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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

It is a crime to beat one's wife.
Say **'NO'** to PHYSICAL ABUSE!



ATTENTION

Report to the
the police (barrow)
And other orgs nearby
drawing with the help
them if any case ab
out (that is found

Drawn by Jacob Sampo. Human Rights
Vacation School: Old Fadama.

Human Rights Vacation School: Old Fadama

Human Rights Clubs for Bethel ECD

With the schools closing in August PAHO sought to continue and build on the work done in previous months at Old Fadama, by running a vacation school at Bethel ECD throughout August. This offered a group of twenty students, between the ages of 12 and 17 years old, the opportunity to learn more about general human rights. There was a particular focus on those issues that primarily affect children, with the intention that the pupils would share what they learnt with their peers in order to disseminate the message throughout their community.

The education situation in Old Fadama is far from ideal. As of last year, it was estimated that 65 per cent of children there did not attend school. Furthermore, approximately 49 per cent of the residents there had no basic education at all.¹ The reasons for this are simple: as Old Fadama continues to be officially unrecognised by the Ghanaian government, its residents face the choice of sending their children to one of the three private schools in the slum, or trying to find a public school in the surrounding area which will accept their child. There is of course a third choice, to not send their child to school at all. In reality, to call this a 'choice' seems entirely wrong given that the circumstances often dictate that this is the only course of action. The distinct lack of public schools in the surrounding area mean that it is rare that a child from Old Fadama will be accepted, and the three private school often prove unaffordable to the poorer members of the Old Fadama community, regardless of the fact that they do not have the capacity to educate all the children who live there. It was with this knowledge, that the PAHO team established a vacation school at Bethel ECD, the largest of the slum's private school. The overarching intention of this outreach was to inspire the pupils here to share what they learnt in these sessions to those in the community who may not be

fortunate enough to receive any form of education themselves.

The school curriculum at Bethel ECD is very extensive, including even a weekly lesson in ICT. PAHO felt it important, however, that the pupils received tuition in what their basic human rights were in order to compound the impact the FLAP programme in combating the perseverance of traditional views on topics such as domestic violence. The introductory session served as an overview of general human rights, covering what human rights are, the characteristics of human rights, the categories of human rights, international recognition of human rights and specific Ghanaian provisions to protect the rights of its citizens. It quickly became apparent that these children were very bright and they engaged very well with the issues discussed. As such, we allowed them to dictate the syllabus thereafter by letting them choose the topics for the following classes. In the proceeding lessons we covered Child Rights, Child Labour, Child Marriage, Domestic violence, Sexual Health and Gender Equality. Throughout the programme, the students consistently and repeatedly demonstrated enthusiasm, intelligence and diligence, and seemed to genuinely look forward to and enjoy these sessions.

As already mentioned, there was a particular emphasis placed on the issues specifically concerning child rights, given that the entirety of the class was under the age of 18 and therefore were classified as children. As such, the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (1990) proved a vital source alongside the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Though not legally binding documents, they serve as frameworks for the universal human rights of all humans, as well as recognising that the rights of children should be afforded greater protection on account of the greater vulnerability of Children.² While covering the additional rights that should be given to children at the start of the session covering child labour, the pupils were able to identify that children are entitled to the right to a childhood, the right to be educated, the right to be healthy, the right to be treated fairly, and the right to be heard. Children's rights were most applicable to the sessions on Child Marriage and

'Awake' A Poem by Nkrumah Akua Anita about Child Labour

Anita was a student whose presentation stood out to the Vacation Human Rights School team. She showed great creativity in writing a poem about child labour.

Awake! Awake! Awake!
People of Africa,
Awake from you slumber,
Child labour has eaten all your children.

The eggs that will hatch
healthy chicks have been
crashed.
Africa Awake!

Your children are being sold
into domestic slavery.
Child labour continues to
shatter the dream of your
children.
The sad and sorrowful voices of
your children can be heard on
the street shouting "yees pure
water".

The classroom has become like
a graveyard that scares away
your children.
Your children are like a boxer
whose hand has been tied and
put in the ring.
Do you expect such children to
perform?

Mother Africa Awake!
I say awake!
For your children are suffering.
How long will they continue to
be under the shackles of this
heatless and anonymous
character called child labour.

The earlier you awake from your
slumber and take your children
from the grips of the joy-killer
the better.
For you don't know which hen
will lay the golden eggs.

¹<http://thinkafricapress.com/ghana/old-fadama-slum> [last accessed 23.08.14]

² UN, Article 3, *Convention on the Rights of a Child* (1990)

Child Labour, as the children identified that both these practices greatly encroached on a children's basic human rights, in terms of depriving them of an education, a childhood, and often their own health. The session on child labour was perhaps of most interest to the pupils as it is a phenomenon that is so prevalent to daily life in their community. When asked the last time they saw an instance of child labour the answer was a unanimous: "Today." Therefore, the pupils were not shocked to find out that more than 30 per cent of children in Ghana were engaged in child labour.³ The volunteers explained the legislative aspect of child labour, citing the Ghana Children Act (1998), which states that the minimum age to work is 16 years old. The exceptions to this are that children over the age of 13 years old are allowed to engage in 'light work' and the minimum age for 'hazardous work' is 18 years old. This prompted questions about what 'light' and 'hazardous' work entailed, and with the help of several examples the volunteers were able to successfully explain the difference between each one to the pupils. Similarly the session on Child Marriage focused on children's rights, which are violated in much the same way as through Child Labour. As such, many of the reasons, consequences and solutions were practically the same as the previous session, which served as a helpful reminder of what was learnt during the lesson on Child Labour.

Through the third lesson, students were educated on another topic which was particularly relevant to life as a teenager in Old Fadama. This topic was sexual health. Within the Old Fadama teen pregnancy is a major issue, with many teenagers forced to discontinue their education in order to care for their child. It is this education which is relied upon in order to break the cycle of poverty and hardship. Clearly the negative repercussions of teenage pregnancy for both the parents and the child make prevention imperative. With a serious lack of health clinics within Old Fadama slum, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases is an equally important issue. Volunteers took this opportunity to educate children on how STDs are contracted, the negative health effects and also the practice of safe sex. Within traditional

Ghanaian culture, women are a disenfranchised group. The primary role of women is seen as child bearing a family life. There is a belief that women are meant to rely on men in all aspects of life. These deeply engrained beliefs have caused a clear divide between men and women. In order to help remedy the inequality of men and women within Ghanaian society, the topic of gender equality was covered with the students. The participation of the students in this lesson was incredibly encouraging, with both male and female students wanting to see change.

The volunteers ensured that all the sessions were largely interactive, with plenty of activities to engage the pupils and to show that they understood what was being discussed. The pupils enjoyed being set homework, especially the assignments for the sessions on domestic violence and child marriage that involved making posters in groups. The posters produced were of very high quality and the intention is that they are displayed throughout the school for the viewing of the other pupils who do not attend the vacation school. By the culmination of the vacation school programme, the pupils had a firm understanding of the issues covered in the syllabus. They also grasped their importance as ambassadors of the vacation school to go into the community and spread the message of what they had learnt to those who may not know what rights they are entitled to.

