

Monthly Report – February 2015

Projects Abroad Human Rights Office, Cape Town

We are now in our second month since the office has moved and have received quite a number of new refugee clients. The legal clinics have also brought in a number of new clients, but the office is still not as busy as we would like it to be.

Our Social Justice Department has been busy with all its projects and interns partaking in the Social Justice workshops have been attending the workshops, Monday to Thursday.

Our office phone has also not been sorted yet, due to a delay with the telephone company needing to get various approvals from our office and municipality in order to port our lines.

We are optimistic that March month will be a progressive month for us and we are looking forward to the new group of interns arriving in March, as well look forward to attending the legal clinics and social justice workshops.

Social Justice Projects Updates

Vredelus

Workshop one – Poetry and goal setting

“This week we did poetry and goal setting. We handed each girl a fill-in-the-blank worksheet entitled “If God Were Looking at My Life”. We gave them the option of filling in the sheet in English or Afrikaans, as some of them felt more comfortable in doing the poetry in their own language.

When they were done completing the poetry we asked some of them if they would like for us to type it up and return it to them the following week, which most of the agreed too.

We then also did goal setting, everyone was divided into small groups, with two or three interns in each group to help the girls write down their short and long term goals.

All the girls had positive goals which they hope to achieve and which they were happy to share with us.

We also played some music and danced, even though the girls at Vredelus dance much better than some of the interns. The girls really enjoyed the poetry, but they enjoyed the music and dancing more.

Both the poetry and the goal setting activities encouraged the girls to think about their past

and their future, as well as for them to realise how far they have come and to motivate them to strive to do better.

I really love working with the girls, this is definitely one of the most rewarding experiences I have had so far.” - Devon Helm

Workshop two – Peer Pressure

“We did a presentation on peer pressure to show the girls that peer pressure can be both negative and positive.

The most likely reason why the boys and girls are at Bonnytown and Vredelus is due to peer pressure, negative peer pressure and we wanted to educate them on the difference between being positively and negatively influenced by their peers.

We, the interns had to first do research about peer pressure, the facts and myths of negative and positive peer pressure, as well as find an interesting way to present the workshop and interactive activities.

A lot of the boys already knew what peer pressure meant, but they only associated peer pressure with negative connotations, and we want them to recognise positive peer pressure, as well as positively influence their peers.

After the slide show presentation, we were split in groups in order discuss what we have learned, as well as to share our personal experiences on peer pressure, whether it was negative or positive. This group discussion was so that we could learn from each other and motivate each other to strive to be and do better.

We also played a song called “Shake It Off” by Taylor Swift which deals with peer pressure. Not only did the girls love the song, but it sent a positive message, that everyone can overcome peer pressure, should they wish to lead a positive life.

I feel this workshop was received very well as everyone could relate to being influenced by their peers. The feedback we received from most of the girls were all similar, “if they knew now what they would have known a while back then they would have made better decisions, which would have led not to ending up in a juvenile detention facility”.

This workshop should definitely be done at all the facilities and with all the dorms. “- Philo Warmerdam

Workshop three - Peer Pressure

“This was the same workshop done as the previous week; however this was done with a different dormitory of girls.

We did a slide show presentation on the negative and positive aspects of peer pressure, how to distinguish between the two and how peer pressure can influence your life.

The girls seemed to like the workshop and had fun with the activities. They learned something that was present in their life, but which they didn't know about, so I think the topic was a very good one as it was relevant to them.

The girls received this workshop really well and we were happy with the positive feedback we received from the girls, as some of them stated that they wished they would have never given in to peer pressure and that by being in a detention facility has given them the opportunity to learn new things and reflect back on their lives.”- Tom Meerkat

Workshop four – Scandinavia

“From what we were told is that this type workshop was done in the past, but because PAHRO receives new interns every time from different counties, this workshop is done at least a few times a year.

The girls and boys at Bonnytoun and Vredelus enjoy learning about other countries, so we the interns had to compare a three to five minute slide show presentation on our home countries, for example the traditions, different types of foods, popular sightseeing places, famous artist, sports and anything interesting about our country.

Myself, Anne Skott and Simone With are from Denmark, so we prepared the presentation together, which was interesting since the three of us come from different parts of Denmark and had different views and opinions to add to the presentation.

During and after each group or individual intern's presentation the girls at Vredelus would ask a lot of questions and share what they have learned from the past Scandinavia workshops.

At the end of this workshop we all split up in groups and talked about various things such as what their dreams are, what they like and dislike, what the interns were studying, etc.

I think it is important for everyone to learn about each other's home countries as it teaches us new things, it also expands our minds more to what is outside of our own countries. Learning about different countries and cultures also teaches us to respect each other's beliefs, opinions and makes us more interested in exploring the world beyond what we assume it to be.”- Maria Ljørring Rasmussen

Bonnytoun

Workshop one – Peer Pressure

“We prepared to do the same workshop which was done at Vredelus on Monday, 02 March on Peer Pressure, but when we arrived at Bonnytoun we were unable to do the prepared workshop due to us being outside.

