, because God created man first. Unfortunately, reasoning, such as this, is prevalent in Ghana and a constant obstacle to the PAHO volunteers. The girls were also very vocal in agreeing that all forms of domestic violence are wrong, yet there were worrying examples of the girls stating that they would beat their boyfriends or other girls in certain situations. Therefore—while they may agree in theory—in reality, there are still some concerns that they will act differently in practice.

Typically, there is a break in the middle of the sessions, between the human rights discussion and the teaching, where the volunteers play a game with the girls. In recent weeks, it has been observed that the girls particularly enjoy teaching the volunteers a Ghanaian dance or a game that they have grown up playing. The games seem to have the dual effect of helping the volunteers and the girls bond, while re-invigorating the attention of the girls for the second half of the sessions, in which the girls are taught basic English and mathematics skills.

In previous session, the last hour was used for mathematics and English lessons, with an average of thirty minutes being spent on each. However, the volunteers found that it was difficult to teach the girls in depth about a particular topic in such a short time frame. Frequently, the session would run out of time before the girls gained a full understanding of the topic that was being addressed. Therefore, in the middle of August, the volunteers met and decided to allocate one hour to English on Wednesdays and one hour to mathematics on Fridays. One volunteer immediately observed the positive difference this change made. For example, after spending an hour on subtraction, one of the girls seemed to finally glean some understanding. This was a feat that had not been achieved in the previous sessions.

The volunteers witnessed **incremental improvement in the girls' abilities** during this month. For instance, three of the girls are starting to read short stories, whilst the other two are getting more and more comfortable with sounding out letters, although they still find it difficult to combine them in to a word. This is, in part, because they do not understand phonetics, which is something the volunteers have been working on with them.

Further, two of the girls are making progress with addition and subtraction, whilst the most advanced girl was learning complex division and how to multiply fractions. Two of the other girls were very eager to complete multiplication practices.

As previously mentioned, some of the girls are much more likely to speak individually with a volunteer rather than in the group discussion. Therefore, the most progress was made

in the sessions that had more volunteers present.

The experiences of the last few weeks have confirmed that it was a good decision to devote an hour each to mathematics and English, as it enables the girls more time to develop and practice what they had just learned. It also became clear that all of the girls are keen to learn, and appreciate the volunteers for giving them the opportunity to do so.

Furthermore, it is clear that simple praise can elicit a smile from the girls and increase their confidence substantially. A key goal of the team is **to build up the girls' self-confidence and self-worth.** Fortunately, the mathematics and English tutorials have proved a vital part of achieving this.

In the last couple of sessions of the month, the volunteers were accompanied by two social workers that have recently joined the PAHO team. In the following month, the social workers will use the first hour of one of the sessions each week. They will focus on a different topic or exercise each session, and this will hopefully help the girls to express themselves better so the volunteers can continue to increase **their understanding of the girls' background and experiences.** It is essential to recognize that they have all experienced hardships in their lives and many are victims of abuse. These childhood experiences are, most likely, contributing factors in their behavior and their crimes.

Additionally, one of the girls has expressed an interest in becoming a fashion designer, and it is clear that many of them enjoy sewing. However, in the centre there is a distinct lack of resources, thereby limiting the amount of practice the girls can acquire. Thus, the volunteers are looking into starting a new initiative to acquire these resources so that the girls can practice. The team will be doing research into the most efficacious method to accomplish this in the coming months.

This is a project that permits volunteers to really gain substantial firsthand knowledge of the Ghanaian legal system and the people who have been through this process while also allowing them to foster relationships with the girls and watch them improve. The team is looking forward to another month at the Girls Correctional Centre.



## Children's Shelter

### Coping with special needs

*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.*

Compared to the previous months, the number of children in the shelter was greatly reduced, as many of them were moved onto a more permanent placement in orphanages. There was a discernible impact on the quality of lessons. The ratio of children to volunteers was significantly less, so the children were able to receive more individual attention.

The team has continued focusing on the children's English language skills. As in previous months, the children were divided into groups; however, due to the reduction of children, instead of three groups, there were only two. There is one section for children who can read, and one section for children who are, as of yet, unable to read.

Often, the children that cannot read also do not speak much English, so the team decided that it would be more important for this group to improve their spoken English skills, before learning to read.

Since most of the children are usually very active and full of energy, another goal was to make the lessons as interactive as possible. This is why the volunteers have tried to teach English through actions outside the classroom, which has proved very successful. The team also used games to help them learn English words and test the children on their alphabet. This proved an effective way of keeping them engaged, as it provided them with a sense of competition, but also helped improve their spoken English.

With the group that already had a basic reading ability, the team focused on developing their understanding of the texts that they read. A few of the children read books extremely well, but some of the others, when more closely questioned, seemed to have little understanding of what actually happened in their texts. Using English worksheets, as well as discussing, in detail, what they read, the team has been able to improve the general reading comprehension for those children.

This month, the team has experienced the challenge of working in conjunction with two special needs children. One boy, although 9, has the attention span and behaviour more similar to a much younger child, as well as, excessive amounts of energy. As a result, he is unable to engage in the lessons like the other children and is highly disruptive. To deal with that, the team consistently ensured that one of the volunteers was available to give him individual attention. It is a great way for him to release some of his pent up energy, but also an opportunity to give him some affection and care. There is another child in the shelter who is physically and mentally disabled. He finds it difficult to speak and half of his body is very poorly functioning. As a result, the other children in the shelter are scared of him and can be cruel. Whilst the team has tried to counteract this by showing him the same amount of affection as they do the other children, the children have not seemed receptive to this and so a session on disability is planned for the coming month.

Due to the constant turnover of volunteers, a record of the abilities and interests of the children in the centre is being kept. This is to ensure that all those who visit the shelter are able to understand the capacities of the children. The team has been focusing on trying to expand PAHO's records, and any information gathered has remained confidential. By understanding their background and reasons for being housed in the shelter, the team can be more successful as teachers and caregivers. Furthermore, it is helpful to know the level of schooling each child has completed, as well as, the languages that they speak, so that the volunteers can tailor the lessons accordingly. So far, it has proved very illuminating and the team shall continue this policy into next month.

Another essential aim has been developing the relationship between the children and the volunteers, in order to make them feel more comfortable. The team hopes to set aside a certain amount of time, each lesson, to play games with the children. Football has proven very effective in increasing the interaction between the volunteers and children, as well as, between the children as a group.

The children have benefited a hugely from the team's trips to the shelter this month. Having volunteer continuity has been important in demonstrating to the children that, whilst they may have ended up in a government-run shelter, there are still people who care about them.

## Gender Equality Project

### Hurdles to women's empowerment

*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.*

During the month of August, the Gender Equality team has regularly travelled to the community of Dodowa to hold discussions, give presentations and lead workshops on gender equality. Over a number of sessions, the volunteers have learned about the opinions of members of the community and taught them about the steps towards achieving genuine equality.

Through several question and answer sessions, the team was able to identify a number of prevalent opinions that could limit progression towards gender equality in Ghana. Often, the idea of female leadership was regarded sceptically. This generally stems from religious and cultural tradition, with Ephesians 5.23 ('...the husband is head of the wife...') often being cited in discussions. There was clear male



The Gender Equality team conducting an advocacy session

anxiety about an empowered woman failing to appropriately 'respect' her husband, which would compromise the traditional Ghanaian family model. Most of the reasons, given by men, for their prejudices against female leaders were anecdotal in nature. When justifying their suspicions of female leadership, they used examples from the household to explain their opinions. Some men even felt that a female president would be purposefully vindictive towards men if given power and, perhaps more worryingly, some women believed that a female politician would trample the women beneath her. Encouragingly, these opinions were not universal. One question and answer session conducted among a mostly male group yielded a fierce debate, in which roughly half of the men said they would be happy to vote for a female president. However, it is worth noting that men were still overwhelmingly sceptical of a woman becoming the sole breadwinner rather than her husband. The widespread acceptance of the man's role as the primary source of income constrained the discussion, even among some men who would be happy to see their wives supplementing the household income.

For the most part, these discussions were interesting and informative. Unfortunately, there were some problems ensuring that everyone contributed equally and had their opinions heard. Women, in predominantly male groups, tended to

be reluctant to voice their viewpoints and hesitant to confront some of the more assertive men who expressed contrary opinions.

The information that was gathered from the question and answer sessions was used to create workshops and presentations, in order to directly address the concerns raised about gender equality. The volunteers gave examples of strong, female leaders and explained how empowered women could help others to transcend the discrimination they experience in the workplace and domestic environment. In addition, advice was given on how women can develop economic self-sufficiency through acquiring jobs and starting their own businesses. The team explained how they could fund these using micro-finance companies and shared loan schemes. However, there was general suspicion about micro-finance companies, who charge high interest rates that could leave careless borrowers in debt. The team endeavoured to explain that small, palatable loans could be taken out for essentials to get a small business off the ground, without leaving the borrower dependent on credit; and, if handled well, these loans could give women the opportunity to access money even without owning property or land to offer as collateral.

Additionally, one part of the presentations and workshops covered domestic violence, ensuring that those

in attendance were clear on how to recognise types of non-physical abuse, as well as, how to report incidents of domestic violence. These presentations were generally well received, and the questions that followed yielded some interesting discussions. Several men raised concerns relating to the social pressure of implementing egalitarian practices in a close-knit, traditional community. Many were worried about being emasculated in the eyes of their friends if seen helping in the kitchen, and some expressed concerns about reporting the abusive behaviour of someone esteemed within the community. However, the fact that so many people were interested in the potential of reporting was largely encouraging; it implied that the presentations were being understood.

Throughout this month the team has sometimes found it difficult to surmount the influence of some very conservative and traditional norms in Dodowa; however, the question and answer sessions and presentations were usually well attended, and the people seemed eager to attend the workshops. Many women were particularly interested in learning more about leadership skills, so this may be a focus in the workshops next month.



## Fadama Legal Assistance Program

### Building upon the foundations

*Old Fadama is the biggest slum in Ghana, and is situated between Agbogloshie 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 either 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).*

This has been a month of exponential growth for the Fadama Legal Assistance Program. FLAP has continued down the track of becoming a self-sustained entity with a multi-pronged approach.

The FLAP team has continued to do educational presentations, in the slums, in order to inform people on their basic human rights and the legal issues that are prevalent in the community. These presentations cover a wide range of topics, such as, domestic violence, sexual violence, **rape, defilement, suspect's rights**, child maintenance, rental issues, and intestacy and succession. The team conducted different types of sessions in accordance with the demographic of the group that they were addressing. Before the session commenced, the group decided upon three of the topics which were most likely to be pertinent to the group present.

