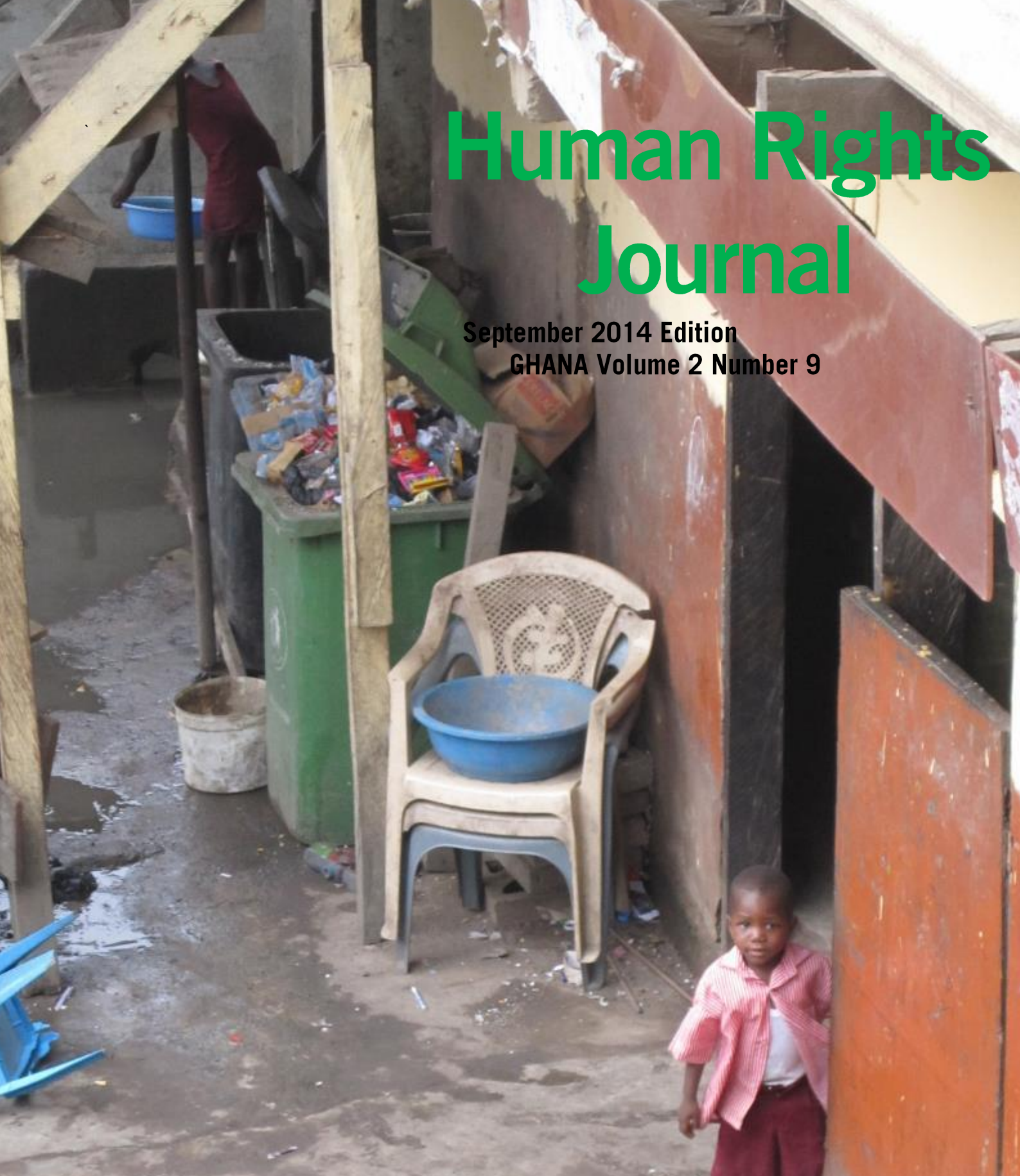


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HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE



Human Rights Advocacy, Monitoring and Abuse Resolution

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

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Monthly Project Updates



Old Fadama Impact Assessment

Access to Education

As outlined in the Republic of Ghana 1992 Constitution, 'all persons shall have the right to equal education opportunities and facilities¹.' However, over recent years the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) has noticed a rift between this ideology and its implementation in Old Fadama. According to People's Dialogue on Human Settlements 'education in [Old Fadama] is of very little importance².' So much so that out of 34,066 community members, 13,959 are recorded to have no education at all. PAHO have therefore been working in Old Fadama since 2012, and have partnered with the Fadama Legal Assistance Programme to attempt to bridge this gap.

