

OUTREACHES

International Women's Day

On 8th March, 2019 HRAC together with the Faculty of Law, University of Professional Studies (UPSA) supported Amnesty International Ghana (AIG) to host a public dialogue on Gender Balance in Ghana to mark International Women's Day. The theme for this year's celebration was "Balance for Better" which resonates with goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which stresses on Gender Equality and the need to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls.

The Dean of the Faculty of Law at the UPSA, Prof. Kwame Frimpong, opened the event with a welcome address and stressed the need for the celebration of women's right to be prioritized taking cognizance of the fact that women form the integral part of the society, in the struggle for our advancement in life. Subsequently the Campaigns and Fundraising Coordinator of Amnesty International Ghana, Mr. Samuel Komla Agbotsey explained that the purpose of bringing the event to UPSA campus was to give the students the opportunity to have a feel of human rights and its practice to add up to their theoretical knowledge bank.

A panel discussion which brought together Dr. Maame Gyenkye –

Jandoh, Senior Lecturer and Head of Political Science Department of University of Ghana, Maame Akosua Asare Deputy Board Secretary of Amnesty International Ghana, and former Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Nana Oye Lithur to deliberate on key issues affecting women and assessed Ghana's journey in ensuring gender balance. The challenges, where we are now and the way forward was discussed. In her submission, Nana Oye Lithur addressed the imbalance in the economic and political platform that favor and empower men more than women.

She said, "It is injustice on the part of women who constitute over 50% of Ghana's population to have less than 15% of representation in political and economic leadership. Moving forward, we demand at least 30% of female representation across all sectors."

Ms Cynthia Nimo-Ampredue, the Executive Director of HRAC, appealed to President Nana Akufo-Addo to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to holistically address issues of women's empowerment. "We call on His Excellency, who is also an internationally recognised gender champion and his government to prioritise women's empowerment," she said.



Health Outreach for MSM

The West Africa Aids Foundation (WAAF) with support from the Ghana Aids Commission (GAC) Technical Support Unit (TSU) conducted STI screening and HIV testing for all the participants of a human rights and legal education training organised by HRAC in Tamale, Northern Region on **15th March, 2019**. The WAAF team again on **14th March, 2019** in collaboration with the representative of the Alliance of Equality and Diversity (AfED) conducted STI screening and HIV testing for MSM at community level using two shops as the screening/testing posts. **Twenty-four (24)** MSM were reached during the two exercises. The activity is part of project interventions under the "Creating MSM Human Rights Awareness to Improve Access to Health" project, with the purpose of bringing access to health closer to the MSM community in Tamale and encouraging them to overcome self-stigma to access health at the health facilities in their communities.



After the first quarter activities in March 2019, the team agreed to use an approach of social, fun and educative events to bring together members of the MSM community in the area. This resulted in an evening event on **26th June 2019** with music, dance, refreshment together with educative talks and quiz to share information and create awareness on the importance of condom use and safe sex practices. Along fun and learning session, a nurse provided STI screening and HIV testing for participants. **Thirteen (13)** out of **Nineteen (19)** MSM participants were screened/tested. The three exercises had **thirty-seven (37)** MSM screened. The WAAF team submitted data from the screening/testing activities to the data division of the GAC. GAC staff were impressed with the testing outcome, and requested to upscale the activity to other MSM communities in the region. They pledged continued collaboration of the Commission with the project team and stated that GAC would find ways of sustaining the approach when the project ends.



ADVOCACY

Biannual Meeting on health and human rights of Key Populations

HRAC held a Biannual meeting on **28th February, 2019** at Verdi Pharmacy and **29th March, 2019** at the Best Star Hotel in Aflao and Elubo respectively. The aim of the meeting was to update members of the HRAC/ALCO advocacy network on activities, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as well as human rights concerns affecting key and vulnerable populations in Aflao, Elubo and their environs.