For example, before one of the sessions

this month, the group was informed that the people they would be addressing were mostly women, and a large number of them were prostitutes. Based on this information, the team decided to focus on domestic violence, sexual violence, and child maintenance issues. It is important that women—especially women in the sex trade—are aware of the rights and remedies that are available to them.

The volunteers have come to the conclusion that, with the progression of FLAP, the educational sessions need to be amended. Instead of thoroughly covering only a few of the topics, they intend to give a brief overview of each issue, as well as, how each issue will be handled by the centre. Thus the presentation has been modified for future use. Ideally, PAHO will send its community advocacy team to the slums in order to continue with educational presentations, whilst FLAP focuses on its new informational sessions. This plan will help to facilitate both the education of the issues, as well as, the ability to seek remedy for the matters that arise.

The presentations have continued to be a good resource for client intake. Until they attend a session, many of the people are either not aware that they have a legal issue, or are unaware that there is a course of action to resolve said issue. Many of the women that were present for the aforementioned session reported cases of assault and the negligence of basic child maintenance by their partners. These

women were taken on as FLAP clients. There has been an influx of FLAP clientele this month, and the team members have successfully helped them navigate through the Ghanaian court system.

One of the most exciting developments is the construction of the FLAP centre. The team was able to successfully fund-raise enough money in order to commence construction. Frederick Opoku, who has been an invaluable resource to FLAP, had previously set aside land for the centre. Two of the PAHO volunteers helped to design the building with the purposes of client intake, ongoing educational sessions, and mediation in mind. The FLAP centre will be complete in the next few weeks, and a press event will be held to **celebrate its opening**. The completion of this building will mark one of the first of its kind in the slums, and is a beacon of the hope and progress to come.

With the continued evolution of FLAP, it has become pertinent for the Fadama Legal Assistance Program to become its own independent legal entity so as not to hinder its potential progress as an organization. The team has started the process of registering FLAP as an NGO. This is an exciting step towards the sustainability, which has been **FLAP's goal since its inception only a few short months ago**. With this registration process also comes the need for a designated structure of FLAP. Not only has the team been working on a day-to-day procedural outline in order to facilitate a smooth operating structure, but on top of that, FLAP needed a structure for its executive partners and representatives. It has been decided that FLAP will have a local board of executive directors. These directors will be able to make decisions about the daily issues which FLAP encounters. They will also be an asset, as they generate permanence within Old Fadama and Ghana. There will also be an international advisory board that will consult on the directions and decisions of FLAP. This international board will consist of some of the founding volunteers that have dedicated their time and energy during their time in Ghana. As FLAP is the result of a collaborative effort by WISEEP and PAHO, it will continue its close partnership with both of these organizations.



Construction of the FLAP office in Old Fadama begins

The final step that FLAP has taken towards stability and durability is the training of various Old Fadama locals so that they can fulfil different positions in the FLAP structure. The PAHO Human Rights Defenders have lead the training effort, which the FLAP staff acting in an advisory capacity. The first week of trainings will focus on the role of an intake officer. These officers will be responsible for staffing the FLAP centre and will be the first point of contact for FLAP clients. The week after the intake officer training concludes, volunteers will begin training respected local community members as mediators. Mediation is an accepted form of legal remedy in many tribal cultures. The HR defenders in accordance with FLAP will train the local volunteers as to the proper techniques for objective mediation.

The conclusion of this month will bring the completion of the FLAP centre as well as local staff to run it. To keep abreast of the daily goings on at FLAP, like the official facebook page [www.facebook.com/fadamalegalassistanceprogram](http://www.facebook.com/fadamalegalassistanceprogram). The continued efforts of the PAHO staff, volunteers, and Old Fadama locals have yielded incredible results. The entire FLAP team is excited for the progress that next month will bring.

## Vacation Human Rights School

### Youth of Abokobi

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

In August, the Human Rights Vacation School travelled to a school in Abokobi, which is a one hour journey from Accra. Over three weeks, the Human Rights Vacation School volunteers conducted six, three-hour sessions. Between seventeen and twenty-two students attended each session. The



The VHRS team with students of the August session

students were aged from fifteen to eighteen years old, which fostered a dynamic yet equal set of students, with a relaxed atmosphere.

The first session held was about human rights, followed by a session on civil and political rights. The team then covered children's rights and gender equality. The second to last session focused on how to deliver a good presentation and write a satisfactory CV. In the sixth and final session, the students prepared presentations and gave them in front of the group. At the end of each session, three students were chosen to summarize the session and read that summary at the beginning of the next session. This was a new practice of the Human Rights Vacation School, with the dual purpose of giving the students an opportunity to practice their presentations skills, as well as, substantiating previously given information in the students' minds. The team was able to assess the skills of the students and give feedback.

The team's experiences in August confirmed the quality of this project. This program is attended on an entirely voluntary basis, which is a testament to both the enthusiasm of the students, as well as, the success of the program. Because of this voluntary attendance, the team needs to ensure that the sessions are interactive in order to maintain the interest of the audience. This was done by incorporating exercises and group work into the sessions to enhance the learning

capacity. The team also needs to allow the students get up and move regularly, so the students maintain their concentration. The team found that, when movement was incorporated into the sessions, the students remained better focused for latter part of the session. The team tried to tie all of the sessions together, constantly testing if the students remembered what they already learned. The majority of times, students remembered and applied the information from the previous sessions, which provided the team with evidence that the sessions were effective.

Many young Ghanaians tend to have strong opinions regarding issues within their society, such as, gender roles and child labor. The team endeavored to make the sessions interactive in order to give the students the opportunity to voice these opinions. The students agreed gender equality and the right to education were fundamental human rights—a view that is not necessarily prevalent in Ghana, overall. Additionally, it was interesting to hear one girl's response when the team raised the question as to whether or not a woman would be as efficacious of a president as a man would be. She kept saying, "Yes, but they will never let it happen." She was referring to the majority of men in Ghana. It showed an insight into the different opinions in Ghana, and how, unfortunately, younger generations were still stigmatized by the more conservative views of the older Ghanaian population. In another exercise, the students had

to decide whether they thought a list of stereotypes were common in Ghana. A volunteer from the team would read a stereotype out loud, and the students had to answer 'yes' or 'no'. This exercise demonstrated that the students were aware of the prevalence of gender inequality in Ghana. The students generally affirmed that women should make less money than men, and women should take care of the household.

The main challenge experienced, throughout the sessions, was the students' lack of respect for one another—especially when another student was giving a presentation. The students were quiet and respectful when a member of the team spoke, but, during the summaries given by their peers, they were not concentrated or focused. To overcome this, the team decided to teach them how to be a good audience, and incorporated it into a session on how to make an oral presentation. However, during these presentations, in the last session, the team still had to make an effort to keep them silent. This was disappointing, and the issue will be addressed during the next project.

The fact that the students were not always focused made the last lesson a mixed experience. On the one hand, they were motivated and engaged while preparing for their presentations, and many of students improved their presentation skills. There was one girl who was too shy to give her presentation. When she did her summary, it was almost impossible to hear what she was saying. However, the team sought to rectify this by pairing her with another student. This proved effective and is something the team will continue to do, if there are students who feel uncomfortable about public speaking. As there is always room for improvement, the team will continue to research new ways to help students with their presentation skills.

Besides presentations, the team also did an evaluation in the last session. Overall, the students were pleased and satisfied with the Vacation School. The students identified that, at times, the content of the sessions was a bit advanced. Despite this, they liked the challenge and did not want it to be easier. They were fond of all the exercises and group work, and they thought that they had learned a lot. Each session, an informational booklet was given to every student. In the

evaluation, the students made clear that they appreciated the booklets as a future reference point. Another issue raised by the students, was their frustration in the constant arrival of new volunteers throughout the program, rather than a team of volunteers who remained the same. Given the structure of Projects Abroad and the length of individual volunteer placements, it is difficult to maintain constant volunteer continuity. These evaluations provided the team with an excellent analysis on the success of the program, whilst also helping to identify areas that need improvement.

## Community Advocacy

### Child maintenance and suspects rights

*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.*

In the month of August, the community advocacy project dealt specifically with child maintenance and the rights of a suspect.

The first presentation, on child maintenance, was delivered on 12<sup>th</sup> August in the village of Aboman in Abokobi, which is located to the north of Accra. This presentation was given to an audience of thirty-three people, which consisted of thirteen men and twenty women. At the outset, all of the individuals present answered in the affirmative when they were asked if they had previously heard of child maintenance. This response was unexpected, given the project's past experiences with child maintenance advocacy, in which the overwhelming majority had little or no knowledge concerning child maintenance issues. This led the volunteers to suspect that the method of getting the audience to raise their hands in response to a question may be problematic in gathering accurate information if the translator is unclear.

The presentation began with a brief introduction to human rights, with particular attention being paid to

children's rights and parental responsibility. Further, the importance of shared parental responsibility was also emphasized, as well as, the socio-economic implications of insufficient child maintenance. The volunteers then spoke, in detail, about what they could do if they were not receiving adequate child maintenance from the other parent of their child.

The volunteers outlined the work of the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), in relation to child maintenance. It was explicitly expressed that DOVVSU understood the importance of family within Ghanaian culture and, therefore, was not concerned with disrupting or damaging family life. Instead, DOVVSU is specifically concerned with the welfare of the child. It was also stressed that, if a parent approaches DOVVSU for help, they will invite both parents for mediation, and together will try and come to an amicable agreement that is acceptable for all parties. It was stressed that DOVVSU takes the living costs, salaries, and the economic situation of the parent into consideration, and will not impose an unrealistic amount on the negligent party. It is not interested in arresting any parent who is not fulfilling their parental responsibility.

However, it is clear that, on some occasions, the measures that DOVVSU are authorised to use may not be adequate for some offenders. Thus, the concerned parent has the option of going through the Family Tribunal, if it is necessary. The Family Tribunal can compel a parent to contribute towards child maintenance and can detain them until they agree to pay.

Upon completion of the presentation, the volunteers took questions from the group. One man commented that, although women were encouraged to go to DOVVSU and report the father of the child for not paying maintenance, it was actually often the mother that had neglected the child in the first place. It is important for people to understand that everyone is equal before the law, and that the law affords both men and women equal protection.

One man suggested that going to DOVVSU could result in a broken marriage; the volunteers responded to this by stating that all claims should be handled in an amicable way. A woman from the audience immediately interjected that she has contacted



DOVVSU for help in the past, and that it was a false assumption that approaching DOVVSU would lead to divorce. In fact, the woman revealed that she was now in receipt of child maintenance from the father of her child, which greatly assisted the volunteers in getting across the point that DOVVSU can be of great assistance with child maintenance problems.

