

**ProjectsAbroad**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE, GHANA**

# MONTHLY REVIEW

**February 2013**

SOCIAL JUSTICE				
HR CLUBS	SOCIAL WELFARE	SLUM PROJECT	HR FOCAL	POLICE ADVOCACY
	BOYS REMAND	HR DEFENDERS		SCHOOLS
	GIRLS CORRECTIONAL	TEACHERS' TRAINING		COMMUNITY
		SLUM LEGAL DESK		
PRO / PLACEMENTS		OFFICE RESEARCH		
LEGAL AID		RIGHTS OF WOMEN	RIGHTS OF CHILDREN	RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
SOCIAL FACILITY				

Welcome once again to a PAHO Ghana. February has seen a marked increase in heat, fuel prices, power shortages and general discomfort throughout Accra. But rewarding results, promising feedback and a Fan-Ice or two has helped to maintain the collective morale. Here's a run-down of February's operations –

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS**

### **1. HUMAN RIGHTS CLUBS**

*The Human Rights Clubs Project was created by the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) through an Amnesty International initiative. It involves teams of our volunteers visiting Accran high schools to lead the student members of their respective Human Rights Clubs in discussion and debate on a broad range of past and present human rights issues.*

It was a disruptive month for the Human Rights Clubs, especially for groups II and III, who eventually decided to consolidate their efforts at Teshie after one of the prospective schools continually failed to respond to our proposals and agree to meet with PAHO to discuss lesson plans. This, combined with a school sports-day and unforeseen fashion show, meant that the Clubs had to postpone a few sessions. However, the sessions that did occur were a triumph, each attended by 35 to 30 enthusiastic and knowledgeable students. February saw

heated debates on the subjects of torture and the death penalty, and included case-studies which asked the students to consider whether certain situations were morally or constitutionally valid. The future of Human Rights education is bright in Ghana, if these sessions are anything to go by.

## 2. SOCIAL WELFARE FACILITY

*The Social Welfare Facility is an institution for Ghanaian children who are in trouble with the law, who have found themselves in a dire situation. The Boys' Remand Centre is a detention centre for boys awaiting trial, while the Girls' Correctional Centre is detention centre for girls who have already been convicted of a criminal offence, and the Children's Shelter is for the boys and girls who have been abused or who have run away from home.*

In the Boy's Remand Centre, February began with lessons discussing the definition and consequences of theft, lessons to which the boys paid very close attention, as no doubt it resonated with and elucidated many of their adolescent lives. Following this; lessons in democracy and the modern history of Ghana, to accompany their regular English and mathematics lessons. As a farewell gift from Robert, our long-standing lead volunteer, PAHO arranged a football match for the volunteers, staff and boys on the dusty pitch behind the Welfare Centre. It was a close match, two goals apiece midway through the second half, until a flurry of late goals from PAHO saw the volunteers take the match 6 – 3. The boys were evidently grateful for the activity, as they spend most of their lives detained, without the opportunity for physical exercise. For this reason, another match is scheduled for early March.



*The victorious PAHO team (for privacy reasons we cannot include photos of the inmates)*

The Girls' Correctional team continued their lessons in basic English and mathematics, as well as geography and problem-solving, but decided to mix it up a little, with a 'fun day' involving musical chairs and football for Gemma's (our other long-standing lead volunteer) last session. Like the boys, the girls appreciated this time for physical recreation which is so lacking in their daily lives. For the second half of February we were joined by two local girls, one completing her vocational training and another her compulsory National Service. Our volunteers began to notice some significant relationship problems between the girls, who bully a particular orphaned inmate serving time for offences relating to prostitution, a path

taken out of necessity in order to provide for her younger siblings. For this reason the team have decided to begin lessons on bullying and the concept of role-models, in the hope that the other girls might learn to respect their fellow inmate.

### 3. THE SLUM PROJECT

*Perhaps the most popular and physically demanding project currently in operation at PAHO, the Slum Project sees two teams of volunteers visiting the Old Fadama slum in the west of Accra, a shanty town of nearly 100,000 residents, on a weekly basis in conjunction with WISEEP (Women In Slums Economic Empowerment Organisation).*

The Human Rights Defenders team held a series of excellent sessions in Old Fadama this month, concentrating on how to recognise, report and prevent domestic violence. They have incorporated rehearsal presentations as part of their pre-outreach preparations in order to identify shortcomings in coherence and fact. This greatly improved the quality of their sessions, which was reflected in the feedback questionnaires distributed to attendees at the end of the month. There were some issues with attendance, as new faces appear whilst others disappear each week, working against the concept of a long-term course.

The Teachers Training team concluded their operations this month, with the intention of resuming in April after evaluating the feedback questionnaires distributed in their final



session. In February they held sessions on child labour, child abuse and child sex trafficking. In addition to this, they ran side presentations on sanitation and the particular challenges that arise in Old Fadama, with the intention of illuminating the causes of child mortality and the spread of infection. Our in-house journalist volunteer Sarah produced a video exposé of the project, containing footage of our sessions and short interviews, which will be available on the Projects Abroad website once editing is completed. The team hopes to collaborate with the Projects Abroad teaching volunteers in the future to provide a more practical education to teachers operating in the slum.