This September, the team spent a couple of weeks evaluating and assessing the impact of PAHO's work in Old Fadama over the past two years.

In preparation for the impact assessment, the team compiled a few questionnaires that were to be presented to the headmaster, various teachers and some students at both Bethel ECG School and Polina's Queensland School. These questionnaires were based on an initial impact assessment that was conducted shortly after the conclusion of a teachers training programme run by PAHO in 2013. The questions in the survey ranged from the number of students per class, to the religious demographic of the school, to any perceived improvements in the school since 2012. This range of questions allowed team members to make comparative judgments as well as new observations in regards to the quality of education in the school.

Upon arrival at Bethel ECG School, the volunteers were greeted by a large group of young students eagerly yelling a cacophonous chant of 'Obruni'. Following this shocking, yet warm greeting the team instantly noticed

some changes since Project Abroad's last visit to the school, including the installation of a rubbish disposal system. Although the bins were overflowing, it was an encouragement to see that there was little to no rubbish on the ground, thus showing significant improvements in the school's sanitation and cleanliness. Additionally, upon entering the school it was observed that the school now provides drinking sachets for the students at a small cost, which is a noteworthy improvement.

Following this, the team met with the only trained teacher in the school who identified some areas of improvement in the school since 2012; for example, in 2014 the school installed a drainage system, which has stopped the playground from flooding. In addition to various structural changes, the teacher also acknowledged an attitudinal change in many of the teachers and students in regards to the importance of education and some other human rights issues. One teacher even established a Human Rights Club for the students, aimed at giving students a greater global perspective. While the teacher hinted that the school has become a "better" place, he additionally stated; "in many ways the school has also become a worse place for the students". This is as a result of an increased school populous (645 students compared to 317 students in 2013), which has caused various new concerns such as; overcrowded classes, structural problems and an even greater lack of resources. More than this, he also stated that the school was facing sanitation problems as well as issues with students leaving school early due to child labour. Next, the team met with the school's headmaster who confirmed most of what had already specified, however he added, "the students are performing better than ever and are all very talented, however their talent is squandered by this school and its poor learning conditions". Sobering words.

Following this, the team visited Polina's Queensland School and arranged to meet with the headmaster, a teacher and two students. Similarly to Bethel ECG School, there was an overarching change in posture towards education, which is made evident in the increased performance of students since 2012. The headmaster noted, the improvement in student academic performance is because "teachers have become better at teaching"; the

teacher training offered by PAHO has been "very valuable". The two students agreed with the headmaster's observations, suggesting that the teachers were "very good" and that they felt that they were receiving a "perfect" education – some parents even come to the school to congratulate the headmaster on their child's success. However, similarly to Bethel ECG, it is clear that there are some huge problems that hinder the furtherance of student education. The school is now facing severe overcrowding problems and as a result many children feel as though the classrooms are to "stuffy" and "hot", especially throughout Ghana's dry season. More than this, as a result of low student fees and a lack of government funding, the school is unable to purchase new furniture, textbooks, stationary and ICT equipment; the school is still financially unable to purchase a block of land adjacent to the property. Thus, development is slow and many students suffer as a result of the conditions under which they are expected to work and study.

Since 2012, when PAHO began working within Old Fadama, there have arguably been some positive advancements, specifically in regards to the quality of education offered to students. The students and teachers are dedicated to, and passionate about education, which has resulted in improved student grades and an increased awareness of Human Rights issues. They are also zealous about spreading the necessity of education throughout Old Fadama. Nevertheless, based on PAHO's observations this month, it is clear that poverty tends to be a huge problem for schools situated in Old Fadama. Thus, PAHO and the wider international community is encouraged to support these schools through Project Abroad's Book Drive. In addition, it is suggested that the teachers will hugely benefit from further teacher training.

Educating the youth of Old Fadama is hugely important. The students are determined to succeed. They are "empowered to empower others". So, in the coming months PAHO will continue to support these schools, offering continued help where appropriate.

¹Republic of Ghana Constitution Act 1992 Article 25, Clause 1

² People's Dialogue on Human Settlements, "Enumeration Report for Old Fadama Community", Accra (2010): 18

Gender Equality Outreach: Abokobi

Empowering women to take control

In 2009, PAHO volunteers conducted outreach sessions to a womens' action group in Abokobi, where a number of topics were explored, such as domestic violence, sexual health, and access to education. In response to monitoring work in the area, PAHO began working with a partner, a local NGO for empowerment of local rural women to continue the work begun here. The two organisations agreed that the focus of these discussions should be gender equality and women empowerment, and has continued to run with several different groups throughout May – September.