The volunteers learned some important information about the work of DOVVSU over the course of the month. In certain circumstances, DOVVSU can loan a mother a small amount of money; usually about GH5 cedi to start up a small business, such as a food stall. It was also mentioned that if a father is unable to contribute financially to his child's maintenance because he is unemployed, that DOVVSU could assist the father in searching for a job. This working knowledge of DOVVSU is both integral and widely unknown as there is general lack of information on the subject.

Another woman stated that men were sometimes cruel to women and did not give them enough money to live comfortably. In riposte to this comment, one man asserted that women expect too much from their husbands. This led to a discussion concerning the importance of shared parental responsibility and, more generally, gender equality. It was widely agreed, among the group that women should be as independent as

possible so that they, along with the father, can provide for their child.

Overall, this trip was a success, and the community reacted positively to the information with which they were presented. The fact that the community began to discuss gender equality and the shared responsibility of a child, without any input from the volunteers, illustrates the significance of these advocacy outreach trips. They give crucial information to people who would not have access to it otherwise.

The Community Advocacy Project returned to Abokobi on the 19<sup>th</sup> August and presented another child maintenance session to residents of the village of Pantang. The number of people attending the presentation fluctuated between nine and fourteen people. The number of people increased, as more women joined over the course of the presentation, and there was one male in attendance. The structure of the presentation was largely the same as the previous presentation; however, the volunteers emphasised the importance of data collection to the interpreter so that they could accurately assess the response of the community.

When the attendees were asked how many of them knew about child maintenance, only one of them raised their hands, which is in stark contrast to the previous child maintenance outreach presentation.

Once again, the audience was eager to ask questions about child maintenance, and many of the questions followed similar themes. Several members of the community were particularly concerned with what DOVVSU could do if one parent simply could not afford to contribute to the maintenance of the child.

One woman asked what she could do if a father continually refuses to contribute financially to child maintenance, despite DOVVSU mediation. The volunteers responded that she always has the option of taking a much stronger approach, through the Family Tribunal and explained what this would entail.

There were also some questions relating to child custody, such as, what a mother can do if the father of her child takes the child away for a weekend but does not bring the child back home. The woman was advised that this should never happen, and that she should contact the police. Similarly, a woman asked what her sister could do as she voluntarily gave her child away to the father, who in turn passed the child over to his parents, but now she wants her child back. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the sister should first try **and approach the father's parents and ask if they are willing to return the child before going to the authorities**, as the fact that she willingly, initially gave up custody could bear repercussions if the case were to go to court.

The session was largely successful, as the group seemed to react well to the information and asked many questions at the end.

The first outreach concerning suspects' rights was held in the slums of Old Fadama on 15<sup>th</sup> August. The presentation was given to about fifteen people. It is difficult to pinpoint a definitive number as some of the group left and others joined, so the number fluctuated. As usual, the presentation began with a brief introduction of human rights. The presentation then proceeded to discuss arrest warrants, necessary force, rights of an arrested person and the safeguards that are in place for women and children. The rights of a suspect during an interrogation were also outlined.

The volunteers explained the fact that suspects are entitled to a lawyer, the conditions and requirements of both



The Community Advocacy team in Old Fadama

the police and suspects regarding bail, and finally the organisations to contact, should they ever be a victim of police misconduct or rights violation.

The group was then asked if they had any questions for the volunteers, and it became apparent that nearly all of them had been illegally detained by the police at some point, with most stating that they had been held for over 48 hours without going to court. A number of the questions were in regards to legal assistance. The volunteers directed the members of the group to the Fadama Legal Assistance Program, which is another PAHO initiative.

The reaction to the presentation was very positive, the audience was extremely receptive and the volunteers were specifically asked to come back again and present about other topics. This validates the work of the volunteers and Projects Abroad, as well as, demonstrates the efficacy of the information that volunteers give.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> August, the team returned to Old Fadama to deliver its final **presentation of the month on suspects' rights**. Once again, the size of the audience changed throughout the course of the session, but by the end of the presentation, twelve men were present.

Given the success the team experienced with the format and contents of the presentation on the previous outreach, it was decided to retain most of the same features as before, with the only adaption being that the volunteers asked the group two questions during the presentation for the purposes of PAHO research. The two questions that were posed were, firstly, whether they had witnessed police misconduct before and, secondly, whether they had personally experienced police misconduct. The volunteers stressed to the interpreter that it was essential to know an exact number of affirmative responses and so each person in the group should raise their hand if they had witnessed police misconduct or experienced it.

The interpreter for the presentation stated that all of the men had witnessed or been victim to police misconduct. He explained that police misconduct was very common in the slums, and everyone has had money extorted from them. This is because they do not know their rights as

citizens or the responsibilities of the police to respect these rights. This fact exemplifies the crucial nature of the Community Advocacy work, as, without it, the police would be able to continue abusing the community and exploiting their vulnerability. The question and answer session further enlightened them to the fact that the police were legally forbidden from accepting or asking for bribes. This is clearly a large issue in the slum and elsewhere around the city, and the audience was thankful for the presentation.

All of the sessions received an overwhelmingly positive response from all the members of the community. The desire for volunteers to return to educate them on other pertinent human rights issues of particular relevance is demonstrative of how important these community advocacy projects are for empowering people to protect their human rights and seek redress for any violations.

## Human Rights Defenders

### Perceived roadblocks to justice

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

Towards the end of August, the HR Defenders team was incorporated into the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP). The HR Defenders assisted in training client intake officers in anticipation of the launch of the new FLAP legal office, in the slums of Old Fadama. Leading up to the training sessions that will occur in the month of September, the HR Defenders team spent the last two weeks of August assisting the FLAP team in developing a training manual and presentations for the sessions.

FLAP is concerned with ensuring its office is self-sufficient, thus the FLAP

centre is to be run by the people of Old Fadama. With this goal in mind, FLAP has selected seven locals who have a keen interest in serving the community by protecting and promoting human rights, helping their neighbours find a redress for their grievances, and providing legal assistance.

The key priority of the combined FLAP and HR Defenders project is to ensure that all the intake officers are fully capable of identifying client issues, as well as, the necessary steps and protocols that will need to be taken. As the primary point of contact in FLAP, the intake officers will need to take clear instructions from potential clients. They must also be able to filter the information to ensure FLAP has all the relevant details. FLAP is a new office, with limited resources; therefore, a key role of the intake officers will be to decide whether the client's problems are within the parameters of FLAP's work.

In order for the intake officers to work professionally and effectively, they will need to have a sound understanding of human rights and their place in international and Ghanaian law, in addition to the main areas of law, and grievances they will likely be dealing with. The beginning part of the training sessions will be primarily concerned with introducing human rights, the Ghanaian legal system, and the core legal issues that are most prevalent in Old Fadama.

The volunteers will present a range of topics to the intake officers over the course of an intensive three-day training program. The presentations will be conducted on education, child maintenance, child custody, questions pertaining to parentage, divorce, the National Health Insurance Scheme and succession. Domestic violence, rape and defilement will be addressed in detail.

Recent PAHO activities have found the rights of the suspect to be a matter of great concern for many residents of Old Fadama. Consequently, this issue will be taught to the intake officers. In addition, the right to housing and rent law, as well as, contract law will also be discussed. Much of the training sessions will focus on preparing the intake officers to complete their daily functions and to take clear instructions and precisely identify the issues at hand.

Given the intensive nature of the training sessions, and the importance that both the HR Defenders and FLAP place on having professional and capable client intake officers, an extensive training manual has been compiled. The manual provides detailed descriptions of everything the intake officers will need to know to conduct their daily activities. The purpose of the manual is to act as a reference point for the intake officers when dealing with clients.

The week following the intake officer training will focus on mediation training. The HR Defenders will begin preparations for that training subsequent to the conclusion of the first training.

The HR Defenders are excited to start these trainings in conjunction with the FLAP team in the upcoming month.

## Legal Aid

### The importance of mediation

*Volunteers at PAHO with professional legal experience are given the opportunity to undertake the 'Pro-Placement' at the Legal Aid Scheme in the Greater Accra Region. The purpose of this project is to give these volunteers the opportunity to use their professional skills in an appropriate environment, whilst also furthering their knowledge of the operation of their field in Ghana.*

Chapter 26 of the Constitution for the Republic of Ghana provides for the establishment of Legal Aid, which was granted by the Legal Aid Scheme of 1997. The Scheme is a government-regulated body, and concerns itself with acting as a public defender. It helps to ensure due process and serves the poor and disadvantaged by providing them with free legal services that they may not have access to otherwise. To be entitled to receive legal assistance from the Scheme, clients must meet a means test to ensure they are eligible. Thus, this scheme plays an essential role in providing all Ghanaians with their right to legal representation.

The volunteers, who undertake placements at Legal Aid, perform a variety of different tasks, ranging from initial client intake to preparing legal documents. In August, the volunteers who attended this placement were mostly law students and not certified

legal professionals. Thus, they often found the work challenging, especially given the language barriers often experienced between themselves and the clients. Despite this, they still found the experience rewarding.

Typically, a volunteer will conduct initial client intake interviews, which involves discussing the client's legal issue and determining the best course of action, whether it be mediation, legal advice, or legal representation. The Scheme places a large emphasis on mediation, as it is cheaper and much more efficient than a court proceeding. It is also a customarily and culturally recognized form of legal remedy. In cases where mediation occurs, the volunteer is required to schedule the mediation and write a letter inviting the responding party to attend mediation at the Scheme's office with a trained mediator.

In August, the majority of mediation sessions were successful. However, it was noted by the volunteers that, on occasions, a party to a dispute would fail to arrive. It was also not uncommon for both parties to arrive hours late for their scheduled mediation. Whilst the volunteers did, at times, find this frustrating, it was of little concern to the staff at the Scheme, who evidently experienced this frequently.

In the month of August, much of the Scheme's workload consisted of assisting clients with property disputes and child maintenance issues. There were few clients requiring assistance with criminal matters, with the majority of cases being of a civil nature.

As most of the cases in August pertained to child maintenance issues, the volunteers were also given the opportunity to write child maintenance orders and to stamp orders for court. Further, volunteers were required to prepare writ of summons for clients and draft letters. All the work written by the volunteers was drafted on behalf of the Scheme's legal team, who provided the volunteers with feedback. This offered an excellent opportunity, especially for those volunteers still studying, to improve their legal writing skills, and was greatly appreciated.

The Legal Aid Scheme in the Greater Accra Region also worked closely with PAHO and the Fadama Legal Assistance Program (FLAP) in August. FLAP was established by a group of PAHO volunteers in conjunction with

another NGO, called the Women in Slums Economic Empowerment (WISEEP). FLAP provides free legal assistance within the Old Fadama community. The Scheme has worked with FLAP by offering legal representation to clients, helping the PAHO team with training local volunteers, and setting up mediations in the slums.

PAHO and the Scheme hope to continue their relationship, continuing to offer Pro Placements to professional volunteers and with their partnership to FLAP.