*School Children of Old Fadama*

### 4. LEGAL SERVICES DESK

*Another PAHO operation in the Old Fadama Slum, the Legal Services Desk is a rudimentary drop-in legal service for a community with effectively no access to legal resolution. It is again run in conjunction with WISEEP, and where possible at least one team-member will be a law graduate or final-year law student.*



The start of the month saw a very poor client intake, indicating to our Legal Service Desk that there was a lack of awareness of the Desk's existence among the residents of Old Fadama. The team's focus therefore shifted towards an advertising drive in order to increase the intake, whilst continuing with the production of legislation summaries to make an understanding of the laws of Ghana more accessible to the public. This immediately bore fruit from the middle of the month, with clients bringing cases mostly involving property disputes. The team have made contact with the government's Legal Aid Service, setting up a meeting in early March to receive training in mediation and dispute resolution.

## 5. HR FOCAL

*Our HR Focal project provides human rights education to focal members of the community, such as teachers or religious leaders, in the hope that their particular influence in society will see our message trickle-down to those who hold them in such high esteem.*

The HR Focal project was mostly dormant in February, with the team preparing presentation materials ready for early March. The early February session was tailored towards teachers, our focal group of January, and began with a discussion of basic human rights, followed by the rights and responsibilities of children and teachers. The teachers seemed engaged and interested, involving themselves in the various interactive case studies and posing thoughtful questions to our team. Next month's sessions will predominately address domestic violence, divorce and dispute resolution in the home.



*The HR Focal Team addressing women in Tema*

## 6. POLICE ADVOCACY

*The Advocacy project is an initiative jointly coordinated by PAHO, the Ghanaian Police and the Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DoVVSU), a police department established in 1998 to respond to cases of domestic violence. The purpose of this project is once again concerned with awareness, and our volunteers visit communities and schools in various villages outside of Accra, with members of the above institutions, to educate citizens on basic human rights, and crimes involving domestic violence and rape.*

Our Communities Branch of the Advocacy project was particularly active this month. The number of male attendees increased, and from the questions and feedback that we received as the sessions progressed it was clear that our message was being absorbed by the community. It was both rewarding and alarming for our team to hear that their lessons had

directly contributed to two community members being charged with defilement in successive weeks, the attendees having learned the definitions of sexual abuse, rape and defilement from our presentations and subsequently noticing its occurrence in their community for the first time. The team also addressed issues such as whether domestic violence can be committed by both sexes, whether it can be justified in cases of adultery, and the identification of emotional and economic violence.



*Police Advocacy in Dodowa*

The separate Schools Branch was shelved due to a lack of response from our school partners, but the Communities Branch was asked by the local Assemblyman to expand their presentation to children to ensure they are hearing both sides of the story. Therefore the Schools Branch has taken on the task of adapting the presentations to the younger audience, and the combined Advocacy team will give multiple presentations on each outreach.

## LEGAL AID

*Volunteers requiring a law-focused internship and supervision from an experienced Ghanaian lawyer often join the Legal Aid Placement. This involves full time participation at a government-funded drop-in legal aid clinic in Accra, where interns will shadow and work closely with the co-ordinating lawyer, meet clients, attend court and mediations, draft documents and assist in any other way that is required. Our volunteers deal with legal matters ranging from property disputes to criminal defence to constitutional matters.*

Edwin represented PAHO at Legal aid in February, and provided us with a summary of his involvement. He acted as the first port-of-call for anyone seeking legal assistance, and attended mediations (sometimes in Twi, sometimes in English), and reviewed previous applications and cases for the purposes of preparing the Service's annual report. Edwin made it very clear that Legal Aid was incredibly under-resourced, and on his last day one of the mediators remarked to him – "Projects Abroad volunteers; can't live with them, can't live without them", implying their appreciation of having extra hands on board as well as the difficulties of working with short-term interns with inconsistent levels of experience and training.

## OFFICE RESEARCH

*The Human Rights Office conducts group research tasks for all Social Justice volunteers to investigate the public perception of and laws relating to the rights of women, the rights of children, and the rights of people living with disabilities.*

All three research groups (Women, Children and People with Disabilities) conducted pilot questionnaires in the streets surrounding the PAHO office, as well as in remote communities when they attended other outreaches. The Children's team had been considering the effects of failing to

register the birth of children, but following the pilot they decided it was not a particularly important issue, and are considering a shift to issues surrounding child labour. The Women's team have realised that their questionnaires are too long and complex, and the Disabilities team have decided to condense their focus, which was split in two to cover physical and mental disabilities separately. It became evident that community members were generally unwilling or unable to spend the time to complete such a lengthy questionnaire in any useful detail. Their intention is to debunk common myths surrounding mental and physical illness in Ghana.

## **A FINAL WORD**

We are approaching the quieter months of March and April at PAHO, which should give our current volunteers a chance to consolidate the work that has been done over summer and consider what direction they would like to take the projects ready for the increased volunteer-power over the rainy season. We have begun looking for new partners, including BASICS International, an after-school centre for children in genuine need. We recommend you visit their website and look at the great work they are doing. We also hope to take the first steps towards a campaign in the north-western mining towns, and a shift in focus towards conflict resolution, social welfare provision and deficiencies in the laws of Ghana.

From the PAHO team we wish you all a prosperous month of March.

Warm Regards,

**Oliver Shepherd**

Human Rights Coordinator  
Projects Abroad (Ghana)

