



LETTER FROM AFRICA

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Welcome to the sixth edition of *Letter from Africa*, the official quarterly newsletter of African Prisons Project.

This edition is late because we have been so busy with fundraising and recruiting new volunteers. Over the past few months, the size of APP's volunteer base has increased dramatically so we are now organising volunteers into specialist areas so they can help more efficiently. See the news later on about our first fundraising committee. Also this issue, a selection of poetry from prisoners at Luzira Prison, Uganda. Full details about APP are, as ever, listed on the back page. Read on for more news and don't forget to keep checking www.africanprisons.org for updates.

African Prisons Project is a young charity founded to improve the welfare, health and education of detainees in Africa. For more info, see page 8.



APP trustee Lyn McLean visits our Africa base in Kampala, Uganda. Further details about the recent trustee visit to Uganda will be included in the next edition of the newsletter.

– Adam Smith, editor

APP experts train Nigerian prison staff

Skilled APP volunteers recently ran seminars for the Nigerian Prison Service in London.

Kerry Ann Akers, APP's legal and mental health project manager, Sandra Worthington, a former member of the UK's Independent Monitoring Board for Prisons and Alexander McLean, director general of APP, were invited to conduct the training because of their experience and expertise in the field.

Alexander presented various DVDs

by Penal Reform International and introduced APP; Sandra conducted discussions based on her vast experience working in prisons, such as monitoring systems, occupational therapy and rehabilitation; and Kerry's seminar focused on international human rights standards and their practical application in Nigerian prisons, such as the use of non-violent forms of discipline and prevention of HIV infection.

Kerry has recently undertaken various fundraising activities in order to... (cont'd)

(from page 1)... fund APP's legal and psychiatric projects. However, further funding is still needed. Kerry is now in Uganda, fundraising with Marcel Van Gils, APP's assistant director, and working alongside two volunteers, Alexandra Akantorana, a law student assisting with the legal aid project, and George Marshall, a psychology graduate conducting research into cultural perceptions of mental health and the implications for capital mitigation.



Adam and Angela pass the finish line after 26 miles

Long walk to freedom for fundraisers

This summer, a pair of volunteers walked an entire 26 miles cross country to raise money for APP. Adam Smith, a long-term APP volunteer, and Angela Helliwell, raised over £800.

The walkers hiked the marathon trek across the White Peak area of Derbyshire, along rolling dales, abandoned railways and through handsome villages. It was a gruelling walk and took Adam and Angela nine and a half hours to complete – just in time for a pub dinner!

“I am so pleased to have raised so much money,” Adam said. “By the end, the walk was very difficult so I was relieved to finish. It was all worthwhile, though: £810 exceeded my expectations of what we could raise. Thanks to everyone who sponsored us!”

It is not yet known whether Adam and Angela will be walking the marathon again next year.

UK volunteers form APP's first fundraising committee

Volunteers in the UK have organised themselves into a functioning fundraising committee. The move is the natural progression for a network of casual volunteers eager to become more organised in addressing APP's ongoing need for funds.

Members of the committee will write grant applications and awards nominations, to speak about APP at events or with external fundraising groups, and support the other fundraising committee members on the design and implementation of fundraising events and campaigns. Two of the group's members were lucky enough to be given a day's free fundraising training. The course was a collaboration between the Small Charities Coalition, Charities Aid Foundation and the Institute of Fundraising.

This training has meant that now the fundraising committee is for the first time writing a comprehensive fundraising strategy to ensure it works most efficiently. "Organising ourselves in this way, with regular meetings and a more strategic approach, will hopefully prove incredibly useful in the amount of money we raise," said Paul McFarlane, one of the committee members. Another member, Olamide Olajide, added: "We're still only four members so anyone who wants to become involved should get in touch. Because APP is still so small, you really feel the difference you're making."



The group meets monthly in central London. If think you can help the committee and are interested in joining, please email Adam, the head of the group, on adamsmith@africanprisons.org.

Newsflash! APP trustees visit Ugandan headquarters

APP trustees Lyn McLean and Diana Opio visited APP's base of operations in Uganda in September. The trustees were there to open officially the new healthcare centre at Gulu and work with Ugandan staff and volunteers on APP's strategic plan. A full report on this visit will appear in next quarter's newsletter.