Volunteers with members of the Abokobi, for the first time introducing men into the group to discuss gender equality.

The volunteers visited Abokobi every Wednesday in September for a period of 4 weeks. About 10-20 women and men aged between 18 and 45 attended the training. Presentations aimed to take advantage of having both men and women attending these sessions by tackling gender equality from a communication and teamwork perspective. The first session was designed to focus on gender equality in the family and community context. Family planning and sexual health formed the basis of the second lesson, while the third encompassed education about how to start your own business. In the fourth and final session volunteers presented on the topic of educational inequality, concentrating on how attendees could educate their own children at home.

The first session tried to emphasise a key principle: that gender equality means teamwork and respect. However, an issue raised frequently by the women was problems of communication with their husbands. In Ghana it is often seen that women feel ignored or dominated by the “head of the household”. The mix of genders in this presentation allowed for spirited debate over the differences between men and women’s perspectives and resulted in the audience answering each other’s questions directly. To make it more lively the volunteers started an interactive part to show the gender stereotypes. It was clearly successful in demonstrating stereotyping, with descriptions involving caring for children or cooking being automatically associated with women. The most successful aspect of this session was that men and women

were able to share ideas and put themselves in the others shoes, learning from each other and trying to find an equal solution under the head topic of gender equality.

Session two was aimed at informing and educating local Ghanaians about family planning as well as general sexual health in a setting that promotes gender equality.

In Ghanaian culture, the female tends to make the big decisions in regards to family planning, often without the knowledge or consent of the male. It was therefore a key aim of the session for the group to recognise the need for both genders to be involved in the planning process as each parent has important, yet diverse roles to play in child rearing. Following the sub-topic on family planning, the volunteers educated the group on reproductive health; specifically contraception and STDs. With the help of diagrams picturing both male and female anatomy the volunteers tried to explain the human reproductive organs to show what happens in the body when someone contracts an STD. A lot of questions from the women made the conversation very ‘female oriented’ but also showed that it was a theme which resonated well and was of interest to the audience. Much of the information provided appeared to be quite new to the group, and as a result both male and female members indicated a desire to be much more cautious, taking a more active role in preserving their sexual health.

The third session focused on how to start up and build a business. In 2003 the unemployment rate was about 30 % in Ghana. As a result people are often encouraged to start their own business, but are rarely given direction or guidance on how to do this. This session specifically related to empowerment as it provides financial independence and also an opportunity to have a fulfilled career and was specifically requested by the group as a topic they’d most like to learn about. During the session the volunteers showed the benefits of running your business and began with a short overview about the first steps. The biggest hurdle in Ghana is to get the financing.

Volunteers therefore introduced an interactive session based on the idea of ‘Dragons Den’, where the groups were asked to develop a business model, with a particular focus on making it low budget. They were then asked to present this to the panel of volunteers to assess their business ideas. The result of this session was incredibly encouraging. The groups were able to find realistic business proposals that worked on a low budget and could present these ideas in a straightforward and coherent way.

The fourth session was aimed to address the issue of educational inequality in both formal and informal education. Volunteers aimed to prompt discussion and change attitudes, encouraging parents to take responsibility for their own part of a child’s education. While assessing that

there are obviously various inequalities that exist in the formal education setting based on wealth, schools, location/ community and gender, volunteers felt that it was more important to focus on what the parents themselves could do to address this in an informal setting

Emphasis was placed on both parents taking an active role in the education of their children at home as best as they could. This means not solely placing a reliance on the schools, but begin teaching as early as possible, taking an active interest in school work and homework and passing on their own knowledge through regular discussion.

Volunteers were keen to show that the education of the next generation is an important topic for everybody. To demonstrate this volunteers tried to give pictured examples of the ways to educate their children at home and make the first step to excel later in their children's schooling career. Volunteers and participants recommended their own ideas and discussed about general points. The biggest problem faced was the lack of the knowledge of the parents, some of whom would not understand or be able to assist with the work set for their own children; as they may not have finished or been able to finish those school years themselves.

The volunteers tried to convince the participants to be open-minded to adult education and ask for help. At least through taking an active role in the child's studies they may also begin to learn for themselves.

After the final session the volunteers met with Miss Felicia, a member of our partner NGO on the project. Felicia confirmed the views of the volunteers, stating that the program had been a success and that the combination of men and women in the group gave participants much better exposure to different or opposing views, making the interactive parts much more enjoyable and insightful for the group. As a result it was suggested that this project continue into next month with a similar format, but with a different segment of the community.