Human Rights Vacation School: Nungua

The final sessions

The Human Rights Vacations School is aimed at Junior High grad students with the purpose of increasing the students' knowledge on different human rights topics both globally and domestically. The outreach took place in two different areas- on a Monday and Tuesday in Abokobi and on a Thursday in Nungua. The outreaches in Abokobi were with the same set of students and covered six sessions, the outreach to Nungua covered four sessions. Both outreaches covered similar topics but also catered to the specific interests of the students which the team identified during the first introductory session.

Education is a fundamental human right; its importance within society cannot be disputed. Through the education of the younger generation, the Human Rights Vacation School project aims to promote human rights, thus initiating change within the community. The program takes place over the vacation period of two separate schools, one in Abokobi and one in Nungua. Students who attend the program elect to take place in this extracurricular activity and are therefore incredibly enthusiastic to learn more about human rights both globally and domestically.



Awards for the participants of Human Rights Vacation School: Old Fadama

³UNICEF *At a Glance: Ghana* (2013) (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana_statistics.html) (last accessed 23.08.14)

Throughout August volunteers conducted 6 sessions at each school. Topics were similar for both groups, however some differences were allowed according to the student's requests. Session 1 for both groups consisted of a basic introduction to human rights. Students were educated on what human rights were, the instruments which protect them and also their application within a Ghanaian context. The students displayed an impressive general knowledge with regards to human rights, as many were able to name the basic rights and provide examples. With this basis, volunteers were able to develop lesson plans which were engaging and challenging for the students.

The second session of vacation school was centred on the rights specifically afforded to children. This was clearly a relevant topic for the students. Volunteers discussed the extra rights which children have, for example the right to a healthy, the right to have a childhood and also the right to be educated. When discussing these rights, the use of example scenarios was particularly useful, giving the students some context. The lesson then covered child labour, a prominent issue within Ghana. The overarching emphasis was on education and how it is affected by child labour.

By educating the students on fundamental human rights, the lessons were then able to progress, covering topics relevant to the students and the issues which they face. Topics covered included child marriage, teen pregnancy, child trafficking/slavery and gender equality.

The gender equality lesson was conducted with the Abokobi students and proved to be quite interesting. Gender inequality is an issue which is deeply rooted within Ghanaian society and this was recognised by the Abokobi students. It became evident that despite patriarchal traditions, the students wanted change. Many of the students among the class were females and as a result they were very interested in the information provided. The girls among the class hoped to one day have successful careers without having to face gender discrimination.

Through the lesson, students were given a background to gender discrimination both within Ghana and around the world. They were encouraged to identify specific



Group presentations of the topic of Child Trafficking

instances of gender discrimination which they had witnessed. Students were realistic about the situation in Ghana, as both males and females recognised that women faced unfair discrimination. Some examples which were mentioned included being denied an education and being looked over for a job opportunity.

The focus of the lesson then shifted to women's groups within Ghana who were pushing for change, such as the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. Solutions to gender inequality were further explored through guidelines set out by UNICEF. It was identified that the most important step to improving gender equality was education, that is, females must be educated to the same standard as males. Another factor identified by UNICEF as a solution to gender equality was engaging boys and men. In order to combat discrimination males must support the push towards equality. Many of the students identified this as an obstacle caused by the traditional culture of male dominance. Students explained that through promoting equality, men would feel as though they are relinquishing some of their power.

The awareness demonstrated by the students created a good context for a debate regarding gender inequality. Students were asked to argue for the affirmative and the negative on the notion 'gender equality benefits society'. Through this topic students were able to demonstrate the

knowledge which they had acquired during the lesson and also incorporate their own opinions. Students became passionate and involved in the debate, as the topic of gender equality was so personal. The results of the debate were impressive, with each team presenting convincing arguments for their position. The debate served to reinforce to the students that gender equality is ultimately beneficial for society. Although there may be factors which inhibit the progress, equality should be prioritised and promoted. It became clear that the onus for change was placed on their generation.

As previously mentioned, students were able to select special interest topics which they would like to cover within Human Rights School. As a result of this, a new lesson plan was developed for the Nungua students on the subject of democracy. Volunteers built on the student's fundamental understanding of democracy, ultimately aiming to give them a more informed understanding of how their government operates. The lesson began with an introductory definition and a discussion on the various types of democracy. Students were educated on the basic features of parliamentary, constitutional and representative democracy.

The lesson then progressed to cover the situation in Ghana, both historically and currently. After the turbulent political atmosphere that accompanied independence, Ghana developed a complex political system which is a combination of representative, parliamentary, presidential and constitutional democracy. A system of checks and balances is intended to accompany this political system, however Ghana still experiences profound corruption. The students were well aware of the evident flaws within the Ghanaian system.

With this context students engaged in a passionate debate regarding the democratic system. Students were asked to discuss the question 'Does democracy work in Ghana?' Through this topic, students identified both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy within the Ghanaian context. Overall, it was agreed that although Ghana contains elements of the democratic process, it is seriously inhibited by the widespread corruption amongst society. As a result, Ghana suffers as a country.

Developing a politically aware generation is an essential element in the push towards change. Through the lesson on democracy students were educated on their political rights and encouraged to actively participate in the democratic process. Ultimately the Human Rights Vacation School sessions were hugely successful in both Nungua and Abokobi. Students were enthusiastic and engaged, and came away with a thorough understanding of their human rights and how they apply to society.

Gender Equality Outreach: Abokobi

Empowering women to take control

In 2009, PAHO volunteers conducted outreach sessions to a women's 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.

Ghanaian society is heavily reliant on tradition which has meant that the transition into the modern world has been slow for women. Women's primary role has always been childbearing and raising the family, while access to education is limited for women as young girls are often held at home for labour. This attitude has stemmed from the belief that women are meant to rely on men and it was at one point believed that education reduced a woman's marriage prospects. This lack of progress has caused the divide between the role of men and women that is seen today. It is therefore important that women are taught to be empowered to overcome these stigmas and fulfil their goals, which was the aim of these sessions.⁴

Presentations were made to a group of women in Abokobi at the community centre, focusing on ways to empower themselves and how they can make decisions regarding their own lives and those of their families. The first session was designed to enable the women to discuss what empowerment meant and why it is important that women are regarded as equals to men in society. Family Planning, Reproductive Health and Child Maintenance formed the basis of the second session while the third encompassed education and starting a business. The final session discussed leadership and goal setting. These topics were chosen as they all give women greater control over their decisions and gave them the ability to make these decisions in a more informed manner.

Katherine, Marie-Catherine, Beth and Rose led the first session of the project; discussing empowerment, discrimination and role models. There were 18 women in attendance between the ages of 20 and 60, who when asked what their expectations were for the course, answered: knowledge, improving their life, improving family life and starting their own businesses. In Ghana gender equality is an issue which hinders women's independence and opportunities within society. By doing this first session on empowerment the women became more aware of their right to be treated equally to men, motivated to become more self-confident and to have the



initiative to change their futures. The volunteers felt that the presentation had worked well as the women were attentive, enthusiastic and had insightful questions to ask at the end of the session which showed that the topics had captured their interest. In particular the use of examples of female role models inspired the group and it was felt that this was more effective than providing them with an excess of statistics.