We then improvised and did skits demonstrating positive and negative peer pressure. We also split up into small groups and discussed our personal experiences with peer pressure.

Surprisingly having to improvise turned out really well as the boys were open to sharing their experiences with us and it seemed that many of them had learned a lot from being influenced negatively.

We only hope that this particular learning experience will have a long lasting effect on the boys and help them make better and positive decisions when they are back home. “ – Alex Lia

Workshop two – Peer Pressure

“We were once again prepared to the workshop on peer pressure with a different group of boys, but once again due to the power being off we were outside in the yard.

We improvised again, using the previous week’s tactics. This time however we did not get the same results as expected.

This particular group of boys did not open up and may not have been as ready as last week’s group of boys to discuss their peer pressure experiences.

This was a bit of a letdown, but I believe this group of boys would have responded better if we had done the planned workshop, which included the slide show presentation.

We will be doing our planned workshop on peer pressure in the future as we hope to be educating the young boys on how peer pressure could influence your life negatively or positively depending on the decisions you choose to take.”- Andreas Faulkener

Workshop three – Scandinavia

“This was the same workshop as done at Vredelus. I helped Maria with the presentation on Denmark, so it was interesting to see what the rest of the Danish interns had already compiled and prepared about our home country.

Various interns did presentations on where they are from, Denmark, Australia, US and Germany. I think everyone did a good job and this type of workshop should definitely be done again, because the boys were paying attention to what we were saying, asking questions and seemed excited when the next group of interns were presenting their slide show.

I think the boys really like learning about different countries, as some of them have dreams of one day travelling abroad and us talking about where we are from just ignites their interest more.

This was also a good learning experience, not only for the boys, but for the interns as well, as often we do not know much about where each other is from or the cultures. “-Cecilie Müller

Workshop four – Soccer Match

“We had a soccer match at Bonnytown, the interns against the inmates. The boys were really excited to be playing against us and were expecting a serious match, little did they know that some of the interns had never played soccer before and wasn’t very good.

The first half ended with a score of 0-0, but in the second half the boys from Bonnytown played much better, which only showed how good they are, because they won us 6-1.

Besides all three of our soccer balls being broken during the match this workshop turned out to be really fun and it was a good day for both the interns and the boys.

The purpose of the soccer match was to enhance team building efforts, as well as teach positive competitiveness, which I think is a valuable lesson for people to learn. I definitely enjoyed the soccer match, so did the boys and the rest of the interns and partaking in sports should defiantly be part of the curriculum for the youth to partake in.” - Andreas Faulkner

Ottery Youth Care

Workshop one – Introduction

“This was our first workshop at Ottery Youth Care for this year, so we decided to have a fun introductory session.

We decided to play a few ice breaker games as well as talk to the boys to get to know them and see what their interests were and what workshops we could do for them.

From the feedback we received from the interns, this group of boys weren’t as eager and welcoming as the girls and boys at Vredelus and Bonnytoun; however the interns remain positive that the boys at Ottery will get used to having us around and therefore be more welcoming and talkative.”- Gaby van der Sanden

Workshop two – Peer Pressure

“This was the same workshop as done at Vredelus, with the slide show presentation.

Most of the boys speak Afrikaans, so they had difficulty understanding our accents; however Shuan would translate what we were saying, so that was extremely helpful.

With the boys at Ottery, they are a lot younger than the boys at Bonnytoun, so from this workshop we saw that they feel more comfortable with having less interns present, as well as need more time to be explained certain things.

I also think it would be a good idea for all the workshops at Ottery to be more detailed, but made fun and interesting, so that the language barrier between the interns and the boys do not make them lose out on valuable workshops. “- Jack Sheerin

Women’s Shelters

St Anne’s

As our main aim and focus at the women’s shelters are to empower and motivate the women, the workshops we do relate to their experiences, as well as empower them to believe in themselves, build their self –esteem, confidence and motivate them to be better role models for their children.

Workshop one – Women’s Rights and Self Esteem

“This week we decided to do a workshop on women’s rights and self-esteem as we feel it is important for women to be educated about their rights, as well as for them to have self-confidence and not to have a low self esteem.

The workshop consisted of both theoretical parts and activities. We started off by explaining the different rights women have, how these rights were founded, the women involved in the movements leading to gender equality. Of course we could not explain women’s rights without having to explain the pass laws which prevented women from being equal to men.

Surprising all the ladies already knew the history about the pass laws and were able to educate us interns as well.

The slide show presentation was followed by three motivational and educating videos, and discussions about them.