## Projects Abroad PRO Social Work Placement

### Social Welfare: Protective Behaviour Program

*The newest additions to the PAHO team have included three certified social workers from various countries. In lieu of this, PAHO has implemented a social welfare program in order to benefit the entire Social Welfare Facility.*

The Protective Behaviour Project is being delivered on a weekly basis at the welfare facility, which encompasses the Boys' Remand Home, the Girls' Correctional Facility, and the Children's Shelter. The Protective Behaviour Programme was started by Peg Flandreau-West, in the 1970's, as a child abuse prevention program. It promotes and educates children on personal safety, self-empowerment, and provides the skills to avoid being victimized. It also encourages children to develop a network of people they feel they can trust in order to share their feelings, worries, and to seek help if they do not feel safe. Thus, the program also encourages children to express their emotions and their personal experiences to others.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of delivering the project to all of the children in the social welfare facility is to provide methods of staying safe by being able to cognitively recognize when they are feeling unsafe, and what they can do to protect themselves in these situations. This

<sup>1</sup> S. McGrath, & S. Gordon, *Safe Start, Safe future: Based on the Protective Behaviours Programme*, (South Australia: Children's Services Office, 1991)



applies to the child's own behaviour or actions, as well as, the actions of others towards the child. Thus, it can also apply to any offending behaviour carried out by the child, in which the child may not feel safe. In these situations, the emphasis is that the child has a choice over their behaviour, so they can choose to act differently in the future.

This project was established so it could help in reducing reoffending—or first time offending—through equipping the child with skills to recognize unsafe situations and the subsequent actions they can take to protect themselves. Additionally, this project also aims to encourage the children to open up to individuals they feel they can trust. By doing this, they can seek help if they feel unsafe. Further, it allows the children to begin the process of healing from any trauma or abuse that they may have experienced through sharing these experiences.

The project will be delivered over five sessions to the Boys' Remand Home, the Girls' Correctional Centre and the Children's Centre. In the month of August, the first two sessions were completed at both the Girls' Correctional Centre and the Children's Centre, with only the first session being delivered at the Boys' Remand Home, and the second scheduled for the beginning of September.

In order to examine the effect of the project so far, it is necessary to briefly outline the structure of the project and what it will involve.

The first session, entitled "Introduction to Emotions and Feelings", introduces the different emotions and emphasizes that all feelings are acceptable. Further, everyone experiences the various range of emotions.

In the second session, "Masked Feelings", the story *The Person Who Had Feelings* is read aloud to the participants. The story is about a child who conceals their true feelings, such as, fear and loneliness with other emotions such as anger and simulated strength. The story explains the negative impact that hiding your true feelings can have on a person. Hiding feelings does not make them go away; they only increase in intensity, and, as a result, they need to be covered with an increasing amount of anger and toughness to hide them. This leaves little room to experience other positive



Young citizens of Old Fadama

emotions, such as happiness. This session emphasizes the importance of sharing true feelings with someone they feel they can trust and the positive impact this has on their wellbeing. At the end of the session, the children made masks in order to enjoyably reinforce the training.

In the third session, the first theme of Protective Behaviour is introduced through a presentation called "We All Have the Right to Feel Safe All the Time". This outlines the early warning signs in the body that indicate that people feel unsafe, such as, the heart beating fast and palms starting to sweat. This is so that the child can better identify unsafe situations and subsequently take action to protect themselves.

Session four is named "There Is Nothing So Bad That We Cannot Talk About It With Someone", and is the introduction to theme two of the Protective Behaviour. In this session, children are encouraged to open up to someone they feel they can trust, and the child identifies who they feel they can speak to if they are not safe, through developing a personal support network.

Lastly, session five summarises what has been learnt over the past four sessions, reviewing the two Protective Behaviour themes and how the children have started to put them into practice.

As previously mentioned, sessions one and two have already been completed in most of the facilities, with only session one having been delivered at

the Boys' Remand Home. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the sessions that have already been delivered, in order to determine if any changes need to be made for the next sessions.

Session one at the Children's Shelter covered the emotions of happiness, sadness and anger. Basic pictures of the emotions were shown to the children, who then played a matching game where they had to find the matching emotion cards around the room. The team took a simplified approach due to the younger age of a majority of the children in the shelter and the varying abilities in speaking English and cognitive functioning. While the children enjoyed the nature of the game, the team found that this session could have been improved by translating the emotions into Twi—one of the most prevalent local languages—as the children who spoke little English struggled to understand the meaning of the emotions of happiness, anger and sadness.

Session one was also adapted for the Boy's Remand Home and Girl's Correctional Centre, as these children are older. The team felt that, if the presentation were too basic, it might patronize the children, resulting in a decrease in their engagement. The boys were asked to name the different feelings a person can experience, and these feelings were written down by a volunteer. The boys found it very difficult to name different emotions; in comparison, the girls filled an A2 sheet of paper with different emotions. Since the boys were struggling to name different emotions, a game was played

in which one child chooses an emotion written on a card and acts this emotion out to the rest of the group. The group then has to guess the emotion, and, if they are correct, they are given a piece of candy. This received a much better reaction, from the boys, than just writing down the different emotions. The boys were enthusiastic and enjoyed the competitive element. They also demonstrated understanding of the different emotions by guessing the emotion through the actor's body language. The comparison of the two sessions suggests that the boys find it more difficult than the girls to talk directly about their emotions. Thus, they will benefit from the use of a game or activity, as a less threatening means to talk about emotions.

The evaluation of session one enabled the team to make the second session, **at the children's shelter, more accessible to all children at the centre.** An A2 page was shown with pictures of the emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and strength with the English, Twi and Ga translations for each emotion. This was done to familiarize the children with the emotions that the team was going to talk about in the session from *The Person Who Had Feelings* story. A staff member from the facility also agreed to translate the entire session into Twi. Visual aids were used to support the understanding of the story for the younger children. A drawing of a boy and cards with the different emotions written on them were used, for example, to visually show how fear can be hidden by anger. The message that the children can share their feelings with someone they can trust was stated at the start and the end of the story. The team felt this was very important to emphasise because, if a child opens up to someone who does not provide a caring response to the child, they may be very reluctant to open up to anyone again.

Despite using several methods to translate the session, the younger children struggled to understand the full meaning of the story. However, the older children grasped the story well. This could suggest that, for the younger children, a more interactive method such as acting out the story in a play may have helped their understanding of the meaning of the story.

Session two at the Girl's Correctional Centre began with the game of guessing the emotion an individual

acted out. Similarly to the boys, they enjoyed the competitive element to the game and showed good understanding of the different emotions. *The Person Who Had Feelings* story was then read by one of the girls who also agreed to translate it into Twi to aid the understanding of the girls who had a lower level of English. The girls demonstrated a good understanding of the meaning of the story: to not hide your true feelings, but to share them with someone you can trust. Unfortunately, it became clear that the children would like to share their feelings and see it is a positive; however, they do not feel they have someone they can trust to share their feelings with. This is understandable given the experiences that the children have had, such as, trauma and abuse, have caused a huge breach in their trust. Alongside this, there is a general culture in Ghana that children should not share their emotions with adults, as there is an expectation that they deal with issues on their own. This is clearly a challenge for the successful delivery of the project and is demonstrative of the importance of volunteers building trusting relationships with the children.

The project has also utilized non-threatening fun activities or games at the start of each session, such as a game of catch, to start bonding with the children and hopefully building some trust so the children can start talking about difficult topics.

The project also tries to fully involve the staff of the welfare centre. The team utilizes the welfare staff for translations and runs session debriefs in order to keep them as involved as possible. This is done so that the staff is able to deliver the project in the future, which would be beneficial to the centre, as it would enable the children to trust the adults who take care of them.

Overall, the project has been a success so far. It is clear that the team has had an impact on the children and, at the very least, has given them much to consider. However, in order to deliver this project to the highest standard possible, it will be constantly evaluated to ensure that the project is best suited to the needs of the children. The team is excited to report on the continued success of this initiative upon its completion next month.

## Italia: Boys' Remand Centre

Cecilia Maccacaro

Quando abbiamo iniziato a seguire il progetto al Boy's Remand, l'attività principale era insegnare loro due volte a settimana nozioni di Matematica e Inglese. Abbiamo da subito notato con piacere che i ragazzi erano molto interessati a migliorare le loro competenze. A causa del loro diverso livello, (molti di loro erano in grado di scrivere e leggere fluentemente ma altri erano completamente analfabeti) offrivamo loro diverse tipologie di esercizi cosicché ognuno potesse fare miglioramenti.

Durante i primi giorni al Remand abbiamo iniziato a conoscere meglio i ragazzi e abbiamo realizzato che sebbene molto motivati a imparare queste materie, essi erano altrettanto interessati a creare un rapporto con noi volontari. Molti di loro hanno voluto infatti raccontarci le loro storie, ricordando la loro famiglia, i loro amici e la loro scuola. Essi hanno mostrato anche le loro preoccupazioni per l'imminente sentenza della corte, dalle quali è emersa una totale inconsapevolezza della loro posizione.

Parlando con loro ci siamo resi conto della totale ignoranza in materia. Tutti i ragazzi, anche quelli accusati dei crimini peggiori come stupro o omicidio, erano convinti della propria innocenza e aspettavano con ansia il momento della sentenza con la certezza di poter tornare a casa. Per questa ragione, sebbene consideriamo importante lo studio di queste materie scolastiche, abbiamo deciso di abbandonare per il momento le lezioni di inglese e matematica, e soffermarci di più sulla conoscenza dei ragazzi.

Abbiamo chiesto supporto al supervisore del centro perché ci spiegasse meglio la situazione dei ragazzi e l'organizzazione della struttura in modo più approfondito così da impostare sulle basi di questi dati delle lezioni future. Il supervisore ci ha spiegato la giornata tipo dei ragazzi, qual è il ruolo della corte e come funziona il centro correzionale successivo alla sentenza in caso di colpevolezza. Ci ha mostrato i documenti sui ragazzi del centro in

modo tale che potessimo farci un'idea sul loro background e sulle tipologie di crimini di cui erano accusati. Partendo da queste informazioni abbiamo deciso di organizzare lezioni nelle quali i ragazzi potessero partecipare attivamente creando dei momenti di confronto sia individuale che collettivo. Oltre a spiegare il funzionamento del processo, i diritti dei sospettati, come funziona il centro correzionale, abbiamo parlato con loro cercando di spiegare perché non fosse giusto quello che avevano fatto per essere lì, il concetto di rispetto della legge e degli altri.

