



LETTER FROM AFRICA

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Welcome to the fifth edition of *Letter From Africa*, the official newsletter of African Prisons Project.

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.

It has been a busy few months since the last issue, with more fundraising events in the UK than ever before. APP's UK fundraising volunteers have been incredibly hard at work holding a street collection, a music night and various meetings with individuals and organisations. APP has been lucky enough to present to several Rotary Clubs, in both the UK and Uganda, and has great hope that we will be the link between clubs around the world. Read on for more news and don't forget to keep checking www.africanprisons.org for updates.

– Adam Smith, editor



Poster image designed by APP volunteer and freelance designer Robbie Smith to help promote the Afro-beat Break-out night held at SOAS on 1 May 2009.

Hitting the streets for APP

On a chilly day at the end of March, over 20 UK volunteers turned out to help APP raise much-needed cash. The team arrived early in the morning to kit themselves out with collection buckets, yellow t-shirts and official name badges. The plan was a simple one: to spread out around Borough Market (London's best and trendiest food market) and entice shoppers to drop their coins into the team's buckets.

Volunteers were all briefed on the Gulu Healthcare Centre project. By the end of March, APP had collected £27,000 and

needed an extra £13,000 to fund the project.

Volunteers at the street collection eagerly spoke to passers-by who were interested in APP, coaxed donations and even came up with a rousing chant. "It's been a great day," said new volunteer Paul Macfarlane. "I've really got the bug for fundraising now." The day raised an impressive £640 – well done to everyone involved!

APP would like to thank Borough Market for supporting our cause.



APP's Afro-beat
Break-out night,
May 2009

African music night drums up funds and awareness

On 1 May, APP hosted a night of live music in London. The event, held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), was designed to raise APP's profile and widen its base of potential volunteers and donors.

The SOAS common room was the backdrop for a series of Ugandan and African inspired bands, which entertained the audience with a range of afro-funk beats and rhythms. APP volunteers were on hand to answer any questions from people who were interested in the charity's work. APP volunteer Rowan

Hunter, who spoke to many people interested in the charity, said: "The event roused the interests of a wide variety of people, from a range of professions and backgrounds. One teacher came up to me pondering the idea of taking a year out to help with APP's education projects, while a musician approached me with the idea of working with prisoners."

The packed-out event was free of charge, with revellers taking advantage of the opportunity to sample some Ugandan dishes and cheap student union bar prices. It is hoped the event can be replicated, to extend public awareness of APP's work, as well as helping to raise funds for upcoming projects. "We raised nearly £500," said APP volunteer and event organiser Adam Smith. "Hopefully we can do it again and raise even more."

For more details, see the feature on pages 4-5.



APP in talks with new trustees

After months of searching for experienced individuals to join its growing board of trustees, APP is now in talks with a number of potential candidates.

APP has been in desperate need of new trustees for some time. Trustees are the people who help govern a charity: they may help run the organisation on a daily basis or may keep a more distant approach, but trustees always have the long-term goals of a charity in mind as they help it to grow. APP needs to expand its trustee board (currently only three people) with individuals experienced in one or more of the following areas: prisons, education, healthcare, palliative care, charity management/administration/governance and fundraising.

“I’m really hopeful that we’ll be able to expand our excellent board of trustees,” said Alexander McLean, APP’s director-general. “Our trustees do a sterling job but for APP to continue to grow we need more in-depth expertise.”

If you are interested in finding out more about the available trustee positions, please email one of the APP’s existing trustees Lyn McLean on lynmclean@africanprisons.org.



APP gets its groove on

A special report
by Adam Smith

The common room at London's notoriously cool School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is a strange, almost-but-not-quite pentagonal shape. Its walls are covered with posters explaining various third-world plights. Students lose whole afternoons in the lively room, chattering about social injustice and takeaways. There is a gaping hole in the floor, through which a staircase leads down to the bar. The common room is messy, but it has its own logic. What better stage for APP's first live music night?

In early 2009, Charlie Shuttler contacted APP with an idea. As a student Charlie had written an essay on the importance of

music in social movements, using APP's *Condemned Choir* album as a springboard into wider discussion of how powerful music can be on its makers and audience. As a musician in a number of different bands, Charlie wanted to use his skills and contacts to help APP.

APP practically bit the poor trumpeter's hand off. Charlie set about planning an evening of African music from traditional amadinda (a giant Ugandan glockenspiel) to afro-beat dub rap band Gravy Train and to Afla Sackey & Afrik Bawantu. He got SOAS on board, providing us with a free venue plus equipment, and managed to persuade the bands to play for free. APP volunteers supported Charlie by organising some Ugandan food, promotional flyers and posters, and fundraising materials.