We also gave each woman a page with the different rights on, which was part of an activity, so that each woman could select their favourite right and read it out loudly with confidence.

We also had a poem about session, where the woman had to complete a fill-in-the-blank sheet, name of the poem was "I am Beautiful, I was". The women had to fill in the blanks on the sheet for example, my hair is beautiful like _____, my body is fine like _____, etc.

At the end of completing the poem the women had a chance to share what they have written with the group. Not only did this poem session teach the women to feel better about them, but to be proud of their physical appearances.

When we were done with the workshop, the women asked us questions and we discussed women's rights and self-esteem. The women were laughing a lot, so it felt rewarding to see the women be happy and in that moment be content with themselves.

The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness about basic human rights that we as women have, as well as empower the women and build self-confidence; so I feel we definitely surpassed our aim as we all left feeling empowered as women and motivated to do more than what we think we are limited to."- Milena Adamczewska

Workshop two – Self Reflection and Valentines

"We did a workshop about the importance of self reflection and celebrated friendship with each other and the volunteers by making Valentine's Day cards and decorating cookies.

The workshop began with an exploration of emotions through looking at art. The point was made that everyone has different emotions looking at the same work of art, which is similar in life situations. Other activities included listening to a song that won a Grammy award and was lauded by President Obama about overcoming domestic violence; watching a video about what is important to tell daughters; listening to a poem and then writing one entitled, "If God Were Looking At My Life"; and learning about the benefits of journaling.

The women were given journals in which to write their thoughts and keep special objects. The session concluded with everyone creating beautiful Valentine's Day cards and decorating heart-shaped cookies and cupcakes.

The women of St. Anne's were very grateful for their journals and immediately began decorating them and signing them. We have been happy to see them bringing them to subsequent workshops and writing in them. This workshop made a positive impression on the power of self-reflection."– Mary Rae Bruns

Workshop three – Property, housing subsidies, divorce and maintenance

“One of the women at the shelter previously approached one of our interns asking legal advice about her current situation relating to the above and from what we have previously discussed with the women, we have come to realise that many if not all of them are currently in a situation relating to housing subsidies, divorce and maintenance.

We were therefore decided to do a workshop focusing on the above topics as the ladies would then be educated on the steps they can take regarding their current situation.

The interns did research on all of the above, printed and compiled the necessary information and formed a detailed power point presentation.

We started off by explaining why we chose to do a workshop on the above topic and why it is important for the women to know their rights when it comes to the above as many of them are facing the same situation and do not know what to do.

During the presentation the women asked us questions, relating to their particular situation and because we did our research we could answer their questions. We also previously did a workshop on housing subsidies, which was led by intern Melena Adamczewska, so Melena was able to answer all housing subsidies questions promptly, which astounded some of her fellow interns as they were impressed with her quick replies.

Throughout the presentation the women expressed their gratitude and discussed their situations as they now know how to proceed forward and have also asked for us to assist them should they need further advice.

Due to the women being in a shelter for abused, we printed out protection orders and assisted in filling out a dummy form, as previously the women mentioned that they would like assistance with filling out protection orders.

We felt this workshop went really well and that the women learned a lot, so hopefully with all the information learned they will be able to share it with the rest of the women at the shelter who weren't present at the workshop, as well as be able to use their knowledge to better their situation.”- Gaby van der Sanden

Workshop four – Nutrition

“On the 25th of February we presented a workshop about living a healthy lifestyle and nutrition. The aim of the workshop was to explain how our eating habits and lifestyle can affect not only our physical but also mental health and daily wellbeing.

We prepared a presentation and included theoretical information about nutrition and practical tips on how to introduce changes into eating habits. We watched and discussed 2 videos and practiced reading labels of food products together.

We also did some basic exercises, which the ladies enjoy and found easy to do. These exercises could be done in small spaces or with their children, so we hope that they will continue to do it, as they felt full of energy and felt motivated to continue working out.

As homework, we asked participants in the workshop to keep a food and exercise journal for a week.

The following week we asked about the food and exercise journal and learned that the women who were present in the workshop, as well as the other residents do the exercises on a daily basis.

This was definitely a rewarding experience, not only for me, but for the rest of the interns and the women at the shelter.”- Milena Adamczewska

Sisters Incorporated

We were unable to attend Sisters Incorporated for the first three weeks of this month, due to the ladies either having job interviews or being at work. The last Thursday of the month we attended the shelter, where we assisted them in preparing for the clothing sale the next day.

The interns also attended the clothing sale, which they enjoyed as they got to buy lots of clothes and items at a reasonable price.

Conclusion

We will be having a Human Rights Day event in the CBD area of Cape Town, where we will be educating people on the basic human rights. We will also be distributing our office contact details, so from this event we will hopefully be receiving a diverse group of clients, which we look forward to.