Twenty-six (26) members of the advocacy group comprising representatives from Ghana Police Service, Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Health Service, Key Populations (KPs), Peer Educators, CEPEHRG, Pro-Link, PPAG, Journalist and the ALCO Information Unit participated in the two meetings. With 2019 being the final year of the project, the meeting reviewed the purpose for the formation of the advocacy network



and refreshed the knowledge of members on human and legal rights of KPs, GBV, stigma and discrimination, reporting and managing of human rights abuses against Sex Workers (SW) and MSM.

Representatives of Organisations present reported on their work with KPs and updated the meeting on their plans to improve on abuse case reporting, referral of medical cases from STI screening, and HIV testing to the health facilities. The meeting observed that with the network readiness to assist KPs in accessing stigma and discrimination free health and legal services, KP communities are not accessing these services because of high incidence of self-stigma and past experience with service providers. Members of the network pledged again to support KPs in reporting abuse case, and accessing health and legal services.

Participation in the 5th AfHEA Biennial Scientific Conference

The theme of the 5th African Health, Economics and Policy Biennial Scientific Conference that occurred from 11th to 14th of March 2019 was “Securing Primary Health Care for All: The Foundation for Making Progress on Universal Health Care (UHC) in Africa”. At the conference, Dr. Gina Teddy, Director of the Centre for Health Systems and Policy Research (CHESPOR) presented a paper on behalf of HRAC. The aim of the paper was to discuss the preliminary findings from the STAR-Coalition (Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) and MindFreedom Ghana (MFGh)) STAR-Ghana funded Mental Health research under the project “Promoting Quality Access to Mental Healthcare and Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities in Traditional Mental Health



Centres in Ghana”. She successfully created awareness on the objectives of the research and offered suggestions that will aid in the achievement of Universal Healthcare that is inclusive of mental health services that aims at quality and respect for the rights of persons with mental disabilities.

The conference recorded over 400 participants, consisting of economists, policy, research and health professionals from the private and public sector, across a variety of disciplines and around the globe. Notable participants included His Excellency Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia, the Vice President of Ghana, Mr. Kwaku Agyemang Manu, the Minister of Health, and the Director General of the Ghana Health Service Dr. Nsiah Asare.

Meeting Between Security Officers and Networks for Key and Vulnerable Populations

As part of activities in the implementation of the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor (ALCO) Project “HIV/AIDS prevention for Key and Vulnerable Populations along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor”, HRAC organized a meeting between Security Officers and NGOs/CSOs Associations, Key Populations (KPs) and Journalist at the Aflao and Elubo sites. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Gender-Based Violence and other Human Rights concerns affecting Key and Vulnerable Population at the sites. Total of **twenty-seven (27)** representatives from Ghana Police Service, Ghana Immigration Service, ALCO Information Unit, CEPEHRG, Pro-Link, Ghana Health Service, PPAG, Journalists, Peer Educators and SWs and MSM participated in the meetings.



Gender Based Violence (GBV), forms of GBV and Issues of Protection and Reporting. The purpose of the presentations was to refresh participants’ knowledge on human and legal rights of Key and Vulnerable Populations in the Ghanaian context. HRAC Facilitators used two case scenarios and subsequent participatory discussions to evaluate participants understanding of the content of the presentation. The scenarios included cases of GBV and Human Rights abuses against Key Populations. The Facilitators concluded the discussions by encouraging participants (KPs) and CSOs to report cases immediately they happen to avoid loss of evidence. The representatives of the Ghana Police Service and Ghana Immigration pledged their support and encouraged Peer Educators and representatives of KP focused CSOs to contact them when they encounter challenges with reporting cases at the stations.

