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This month South Africa celebrated Freedom day on the 27th which commemorates the day on which the first democratic election was held in South Africa. This is indeed a significant date for us who work in human rights; however, we did not hold any event in the light of the current caseload we are attending to. PAHRO staff and volunteers have had to draw on all their strength reserves to cope with the increase in clients but huge decline in volunteer numbers. Despite the challenge, we have managed to pull through and we are grateful for the volunteer input.

Unfortunately our rise in client numbers was in part due to xenophobic attacks on asylum seekers and refugees resident in Dunoon Township. PAHRO is currently following up with the City of Cape Town's Disaster Relief Department in the hope of securing social assistance for the foreigners whose work containers and homes were destroyed in the attacks.

SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT UPDATES

■ Siyakhathala – Khayalitsha Township

Case 1

We attended to a home visit where we consulted with a client who we found out did not have an identity book. We attended the Department of Home Affairs and assisted her to fill in the relevant forms so that she can lodge a late application. We subsequently followed up on her application and confirmed that it is currently being processed.

Case 2

In this case our client, a female minor is a rape victim. At our consultation we realised that the client had not been assisted to open a criminal case, we will be assisting her with this. We have also referred her to a rape crisis counselling centre so that she may receive counselling and work with a social worker.

Case 3

This client consulted with us at Siyakhathala regarding a child in her care. The child is originally from the Eastern Cape and has been placed in the client's care, however since the child moved to Cape Town, the client has been trying to get her into a school, which has proved to be impossible for the client. We contacted the school where our client wanted to enrol the child and found out that the client needed to submit the child's December 2015 school report, which the client did not have as all the child's documents is still in the Eastern Cape.

The client has made several attempts to contact the child's family in the Eastern Cape in order to obtain the report, with no success.

We decided to contact the school the child previously attended to request a copy of her report to be sent to us. Fortunately the old school was able to assist us and the child has now been able to enrol in Grade 2 at the initial school of application. The client and the child are both very happy and have contacted us again just to express their gratitude.

Case 4

Our client has been looking after her sister's child for the past four years and wants assistance with applying for a foster care grant.

The client's sister was already receiving a child care grant, known as SASSA, however as per the client and her sister's agreement, the client was given the SASSA card in order to care for the child. The client thus also wants assistance with drawing up a legal agreement between her and her sisters regarding the SASSA grant and stating that the client is should be able to apply for the foster grant.

We drafted the necessary agreement, which we have given to our client and advised her that both her and her sister would need to agree to the terms and conditions in the document as well as sign it.

Once the client and her sister has signed it, she will return it back to us, where we will give a copy to each of them and keep the original as a legal binding document in the client's file.

■ Vredelus / Bonnytoun / Lindelani

Study Options

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” - Nelson Mandela

In the past we did a workshop called “education after detention”, where we encouraged the boys and girls to complete their education in order to achieve their dreams and goals.

This particular workshop was very similar to the above mentioned one; however our main focus was to educate the boys and girls on the different study options available to them whilst being incarcerated and after being released.

A lot of the incarcerated youth feel constrained by lack of finances and raised this factor as one of their main reasons for not being in a position to achieve their goals. We gave them information on bursaries and FET colleges where they would be able to get funded education.

“The boys and girls asked questions and made a lot of notes. This workshop once again fueled their passion to complete their education and make their goals and dreams a reality. It was great to see them excited and eager to want the best for themselves.”

Delphine D'Hondt

Scandinavia

This particular workshop is one of our most popular; the youth often ask us to present this workshop.

“The boys and girls were really inquisitive about the workshop. Many of the boys and girls have expressed their desire to travel to our home countries and to one day have the opportunity to present their travel experiences to other individuals who are in similar positions that there are currently in.”

James Stansfield

The workshop entails volunteers giving presentations on their country of origin and or State in which they reside. The volunteers provide information on traditions, popular/staple food, famous landmarks, famous people and other items that may be of interest to the youth. The youth then get an opportunity to ask questions about the countries. The workshop is an opportunity for global cultural exposure. The presentations include videos and photos.

Respect

Respect in general has a lot to do with self-discipline, self-acceptance and self-worth. One simply cannot respect another individual if you do not have self-respect and lack basic mental discipline; disciplining your thoughts to correlate with your actions and believing in the “treating people, how you would like to be treated” notion.

The workshop was more discussion based, as we wanted the boys and girls to be able to communicate with each other, and through this we would see their level of respect for each other, but most importantly for themselves.

We prepared a slide show presentation in which discussed “what is respect”, “provide examples of how respect can be proven”, “what is disrespect”, “how is disrespect shown?”, “why is respect important?”, “the difference between respect and obedience”, “what to do when we feel disrespected” and “the importance of self-respect”.

“They all understood that disciplining your thoughts to be more positive and respectful will affect your actions and relationships and in turn your whole life for the better.”

Paulina Rundel

After the slide show presentation we split into groups and discussed various scenarios and how these scenarios relate to our personal experiences dealing with respect. We also discussed how respect is one of the most important social skills that a person can have and the benefits being respectful has.

■ St Anne's

Power of Me

Many if not all the women at St. Anne's have endured abuse and do not realize that through manipulation and coercion their abusers have chipped away at their self-esteem leaving them to feel vulnerable and powerless. We prepared this particular

workshop in order for the women to be motivated to channel their inner strength, as well as realize that they are the “captains of their own ship”.