The second session on Family Planning and Reproductive Health was run by Katherine, Marie-Catherine, Georgina, Rachel and Chloe. By educating the women about contraception they were made more aware of how to control the number of children they have and how long they wait between children. This is a method of empowerment as it allows them to make decisions that currently the male member of the family typically controls. This is often against the will of the female as having children can be detrimental for her health and the wellbeing of her family.

In order to give the women a measure of their progress they were given a booklet to fill in with areas to write their goals, obstacles and achievements which were given back at subsequent sessions to update. The aim of this was to allow the women to work towards goals and gain self-confidence from their accomplishments. Throughout this first session they engaged well with the content but became restless due to the length of the talk; so a short break in the middle was used to recapture their attention. Other than this the session

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http://atheism.about.com/library/world/AJ/bl_GhanaWoman.htm

proved to be well received as the women had many questions and concerns over contraception, due to the fact that their husbands are often uneducated and want large families.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases was a topic that concerned many of the women: when asked about them the women were able to volunteer many different types, the most prevalent being HIV. This was encouraging as it showed that these women were aware of the dangers of these diseases and were keen to learn about prevention and treatment. Again the women were concerned due to the nature of their husbands; as many refuse to be tested endangering themselves, their wives and any unborn children. Child Maintenance was the final topic which the women found useful as they were not necessarily aware of the influence of the court over their family. Concerns were raised over the cost of such action but they were advised about Legal Aid. The group asked the volunteers whether it would be possible to run sessions with both men and women present, in order to tackle gender equality within the family setting. This was very encouraging as the women were being proactive and willing to cause change which was the aim of the programme. In September Projects Abroad plan to begin these sessions which will cover family planning, running the household and managing income, so that together men and women can work as a team within the family.

The third session of the training sought to emphasise the importance of education within all areas of life. The focus was primarily on the education of females, as they are clearly underrepresented within the Ghanaian schooling system. Furthermore, funding was identified as the biggest obstacle facing women furthering their education. Volunteers worked to provide information of the scholarships available and how to access them. Through the third session, women were also educated on the basic steps of starting your own business. This topic specifically related to empowerment as it provides financial independence and also an opportunity to have a fulfilling career. The women were particularly interested in this topic. After outlining the steps of starting your own business, women were split into groups and asked to create their own mock business. The results of this exercise were incredibly encouraging, with both

teams following the steps in detail and developing sound business ideas.

The fourth and final session with the women of Abokobi centred around leadership. Volunteers discussed the importance of leaders within the community, the qualities of these leaders and also how to become a leader yourself. There was an emphasis on women as leaders and a realisation that the different qualities which women possess can often be incredibly beneficial for leadership. Furthermore, the natural role which women play within the family was redefined as a leadership role. The women of Abokobi got a lot out of the August sessions. It is hoped that they use the information provided and apply it to their own lives, therefore becoming empowered.

PRO Placement: Legal Aid

Alternatives to court

Volunteers at the projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) with professional legal experience are given the opportunity to undertake a 'Pro-Placement' at the Legal Aid Scheme in the Greater Accra Region. The purpose of this placement is to give volunteers the opportunity to use their professional skills in an appropriate environment whilst also furthering their knowledge of the operation of their field in Ghana.

The expense involved in dealing with disputes through traditional court procedures can result in many citizens feeling unable to effectively participate in the justice system, thus encouraging the resolution of disputes via undesirable means. The Legal Aid Scheme (LAS), established by the Government in the 1997 Legal Aid Scheme Act, aims to address this issue, by rendering free legal services for those earning minimum wage or below. Services include the provision of legal advice, as well as active resolution of cases via mediatory conferences and legal representation in court. A week-long placement at the Legal Aid office in Accra enabled the following comparisons to be made between these services, as to their relative strengths and effectiveness in resolving disputes and ensuring party satisfaction.

Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism, which endeavors to achieve a mutually satisfactory agreement between the parties to the case. It is generally the initial procedure adopted by the LAS. This is due to the minimal costs incurred by the parties and time efficiency. With mediation sessions only lasting from between 30 minutes to three hours, this allows for around 30 mediations to be conducted weekly. This can be contrasted with the typical delays that occur in court, due to further investigations, adjournments and motions, which can drag cases out for months or even years. Mediation is available for a majority of complaints, including all civil and some minor criminal cases. It can deal with issues concerning marriage, property, tenancy, child maintenance and custody, and debt.

Initially, a legal aid staff member will complete an intake form, taking the parties' details and a brief summary of the issues needing to be resolved. An Invitation Letter is issued to the respondent, inviting them to appear for mediation. If the respondent fails to attend the session, a second invitation letter will be given to the respondent with a police escort. This lends a sense of authority to the mediation proceedings, encouraging greater compliance.

However, mediation does remain an entirely voluntary procedure, which can be its greatest weakness. Unlike the obligatory nature of court appearances where absconding can result in warrants for arrest, the parties to mediation can legitimately refuse to attend. Whilst the legal aid staff can continue in making further contact, this tends to result in the unfavorable situation of complaints pending indeterminately.

The mediation session is conducted by a trained ADR official, whose role is to guide the disputing parties to a satisfactory consensus. The mediator must remain impartial, only offering suggestions and guidance to the parties, never judgments. The mediator will never seek to dominate the conversation, but instead will encourage calm discussions to take place directly between the parties. This allows parties to take ownership of their personal conflicts in a controlled environment, rather than such disputes being controlled and resolved by the state.

Mediation sessions are entirely confidential; in the event of subsequent court proceedings, mediators cannot be called as witnesses to reveal conversations which took place during mediation. An additional layer of confidentiality can occur when a mediator adopts a procedure called 'caucusing'. This is where the mediator will speak privately to one of the participants before inviting the other parties to re-enter the room and discussion. This procedure is significantly different to the rules of giving testimony in court, in full hearing and sight of the respondent, and can prove valuable in cases of abuse or intimidation. However, it can also be subject to the criticism of lacking open justice, raising suspicion in the mind of the party prevented from participating in the conversation.

Overall, the informal process of mediation allows for greater interaction and ease of expression between the parties. Instead of the strictly-controlled process of testifying in court, mediation allows parties to engage in free narrative accounts with little to no procedures or formality. This can be contrasted with the daunting atmosphere of the courtroom, which can be further exacerbated through the procedures always being conducted in English. Mediation can be conducted in local languages allowing for greater confidence and freedom of expression. The mediator will undergo intensive training in order to be competent in their role, but a legal background is not a prerequisite of being an ADR official. Mediation gives parties the freedom to apply common sense and business logic to proceedings, rather than being restrained by solely using black letter law and precedent.