Alsuna Community Outreach

Human Rights in an Islamic Community

In September 2014, the PAHO introduced a new programme running at a girls' school within the Muslim community of Al Sunna. These sessions were designed to educate the students on a range of human rights topics identified as particularly relevant for the girls, considering their age and Islamic culture. The subjects addressed were: gender equality, child marriage, domestic violence and leadership. The main objective of this programme was to empower the students with knowledge of the rights they are entitled to as children and women and how to address violations of these rights.

The expense involved in dealing with The first session began with a brief introduction to the concept of human rights before continuing onto the main topic of gender equality. It was immediately apparent that the students were very intelligent and already had a basic understanding of the topics volunteers intended to cover. This meant that the team could approach subjects from an in-depth perspective, allowing for lively debates and interaction within the group. It was very beneficial to begin the programme by discussing the issue of gender equality, as it encouraged the students to consider how violations of human rights, such as domestic violence, are

often triggered by inequalities between men and women. The solutions to these issues could therefore be approached from the angle of encouraging respect and communication between the sexes.

The students were very quick to grasp the distinction between biological and cultural determination of gender roles, recognising how the latter can be influenced by notions of gender stereotypes or discrimination. Volunteers then addressed some of the more prevalent situations of gender inequality within Ghana, focusing on financial dependence, land rights, and trafficking. It was very encouraging that the students were able to propose solutions to these issues for themselves, particularly focusing on greater female participation within politics, to give women a voice in shaping gender specific policies. Volunteers also stressed the importance of engaging men and boys in pursuit of the goal of gender equality; encouraging the two sexes to focus on each other's needs will result in greater communication, cooperative working relationships, and more shared childcare and household responsibilities.

The session on child marriage appeared to be of particular interest for these students, resulting in this presentation being more student-led through frequent questions and debates. Whilst recognising that the issue of child marriage is more prevalent within the



Students present sketches on domestic violence

north of Ghana, the students were still prepared to engage with this topic and consider its causes and consequences. Volunteers stressed that any person has the right to refuse marriage; however the team also identified some of the main factors that can result in women being pressured or forced into marriage, such as religion, customary traditions or poverty. Many of the students expressed concern and frustration over the powerlessness of children, due to their dependence on families and authority figures. Entitlement to human rights can appear hollow if governments and national policies are not fully committed to the protection and enforcement of these rights. Volunteers responded to these concerns by discussing the role of education and global awareness in breaking the trend of child marriage; how the next generation has a responsibility to build a better future in light of their knowledge of human rights.

Our third presentation was on the subject of domestic violence, and aimed to educate the students on the forms of violence and its common triggers. It was important that volunteers stressed that such violence can never be justified in relationships, linking this to the main theme of gender equality – that women and men should demonstrate respect and calm communication in solving domestic issues and tensions. This proved to be a sensitive subject that provoked a lot of debate and disagreement within the group; however it is felt that volunteers were able to effectively communicate the problems associated with domestic violence, such as low levels of reporting and policing, as well as offering the students advice on protection and vigilance. Despite the difficult subject-matter, the session was nevertheless positive and upbeat, particularly due to the student sketches which were approached with a lot of enthusiasm.

The final session aimed to educate the students on leadership qualities and strong female role-models. The students were eager to discuss the skills and attitude that leaders need to possess and identified strong women within politics and their own community with these qualities. The students were particularly interested in the influential female role-model, Malala Yousifazi; one volunteer who shared this especial interest was able to provide this young woman's history and importance in campaigning for

human rights and gender equality within education. Volunteers were also determined to explain how the students themselves were role-models for their school and community.

This session was also designed to assess the extent to which the girls had learnt and benefitted from the PAHO project, through inviting them to perform their own presentations on topics covered by the volunteers. Despite the added pressure of having visitors to this session, namely the country director for Ghana and the human rights director of Morocco, the students performed admirably. There were lectures and role-plays explaining domestic violence, a sketch demonstrating an election highlighting the key qualities and responsibilities of leaders, and a very moving poem on the subject of child marriage and gender equality. Overall, this session was very successful in demonstrating the extent to which these young women had developed throughout the programme; in knowledge, confidence and self-respect.

Next Steps

This outreach was conducted within a very positive learning environment. It was encouraging to note that there was full attendance throughout all four sessions and all students appeared eager to learn and contribute. The volunteers who contributed to this project highly recommend that these sessions be continued at the school; both the students and volunteers benefitted from the interaction and learnt from each other.