During the meetings Ms. Nimo-Ampred, Executive Director of HRAC made presentations on the basic principles of Human Rights,

HUMAN RIGHTS AND LEGAL EDUCATION

Human Rights workshops for Nurses and Operators of Traditional and Faith-Based Healing Centers

Under the STAR-Ghana funded project “Promoting quality access to mental healthcare and rights of persons with mental disabilities in traditional mental health centres in Ghana” HRAC has conducted three Human Rights workshops each for nurses and operators of traditional mental health centres in Cape Coast (Central Region), Koforidua (Eastern Region) and Ho (Volta Region). While the Nurses workshop was held under the theme “Rights-Based Approach to Mental Healthcare for Community Psychiatric Nurses and General Nurses”, the one for operators was titled “Training on the National Guideline for Traditional and Faith-Based Healers (TFBHs) in Mental Healthcare and the Law on Mental Health in Ghana”. A total of **eighty-one (81)** nurses and **fifty-seven (57)** operators of traditional mental health centres were reached in the three regions.



The workshops included interactive Human Rights teaser exercises to engage participants in a discussion on their general understanding of Human Rights and value clarification exercises to encourage them to reflect on their beliefs on rights of persons with mental disabilities. Ms Cynthia Nimo-Ampred, educated participants on the basic principles of Human Rights from national and international perspectives, the effects of stigma and discrimination and the legal foundation of Rights of persons with mental disabilities in Ghana, namely the Mental Health Act and the Guidelines for regulating TFBHs.

The workshops informed and challenged the participants on their knowledge of Human Rights in Ghana while offering them a safe environment to ask questions. The participants were able to exercise what they learned at the workshops through group work activities and discussion sessions. These workshops were effective in compiling information on the concerns of nurses and operators while providing suggestions for them on how to use the right-based approach in providing service, protecting and advocating for the rights of persons with mental disabilities.



Empowerment Training for Female Sex Workers



As part of activities in the implementation of Abidjan-Lagos Corridor (ALCO) Project “HIV/AIDS Prevention for Key and Vulnerable Populations along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor”, HRAC in collaboration with Pro-Link successfully conducted a “know your rights and responsibilities” training and sensitization for Female Sex Workers (FSWs) at Elubo. **Fifteen (15)** FSWs and **four (4)** Peer Educators (PEs) participated in the training respectively.

The purpose of the training was to empower SWs to protect their rights and report cases of human rights abuses against them, through improved knowledge on human rights and their responsibilities. During the session, the Facilitator explained that the focus of the project is to improve access to health care. Which is a human right and that any act of another person that prevents FSWs from accessing health is an infringement on their rights. Additionally, participants were enlightened on why they should report cases of abuse, things not to do when physically/sexually abused, who to report to and where to report.

Supportive Supervision

HRAC conducted **five (5)** Supportive Supervision of Mass Sensitization on health and human rights, and STI/HIV testing and screening exercise for MSM and SW under “HIV/ADS Prevention for Key and Vulnerable Populations along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor” project. The activities organized by Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights (CEPEHRG) in Aflao and Denu in Volta Region, and Elubo and Half Asinni in Western Region, recorded **seventy-six (76)** MSM participants. Pro-links activity in Aflao recorded thirteen (13) SW participants.

The purpose of the activities was to support and supervise the CEPEHRG and Pro-Link PEs to conduct health and human rights sensitization of their peers and STI/HIV testing and screening exercises of participants and collect data on cases of human rights abuses against MSM and SW.

Empowerment Training for Men who Have Sex with Men (MSM)

As part of the project “Creating MSM Human Rights awareness to improve access to health”, HRAC on the **13th March 2019**, embarked on an empowerment training for MSM in Tamale in the Northern region. **Twenty (20)** MSM participated in the event. The main purpose of the training was to empower participants to resist any form of human rights abuses through human rights and legal education and sensitization on available mechanism for legal redress when they encounter rights violation.

Participants were taken through the HRAC's "Know Your Rights" series with focus on understanding human rights; human rights in action in Ghana; some relevant human rights; State redress mechanisms; legal position of MSM in Ghana; challenges with protecting MSM rights with a look at the impact of the law and its interpretation; and legal and human rights responsibilities of MSM. This was followed by a session on reporting of abuse cases with emphasis on the need for reporting abuse; the "dos" and don'ts" when one encounters physical/sexual abuse; where to report cases; and who to report; the responsibilities of Peer Educators (PEs) when they receive cases.