If a mediation session reaches a satisfactory consensus for both parties, an Agreement Document is prepared and signed, detailing the key facts and agreements arising from the mediation. Such decisions can include: payment of child maintenance, modifications to tenancy agreements, acquisition or transfer of land etc. This Agreement is binding upon the parties and enforceable within a court of law. In situations of breach, the parties can be invited for further mediation sessions or the court may take action by imposing fines and other sanctions. These enforcement mechanisms ensure a level of security to any agreed arrangements, similar to the binding nature of court judgments.

Furthermore, a legal aid staff member stated that enforcement is not a problematic issue for mediation, with only an average 10% of mediation cases returning to the Legal Aid office due to breach of the agreement.

However, a major weakness of the LAS, identified by the former Minister of Justice Mr. Martin Amidu, is general lack of awareness of the availability of legal aid or mediation as a less daunting alternative to court. There is little effort made to promote the scheme; the courts have no notices about legal aid and notification of this service is not mandatory even if a party appears in court without legal representation. This ignorance is the key issue which prevents LAS from achieving its full potential, failing to act in cases which could otherwise be readily resolved.

In conclusions, observations of mediation sessions demonstrate that it is a viable and valuable alternative to the traditional settlement of cases within court. As well as its obvious administrative advantages in terms of money and efficiency, mediation can result in greater party satisfaction, through ease of expression and interaction. However, whilst the LAS is now a formalized institution available nationwide, its potential effectiveness cannot be fully explored without greater community awareness of its existence and advantages.

Research



Anthropology Project

PAHO gains its first anthropology volunteers and begins research

Volunteers who are skilled in history, law or anthropology are attached to Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (Ghana) to assist in the development of research and production of literature. It aims to produce vital resources for PAHO by enhancing our knowledge about the context, culture and history of the areas that we work in. Through this increased knowledge we'd hope to be able to modify the way in which we address human rights concerns with differing communities to provide the most effective results for them. Where research is conducted, the results will be published here in the Human Rights Journal.

Patriarchy and violence against women.

Research by Giulia Salvetti

History and Anthropology Course, Faculty of Literature and Philosophy. Sapienze, University of Rome

The aim of this anthropology project is to find out issues of patriarchy that support violence against women in Ghana and attempt to answer this broad question: Can we say that male dominance in society determines violence?

We went to four different communities, asking questions to women about varying topics.

The first part of the questionnaire was about their knowledge and their idea of

- Domestic violence
- Pride and dignity
- Honour

In the second part of the questionnaire we asked questions related to the women's personal experiences and their views on these issues:

- Religion
- Education
- Governance and institutions
- Health
- Society

The purpose of subjecting them to this questionnaire was to try to understand the women's perspective and let their voices be heard, in a society that's male dominated.

The following statements on these issues relay the opinions and discussions had with several groups of women, and are a demonstration of

those findings only. It is not intended to be fully representative of the wider issues in their full context.

"Domestic violence" is almost always associated with physical abuse and sexual abuse, which cause psychological and emotional effects. The women revealed a wide range of reasons that they believed men would beat their wives. They mentioned that men, considering themselves the head of the family, take all of the decisions, and if the woman refuses, they feel within their rights to beat her. They further commented that men often don't respect their duties, but insist on exercising their 'rights': staying out all day and only returning home to eat and sleep with their wives (considering sex as the man's rights that a woman can't refuse).

Domestic violence has many consequences within the family, both on women and their children. As a result women often suffer from depression and even, in some cases, alcoholism. Equally, children's behaviour and mentality can be dangerously affected as a result of witnessing or even falling victim to the violence. Other frequent consequences are divorces and homelessness.

All of the women spoke to stated that they know that the right way to react to these issues is complaining to the police, but that often when they go to report these abuses, the police do very little to help them, and they will often leave the station with the problem completely unresolved. One reason given for this, is that in the first place the policemen are, in their largest majority, men: the fact of being a man is seen as more important than being a policeman and respecter of the law. Moreover, sometimes women don't complain to the police because they are afraid of how the community would react: culture wants to keep these issues as a family affair. Another obstacle is that if the woman goes to complain about an abuse to the police, she would be forced to leave the house,

and then she would need to find another husband, but the issue of polyandry is not commonly accepted by the society. The consequence is that women don't feel protected by the institutions.

When it comes to work and to the upkeep of the family, women do everything, preparing food and taking care of the children. Men ought to provide money, but sometimes they refuse to give it to their family: in that case, women can't even ask for it. Despite that, women don't have enough power to exercise their influence neither in society nor family, and when it does happen, there are many conflicts, not only with men, but even with other women.

When it comes to their concept of "pride", "dignity" and "honour", it's easy to notice how it is completely different from that of the men. Women identify their pride and dignity with:

- Work
- Children
- Education
- Managing finances

"Honour" is mostly found in respect, but even in their character and attitude. Instead, men are more likely to consider these values in a material way.

It has been interesting to find out how religion influences male domination in society. Christianity and Islam, both in ideology and in practices, subordinate women. As an example, in the Bible there are mostly male names or the fact that women are not allowed to enter the mosque. This leads men to use religion as a support of their dominance in society.

Asking their views on women's rights, it has emerged that through the human rights advocacy, women are becoming more aware of their rights. In order to do that, one of the main issues is to improve education. Most of the women we interviewed, had a basic education,

but they all agree on the importance of education. If a woman is well educated, her life changes completely: awareness through education can give them the possibility to exercise their rights.

However, while education is considered the key for changing women's condition in society, it is also limited by the constraints of society in which it exists, which is traditionally built around the perceptions of inequality of the sexes. Families are noted for giving priority to the education of their sons, and tend to consider their daughter's education less important, as when they'll be married in the future they will tend to assume the childcaring and domestic roles. So, in instances where the family has little resources for education, preference would be given to male over the female: in fact, most of the women finance their studies working by themselves; there are only a few families that support their daughters' education.

Related to education, there's another important issue. It often happens that women are forced to sell sexual favours in order to pass exams or get the degree: the risk is that all of their studies become useless.

As a consequence of these practices, there's a big difference between the education of men and women, and this determines male domination in society.

The inequality between the sexes is perceived most in these ambits:

- Education
- Work
- Customs and practices
- Governance

Aside from the culture that supports this patriarchal structure of society, further causes of inequality between the sexes must be explored. In particular, lack of education and poverty. It often happens that as women couldn't get an appropriate education, they are not able to work, and have to rely economically on their husband: this attitude limits their freedom. Another important issue is poverty. Poverty is a consequence of male economical domination in society and has many effects, such as selling sexual favours.

The majority of women do not feel included and represented in the governance of their country, as their

voices are neither heard nor consulted. It often happens that politicians, during their campaigns, make promises in order to get their votes, but then they fulfil none of them. Talking about this issue, a few of them suggested some ways to remedy the situation i.e.:

- Refuse to vote for these politicians
- Create leaderships between women that support women's empowerment in politics. (But in order to do this, they must struggle against the mentality of their society that influences both men and women.)
- Provide better education on the issue to their children
- Improve the self confidence of women

All of these issues have many consequences on society. First of all, division of labour: women that can't use their education don't feel to be an active part of society because they don't have any decisional power. Indeed, the patriarchal structure of society represses women's talents and ideas. It's interesting how sometimes this male dominance in society is considered as naturally ordered as <men have always been the head>, and <God created first the Man and then the Woman>. On the other hand, some of them considered patriarchy as not determined by nature, but as a decision that men take when they are born.

