

Monthly Report – July 2016

Projects Abroad Human Rights Office, Cape Town

Social Justice Project Updates

Siyakhathala – Khayelitsha Township

Siyakhathala's primary focus is to support at risk youth and children in need of care. The organisation is based at the Kuyasa Primary School in Khayelitsha. The cases of child neglect and abused are identified by teachers and care givers at the school. Our volunteers in partnership with the organisation assess the merits of the claims with the view to resolution.

Keira Zlatic - We received a new case about a mother who is neglecting her child and misusing the government child care grant that should be administered for the benefit of the child. The child has been staying with a relative for the past three years and this relative though poor has been forced to support this child from his meagre income. The child's mother is still receiving the child care grant. We are assisting the relative to have guardianship rights in order for the relative to obtain the child care grant instead of the mother.

Vredelus

Vredelus Huis is a detention centre for juvenile female offenders between the ages of 13 and 17 years. It houses both awaiting trial and sentenced offenders. Volunteers prepare and present life orientation skills workshop on a weekly basis.

Gabriel Locke: We did a workshop on Child Abuse. How it mentally and physically affects your life and those around you. The girls were very receptive of the workshop, which was very good. We also talked about victim blaming and how whenever one is being abused that he/she should not allow the abuser to make them feel as if it is their fault. The girls knew a lot about child abuse, but were still listening and interactive.

Lindelani

Lindelani is a Place of Safety which offers special services, such as specialised assessment and care development programmes for girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 17 years old. The youth in these centres include children who have suffered abuse and neglect and as a result of their experiences have behavioral problems. Volunteers attend this facility once per week, where workshops are conducted and aimed at educating and empowering the young girls and boys.

Gabriel Locke: We presented a workshop on Bullying, the reasons why someone would be a bully and how this affects the victim. Many of the boys have been victims of bullying and have been bullies themselves, so it was interesting to hear them talk about how they would have been more considerate of their own feelings as well as other peoples. The workshop was very receptive and was a good session to get the boys to open up and share their personal experiences with us and their peers.

Bonnytown

Bonnytown is a centre for juvenile male offenders between the ages of 13 and 17 years. The centre houses both awaiting trial and sentenced offenders. The young men in this centre have been charged with crimes ranging from minor offences such as assault and theft to armed robbery and murder. Volunteers facilitate rehabilitative workshops on a weekly basis.

Keira Zlahtic: The workshop we did was pretty phenomenal and turned out better than expected. We decided to do a workshop whereby the boys had to express themselves through positive rap. The boys really got into this idea and started talking about their life stories, their experiences, their regrets and their loved ones. The volunteers were in awe of how receptive and eager the boys were of this idea and it was an emotional, yet life changing experience for the boys.

Shuan Solomons: Mr. Williams, whose in charge of the education sector at Bonnytown contacted the office in order to congratulate us on the session as he received positive feedback from the boys. Mr. Williams also requested that we have this particular positive rap session with the rest of the dorms at Bonnytown. The session was so well received that we will be filming these sessions and using the videos to educate and motivate the youth in other juvenile facilities.

Legal Services

PAHRO has four legal clinics, which are in townships situated in the Cape Flats. Many of the townships suffer from many social ills including a lack of educational opportunities and employment prospects, a high level of substance abuse, inadequate housing, and gang violence. In such areas there is little or no access to legal assistance and the majority of the residents do not have the financial means necessary to travel to seek the help that they require.

This month we received 41 new cases from all the legal clinics in total.

Some of the cases volunteers have assisted the supervisors with are as follows:

Maria Mulindi

Mitchells Plain Legal Clinic

Natalie White: I am working on a property matter. Our client's father passed away intestate (without leaving a will). The estate has not been divided between the heirs of the deceased. The client's sister has been living on the deceased's father's property. The sister living on the property has allowed the

estate to fall into arrears of R17,00.00. Our client had wanted to take over management of the property, but wanted the property to be transferred onto her name first. We contacted the City of Cape Town regarding this and found out regardless of whether or not our client has the means to pay, the transfer of property will not proceed prior to clearing off the arrears. We now have instructions to pursue legal action against the client's sister for the arrears on behalf of all their heirs.

Sherwin Daniels

Athlone Legal Clinic

Arya Taghdiri: Our client came to us for assistance regarding a property matter. The client refused to pay his previous landlord for the water bill and was eventually evicted. The client now has a new landlord, whom wants to evict the client as well; however the client states that he will stay until his lease expires. We have been communicating with the client and the landlord as the client's version of events does not add up and sometimes does not make sense at all. This case is very interesting and I would like to see how this is going to work out.

Miriam MacDonald

Vrygrond Legal Clinic

Sascha Hoogesteger: I am working on a case where our client is being verbally abused and harassed by somebody in his community. He has been accused of being a homosexual, and recently rumours were spread that he was using drugs. Because of the allegations, his place of employment were obliged to carry out a drug test, the results of which were negative. We assisted our client with applying for a Protection Order in terms of the Protection from Harassment Act. I attended court with him last week, but the case was postponed for the 8th of August 2016. We are confident that it will be granted.

Last Fridays

As is our tradition at our weekly internal review meeting (IRM), we ask volunteers who are about to leave the program (their last Friday at the office) to tell us about their high lights and low lights about the work. Below is some of the feedback we received.

Hélène Deroubaix

High Lights - The satisfaction I got working on a case where I know I was able to help the client.

Low Lights - Clients not answering the phone and not being able to share good news with them.

Sophia Gustaffson

High Lights - Being able to learn as much as I did in such a short time.

Low Lights - Trying to send an appeal letter to the minister and not being able to get through to him.

Sascha Hoogesteger

High Lights - Being able to attend the legal clinics and getting in contact with clients.

Low Lights - Yesterday when a young couple came into the office wanting to get assistance with their divorce.

Mailys Lesparre

High Lights - Receiving my first case.

Low Lights - When we try and call government institutions and they said they would call back, but never did.

Arya Taghdiri

High Lights - Having conversations with my clients.

Low Lights - The government services not being very helpful.

Conclusion

This month has been extremely busy with an increase in volunteer numbers; we had 29 volunteers in office. There was an even greater increase in client attendance at our legal clinics. This brings the total number of files currently open to 751. We are looking forward to welcoming even more volunteers especially those who are currently studying towards a law degree or have legal qualifications. Part of our challenge has been trying to find a balance between volunteers who attend the project for two to three weeks at a time, versus effectively assisting our clients. It is preferred if prospective volunteers sign on to work with us for at least one month.