Poets in prison

Compiled by Gloriaas
Asiimwe

The body may be imprisoned, but the mind will always be free. APP is consistently surprised to find that poor conditions, unjust legal systems and the debilitating regime of a retributive penal model leads to artistic freedom. Two years ago, APP recorded the songs of the Condemned Choirs, made up of prisoners on death row in Uganda. The album, *Freedom Cry*, is still available to buy through the APP website and has helped raise awareness around the globe for the fight against capital punishment in Africa.

Now APP brings readers of *Letter from Africa* a selection of poetry written by those held in Luzira Prison, Uganda.

Love story By Osborne Opio

One morning, a yawn
Bored with the smug
Dissatisfied face
That surrounded it
Fled

In Venice, crossing
The bridge of sighs
He met one and
Completely lost his head
Head

A sight for sore eyes
Was she. So lovely
He popped the question
No sooner said than
Wed.

Oh, oh, oh am so so annoyed
By Owor Emmanuel

A loved voice was heard all over the world,
 Am the man who cares
 I have great love for everyone
 I provide to the needy
 I made many things within society
 However, I am getting hungry with the
 things I made
 Because they do not hear and follow me
 I will cut off the light from the sun,
 Cut off the light from the moon,
 Say no to move rain and finally cut off air,
 And there will be no more breathing
 And will know that I am so so annoyed.

The cursed day
By Adome Gabriel

Friday passed and Saturday came,
 With a bright sky, the day carried stars.
 The son of man and woman arrested
 Whose eyes turned pale and pale,
 And the whole body turned deadly pale.
 The thin legs could not walk,
 The helpless hands tied,
 And the pale eyes would see the bright
 sky.
 The son of man and woman plays ating-
 tang-tong.
 Of the guitar all over his body,
 No peace and rest all day and night.
 Friday passed and Saturday came with a
 sky,
 This produced a gallon of problems.

Aids Aids Aids
By Ocamá Jude

Where do you come from?
 Is it from heaven or from earth?
 You cannot be a mister. May God forbid.
 You have killed our dad and mum
 They are all gone.

You have left us parentless,
 And homeless looking for future.
 We are born free but now suffering your
 epidemic.
 Why do you attack us, the young.
 You have no friends you must have killed.
 You are merciless surely, we know.
 In this millennium year, hungry we are,
 United we are.
 You will not line to us Aids.
 Aids Aids Aids
 Never to meet you.

Soft as old silk
By Latigo Bashir

I tread in this room
 Wary of space
 That between us flows
 You know me
 As fish knows fish in tide
 No more you know
 I cut you through to
 The bone – no touch

You down so gently I
 Walk around the space
 Enclosing you as soft as
 Silk

World, world, world
By Yusuf

People face problems in the world
 Doing slight mistake ends you in jail
 Walking around without identity
 You can be taken for idle and disorderly
 You can reach the extent of cursing the
 Day you were born.

This world is crazy,
 Coz it keeps on changing itself
 Today I may be the one,
 Tomorrow you
 I curse the day Adam and Eve ate the fruit

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Thanks for reading...!

We hope you enjoyed the newsletter. Why not forward it onto friends and family who might be interested in finding out more? And please get in touch if you have any suggestions.

Email the editor, Adam Smith, at: adamsmith@africanprisons.org

You can read the latest APP news on our website, now with a .org domain!

www.africanprisons.org

And check out Alexander's blog at:

www.scottmelhuish.com/africanprisonsblog



And remember we still need your donations. Please give what you can so we can continue to help improve the lives of prisoners in Africa.

African Prisons Project (APP) is a young charity founded to improve the welfare, health and education of detainees in Africa. We aim to restore the dignity of prisoners by providing humane conditions and improving welfare, access to medical facilities and the opportunity to learn. Our principal projects are the creation or refurbishment of prison clinics and libraries.

Africa is a continent in transition, and its problems are magnified within the detention system. The plight of detainees is rarely noticed; therefore they receive little help from charitable organisations. Yet they include the most downtrodden and vulnerable - babies imprisoned with their mothers, the mentally ill, children and the illiterate.

In general, the conditions in African prisons are painfully poor. Many are severely overcrowded, lack sanitation and are unable to provide adequate nutrition. Access to books and education is limited or non-existent. Medical facilities are wholly inadequate. Few countries have universal access to legal representation, whilst many retain the death penalty and corporal punishment. Prison sentences can be significantly longer than in developed countries and it is not unusual to spend long periods in prison without trial.

Since its foundation, APP has been run by young volunteers - students and young professionals who want to make a difference. Increasingly we are supported by our advisors and partners. We provide school leavers and those from disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to gain experience and skills by assisting a project in Africa. Our volunteers then act as ambassadors when they return home.

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