Male domination in society has led to practices such as:

- Female genital mutilation
- Witch camps
- Child marriage
- Adultery

The people that we interviewed claimed that these practices were limited to the communities in the north. However, they were reluctant to offer opinions on these matters other than that these practices were immoral.

In relation to child marriage, two factors seemed to be the principal causes: poverty and teenage pregnancy.

In cases of extreme poverty, the man is able to use economic pressure to buy a wife regardless of the age, often with the consent of her family due to the economic benefits of being related to a rich man.

In other cases, underage girls may become pregnant, and societal and economic pressures lead to marriage.

The patriarchal nature of this society means that male infidelity remains widely acceptable. This has many consequences on family structure, as the resulting break down of families, and often divorces, lead to neglect of the children's needs.

Women don't have any authority in their families, so they are not allowed to take any decision. Although, sometimes the economic status as income generating women brings equality in decisions: when it does happen, society doesn't understand nor share it.

The right to health is quite well respected for women, but some of them claimed that there are few female doctors with specialization on issues affecting the health of women. Related to this specific topic, we asked questions about the phenomenon of death during pregnancy and childbirth. Even these issues are more frequent in the northern regions, although it might happen in cases of extreme poverty, where women don't go to the hospital on time. Otherwise, the right to health is completely respected for those women who have money or know the right people that can help them.

None of them are happy with their condition, apart from the ones who have had a better education: they know their rights and can consequently insist on them. They would do everything to change their conditions, if given the opportunity.

At the end of the interview, we asked to the women what they thought should be done to change improve their condition. Their answers can be summarized thus:

- Provide a better education to children, in order to make them more sensitive to these issues
- Increase women's self confidence
- Organize leadership programs for women to encourage them to take up leadership roles in society

This is a product of my own anthropological data collected as an intent volunteer on the anthropology project with Projects Abroad.

The use of Traditional Medicine

By Lucy Parrish

The research into the understanding of traditional medicine in different regions of Ghana took place in June and July. After developing questionnaires, one for herbalists, and one for the patients of traditional healers, several outreaches were conducted in Dodowa, Old Fadama, Mamfe, Abokobi, and Osu, to hold interviews and group discussions with community members on the subject.

During the data collection phase of this project, Ebenezer and Ernest from the Projects Abroad Human Rights Office helped to translate the participants answers from their local languages into English. With their help, the language barrier was overcome slightly and it was possible to connect with both men and women of various ages, all of whom seek help from traditional healers for different reasons. Similar questions were asked in each outreach to gain as much data as possible in order to compare peoples beliefs and knowledge on traditional and Western medicine in Ghana.

After analysing the data collected from interviews, 'spirituality' and religion were identified as the most common themes involved with traditional medicine in Ghana. The traditional health care in Ghana is holistic; it integrates cultural values, religion, and social beliefs. Each person interviewed spoke about their connection with God in the healing process. This aspect is very different from Western medicine in the United States and the UK where religion is not associated with medicine. This religious finding was not surprising as Christianity is a large part of Ghanaian culture and is the most predominant religion.

Herbalists treat a large spectrum of diseases for example, malaria, typhoid, and HIV/AIDS. Unlike in the United States and the UK where you need formal training and a university degree to become a doctor, traditional medical knowledge in Ghana is passed down through oral tradition from their

forefathers. Therefore, this knowledge is not recorded on paper but passed on from one person to the next, making it hard to legitimise into an education system.

Medicine in the United States is viewed as a science and is not based on religious beliefs. In Ghana, the herbalists and traditional birth attendants interviewed explained that they connect with God in order to heal, or ensure a safe delivery for the mothers and babies. The general belief I came across is that God is the person who does the healing and the healers are there to help this process.

Another important factor in the treatment is connecting with ancestors through the spirits. In Ghanaian culture, there are two worlds: the physical world and natural or spiritual world. This is unlike the United States or UK as the natural world is not integrated into medicine practices. Therefore traditional medicine is more complex as it combines both worlds; many different cultural and spiritual aspects are taken into account in addition to the symptoms or disease that is present.

In the book, "African Religions and Philosophy" John S Mbiti describes the spiritual realm as, "The spirits in general belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man." (74) This is a very close relationship, as diagnosis is reached through a spiritual means. Therefore, the healing process by herbalists is not only a medical act but also a religious one. Many illnesses are perceived to come from evil spirits and therefore combining God and medicinal plants are used to destroy this and heal a person. This spirituality makes the treatment more complex than western medicine as it treats the body, mind, and soul- not just the disease. Instead of attempting to destroy the disease, the focus is on what can be learnt from the disease and the body.

Modern medicine still remains inaccessible to a large population of Ghanaians especially in rural areas. After interviewing several herbalists and traditional birth attendants in villages surrounding Mamfe in the eastern region of Ghana it was discovered that, for most people, the local clinic and hospital are too far away or too expensive to get to.

However, nurses do visit the surrounding villages every month to supply people with vaccinations, medicine, and check ups for newborn babies. Hospital fees are a lot more expensive than visiting a local herbalist as the majority will still treat patients even if they cannot afford to pay money. Instead, a gift or offering will be given and a form of payment will be rendered when possible. However, in a hospital in Ghana one has to pay before you leave and medicine at pharmacies are also more costly. Therefore traditional medicine is the most accessible form of medicine for impoverished regions of Ghana.

One of the main factors that was recognised is the growing gap between Western and traditional medicine. One problem is that in parts of the United States and UK herbal medicine is not recognised as legitimate and many people do not believe it to be safe, as it is not formally regulated. After several interviews it was discovered that a similar perspective exists for some Ghanaians towards Western medicine- for example, strong pills are sometimes considered unsafe as it is putting something unnatural into your body. There is growing interest in the United States and UK to learn more about traditional medicine as Africa depends on it. There is still a lot of work to be done to close this gap and spread awareness of plant medicine in the West.

Neither traditional nor Western medicine is better than one another, however it depends on ones belief systems and access to treatment. In some parts of Ghana, herbalists play a crucial role in the population's health, as there are many more traditional healers than university trained doctors. Meanwhile, in Accra there are thousands of doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies to support the population.

Discussions and interviews will continue to be held with traditional herbalists to research and learn more about traditional African medicine. This knowledge allows me to draw cross-cultural comparisons with medical practices in my two homes, the UK and the United States in the field of medical anthropology.