È essenziale per questi ragazzi creare una base generale di conoscenza su questi argomenti perché possano in futuro agire consapevolmente. Ci siamo posti con loro come degli amici con i quali poter parlare liberamente, in grado di rassicurarli e dare loro sostegno. Pensiamo sia molto importante per i ragazzi avere una figura di sostegno durante il soggiorno nel centro, qualcuno che sia in grado di dare spiegazioni su cosa stia succedendo e cosa potrà accadere.

## Belgique: Fadama Legal Assistance Program

Astrid Caporali

*S'il fallait résumer la problématique qui sévit actuellement dans le bidonville de l'Old Fadama en un mot, il s'agirait probablement du manque de ressources : manque d'eau, d'électricité, de routes, mais surtout, un manque d'instruction. Or, aussi longtemps que les citoyens n'auront pas connaissance de leurs droits les plus fondamentaux et plus principalement des solutions qui sont mises à leur disposition, la corruption, la violence conjugale ou encore l'abus de pouvoir continueront à être perpétrés en toute impunité. C'est là que Projects Abroad intervient.*

Afin de s'atteler à cette tâche de conscientisation, le Projects Abroad Human right Office (PAHO), en lien avec l'ONG Wiseep (Women in Slum Economic Empowerment) décida, dans un premier temps, d'envoyer des volontaires afin de donner aux habitants de l'Old Fadama des présentations relatives aux sujets suivants : violence domestique, agression sexuelle, contrat de bail, succession, l'entretien de leurs enfants



The foundations of the FLAP office

ainsi que les solutions mises à leur disposition en cas de conflit. Les sessions devaient généralement être ajustée au cas par cas, en vue d'assurer que l'information exposée corresponde au profil de l'audience.

Par après, l'idée de créer un centre juridique (appelé Fadama Legal Assistance Program, or FLAP) au sein même du bidonville germa. La vision poursuivie est de permettre à chaque habitant de l'Old Fadama de prendre des renseignements et de demander conseils concernant les éventuels problèmes juridiques auxquels ils seraient confrontés. Le FLAP fut également principalement mis en place comme un point de contact entre les habitants de l'Old Fadama et les institutions gouvernementales. En effet, ceux-ci doivent faire face à un manque de connexion entre le bidonville et les services offerts. Cela est dû au fait que le gouvernement possède les terres sur lesquelles les habitants se sont installés et refuse dès lors de leur accorder une quelconque aide.

Dès juin, les deux organisations, avec l'aide de volontaires, commencèrent à faire un appel aux dons tant aux sociétés qu'aux particuliers afin de récolter les fonds nécessaires pour la mise en place du programme. Une fois ceux-ci récoltés, la construction du bureau commença dès le mois d'août. A l'heure où cet article est rédigé, les travaux devraient être terminés d'ici une semaine. Tout au long de l'instauration du FLAP, les présentations au sein de

l'Old Fadama se poursuivirent de façon à ce que la population soit informée de la création du centre et de ses objectifs. Il est en effet important que le programme gagne la confiance des habitants de l'Old Fadama, trop souvent déçus par d'autres ONGs, promettant monts et merveilles pour ensuite rompre de telles promesses.

Il est essentiel que le centre juridique devienne indépendant à long-terme et qu'il puisse être géré par les habitants même.

Pour cela, et grâce à l'aide du fondateur de Wiseep, Frederick Opoku, la future organisation juridique réussit à recruter quelques habitants de l'Old Fadama convaincus de l'importance d'un tel projet pour le bidonville et dès lors décidés à prendre part à celui-ci.

Les volontaires de Projects Abroad ont alors passé une semaine à préparer des sessions de formation et à rédiger un manuel comprenant tant les aspects théoriques que pratiques de leur rôle en tant qu'agent d'évaluation. Celui-ci consiste principalement à entendre les requêtes et récits des habitants de l'Old Fadama afin de pouvoir les orienter vers l'institution la plus appropriée, que ce soit l'assistance juridique, l'hôpital le plus proche, ou encore l'unité spécialisée dans le traitement de la violence domestique. Ceux-ci peuvent également conseiller de mettre en place une médiation entre les deux parties en conflit au sein du centre même.



Pour conclure, il semblerait que le FLAP ait un futur très prometteur et constitue un espoir pour la population de l'Old Fadama. Une fois la construction du centre terminée, les habitants auront enfin cette ressource qui leur manque tant: une institution créée pour eux, gérée par eux et ayant pour seul objectif de défendre leurs droits les plus essentiels.

## Deutschland: Das Menschenrechts-Büro in Accra - Erste Eindrücke

Miriam Schirmer

Wenn man als *Projects Abroad Volunteer* in Accra ankommt, wird man als Erstes von einer großen Zahl verschiedener Eindrücke überschwemmt: Da sind das tropische Klima und das traditionelle Essen in Ghana, dazu kommt die Umstellung auf die ghanaische Lebensweise und die lokalen Transportmittel. Alles in allem also ein kompletter Kulturschock.

Als wäre man nicht schon genug mit den vielen neuen Impressionen beschäftigt, kommt auch noch der neue Arbeitsplatz hinzu, das *Projects Abroad Human Rights Office* (PAHO). Wer jedoch Angst hat, das könnte ein bisschen zu viel "Neues" sein, der darf beruhigt aufatmen.

Auch wenn man an den ersten Tagen vielleicht noch etwas unbeholfen am Büroalltag teilnimmt, das nette Team und die zugeteilten Aufgaben machen die Eingewöhnung in die Menschenrechtsarbeit in Ghana um einiges einfacher.

Man hat natürlich gewisse Erwartungen, wenn man sich entschieden hat, am Menschenrechtsprojekt in Accra teilzunehmen. Im Internet ist die Rede von einer Menge an Projekten, so zum Beispiel von Vorträgen in Slums zu Themen wie häuslicher Gewalt, Kinderfürsorge, etc.

Die meisten dieser Erwartungen werden auch gleich erfüllt; denn kaum ist man im Büro angekommen, kann man

schon an den ersten Projekten und Präsentationen mitarbeiten. Selbstverständlich wird man vorher vom zuständigen *Supervisor* in die Arbeit eingeführt und dem Team vorgestellt.

Aktuell gibt es im PAHO neun Projekte, darunter die Mitarbeit im *Children's Shelter* und *Boys Remand Centre*, das *Gender Equality Project* und der *Legal Service Desk*, um nur einige zu nennen. Die Arbeit ist ein Mix aus Sozial- und Aufklärungsarbeit mit rechtlichem Hintergrund und erfordert die Bereitschaft, sich immer wieder auf verschiedene Umgebungen, Menschen und unterschiedliche Tätigkeiten einzustellen.

Ich wurde für das *Human Rights Journal*, die offizielle PAHO-Zeitung, die Strafanstalt für Mädchen, die Ferienschule für Menschenrechte und für Menschenrechtspräsentationen in ländlichen Gemeinden eingeteilt. Damit war ich in den ersten Tagen schon komplett eingebunden und an Langweile war daher nicht zu denken.

Zum Beispiel habe ich gleich an meinem zweiten Tag eine Gruppe von Schülern in Menschenrechten unterrichtet. Eine weitere erste Erfahrung war eine Präsentation über häusliche Gewalt in einem abgelegenen Dorf. Das war besonders interessant in der Hinsicht, dass man mit den Dorfbewohnern diskutieren und somit ihren Standpunkt zu verschiedenen Themen erfahren konnte.

Aber keine Angst, man wird nicht einfach ohne Vorbereitung ins kalte Wasser geworfen; die anderen Freiwilligen im Büro haben dafür gesorgt, dass sich alle meine Fragen und Unklarheiten nach und nach in Luft aufgelöst haben.

Im Moment sind wir insgesamt 16 Freiwillige im Büro, was auch ein Aspekt war, der mir die ersten Tage erleichtert hat. Seien es Fragen zu Projekten oder auch nur wo es das beste Mittagessen gibt - man wird nie mit einem Problem alleine gelassen.

Wenn ich auf die letzte Woche zurückblicke, habe ich so viel erlebt, dass es mir schwer fällt zu glauben, dass ich erst seit kurzer Zeit hier bin. Aber selbst in den wenigen Tagen konnte ich bereits eine Menge praktischer Erfahrung in der Arbeit mit Menschenrechten sammeln und habe

das Gefühl, dass ich einen kleinen Beitrag zum rechtlichen Bewusstsein und zur Aufklärung leisten konnte.

## Danmark: En sammenligning af den ghanesiske og den danske velfærdsstat.

Line Rosenkrands

Politisk og økonomisk er Ghana kendt som et af de mere stabile lande i Afrika, alligevel står landet overfor mange især sociale og økonomiske udfordringer. På trods af en stigende økonomi, er det oftest den rigeste samt den voksende middelklasse der nyder godt af dette, mens forskellen på rig og fattig bliver større og større. Dette, samt den høje grad af arbejdere i den uformelle sektor gør det svært at få den rigtige udvikling i gang i landet. Alligevel forsøger den ghanesiske regering at få skabt et socialt sikkerhedsnet for befolkningen, med sygesikring og fri skolegang.

Den danske velfærdsstat er en rodfæstet institution, som nyder stor anerkendelse blandt befolkningen. Her er alle borgere omfattet af de samme sociale rettigheder, og de har samme adgang til at modtage velfærdsydelser, uden hensynstagen til individets arbejdsmarkeds- eller familiemæssige situation. Systemet bygger på tanken om medborgerskab i nutidens risikosamfund - i dag er det dig, i morgen er det mig der har brug for hjælp. Derfor skal alle have ydelser i en sådan mængde og af sådan en kvalitet, at ingen føler sig fristet til at sikre sig ydelser af anden vej, altså er målet for velfærdsstaten at hindre statusbetingede forskelle i adgangen til velfærdsydelser. Den danske velfærdsstat sikrer ordentligt infrastruktur, et frit skole- og sundhedssystem og en generel reduktion af risici og usikkerhed i det senmoderne risikosamfund. Staten er i høj grad involveret i finansieringen og organiseringen af velfærdsydelserne, og velfærdsmodellen kræver en bred skattebase og et højt skattetryk, som er modsvaret af en stor omfordeling samt generøse ydelser. Sammenligning

hermed betaler den arbejdende befolkning i Ghana 13 % i skat, men det er udelukkende arbejderne i den registrerede formelle økonomi, der betaler skat, hvilket er en minoritet overfor arbejderne i den uformelle økonomi. Ud af den totalt anslåede arbejdsstyrke på 11 millioner arbejder cirka 10 millioner inden for den uformelle økonomi.<sup>2</sup> Dette holder regeringens skatteindtægter og politiske handlemuligheder på et minimum, på trods af dennes store behov for at investere i sundhed, uddannelse og social sikring af de svageste.

