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## Monthly report – April 2012

### ACCRA, GHANA

Over the month of April PAHO postponed its projects to concentrate on a month of challenging Domestic Violence in Ghana.

Domestic Violence remains one of the most prevalent abuses in Ghana today. It is a social issue which PAHO has tried to tackle since its establishment in many forms; through awareness, the taking on and referring of cases and monitoring.

Over the month of April neither legal services nor research projects featured this month. All current volunteers are extremely interested in the topic and so there were no other project allocations.

One exception was made to our complete focus on domestic violence; a week long outreach in Kete Krachi. The purpose of the trip was to support the Campaign against Child Trafficking through awareness and training.

#### ***Domestic Violence***

PAHO decided to enter the community of Tema Newtown to run its domestic violence project. Tema Newtown is a suburb of Accra which has been notoriously crippled by the abuse according to police reports. It is a common practice across the age and societal board. Despite this we aimed to target everyone affected.

To begin our work the team required some more information on Domestic Violence in Ghana. Meetings were held at the end of March with the 'Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice' representative in the area as well as with the local Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Police.

Following these interviews, our volunteers began interacting at a grassroots level and held focal group discussions with men, women and the youth from the community of Tema Newtown. Questions were put before the group in order to get a real understanding of the issue. The answers, opinions and findings were analysed and compiled in one comprehensive report which was later presented to governmental and security stakeholders.

The general opinion of the community members was that domestic violence is an acceptable practice both socially and culturally.

*Comments/ follow up:* Over the month of May it is our intention to change this perception thorough awareness programs with our local partners.

#### ***Campaign against Child Trafficking in Ghana***

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, PAHO's entire volunteer and staff body travelled to Kete Krachi to complete a week of community sensitisation and development programs to support Projects Abroad's Campaign against Child Trafficking. The team was split into groups according to experience and interests to carry out the following projects;

- Community Advocacy: This project aimed to sensitise the greater community of two rural islands surrounding Kete Krachi which are notorious for receiving trafficking victims; Lala and Manoryekpo. A representative of the Anti- Human Trafficking Unit joined us to address the whole community (men, women and children) on each island. Child labour, trafficking and the importance of education were paramount issues discussed with the community.
- CCPC Recruitment: CCPCs or Community Child Protection Committees were set up on both islands. These committees are made up of approximately 6 community representatives from each ethnic group on the islands. The plan is to train these members in partnership with the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit and post them as 'watch-dogs' and advocates in their area. Our campaign human rights volunteers will be following this up over the coming weeks. The CCPCs are instrumental in bringing change to trafficking trends in the communities.
- Assembly Leader Training: 10 members of the local council/ district parliament were gathered to receive training from our team of human rights volunteers and the District Director of the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice. Once again trafficking and labour were the primary focus. The training was very interactive but again it became clear that further education, training and discussions will be essential.
- Intestacy and Property Rights: Widowhood rights in the area of Krachi were particularly shocking to our team. Many women are forced to go through a 'cleansing' following the death of their husbands. This questionable custom requires the widow to search for a man she will never meet again and have sex with him. Until she complies with this, it is believed that neither she nor her husband can be freed. PAHO provided information and knowledge on intestacy, property and widowhood rights, the various types of marriages and the laws surrounding them to a group of 11 widows.
- Prisons Training: Having being granted permission by the Prisons Commander to enter Kete Krachi's District Prison, PAHO delivered a presentation on prisoner's rights to the entire staff of the service (apart from those keeping watch at the time of course). The officers were very enthusiastic about seeing us again soon so as to work together on reformation programs for the inmates.

In between the outreaches the volunteers, eight in total, completed the painting of Village of Life's school.

*Comments/ follow-up:* Based on reports from PAHO's visit, it is clear that much work is left to be done in relation to all of the outreaches that were held. PAHO will travel in the month of May to Krachi once more to continue the work started.

Volunteers were really excited about this project. The issue of trafficking itself is an area of human rights which most volunteers are extremely interested in. As well as this, they really enjoyed the travel and structure of the week program out of Accra. The amount of work covered was huge. I hope to see more week long outreaches in future.