The day itself arrived all too soon. APP director-general Alexander McLean was on-site for much of the afternoon, giving talks in the common room and a class. Meanwhile, other APP volunteers manned a stall all afternoon to help promote APP and the music night.

The party went on well after midnight, in spite of the security guard's signal to stop

By the time Seby Ntege and Ngoma started to play, dusk was setting in and the crowd had grown to a considerable size. Every audience member by the stage looked ready to groove and as soon as Seby and his band started to play, it would have been impossible to stand still. The musicians pounded out some booming Ugandan rhythms and shook their bodies to the beat. Almost every member of the band sung at one point or another, much to the amazement of the crowd.

The audience was now fired up, so Alexander took the stage to deliver a brief talk about APP. Next, Gravy Train commandeered the stage with their south London protest pop. APP volunteers naturally solicited for more donations, at the door, on the bar and anywhere else possible. They also managed to sell a significant number of Condemned Choir CDs. Finally, Afla Sackey & Afrik Bawantu, an expansive 12-piece afro-funk band appeared, each member dressed in colourful Ugandan cloth and ready to groove. The ensuing sound filled the room, from guitars to drums to horns (including co-organiser Charlie on trumpet). There was a happy, frenetic sound. The crowd could not help but move to the rhythm. A few outstanding solos elaborated on

Afrik Bawantu's message, while the band's energetic singers engaged every member of the audience.

The party went on well after midnight, in spite of the security guard's signal to stop. The headliners had to do one more song; it was a frenzied attack on sense but pure rhythm genius.



Afrik Bawantu rock the willing crowd at the Afro-beat Break-out night

The Afro-beat Break-out was a triumphant success, a night that proves APP's model: that an enthusiastic individual can see a niche and a way that he/she can help, then plans a project and executes it to great acclaim. This is the foundation upon which APP was established, with Alexander responding to basic needs of prisoners in Africa, and that upon which it can continue. With support from individuals like Charlie, APP pounds ahead like a marching band.

Thanks to everyone involved with the Afro-beat Break-out night. Special thanks to Angela Impey, Massy Rukuundo, Ben Sellers, Charlie Shuttler and Robbie Smith.



Work begins on the foundations of the Gulu health centre

Project update!

Project: Construction of a health centre at Gulu Prison, northern Uganda

Background

Gulu Prison is located in northern Uganda, a region that has been torn apart by war for the past twenty years. As a result, there is a severe lack of adequate health facilities, causing further suffering to the local people. The prison currently holds up to 1,000 inmates, but it has only the most basic medical facilities. Prisoners who need anything more than paracetamol and the privilege of sleeping on a mattress are

supposed to be transferred to the district hospital. However, a lack of transport and fuel means that prisoners rarely receive treatment, often dying unnecessarily from conditions such as diarrhoea or tuberculosis.

Prison warders, wardresses and their families also do not have access to medical treatment. They live in overcrowded military-style barracks, which means that the diseases that plague inmates due to poor housing also affect their keepers. Women are forced to give birth in prison due to the lack of a suitable maternity centre nearby – a condition in breach of United Nations regulations and which means that if there are any complications during the birth, mother and child have a much greater chance of dying.

Project details

APP is constructing a health centre to change the lives of the 5,000 prisoners, officers, family members and people in the communities surrounding Gulu Prison.

The boost a health centre will give to the beleaguered medical staff is hard to describe. APP will use its expertise to ensure the following:

- 1) Access to health care for the prisoners of Gulu Prison, its staff and their relatives.
- 2) Access to health care for the local community, which has been so badly affected by the war.
- 3) Reduction of long and gruelling transportation of often desperately ill prisoners to the nearest referral hospital.
- 4) Construction of a maternity ward within the health centre so that, in accordance with United Nations regulations, women will no longer have to give birth inside the prison.
- 5) Provision of accommodation for nurses working at the facility. This will be in close proximity to the health centre, allowing for 24-hour nursing care for the patients.

Update from APP engineer Gordon Binomugisha

On 31 March 2009, APP volunteer Rowan Hunter and I went to Gulu District to hand over officially the site for the Gulu Project, upon which the health centre is yet to be constructed. The parties attending the handover ceremony were Uganda Prisons Service (UPS) Gulu, SEM Investments and APP.



The health centre will provide health care for the prisoners of Gulu Prison, its staff and their relatives.

On arrival at Gulu we met with the other parties and proceeded to the official site. Once there, we took photographs of the site and the parties present. Among other things, we discussed the quality of work expected, storage of materials, unskilled labour from UPS Gulu and general overviews of the entire project.

During our visit, UPS Gulu pledged to cooperate fully with the relevant parties and to be involved in the implementation of the whole project. SEM Investments also pledged to cooperate and comply with its part of the project implementation and also to produce work that meets APP's expectations.

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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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