

Centre for Applied Human Rights

CAHR Newsletter 1, July 2008



Events

On July 1st, CAHR, in association with the University's Social Policy Research Unit, held its first major public event, a one-day conference on Children's Rights and Participation. It proved to be a very successful day, with over 100 people attending. The wide experience of the contributors, including speakers from the UK, Ireland, Afghanistan, and Zimbabwe, representing universities, youth groups, non-governmental organisations, and development agencies, set a welcome precedent for the future work of CAHR. Debates during the day looked to promote and constructively critique the application of human rights in this field, both domestically and internationally. A rapporteur's report is available on CAHR's website.

Visiting Fellows

CAHR Fellows, Sharon Gwati and Saifora Barekzai, came to York in the spring on Protective Fellowships which enable human rights defenders working in difficult circumstances around the world to spend several months at CAHR. In October we hope to welcome two new Fellows, one from the occupied Palestinian territories and another from Indonesia.



Front left Saifora Barekzai and front right Sharon Gwati

Sharon and Saifora have had a busy schedule of speaking engagements. In addition to addressing the Child Rights and Participation conference, on 2nd July Sharon and Saifora spoke about their work and about the situation of women in their home countries at a meeting of the Soroptimists in Harrogate. The Soroptimists are a worldwide organisation that brings together professional women to work through service projects to advance human rights and the status of women. The British Federation of Soroptimists has close links to clubs in Zimbabwe and Pakistan (although not Afghanistan), and so the meeting offered the opportunity to make valuable contacts for the future. We extend our thanks to Marion Simon for setting up the talk and for her generous hospitality in Harrogate. On 23rd July, Sharon and Saifora will both be giving a public talk at York St John University on Women's Lives in Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, in association with the York One World Linking Association. Sharon is also due to be interviewed on BBC Radio York.

MA and PhDs

On a number of fronts, preparations are underway for the new academic year starting in October:

- CAHR is soon to move into new office space. This area is currently being refurbished and will include individual offices in addition to a common study area for PhD students and CAHR Fellows with all the necessary computing and other facilities.
- Scholarships have been offered to three PhD students who will be among the doctoral scholars starting work at the Centre in October.
 - Natasha Khan, from Fiji, has a background in peace and development research and will be exploring the challenges of ensuring public participation in transitional justice mechanisms.
 - Tumaini Minja, from Tanzania, is a lawyer and founder of Pro-PEACE (Professionals Peace Activism Initiative) – his research will examine the role of traditional justice mechanisms in promoting reconciliation in Southern Sudan.
 - Lynn Shorter is a US citizen resident in the UK, with a background in social work. Lynn's thesis also focuses on ways of facilitating participation, at the intersection of social work, development and human rights.

Staff and interns

In May, Michael Kearney gave a paper in Tehran, Iran, at a School of International Relations and International Committee of the Red Cross conference on international humanitarian law. We are also delighted to announce that he was recently awarded the Lieber Certificate of Merit for outstanding scholarship in the field of the law of armed conflict from the American Society of International Law for his book *The Prohibition of Propaganda for War in International Law* (OUP, 2007).

Paul Gready attended two conferences on human rights and health, with a view to developing the Centre's work in this area. The first was entitled Global Health Issues and Human Rights (University of Warwick, 5-6 June), and the second, Mental Health: It's Everybody's Business ((University of York, 10 July 2008). Mary Renfrew, Director of the Mother and Infant Research Unit in the Department of Health Sciences, has been leading our health-based work.

CAHR and allied departments have been pleased to host two interns over the summer. Elizabeth Montpetit, a law student from Canada, helped organise and acted as rapporteur for the Child Rights and Participation conference. She is also assisting with research for the MA module in human rights and development, and providing research assistance to our Visiting Fellows. Kirsteen Macleod, has a background in medicine, public health and human rights, and has been assisting Mary Renfrew in designing a health and human rights module and curriculum for the MA (2009-10), developing a research agenda in this sub-specialty, and drafting policy papers on maternal and infant health for publication.