Alle danske statsborgere har et sygesikringsbevis, der sikrer dem behandling hos læge, speciallæge, hospitaler og giver tilskud til bl.a. fysioterapeut, medicin og tandlæge. Til sammenligning indførte den ghanesiske regering i 2003 the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), for at sikre den ghanesiske befolkning lige muligheder for en basal sygeforsikring. NHIS består af tre typer sygeforsikring, to private og en offentligt støttet: District Mutual Health Insurance Scheme, der bygger på filosofien om, at alle skal kunne få den hjælp de har brug for, uanset hvem de er eller hvor de bor, for et oprettelsesgebyr samt et årligt beløb, derudover er der gratis medlemskab for særligt udsatte grupper, f.eks. ghanesere uden fast indkomst eller bopæl. På trods af dette betaler mange ghanesere tilsyneladende stadig for behandlinger.<sup>3</sup> Ifølge en rundspørge udført af the Weekend Globe havde 43 % af adspurgte betalt for en behandling, som de vidste NHIS skulle dække. Meningen med systemet var netop at undgå at individet skulle betale hver gang vedkommende havde brug for behandling, da dette afholdte mange fra at opsøge læge og hospitaler. Derudover er der en høj grad af uigennemsigtighed i systemet, der resulterer i en manglende forståelse for, hvad forsikringen kan bruges til, hvorfor mange afholder sig fra at melde sig ind.

Andre offentlige ghanesiske institutioner, børnehjem, herberg ol. er

afhængige af økonomisk støtte fra den frivillige sektor, da regeringen ofte ikke udbetaler de bevilligede ressourcer i tide. Dette resulterer i en stor mangel på ressourcer, samt institutioner der overlever på dag-til-dag basis, og dermed ikke er i stand til at udøve den service de burde kunne. Oplevelser på det velfærdscenter i Accra Projects Abroad arbejder på, vidner om dette: børnene sover på gulvet, uden andet underlag end et tæppe, de har kun hullede myggenet på trods af risikoen for malaria og mange af dem går barfodede rundt, da nye indkøb simpelthen ikke er en mulighed. Der er langt i mellem indbetalingerne til institutionen, hvilket vidner om en regering, der ikke har socialt sektor som en prioritet, på trods af at der en stor mangel og efterspørgsel på dette. Skolegangen i Ghana er gratis og lovpligtig indtil eleven har afsluttet sin grundlæggende uddannelse, som er de første elleve år i skolen. På trods af at den er gratis, er der alligevel nogle udgifter knyttet til at sende sin barn i skole, der afholder forældre fra at gøre dette, fx bøger, mad og skoleuniform. Dette har regeringen forsøgt at ændre ved at udlevere gratis undervisningsbøger og flere skoler deltager i madordninger. Dette lykkedes til en vis grad, men stadig skal eleverne betale for skrivehæfter og sommertider vil skolerne forsøge at opkræve penge for undervisningen, når de offentlige tilskud ikke dukker op. Dette resulterer i at nogle forældre holder deres børn hjemme, da de ikke har råd til at sende dem i skole, samtidig er der mange forældre der bruger børnene som arbejdskraft og derfor ikke giver børnene mulighed for at komme i skole. Senior High School og universitet koster penge, hvorfor den ghanesiske kultur gør at der er en overflod af drenge på de videregående uddannelser, da pigerne bliver holdt hjemme. Der er flere forskellige årsager til denne skævvridning af kønnene, men en holdning er at det er spild af penge at betale for pigernes uddannelse, da de bliver gravide og derfor bliver nødt til at stoppe skolegangen. Sammenlignet hermed er der fri skolegang for alle i Danmark, og efter eleven er fyldt 18 og går på en SU-berettiget uddannelse, får eleven Statens Uddannelsesstøtte (SU), som er en økonomisk hjælp mens man er under uddannelse. Dette sikrer at alle, på trods af køn og baggrund, har muligheden for at udnytte sit fulde potentiale og forfølge sine drømme.

<sup>2</sup> Ulandssekretariatet i Lomé, 1 Landeanalyser – Vestafrika, [www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/.../Landeanalyse-r-Vestafrika\\_19.05.11.pdf](http://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/.../Landeanalyse-r-Vestafrika_19.05.11.pdf) 2013 9/6

<sup>3</sup> Martin Asiedu Dartey, "Many Ghanaians still pay for treatment despite NHIS", *The Weekend Globe*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013: page 1, 15.



Ghana:  
Human Rights in Focus



# Supreme Court Rules on the 2012 Presidential Election

Kate Budzynski

On 29 August 2013, the Supreme Court of Ghana ruled that the election held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012 was valid, and John Dramani Mahama, leader of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was to remain President of the Democratic Republic of Ghana.<sup>4</sup> Justice William Atuguba of the Supreme Court stated, “the overall effect is that the first respondent was validly elected.”<sup>5</sup>

The election was contested by the opposition, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and its leader Nana Akufo-Addo, despite the election itself being widely reported as the most peaceful in Ghanaian history.<sup>6</sup>

Mahama won the election, gaining 50.7% votes. However, the NPP asserted that the election was invalid. The election, which was held over two days—due to technical glitches—and was the sixth election since military rein in 1992. The NPP purported that there were more votes registered than there were ballot papers counted and that voting had taken place where biometric verification was not available. Indeed, voters were required to scan their fingerprints before casting their vote, but it was alleged by the NPP that, at times throughout the election, these scanners were set to zero. However, the NDC responded to these allegations by stating that, in instances where verification was disputed, the voter’s fingerprints were unreadable or, in rare cases, had no fingers.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the NPP wanted a large majority of the votes annulled.<sup>8</sup> The NPP first requested that the Electoral Commission delay announcing the results of the election so they could conduct an investigation into accusations of an unfair election. However, the Electoral Commission denied this request.<sup>9</sup>

Despite disagreeing with the result announced by the Electoral Commission, the NPP did not turn to violence and dealt with the matter through the appropriate legal processes. On 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, as per the parameters of the Constitution, the NPP applied to the Supreme Court to petition the election.<sup>10</sup> This shows a positive step forward to restoring faith in the judicial system. In fact, PAHO asserts that the NPP set a positive example for Ghanaians in doing this.

Leading up to the announcement of the decision, both Mahama and Akufo-Addo advocated for peaceful acceptance of the verdict, no matter which side it favoured. On the day of the decision many Ghanaians, including PAHO volunteers, had prepared to deal with possible outbreaks of violence. Locals and volunteers alike were met with an unusually quiet Accra, with streets leading into the capital closed off and a large amount of police officers deployed around the city.

However, there were no reported instances of violence in the media and the leader of the NPP, Akufo-Addo, despite not agreeing with the Court’s decision, continued to urge his supporters to accept it and respond peacefully, which they did.<sup>11</sup>

As Ghanaians have struggled so hard for their right to be able to vote, this was a welcomed affirmation that the electoral system, judicial system, and executive branch adhere to their constitutional democracy.

After what has been described as an uneasy eight months in Ghanaian political history, the Court’s decision, along with the investigation by the NPP, has shown that there is transparency in the system.

Ghana has been described as a ‘beacon’ of democracy in Africa and the confirmation that the election was valid has ensured this description is accurate.

In saying this, Ghana still has a long way to go on its human rights journey; however, the decision definitely symbolizes progress in the area.

## Human Rights in the Media

Pippa Mulvey

In August, there were several human rights issues reported in the media. The Projects Abroad Human Rights Office keeps a watchful eye on the media, as a resource for both knowledge and potential initiatives. Despite the dominance of the pending court decision over the election in the daily newspapers, a number of other significant human rights issues were addressed. Unsurprisingly, similar themes as previously witnessed were present throughout August, such as access to healthcare for all Ghanaians as well as police misconduct. Additionally, there was a particularly worrying pattern of pre-trial detention, along with the apparent push for increasing the advocacy concerning the rights of the disabled.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> August edition of the *Daily Graphic*, the public’s attention was drawn to the common occurrence of pre-trial detention in Ghana. The article referenced a study conducted by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI; Africa Office), from September 2011 to April 2013, which found that the abuse of a suspect’s right to bail by some judges was extremely prevalent in Ghana.

Chapter 14(4) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana states “where a person arrested, restricted or detained is not tried within a reasonable time, then without prejudice to any further proceedings

<sup>4</sup> K. Kpodo, K 2013, Reuters UK, ‘Ghana’s Supreme Court Rejects Opposition Challenge to 2012 Vote’, 29 August 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Kpodo, K 2013, Reuters UK, ‘Ghana’s Supreme Court Rejects Opposition Challenge to 2012 Vote’, 29 August 2013.

<sup>6</sup> The Danquah Institute, ‘Report on the Presidential Election Petition in Ghana – 23 February 2013 (updated 18 March)’.

<sup>7</sup> Vrankulj, A 2013, Biometric Update, ‘Legal battle continues regarding biometric verification in Ghanaian election’, 2 May 2013.

<sup>8</sup> The Danquah Institute, ‘Report on the Presidential Election Petition in Ghana – 23 February 2013 (updated 18 March)’.

<sup>9</sup> The Danquah Institute, ‘Report on the Presidential Election Petition in Ghana – 23 February 2013 (updated 18 March)’.

<sup>10</sup> The Danquah Institute, ‘Report on the Presidential Election Petition in Ghana – 23 February 2013 (updated 18 March)’.

<sup>11</sup> BBC News 2013, ‘Ghana Supreme Court Upholds John Mahama’s Win’, 29 August 2013.

*that may be brought against him, he shall be released either unconditionally or upon reasonable conditions, including, in particular, conditions reasonably necessary to ensure that he appears at a later date for trial or for proceedings preliminary to trial."*

Therefore, pre-trial detention should be used to ensure that a suspect attends court and not as a punishment. Unfortunately, judges frequently abuse this power, and disregard all notions of equality before the law by setting bail at a price that is unattainably high for the majority of Ghanaians. Sadly, the law, in giving the judge the discretion to set bail conditions, permits this injustice to take place.

The CHRI found that in 70% of non-felony cases, bail was set between GH 1000 cedi and GH 2000 cedi, with GH 1000 cedi accounting for 30% of the cases. However, even GH 1000 cedi is extremely difficult for the poor to afford, and 90% of those non-felony defendants who had their bail set at GH 2000 cedi could not afford to post bail. They, therefore, spent around two weeks in custody for low-level offences.

The safeguards outlined in the Constitution are there to protect the poor and vulnerable by ensuring people are not denied their pre-trial freedom simply because they cannot afford it. However, judges frequently deny suspects this right by setting bail either in cash or secured bonds and at such a high cost that most accused persons cannot afford it. This has led to inadequate and unequal access to justice, and some suggest the judges are purposefully setting an unaffordable bail cost so the defendants will remain in custody and show up for their court date. However, an examination of the evidence shows that 84% of non-felony defendants who are released on bail attend court, while only 6% of non-felony defendants fail to show up to court and do not voluntarily return to court within thirty days. This provides a clear indication that there would be little justification for preventing pre-trial freedom, if that were the case.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, another human rights issue in the media this month was the apparent lack of awareness regarding the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the misrepresentation of

the benefits of the scheme by relevant authorities. The *Weekend Globe*, on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, made the startling revelation that despite the existence of the NHIS, many Ghanaians still have to pay for their treatment.