Human Rights in Focus



Corruption and Accountability

By Benjamin Gerhardt

A look at the Police Force of Ghana

Police corruption is a very common theme within current Ghanaian society. When speaking to locals about corruption in the government, most if not all, respond with an answer relating to the institution of police. In fact, two volunteers had been traveling for research purposes in Kumasi, and they were stopped at a police checkpoint. These checkpoints are very common all throughout Ghana from the rural areas up north near Tamale, to the Ashanti region near Kumasi, and down into the capital of Accra. The woman police officer stopped the volunteer's taxi, talked for a few moments with the driver, and then told him to pull over. The taxi driver then reached into his pocket to pull out some Cedis to give to the officer as she approached the car. The taxi was free to go once the bribe had been paid. This sort of blatant corruption is very common in Ghana. However, it is not only a problem in developing countries, such as Ghana, but an international problem throughout all spectrums of nations.

According to the special report by the United States Institute of Peace on police corruption, "Whenever the international community has tried to build a secure, viable society after a conflict, it has faced the need to reform the institution most responsible for law enforcement—the local police force—to reduce its predatory and often pervasive corruption."⁵ Ghana gained independence in 1957 from colonial Britain, and since then has endured tremendous instability with many military coups (successful ones in 1966, 1969, 1972, 1981) despite being one of West Africa's most promising nations. In Ghana if the common citizen wanted to report a crime or offense, they would have to pay the police for action to be taken.

As a result, many crimes go unreported because poverty is a very real phenomena that plagues the region

with 11 % of people unemployed and almost 29% of people below the poverty line, according to the CIA world fact book.⁶ The public service that this institution is supposed to provide has been warped through corruption. It could be argued that if the police are corrupted, then citizens with complaints might find alternatives to justice. The police themselves may be seen as an enemy in one sense as they are willing to help only if they are bribed and compensated. As stated earlier, they stop citizens on the road with the police checkpoints or barriers forcing the bribe onto the average citizen. Their blatant misuse of power can be seen regularly in Ghana. If Ghanaians do not have money to bribe the police, then there are many unresolved issues, but also some are detained suspending due process until compensation or bribe can be made.

According to a report by the US State department in 2012, the Ghanaian Police Intelligent and Professional Standards Unit looked at 654 new cases involving corruption or misuse of power. Of the cases examined, the breakdown was as follows: 40 involved complaints of harassment, 24 of extortion, 113 of misconduct, 35 of unlawful arrest and detention, 133 of unprofessional handling of a case, 129 of unfair treatment, 87 of undue delay of investigation, and 49 of alleged police brutality with human rights violations.⁷ These numbers are staggering as they show the very real nature of police corruption. The use of power was not used to protect the citizens but in reality, it was used to harm the citizens to benefit either the individuals of the police force themselves or the police force as a collective. The police are not above the law and must enforce the law as duty of their public service. The nature of capitalism rears its head in this issue because greed and self-interest take over. The police use their position of power to exploit citizens by depriving them of their rights and freedoms mostly for economic gain.

A survey was taken in Ghana to see what the average citizen thought about corruption, specifically which institution provided the most corruption. About 90% of households

in Ghana said that almost all of police men and women were involved in some sort of corruption. 50% of households said that the police were in fact the most corrupt government institution.⁸ But, the problem lies in how to address the corruption. The survey indicated other areas of government institutional corruption which indicates the issue of how to go about fixing the corruption and misuse of power. If other government institutions such as the executive, judiciary, or legislature are corrupt as well, then how would change be enacted to combat police corruption?

In a special report the United States Institute of Peace outlined strategies to fight police corruption worldwide. They outlined which phenomena would be crucial to making a change to corruption in the police force. The features identified were: prioritize, insist on leadership from the top, think tactically, require discipline, cultivate the public, and create independent non-political oversight.⁹ By prioritizing it is meant that specific issues which have a constant effect on the daily lives of the citizens should be focused on. An example of this is police checkpoints.

By insisting on leadership at the top, other government institutions must recognize that there is corruption within the police force, although as mentioned, these institutions have also been deemed corrupt. Therefore this strategy may be moot in the sense that all government institutions are indeed corrupt. Thinking tactically and requiring discipline involves getting non-political organizations to think of creative ways to publicize the problem, but also realizing that there will be impediments to change which requires discipline.

Cultivating the public refers to getting the average citizen involved in the movement to fight police corruption. Without mobilizing citizens of a proposed democracy, such as Ghana is through their 1992 constitution, change will not happen because public opinion puts pressure on government to take action. Lastly, creating an independent non-political overseeing

⁵<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR%20294.pdf>

⁶<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gh.html>

⁷<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2012humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2012&dliid=204126#wrapper>

⁸<http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/ghana/corruption-levels/police.aspx>

⁹<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR%20294.pdf>

institution would allow for constant checks on the progress of the combating the issue. Ghana is not alone in fighting police corruption, but it is much more apparent in developing countries with acts being very transparent. Corruption in the police force makes it difficult for the average Ghanaian to live his or her life, and this institution must be held accountable for its actions.

Effects and Solutions to Child Labour

By Konjah Bidalla Michael (Student of Old Fadama)

In order to demonstrate the knowledge and progress of the students of the Old Fadama Human Rights Vacation School, students were asked to prepare a presentation on one of the topics covered throughout the six sessions. Students were free to choose their method of presentation.

Michael's speech was a standout among the presentations. Through a confident and well researched presentation, Michael was able to clearly communicate the effects and solutions to child labour.

It was stated in the Ghana Act 1998 that the minimum age to work is 16, with children aged 13 allowed to engage in light work and 18 for hazardous work. Sadly, this does not appear to be followed and what are we seeing? Children between the age of 13 and 14 years are now doing hazardous work which is meant for those of 18 years. As such, the rights of children are being abused through child labour. Someone may ask then what is child labour?

Child labour is an act where children under 13 are forced to work and earn money. It is also a work that deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity. Children who are forced to perform such labour face various risks.

After many hours of work, children are tired. This also means they are too tired for school. Their performance in school is worse than other children who do not work. Agbogloshie for instance has a lot of children selling before coming to school. After school, they

continue to sell which leads to low performance in school.

Sometimes, children may not get paid in spite of an arrangement. After many hours of selling, people may not buy their goods and they will not get paid for that day. Children may be absent from school because they have no money to pay for their classes.

Moreover, children may suffer long term developmental damage. For example, hawking can damage your spine due to the heavy weight being carried. Children's bodies are not yet fully developed so this damage can be severe. The matter is so disturbing that necessary actions should be taken to solve this problem.

Parents who force their children into this labour should be punished. This would also deter other parents. There should also be public education so children would learn to know the adverse effects and the need to stop doing hazardous work. Finally, laws which have already been made should be enforced so that parents will know the penalty if they force their children into such a situation.

Amnistie International : Vingt ans de répression et d'impunité au Gambi

By Marie-Catherine Beauregard

À l'occasion de la «Journée de la liberté», fête nationale de la Gambie, la division ghanéenne d'Amnistie International, de concert avec de nombreuses organisations de défense des droits fondamentaux, urge le président Yahya Jammeh de cesser les violations des droits fondamentaux, en particulier les atteintes à la liberté d'expression et la liberté d'opposition politique.