“ I feel this workshop was exactly what the women needed to make them realise that they are powerful and are in charge of their own lives. The women loved being able to support a course that was created by a victim of sexual assault and for victims of abuse and sexual assault.”

Delphine D'Hondt

We started off with a power point introducing the topic, ensuring the ladies understood what is meant by “power of me”. We also discussed various influential and famous women who have been in similar situations as the women.

The second part of our workshop entailed watching motivational videos, aimed towards boosting self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as encouraging passion about dreams and goals. After this we did a poetry session that required the ladies to self-reflect.

Many of the women at St.Anne's have been victims of sexual violence. The third part of our workshop was inspired by <http://www.redmylips.org/>. This is an awareness campaign aimed at raising awareness on sexual violence, rape myths and victim blaming. This awareness campaign encouraged women to wear red lipstick in the month of April to show support for this cause. The women and the volunteers put on red lipstick in support of this cause and took pictures, which were e-mailed to the Red My Lips organisation.

Hitting Rock Bottom

“Hitting Rock Bottom” is referred to as a mental state of being wherein you feel as if you cannot sink any lower emotionally, psychologically, or physically.

Many people often hit rock bottom once or more times in their lives, and after numerous conversations with the women at St.Anne's their hitting rock bottom has led to where they currently are. Some of them to this day feel as if being in a women's shelter is still their rock bottom as this is not what they envisioned for themselves growing up.

Today's workshop was to make the women realise that hitting rock bottom is a beautiful start to re-inventing themselves. Hitting rock bottom also gives them the opportunity to re-evaluate and self-reflect about all the decisions that have led to this particular time in their lives, as well as give them the opportunity to make better decision geared towards becoming a better version of themselves and to create the life they envision.

We prepared a slide show presentation with the following headings “life lessons rock bottom can teach you”, “how to build on rock bottom”, “ways to find happiness when you hit rock bottom” and “what to do to make your life rock again”. All these were subheadings and were explained in detail in order to get the women excited and motivated about their goals, dreams and future.

After the slide show presentation we decided to have an open discussion about the topic and our personal experiences about when we have felt we have hit rock bottom. The ladies are very hopeful about their future and the great life lessons they have learned whilst being present at our workshops and being at St.Anne's. As we began to talk more, the women stated that today they have come to realise that their current circumstances is not their final destination and that every experience is a learning opportunity to better themselves. They have also began to recognise their strengths and have through this experience began to build their relationship with their inner self.

“ Today's workshop was powerful and was aimed at changing the women's mind-set about their current situation. Never did we expect that the women would be thus appreciative of us seeing their situation as a great stepping stone to live the life they so deserve.”

Delphine D'Hondt

LEGAL SERVICES

■ Sherwin Daniels

Ryan McMann – Property Matter

Our client and his wife attended our office after appearing in court. The client and his wife received a court summons for eviction from their home; however the hearing has been postponed until the 25th April 2016.

Prior to the court hearing and attending our office the client has visited another law clinic and had been informed that their case lacked merit, however the client disagreed with this finding and came to us for assistance.

The client and his wife, along with their two children had been staying in a property for a few years, having previously being homeless and living in their car. A good samaritan, (now deceased) allowed them to move into one of his properties, without the client and his family having to pay rent. This good Samaritan allowed them to “stay for as long as they want.”

The good samaritan was married at the time when he let our client and his family move into his house; however he later divorced and gave his ex-wife the house our client has been living in as part of the divorce settlement.

The client and his family was then moved into a different property also owned by the good Samaritan, however when he died, his sister became the executor of his estate, which included the property our client lives in.

The client received an summons for eviction last month and therefore had to attend court, the client and his family currently do not have any place to go, but are willing to vacate the premises if given a bit more time to find an alternative.

The client has also been on the waiting list for a government house for over eighteen years. We were not in a position to assist the client on such short notice, therefore we contacted a law firm whom have advised that they would be able to assist the client on a pro bono on basis. In order for the client to be assisted the client needed to complete the application form and attach various documents to the application, such as bank statements, proof of residence and identity document/s.

On our next consultation with the client we received all the necessary documentation and completed the application form and have forwarded it to the law firm. We are currently awaiting feedback from the law firm, advising us on who the attorney assigned to the client's case will be.

■ Miriam MacDonald

Rebecca long – Property Matter

Our client attended the Vrygrond Legal Clinic for assistance with regard to selling his house.

The client and his ex-girlfriend bought the house together and lived together for a few years, however she moved out and married another man. His ex-girlfriend recently passed away and the client was contacted by an attorney informing him that he would need to give his ex-girlfriend's husband half of the money should he sell the house.

After doing research and investigating the matter further we have found that the client would in fact need to pay his ex-girlfriend's husband half of the money for the sale of the house. The client's ex-girlfriend and her husband were married in community of property and since the house was in both our client and his ex-girlfriend's name, the house is thus part of her estate.

The client also already has a buyer for the house and we have spoken to the buyer regarding the property as per the client's request, whom informed us that he will obtain the necessary funds needed in order to purchase the house as soon as possible.

The client is aware of the legal implications should he sell the property and not pay fifty percent of the money to his ex-girlfriend's husband. We have also assisted the client with a pro bono application as the client needs to get a conveyancing attorney to assist him with the sale of the house.

CONCLUSION

The incoming month of May brings with it, an increase in the number of volunteers, we are looking forward to this. With more hands on deck, the more effective and efficient we are in the communities we seek to assist.