Nearly half of Ghanaians, in a poll conducted by *The Weekend Globe*, have paid cash for medical services they know their NHIS card should cover. A quarter of Ghanaians polled stated that their NHIS cards were rejected in both government and private hospitals, despite these hospitals stating that they accepted the health insurance cards. In over half of the cases where the NHIS card was rejected, the patient ended up paying cash for the services they required. This is concerning as it goes against the very reason the scheme was established, which was to abolish the 'cash and carry' system of health care. Under this system, Ghanaians had to pay money at every point of their treatment. The NHIS scheme was devised to benefit the poor and vulnerable, who could not afford essential medical treatment by any other means.

It is clear that most Ghanaians do not fully understand what treatments the card can be used for. Additionally, the Ghanaians who do not have an NHIS card stated they lacked sufficient knowledge of the system. Further, an overwhelming majority of Ghanaians, who had to pay for medical treatment, did not make a complaint, allowing the problem to continue. For instance, of the respondents to the *Weekend Globe's* poll who had their cards rejected, only 11% phoned the NHIS helpline and only 2% reported the occurrence to a higher authority at the hospital.<sup>13</sup>

Another human rights issue reported in the media in August, and one of perpetual concern within Ghana, was police misconduct. One such incident occurred on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> July. In this case, a suspected robber associated with the Fumesua bank robbery was shot dead by the police. According to police reports, the suspect was shot after he opened fire on police officers attending the scene. The police retrieved a machete and pistol pellets

from the scene, but no gun.<sup>14</sup> This story was picked up by Mr. Tetteh Barrigah in the *Daily Graphic* of 5<sup>th</sup> August. Barrigah, observed that the police did not find a gun at the scene of the shooting, and noted the peculiarity that the suspect was shot dead by police officers 'as he opened fire on them,' despite not being in possession of a gun.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, in the month of August, police officers have been accused of engaging in illegal mining operations, referred to as 'galamsey operations' in the Central Region. Although the police deny any involvement, the President of the Atti Mokwa Traditional Church, Mr. Bossman Osei Hyiaman reports that allegations of police involvement in galamsey activities are widespread throughout the town.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, a prominent human rights issue reported this month was a push for greater advocacy concerning the rights and treatment of those with disabilities within Ghanaian society. A number of different groups are taking measures in advocating for the rights of the disabled and to redress what the Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection (GCSP), Mrs. Benita Okity-Duah, has called the "deeply-rooted bias within Ghanaian society" towards those with disabilities. For example, Okity-Duah stated that Ghana has adopted a new 'framework for action', which aims to educate people of the origin and nature of the everyday barriers encountered by persons with disabilities in Ghana.<sup>17</sup>

*Inclusion Ghana* was also arguing for greater advocacy efforts to promote the rights of children with disabilities. *Inclusion Ghana* expressed great concern over the governmental neglect and lack of support for people with an 'intellectual disability'. The national co-ordinator, Mr. Odom, said that children with disabilities, in Ghana, face health and educational problems and, despite the provisions of the Disability Act, there were still no

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Gurbie, "Bail: A right or a privilege?", *Daily Graphic*, Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2013

<sup>13</sup> Martin Asiedu Dartey, "Many Ghanaians still pay for treatment despite NHIS", *The Weekend Globe*, Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Kofi Adu, "3 Robbers gunned down", *Daily Guide*, Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013

<sup>15</sup> Tetteh Barrigah, "What was the suspect firing with?", *Daily Graphic*, Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013

<sup>16</sup> Shirley Asiedu-Addo, "Police implicated in galamsey at Twifo Praso", *Daily Graphic*, Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2013

<sup>17</sup> Graphic reporter, "Ghana addressing bias against persons with disability", *Daily Graphic*, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2013



Departing volunteers discussing the pressing human rights issues in Ghana

measures in place to check whether the benefits were actually being offered.<sup>18</sup>

PAHO is already involved in educating the public over their rights as suspects, and are closely monitoring any incidents of police misconduct. Further research on Ghanaians' access to healthcare and the rights of the disabled needs to be conducted, but PAHO will continue to monitor any human rights issues reported in the media and ensure that any relevant projects are directed accordingly.

## Human Rights in the Courts

Sam Elliott-Wood

In August, volunteers visited the Domestic Violence Court and the Human Rights Court. In previous months, volunteers attended only the human rights court, but as Domestic Violence is a pertinent part of the work that PAHO does, the volunteers were eager to see how the judicial process specifically applies to domestic violence.

During the session on 20<sup>th</sup> August, the volunteers sat in on three cases; one was decided and two were adjourned. This provided a valuable insight into the frustrating nature of the Ghanaian legal system.

The defendant in the first case was an herbalist accused of sexual assault and the theft of five rings; both were allegedly perpetrated during a ritual. Customary tribal rituals, such as this, are prevalent throughout Ghana. The victim had searched for the herbalist to perform a ritual that would enable her to find a husband and also to enable her sister to have children. The victim described the ritual to the court: the herbalist took her to a forest where he rubbed red pepper on her body and inserted leaves into her vagina. Allegedly, he had then made amorous sexual advances towards her. The judge was not convinced, as it had taken her two months to report the crime. He asserted that, if she had really believed it to be sexual assault, she would have made the report much earlier. The judge suggested that the woman had waited to see if the ritual had worked. When she realised that it had not, she became unsatisfied with his abilities, and decided to accuse him of assault. It was also stated that the medical reports showed no indication of sexual assault, and, if she had been covered with red pepper, she would have shown evidence of burning. This evidence did not exist. After compiling all of this evidence, the judge came to the conclusion that the herbalist had not committed sexual assault.

The judge proceeded to rule on the second allegation made by the same victim. The defendant was accused of the theft of five rings that she had given him as part of the ritual. The defendant claimed, in his written statement, that he still had the rings and they were in his garage. However, he contradicted himself during his in court witness testimony, stating that he

had discarded the rings as they were of little monetary value. As a result of this contradiction, the judge ruled that the herbalist had to pay a fine of GH¢100 and the restitution charges for the cost of the rings.

The second case involved the alleged defilement of a young girl, while the third and final case concerned a student who had been impregnated by a teacher at her school. Both cases were adjourned to a later date.

On 21 August, the PAHO volunteers attended a session at the Human Rights Court. Most of the cases were adjourned by the Judge within the first few minutes, as the majority of lawyers requested more time to prepare. However, there were two cases of particular note.

The first case concerned the extradition, of a Ghanaian man to the US on drug smuggling charges. The applicant argued that the evidence, which identified the defendant, was not extensive enough to force his extradition. In the end, the case was **adjourned so the respondent's counsel** could familiarise herself further with the law.

The applicants, in the second case, had had their property stolen by a group of twenty men and claimed they should be able to join their two prosecutions when the matter went to court. The volunteers noted that the judge had, seemingly, already made his decision before listening to the rest of **the applicant's submissions. However, the judge did eventually agree to listen to the applicant's submissions.** Nevertheless, the judge ruled the applicant did not have sufficient legal interest in the case; he thus refused their application to become a joinder.

After the session, the volunteers were invited **into the judge's office to ask him some questions.** This was a valuable opportunity for the volunteers to be able to speak to someone high ranking in the judicial system about current issues concerning human rights.

The judge, however, did not always clearly provide answers that were particularly enlightening and, on some occasions, actively avoided addressing certain issues. One such incident **concerned the question: "Do you think more could or should be done by the Ghanaian government to make its**

<sup>18</sup> Dominic Moses Awiah, "NGO calls for support for persons with disability", *Daily Graphic*, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2013



citizens more aware of their human rights?" The judge seemingly adapted the question to suit his own purposes. Rather than addressing what the government was specifically doing to target human rights abuses, he instead preferred to discuss what civil society groups were doing. One of the volunteers subsequently asked him to answer the question properly and he still was unwilling to identify his opinions, so the volunteers moved on.

Despite the judge's reluctance to discuss his opinions candidly, the volunteers were extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to speak with a senior judge, and witness various types of courts and the cases therein.

## Social work in Ghana and the UK: a comparative study

Laura Sadler

In August 2011, I qualified as a social worker, in the United Kingdom. Since then, I have worked in both the statutory and voluntary sector with children and young adults. Volunteering as a social worker, in Ghana, has been a valuable opportunity to work within a different culture and widen my experience of social work. As a result, I have had the opportunity to compare social work in Ghana to social work in the United Kingdom.

I have been volunteering as a social worker in Ghana since the start of June 2013. My first placement was in a children's home, working alongside the other social workers employed there. I assisted the team in assessing the children's needs, drawing up the care plans for each child, logging observations of the children, supervising the children, and evaluating children who had just arrived at the home. We also did one to one sessions with the children and delivered a program of social skills with the counsellors at the children's home. In August 2013, I started my second—and current—placement with the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office, at the social welfare facility in Accra. I am delivering a program of social skills

training for the children and completing one to one sessions with each child.

There are challenges in both the UK and Ghana, which affect the practice of social work. However, I have found social work in Ghana to be much more challenging than the UK. Social work, in the UK, has faced budget cuts, which has resulted in increased caseloads for individual workers, as councils cannot afford to employ more social workers. There have been cut-backs on early intervention services, such as children's centres for underprivileged families. Thus, there is now a focus on supporting families and children when they become a risk to themselves or others, rather than prior to this point.

However, in Ghana, social welfare institutions rely on financial support from the voluntary sector, as the government often does not allocate funding to the institutions on time. This results in institutions that are surviving on a day-to-day basis and have a massive lack of resources. For example, a welfare facility in Accra was waiting for government funds for an entire year. As a result, the boy's accommodation is sparse and in need of repair. They are also unable to provide special provisions to increase the safety of the boys; some of whom have tried to leave the shelter by using chairs or beds to climb up to the roof. Thus, in order to prevent this, the staff is forced to provide only mattresses and mats for the boys to sit on. The government has an allocated amount of funding to provide social welfare institutions; however, social work seems to not be a priority on the government's agenda, so these institutions are effectively neglected by the government.

As a result, the social welfare institutions are also disparate in the level of service they can provide, as they are almost completely dependent on the amount they are able to receive from voluntary organizations, rather than a set amount from the government. Thus, my first social work placement, at the children's home, was in stark contrast to my second placement, at the shelters in Accra. The children's home has received significantly more funding from overseas voluntary organizations and private companies. As a result, the home could employ three social workers, provide comfortable living

conditions, and was well resourced with a school, library, games, and activities for the children. In contrast, the shelter in Accra is unable to provide a child with more sandals if their other pairs have broken. This inability to provide basic necessities demonstrates the extent of the financial strain that is placed on these institutions.