Le 22 juillet dernier, le gouvernement du président Yahya Jammeh a célébré ses 20 ans au pouvoir en Gambie par la

commémoration de la « Journée de la liberté »¹⁰. Cette fête nationale souligne la prise au pouvoir du lieutenant Jammeh à la suite d'un coup d'état qui a renversé Dawad Jawara, à la tête du pays depuis l'indépendance en 1965 et premier président suite à proclamation de la République en 1970¹¹. Jammeh se présentait alors comme un sauveur et promettait de redresser le pays. Néanmoins, le sentiment d'euphorie subséquent à sa nomination a bien vite laissé sa place au doute et à l'inquiétude dans le cœur des Gambiens.

Un régime oppressif

Depuis l'avenue du président Jammeh au pouvoir, la population gambienne est soumise à un régime de terreur et de répression. Depuis le début de son règne, le gouvernement gambien ne cesse de réprimer la liberté politique et de violer de nombreux droits humains et ce, en toute impunité. La liberté d'expression des Gambiens et plus particulièrement celle des journalistes, des opposants politiques et des militants des droits humains n'est qu'illusion. Effectivement, nombreux subissent intimidation et harcèlement des autorités et vivent dans la peur d'être arrêtés arbitrairement, détenus illégalement, torturés, portés disparus ou tués. Ce climat alarmant incite la plupart à se conformer docilement au régime en place en se réduisant au silence et en pratiquant la censure.

Les exemples les plus prenants de violations des droits de l'homme sont les disparitions forcées, les exécutions extrajudiciaires et l'affectation de mauvais traitements. Ces activités sont pratiquées couramment par les autorités gambiennes et ce, sans qu'aucune investigation ou enquête ne soient faite et sans que les commettants ne subissent de procès ni de contrôle. Parmi les événements importants, on

¹⁰ SCHNEIDER, Frédéric. «Yahya Jammeh, maître incontesté de la Gambie depuis 20 ans», *Afrik*, 22 juillet 2014, [En ligne], <http://www.afrik.com/yahya-jammeh-maitre-incontesté-de-la-gambie-depuis-20-ans> (page consulté le 15 août 2014).

¹¹ PERSPECTIVE MONDE. «18 février 1965 – Proclamation de l'indépendance de la Gambie», *Université de Sherbrooke*, [En ligne], <http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMEve?codeEve=302> (page consulté le 15 août 2014).

peut penser au meurtre du journaliste Deyda Hyndara en 2004, à la disparition du journaliste Ebremma Manneh en 2006¹² et au cas du journaliste Musa Saidykhan qui a été arrêté arbitrairement en 2006 et par la suite, torturé.

D'autre part, depuis le début du règne de ce gouvernement, le système de justice a été et continu d'être considérablement affaibli en raison d'une récurrente ingérence gouvernementale et de la création de lois répressives ayant pour but mettre sous silence les opposants politiques et autres militants¹³. Diverses lois ont aussi été créées pour immuniser les auteurs des horribles interventions faites auprès de la population gambienne, notamment la Loi relative à l'information et à la communication, la Loi relative à l'amnistie et la Loi portant modification au Code pénal. Ces pratiques douteuses vont de corps avec l'immunité quasi-totale de l'autorité gambienne. Le système politique, quant à lui, est caractérisé par une démocratie fantôme : très faible de taux de participation, menace aux électeurs, menace aux opposants politiques, falsification des résultats, etc. D'ailleurs, l'indice de démocratie n'est qu'un faible 3.3 dans le pays, ce qui qualifie le régime politique gambien d'autoritaire¹⁴.

Sensibilisation à l'échelle internationale

À l'occasion de ce triste anniversaire, Amnesty International Ghana, avec l'appui et de concert avec plusieurs autres organisations de défense des droits humains, a tenu une conférence de presse à Accra. Des volontaires de Projects Abroad ont eu la chance d'assister à cet événement

d'envergure en date du vendredi 1^{er} août dernier. Le but de cette présentation était d'alerter la Commission Africaine des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples (CADHP), la Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO), les gouvernements africains, l'opinion public et la communauté internationale au sujet de la détérioration de la situation des droits humains en Gambie depuis les vingt dernières années¹⁵. Un climat de compassion pour les « frères » et « sœurs » de la Gambie régnait tout au long de la conférence.

Les principales inquiétudes qui sont ressorties des propos tenus lors de la conférence de presse sont les suivantes : l'exécution de suspect, la disparition de victime (de journaliste particulièrement), le haut niveau d'impunité, l'absence de liberté d'expression et le transfert d'information limité (censure, restrictions, etc.). On a également souligné la complexité du problème relativement au caractère interne du conflit et de l'impossibilité pour tout gouvernement ou organisation d'intervenir concrètement sans l'accord du gouvernement gambien pour des raisons diplomatiques et pour le respect de l'indépendance et du pouvoir de chaque pays. En réponse à cette problématique, les conférenciers ont grandement insisté sur l'importance d'informer et de sensibiliser la population internationale et les instances gouvernementales à la cause. Il est essentiel de reconnaître l'existence des violations de droits humains en Gambie et de mettre pression sur le gouvernement pour y mettre fin.

Amnistie International Ghana demande au gouvernement du Président Jammeh d'abroger les dispositions législatives qui restreignent la liberté d'expression; de protéger les journalistes, les militants et les opposants qui sont victimes d'abus de la part des autorités; d'enquêter sur les violations des droits humains rapportées et poursuivre les auteurs en justice; de libérer tous les

prisonniers détenus sans raison et illégalement; offrir des procès équitables aux journalistes, opposants et militants ainsi que d'enquêter sur les disparitions forcées¹⁶. L'organisation lance également un cri d'alarme à la population internationale pour que pression soit mise sur le gouvernement gambien afin de remédier à la situation précaire du pays.

Les volontaires du Projects Abroad Human Rights Office (PAHO) étaient très heureux d'avoir eu la chance d'assister à cette importante conférence de presse et ont été profondément touchés par le triste constat qui leur a été présenté. Nous feront notre possible pour sensibiliser un maximum d'individu et resterons au courant des développements. De plus, nous appuyons complètement les démarches d'Amnistie International Ghana et les autres organisations qui tentent de faire cesser les violations des droits humains qui ont lieu chaque jour au Gambie depuis plus de vingt ans.

Human Rights in the News

Appeals to save the Gambia

Date: 4th August 2014, Source: GBC Ghana

Amnesty International Ghana appealed to the President as the Chairman of ECOWAS to urge President Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia to respect and protect human rights of Gambians. President Jammeh has "cracked down on political freedom, and commits widespread human rights violations with total impunity". Human rights advocates and political opposition live in fear of arrest or even death. This information comes from the Amnesty International research report "Twenty Years of Fear in Gambia – Time for Justice". Many citizens have been convicted of treason and been executed as a result. In the Gambia there is a ban on freedom of expression and journalists could face a 15 year prison term if they post information thought to

¹² «Présentation de la Gambie», *France diplomatie*, 22 juillet 2013, [En ligne], <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/gambie/presentation-de-la-gambie/> (page consultée le 19 août 2014).