Human Rights in Focus



Human Rights in the News

We cannot make 'peace' with corruption

Date of article: 1-9-2014

Source: Daily Graphic (K. B. Asante)

The big problem about corruption in Ghana is that Ghanaian people do not want to denounce their family or community of corruption. They like to resolve problems "peacefully". Ghanaian people want corruption to be chained without upsetting the offender. There is "peace" in his family while corruption continues to undermine good order and disturb the larger "peace" of society.

Officials should be held responsible for their corruption. In order to fix the problem of corruption we have to be prepared to upset the few who are in the wrong. Only then it is possible to impede social and economic progress. Namely, corruption is all about money. Increasingly, money appears to be the God we worship in most parts of the world. Even in Britain whose standards and practices we accept as norms to follow, there is corruption.

The time has come to let those at the top know that they are not above the law and laid-down procedures. For this to happen, we the people must act when we see wrong being done even if this will disturb the "peace" of the family or community.

The improvement in the economy which is vital for national stability and progress requires action which may be unpleasant to some. Corruption and inefficiency must be dealt with even if this disturbs the "peace" for many. Incompetence which undermines the economy and, therefore, the welfare of the people cannot be allowed to continue.

NSS Fraud: Coordinator at Amansie Central District interdicted

Date of article: 29 september 2014

Source: Ghanaian Times

The National Service Scheme (NSS) has interdicted the Amansie Central

District National Service Coordinator, Zakaria Ibrahim, for his alleged involvement in the payment of service allowance to ghost names. They paid about Ghc2million to a non-existent national service. The BNI investigated the alleged diversion. According to the investigations, some of the district coordinators of the National Service Scheme have connived with officials of rural banks to divert the money into private accounts.

A source at the BNI told the Ghanaian Times that the modus operandi was that, the affected Coordinators opened accounts with rural banks in the districts where they lodge the bulk of the moneys from the Bank of Ghana into an account for the payment of allowances to both actual service persons and nonexistent ones. After issuing cheques to the actual service personnel, the remainder of the money, which is uncollected because of the addition of ghost names, is transferred by the bank into a private current account, which is cleared by the Coordinators, the source revealed.

The source alleged that over Ghc2 million was reportedly paid to ghost names at the Jacobu branch of the rural bank while a total of over Ghc4 million has been paid to non-existent service personnel at Obuasi and Bekwai branches of the bank. This all had been going on since 2009, according to the source.

Don't Forsake Orphans

Date of article: 30 September 2014
Source: Daily Guide (Joe Awuah Jnr)

The New Patriotic Party Women's Organiser urges Ghanaians to support orphans due to concern that they are being left to their own devices. Women of this organisation are saying it is more blessed to give than to receive. She therefore entreated the populace, especially those who are well-endowed, to readily offer support to orphans. It can be a donation, but also helping with a cleanup exercise or something like that is very welcome.

It is the responsibility of the society to take care of orphans since they unfortunately do not have parents, the NPP Women organizer said.

She is of the conviction that if orphans will be well supported, they could grow to become influential people in future.

According to her, a lot of women were motivated by the NPP Member of Parliament (MP) for Manhyia South, Dr. Mathew Opoku Prempeh, to support the orphanage.

From the HRJ Coordinator

Measuring Impact

September 2014

Old Fadama remains one of the core projects for PAHO to work on- offering a wider range of services to tackle women and childrens rights as well issues of health and access to justice.

Our impact assessment here served as an important reminder that we need to continually assess and adjust our programme aims to fit the needs of the community. We have continued to help build on the success of FLAP, while expanding our reach to more schools and community groups.

Despite this, the situation in Old Fadama would still be viewed by many as a continuous reminder of peoples lack of access to their basic rights and our work as just a small step down a seemingly endless road.

This is often a frustration faced by many of our volunteers and a reality of human rights work in general. Progress has to be measured step by step. Initiatives like the school book drive, though limited in its application, chip away at that problem. With the schools starting up and the money now coming in, we should soon be able to see an impact from this years contribution to what we very much view as an ongoing project.

It is now the responsibility of staff, volunteers and our partners to beign looking at what more we can offer with our combined efforts and skillsets. Try out new approaches and continue to strive towards objectives with the same level of enthusiasm and tenacity exhibited before. It's only when we lose that drive to keep going and trying to change that we stop making an impact.

Though we continue to raise awareness of the issues in Old Fadama , it's the hope of PAHO to begin monitoring specific human rights situations there and come up with more response and resolution methods for individual cases across all our projects. We hope to see many more volunteers next year with the skills, ideas and passion to contribute to this.

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Human Rights in the News

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