Due to financial constraints, social workers in Ghana often lack specialist training in areas such as mental or physical disability, as institutions cannot afford to employ specialists.<sup>19</sup> As a result, I have experienced some social workers who view the behaviour of a child as disobedience, instead of understanding the medical or developmental reasons behind the behaviour. They don't fully consider the ways that the environment or approach to the child can be adapted to meet the child's different needs. This became apparent at my placement in Accra, where there is a physically and mentally disabled boy. The staff seemingly had no other option but to lock the child in the shelter, when there was not enough staff present to supervise him, since he might try and leave the shelter, putting him at great risk.

This is in stark contrast to the UK, where social work is more child centred. In the UK, an ecological approach is taken, in which the child's environment, community, family, development, and society itself all have an influence on the child's development, behaviour, and well being. Furthermore, in the UK, the views and experiences of the child are central to the assessment of their needs and the subsequent care plan that is put in place to meet those needs.<sup>20</sup> However, I have also experienced social workers in Ghana to be very open and interested in learning from social work in the west or the UK. For example, I provided information on different methods, such as, the three houses tool that can be used with the children to gain their views and inform their care plans.<sup>21</sup> They were also very interested in using the Framework for

<sup>19</sup> N.S. Mavadas, T.D. Watts & D. Elliott, *International handbook on social work theory and practice*, (Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 1997)

<sup>20</sup> J. Horwath, *The child's world: The comprehensive guide to assessing children in need*, (London, Jessica Kingsley, 2010)

<sup>21</sup> N. Weld, & M. Greening, "Three Houses Tool", (Social Work Now, 2004)

the Assessment of Children and Families to develop a more holistic assessment of the child, which considers the child's developmental needs, their experience of parenting, and environmental factors on their needs.<sup>22</sup>

Compared to the UK, social work in Ghana seems to be less target driven and less bureaucratic. This allows social workers in Ghana to spend a lot more time working directly with service users. There is value in this high level of direct work. In my first placement, the social workers knew all of the children well and had built positive, caring relationships with them. The social workers live at the children's home and are thus a part of the children's life. They support the children with their daily routines, provide emotional support, and run and participate in activities with the children. Even their meals are taken together with the children. As a result, the atmosphere of the home was also familial in nature. This high level of direct work also enabled the social workers to have a good understanding of the child's behaviour and their needs, whereas, in the UK, social workers are often seen as an invasion of a family's privacy. This results in resistance from the family in working with the social worker. The time spent working directly with service users in the UK is dramatically reduced, as the majority of time is spent in the office producing written reports and assessments.

I have also observed the influence of Ghana's culture on social work. In Ghana, children take on responsibilities, such as chores at an early age, in order to support their family. However, in the UK children often do not take on responsibilities until an older age. Children here are also expected to respect adults and to follow an adult's instructions. As a result, social work assessments in Ghana include assessments of how responsible, respectful, and helpful a child is to adults. This seems to be very positive, as it fosters a sense of purpose and responsibility in the child, compared to the lack of purpose and responsibility reflected in the behaviour

of some children in the UK. However, there is also the negative aspect as adults expect children to be seen and not heard and for children to not question an adult's authority. This results in the social workers labelling children as 'stubborn' or 'bad', because they have disrespected or disobeyed an adult. They do not consider the reasons behind the child's behaviour, such as the impact of trauma or additional problems like attention deficit disorder. I have also observed another aspect of the Ghanaian culture which negatively impacts the success of social work. There is a general reluctance to talk about an individual's emotions. Because of these factors, social work in Ghana focuses more on the behaviour of the child rather than the child's emotional wellbeing.

Due to the close working relationship that Ghana has with volunteer organizations from different countries, social work in Ghana is also influenced by the West. For example, at the boys' shelter, a system of recording the boys' behaviour and recording their case files was drawn up by a previous PAHO volunteer. Furthermore, foreign volunteers demonstrate a more child-centric and, arguably, a more emotionally open approach in supporting the children. This 'Western' approach influences the social workers in at the welfare centre.

During my time here, I have concluded that social work in Ghana faces much bigger challenges than the UK, with its financial constraints, but it is less restricted by the target driven, form-filling culture of UK social work. This allows for more valuable direct work with the children. The culture of Ghana also encourages a social work approach that fosters responsibility and purpose in the child's life, compared to the lack of direction and responsibility that children often experience in the UK.

## Employment trafficking in Accra today

Kelly Mather

conducted research into human trafficking in Ghana—namely the trafficking of Ghanaian women. PAHO was alerted to the issue by the Human Rights Advocacy Centre. The Centre was concerned about posters throughout Ghana that offer work for women abroad with enticing salaries.

It was discovered that women are typically the targets of human trafficking due to sexual exploitation. Many women are offered employment as waitresses but are then used as exotic dancers and prostitutes. Also, because of the promise of sizable wages, women are often sold by their families to traffickers. This is due, in large respect, to the fact that women, in Ghana, are often seen as a burden to their families unless they marry young to ensure sexual purity. Human traffickers often take advantage of this. PAHO research showed that traffickers utilized this fact to their advantage in order to trick families into selling their daughters, if they have not remained 'pure'. Additionally, it is not uncommon for women to be kidnapped and smuggled abroad illegally.

Through extensive research, the PAHO team discovered exactly what these human traffickers offer the vulnerable women that they exploit. PAHO contacted the number on an advertisement referred to them by the Human Rights Advocacy Centre and pretended to be an aunt seeking work for her niece. The trafficking agent suggested the girl could go to Saudi Arabia on the following day and receive GH 80 -100 cedis, per month, as a house girl. He said that, after two to three years, the girl could return home to complete her education in Ghana, and then return to Saudi Arabia. To most poverty-stricken women, this would sound like an exciting opportunity. However, the unrealistically promising nature of the interaction left doubt in the minds of the PAHO team as to the validity of the organisation.

Ghana prohibits all forms of trafficking, under the 2005 Human Trafficking Act ('the Act'). The Act dictates a minimum penalty of five years imprisonment for all forms of trafficking. The Ghana Police Service maintains an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (known commonly as just 'The Unit') to investigate these cases.

The Station Officer at The Unit, Mr. Ben Trifo believed that, often, agents

<sup>22</sup> Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment and Home Office, "Framework for the assessment of children in need and their families", (London, The Stationery Office, 2000)

Throughout August, the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO)

of traffickers approach potential targets on the streets. Trifo said these attempts were generally successful, given that around 28% of Ghana's population lives in poverty. Trifo could not identify the success rates of The Unit, blaming this on problems with justice system. He stated that there are often delays in the court process, which allows perpetrators the time to extort or bribe the victims into abandoning their trials and not cooperating with police. This suggests that the police are not aware of how widespread the issue was. Trifo suggested that PAHO volunteers could go into communities and educate locals about human trafficking, but he felt it would require years of work to decrease human trafficking in Ghana.

It would seem that education on a grass roots level is not the priority. Legislators and politicians are eager to expel human trafficking through large-scale adjustments in legislation, rather than through education at a grassroots level. This suggests that bodies with a large political influence could only see the bigger picture, and not prevention at a community level. Despite this apparent interest, the Human Trafficking Secretariat and the specialized human trafficking unit at the United Nations Children's Fund ('UNICEF') declined to comment.

Facing reluctance from these organizations, PAHO sought to acquire more information at a local level. A questionnaire was developed with ten questions, inquiring as to whether people had seen a poster similar to the one flagged by HRAC, whether they knew what the poster inferred, whether the participant thought that going overseas was a good employment opportunity for women, whether they would personally accept this kind of work abroad, whether they knew any person who had accepted the offer, whether the participants thought that the government protected them against trafficking, and whether they had confidence in the police solving cases that arose from trafficking.

The first participant confirmed that they had seen similar advertisements, and most people accepted this type of work for financial reasons. He believed that in order to go abroad without one of these organizations, people have to pay a large amount of money and are in debt when they arrive. Therefore, they are not often able to return home for many years. The participant stated that

the government was involved in limiting trafficking by providing women with more economic support. He suggested that the problem lies in the lack of complaints from the public, as many people tolerate trafficking as an acceptable form of employment, due to poverty.

The second participant was uncertain about the meaning of the poster, though she believed human trafficking was a widespread problem in Ghana. She went on to say that smaller communities are the most affected due to lack of money and opportunity. The participant asserted that the government is aware of the issue, but does not want to deal with it directly.

The third participant, a judge from the Court of Human Rights, stated that the police and government are restricted by the fact that the victims often agree to travel with the trafficker voluntarily.

The fourth participant suggested that many women go abroad to work, as they are desperate for any form of employment. Thus, the only way to

prevent trafficking was to increase the employment of young girls. He also stated that there is a general lack of information on human trafficking, as the media only publishes a fraction of the trafficking stories it encounters, and the government does not willingly discuss or address the issue.

These interviews supported the research PAHO had conducted over the course of the month. Specifically, the interviews affirmed the fact that poverty is the primary root of human trafficking in Ghana. Poverty is a direct cause of both the lack of knowledge about this issue as well as the necessity to seek employment abroad. Though there was a general lack of information on human trafficking, the PAHO team feels secure in the data they were able to acquire. PAHO has thus concluded that it will continue to investigate the issue of human trafficking, while also exploring the possibility of implementing a community outreach program, with the intention of educating different communities and increasing their awareness of human trafficking.







# From the HRJ Coordinator

## Thank you for your support

*August 2013*

Last month, we at PAHO asked the public for support.

We set ourselves the goal of raising £500 for much needed work at the Welfare Centre where we spend so much time, effort and emotion trying to address governmental shortcomings. These funds were to be put towards structural repairs, bedding, mosquito nets, books and stationery, water pumps, ablution facilities and a range of other desperately needed resources.

As of the date of publication of this edition of the Human Rights Journal, we have received £600.67.

On behalf of the volunteers and the Welfare Centre, I want to send a heartfelt thanks to all who donated. We received donations from all over the world, including a group collection from a small community in the UK, from family and friends in Australia, from past and present volunteers, and from very generous anonymous donors. I would like to take the opportunity to thank those people by name:

Ann Thimont  
'Lucy'  
'Gabbie'  
Harry Kent  
Pamela Shepherd  
'Lesley'  
Emily Andrews  
Elspeth Toop  
Penny Wells  
Emily Fogg  
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Jenny Mill  
and the anonymous donors

Work is planned to commence in mid-September, and we hope to provide some updates in the next edition of the Human Rights Journal. Thank you all once again for making it possible.

- Oliver Shepherd

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