¹³ «Yahyah Jammeh doit mettre fin à 20 années de violations des droits humains impunies», *Reporter sans frontières*, 22 juillet 2014, [En ligne], http://fr.rsf.org/gambie-yahyah-jammeh-doit-mettre-fin-a-20-22-07-2014_46666.html (page consultée le 15 août 2014).

¹⁴PERSPECTIVE MONDE. «Statistiques - Gambie», *Université de Sherbrooke*, [En ligne], <http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMTendanceStatPays?codeTheme=9&codeStat=EIU.DEMO.GLOBAL&codePays=GM&langue=fr> (page consultée le 19 août 2014).

¹⁵ «Gambie: 20 années de répression et de violations impunies des droits humains en Gambie», *Amnistie International*, 22 juillet 2014, [En ligne], <http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/AFR27/009/2014/fr/17ab2b70-c9d8-4a43-992a-8dae7611170d/af270092014fr.html> (page consultée le 15 août 2014).

¹⁶ Id.

be false. The call to pressure the Gambia to comply with international human rights standards has not just been on Ghana but the African and international community as a whole, as after 20 years of abuse compliance with international law is long overdue.

Child Welfare Policy

Article title: 'Ministry develops Child welfare Policy', Date: 12th August 2014, Source: Daily Graphic

The Child and Family Welfare Policy (CWF) was drafted by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and was submitted to the parliament in August 2014. The CFW focuses on three areas family related challenges, child maltreatment and behaviour challenges. It aims to minimise the issues that have negative effects on the welfare of children. It is to be key for the communities to be involved if child abuse and mistreatments is going to be resolved.

Ghana paying dearly for not fighting corruption

Date of Article: 5th August 2014, Source: Ghana Web

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) has criticised the government for how it has handled corruption in Ghana to date. Corruption is now seen in many different areas of life. The Deputy Commissioner of CHRAJ made this criticism as he opened the Integrity camp for schools in Accra. At the camp youths will learn the values of human rights, integrity and patriotism. The hope is that the camp will empower youths to make social changes in the future.

Rights of the vulnerable

Article title: 'Gender Ministry, PPAG to promote rights of the vulnerable', Date of article: 25th August 2014, Source: Daily Graphic

The Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of Ghana has committed to strengthen partnership with Plan Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG). PPAG is the leading NGO providing sexual and reproductive health services in Ghana, they aim to improve socio-economic life of the population and improve

physical and mental health of families. This deepened partnership will be important in the government's mandate to protect vulnerable groups in society. They will be collaborating on challenges such as gender based violence and gender inequality. The two organisations believe that they will compliment each other in achieving their overall goals.

Homosexuality in Ghana

Article title: 'Student arrested for recruiting men to have sex', Date of Article : 28th August 2014, Source: Gay News Network

A student in the northern region of Ghana has been arrested by police after being accused by locals of engaging in sex with other men. In Ghana homosexuality is punishable by a jail sentence of between 5 and 25 years. Residents accused him of wearing women's clothing and trying to recruit other men into being gay. The student received death threats from locals and has been taken into custody by the police.

Mental health in Ghana

Article title: 'Are the Mentally Challenged Abandoned?', Date of article: 19th August 2014, Source: Spy Ghana

The Mental Health Act 2012 has been in place for two years now but steps to bring it to life are yet to be taken. People suffering from mental illnesses are still found living on the streets begging in order to stay alive. These people suffer from degrading treatment and are often laughed at in the street. If the government doesn't start acting on the legislation in place then people suffering mental illnesses will continue to be forced onto the streets. The Chief Psychiatrist of the Ghana Health Service has given an estimate of five years to get all of these people off of the streets and on more stable paths.

Prisoners Rights

Article title: 'Ghana interior minister calls prison decongestion', Date of article: 28th August 2014, Source: Sahara Reporters

Ghana's Interior Minister Mark Woyongo is calling for the release of suspects who have been remanded in prison custody for over five years. The minister spoke to prison officials last Thursday about how it was unfair to keep suspects in remand for a number of years. He said that where your case

is unable to be finished you should not be held indefinitely as you may be found innocent. In March a Human Rights court released a 46-year-old man had been held on remand for 14 years. The decongestion of the prisons would also allow for better quality prison care.

Us-Africa Summit 2014

Article title: US-Africa: Make Human Rights Central to Summit, Date of article: 4th August 2014, Source: Human Rights Watch

The US-Africa summit took place from the 4th to the 6th August. The theme of the meeting was "Investing in Our Future" and 45 African heads of state were to attend.

It was hoped prior to the summit that President Obama would put human rights and democracy firmly on the agenda, as many of the heads of state are guilty of passing questionable laws in the past few years. While leaders of Eritrea, Zimbabwe, Sudan and the Central African Republic were not invited because of their poor human rights record other countries with equally questionable human rights reputations did attend. For example Museveni of Uganda was one of the attendees even though in the past year Uganda's anti homosexuality laws have caused a range of human rights violations. In many of the other African countries human rights activists, journalists and anti corruption protesters live in fear of arrest as many of their colleagues have been imprisoned. Human Rights Watch said that this summit could be the perfect time for President Obama to take the side of the African people and not continue to side with their governments. This would put pressure on the governments to change their policies if they wish to continue to have strong relations with the US.

Unfortunately the summit did not take this path. Democracy and human rights were overlooked and economics was the main focus of discussion. Economic progress was made between the nations but development of democracy and human rights was left ignored. After this summit the intentions of the US are clear. It seems that they will follow China in making large investments in African nations, regardless of their human rights records. The US seemed only interested in expanding new markets in Africa and economic development.

From the HRJ Coordinator

Ending busy season.

August 2014

August saw a swift end to our busy season, dropping from twenty volunteers at the beginning of the month to just two in our final week. As our volunteers fly home, it's fitting to reflect on some of the successes from Summer- and remind those remaining that there is still much to be done.

Throughout the summer our engagement in education programmes was demonstrated by the success of the 3 vacation human rights schools in Old Fadama, Nungua and Abokobi. Our Gender Equality Project in Abokobi which took root this year has become a near permanent fixture in office projects, with a constant cycle of womens groups and enthusiastic volunteers to engage in those vital discussions. Alongside this we had the success of our focussed outreach in Winneba, where engagement will continue next month, as well welcoming our first Anthropology volunteers to continue the research outputs of the office. Finally the successful launch of the slum school book drive, video and fundraising effort.

It is this latter point that we will hope to serve as the legacy from the hard work put in this summer. The fund for Old Fadama has already reached a total of around \$1,800. But with dwindling numbers and passing time the concern is to keep this alive and finally reach our target. For all those volunteers who have had the pleasure to work alongside the residents of Old Fadama, it requires no explanation just how vital it is to continue to give something back. The donation of funds to provide schools with such basic equipment as textbooks is another step down that road and we hope that this can be achieved within the remaining time.

For a reminder of what it's all about watch the video and have a read of the Justgiving Page below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYMQVaVeseQ>

<https://www.justgiving.com/whatdoesabookmeantoyou/>

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