The training also sought to create health awareness among the MSM community and encourage them to access healthcare services without fear of stigma and discrimination. To achieve this, a facilitator from West African AIDS Foundation (WAAF), implementing partners, educated the participants on "Understanding your health as MSM". The presentation focused on the need of MSM to take responsible care of their health; the risk they are exposed to; introduction to basics of the most common STIs and HIV/AIDS; and safe sex practices.



COMMUNITY DURBARS

Mental Health Sensitization Durbar

The MindFreedom Ghana and Human Rights Advocacy Centre, embarked on a community durbar in Nkwankwanua, Sekyere East District of the Ashanti region as part of the community awareness raising activities under the project "Promoting Quality Access to Mental Health Care and Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities in Traditional Mental Health Centres in Ghana." The durbar aimed at garnering community support for protection of the wellbeing and rights of Persons with Mental Disorders (PMDs) under the theme "Protecting the Wellbeing and Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities: It Could Be Me! It Could be You!" **One hundred and forty-**

three (143) community members were reached with information on the law on mental health in Ghana, factors to consider in the early detection of mental illness, the community-based health units available for treatment, and the care and support available for persons with mental disorders in the district and region.

The durbar received immense support from leaders and members from the community. These included the Sekyere East District Director of Health, Mr. Justice Ofori-Amoah and the Droatuofuhene of Nwankwanua, Nana Kofi Asamoah. The activities of the day included a drama on treatment of mental illness through orthodox services and panel discussion. The panelists included a Nurse Administrator, Mrs. Yvonne Fordjour, Mental Health Officers Ms. Ruth Otchere and Ms. Gloria Adu-Abrokwa, Ms. Magdalene Awusie of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (DSW), an ex-Assembly woman Ms. Agnes Boakye, and a teacher Mr. Emmanuel Atakora. In attendance were sub-chiefs, market women, traders, farmers, and persons from Christian



and Muslim groups, teachers and students of the community junior high school, police officers, and officials of the CHRAJ, DSW, and administrative staff and nurses of Effiduasi Government Hospital.

During this event, participants were educated through discussion with the panelists and given directions on what to do in issues of various mental health conditions within their respective communities. It is expected that such community engagement will contribute to increasing awareness amongst community members and strengthen the collaboration between service providers and community leaders to support and protect the rights of persons with mental disorders and their caregivers.



HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC

The Case of the 'Trotro' Driver and the Mate

On **16th March, 2019**, a video of two men physically assaulting a police officer went viral. Shortly thereafter, the Police arrested the two men who were later identified as 'trotro' driver, Francis Buabeng, and his mate, Albert Ansa. They were arraigned before the Circuit Court at Weija, on **18th March 2019**, where their pleas were taken. They did not have any legal representation during the court proceedings. They were remanded for two weeks to reappear before the Court on **1st April, 2019**. On **20th March 2019**, representatives of the Human Rights Advocacy Centre together with Car Dealers Association and Committed Drivers Association sought access to the accused persons at the Odorkor Police Station where they were believed to be held to provide them with legal representation in accordance with their right to legal representation under the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

However, the Ghana Police Service refused to inform the team

led by Ms Nimo-Ampedu, the Executive Director and Head of the HRAC's Human Rights Clinic, of the whereabouts of Francis and Albert, thereby denying them access to the accused persons. HRAC accordingly issued a press statement demanding that the Ghana Police Service disclose the whereabouts of the two accused persons. The Ghana Police Service promptly disclosed the whereabouts of the accused persons and granted access to HRAC, Amnesty International Ghana, and Mr. Martin Kpebu, a private legal practitioner engaged as lead counsel for the accused persons.

HRAC together with lead counsel for the accused persons have since secured bail for the accused persons and their acquittal on three out of the four charges brought against them. Together with other interest groups: COPEC Ghana, Committed Drivers Association, Car Dealers Association, GPRTU and the media, advocacy for fair trial has been sustained. We are confident that justice will be served as we await the final outcome of this case.