

Monthly report – February 2012

ACCRA, GHANA

SOCIAL JUSTICE		LEGAL SERVICES
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Social Justice

Community Police Unit Training

This is a project in collaboration with the Community Police Unit who recently introduced civil policing to Ghana. PAHO is trying to insure that neighbourhood watch committees, who manage the civil policing, are provided with adequate knowledge about human rights while the Community Police Unit give practical information and training about the roles of the committee members.

Over February there was one training session and two evaluations. The reports continue to be really positive on this project and the relationship with the CPU is wonderful. Volunteers always enjoy working on CPU Training.

Child Trafficking

Over the months of August and September PAHO targeted two communities notorious for trafficking children into the fishing industry. Much awareness and education was provided to parents and teachers in both areas. Following these outreaches PAHO identified the need to rehabilitate children who had already been rescued (no rehabilitation is provided for victims on rescue by the State). PAHO engaged local volunteers and with the help of a clinical psychologist and teaching volunteers, created weekly schedules and lesson plans which were followed with a group of approximately 40 students from the two communities. In December the children in the program were assessed.

Over February PAHO volunteers revisited the communities of Old Ningo and Anwhiem to meet children and launch 'Phase 2' of the project. Phase 2 involves the selection of a group of children in need of extra support as identified from December's assessments. Surprise house visits were carried out in the middle of February; these certainly gave volunteers a better understanding as to the background of the children. The selection itself will take place in the month of March.

HR Clubs

For the past year PAHO has been facilitating weekly clubs in three of Accra's High Schools. The program focuses on providing human rights education over a five week period to young adults. At the end of the term, students are engaged in a human rights debate to test their new-found knowledge and understanding of human rights. Sadly, during the month of February one of our school's headmistresses decided the Club was not a positive influence on her students. Her perspective of human rights was made quite clear. It is sad to be reminded of such opinions which are clearly still evident in Ghanaian society.

Over February the two remaining clubs dealt with the right to water, water safety and pollution. On the 2nd of March both schools met to debate a scenario provided by PAHO volunteers. The program was a great success; all students were presented with certificates of recognition and both schools received plaques from PAHO to mark their involvement.

Shelter Work

Over the months of January and February volunteers engaged with the children and staff of Osu Children's Home. The purpose of these visits was to identify issues within the orphanage and come up with a training program for the staff. The training will come off during March and will focus on child protection, child ailments, healthy routines etc. For this training to be effective we will need to collaborate with a group of medical advisors or volunteers.

This is a project of particular interest to social working volunteers.

HR Focal

This month PAHO volunteers provided Human Rights Focal Person Training to teachers in the Mamprobi area of Accra. The training focused on issues of child protection; specifically child labour, child maintenance, child trafficking and punishment. Teachers are well placed to influence and identify issues child protection. It is important they are provided with the necessary informative tools to protect and promote the rights of children in their care. Following a presentation which forms the basis of our programme, a scenario is put to the group. This gives our volunteers the opportunity to relate child protection information to the concerns on the ground.

Legal Services

This month PAHO continued to follow two of its cases. One case concerns the unconstitutional detention of a woman; she has been held at Madina Police station for the past four years. The second concerns a domestic violence issue.

Volunteer involvement in these cases is still minimal. We are currently trying to remedy this short-coming.

One way of doing so is through the establishment of a new legal clinic project. It is the intention of PAHO to enter Accra's biggest slum; Sodom and Gomorra, and identify a particular legal issue affecting the area. Over February volunteers were introduced to and shown around the slum. Chiefs of the slum have been approached and arrangements have been made for discussions to be held with the community in March.

Research

There was no research project running over the month of February. On the 2nd however, PAHO volunteers wrapped up our Mental Health Project by holding a seminar on their research findings. The seminar provided an assessment of not just mental health but the support available for sufferers of an illness. PAHO focused on raising awareness and presenting strong arguments in favour of passing the Mental Health Bill in Ghana.

Other Work

Kumasi Children's Home Training

In the last week of the month volunteer Tessa Marshall and supervisor

Ebenezer travelled to Kumasi to provide focal training to the staff of Kumasi's Children's Home. The program lasted the morning but reports seem to suggest that much work could and should be done there in the near future. The topics discussed concerned the rights of the child and child care.

Slum Visits

Volunteers were really excited about entering Sodom and Gommora.

Court Visits

New volunteers continue to be taken to the high courts within their first few weeks. Sitting in on cases is fascinating to most of them particularly volunteers with legal experience.