

# Human Rights

Human Rights, including the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law, are the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled.

Progress has been made in the assurance of these rights since the signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights close to sixty years ago. However, there are still deep-seated violations worldwide, undermining the world's goals for sustainable development.

CWW has been active in supporting human rights by sending skilled volunteers to work with NGOs, governments and private lawyers since 2000. The majority of our work has been in Belize where we have sent over 20 lawyers in the last 5 years to help reform laws on the rights of children as well as domestic violence.

This programme has been such a success that we have scaled up activity in the region by working with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States to revamp family law and domestic violence legislation across nine states. We are also active in legal reform in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.



*We will continue to engage leading professionals and committed development partners to work towards meeting international human rights goals. CWW is now working with leading law firms and engaging their staff in assignments with our partners overseas. Contact the CWW office for further details.*

## Examples of CWW Human Rights partners....

### **Belize:**

**Attorney-at-law, Antoinette Moore** is an American lawyer who has lived in Belize for over 15 years. She is a founder of the Centre for Human Rights Studies in Belmopan, situated on the campus of the Belize University. The Centre works to promote debate and discussion around human rights issues in Belize. Antoinette undertakes pro bono human rights work and recently created history on 18th October 2007, when the Supreme Court of Belize momentarily found that the constitutional rights of the Maya people in Belize had been violated by their own Government.

### **India:**

#### **Human Rights Law Network (HRLN):**

CWW has an expanding partnership with the HRLN in Delhi. Consisting of lawyers and social activists HRLN is dedicated to the use of the legal system to advance human rights, struggle against violations, and ensure access to justice for all. The organisation provides pro bono legal services to those with little or no access to the justice system and is active in public interest litigation, advocacy, legal awareness programmes, and participating in campaigns.

## Case Studies...

**CWW Delivery Partner:** Women's Department, Ministry of Human Development, Belize

**CWW Volunteer:** Raheel Khan

*Scotsman journalist Louise Gray recently wrote an article on Raheel's work – read some of it below...*

Stuck in a job in the city, where the most exciting event of his week was boosting the balance sheets of the latest client or company, Khan was, like many young corporate lawyers, bored stiff. The 34-year-old had even considered resigning because he was so disillusioned. He had a vague idea of doing voluntary work but had no idea about how to go about it – then he stumbled across Challenges Worldwide (CWW) and was offered the chance for a lawyer to do some good.

*"I thought only doctors or teachers could find volunteer work," says Khan. "So I was thrilled at the opportunity to find an organisation that offered short-term placements for lawyers."*

He was offered a job in the Women's Department of the Ministry of Human Development in Belize City. His task was to get to grips with a massive new piece of legislation on domestic violence and help to explain it to perpetrators and victims as well as the police and politicians.

*"I had an ongoing duty to train the judiciary, police and officers of government departments and NGOs on the new law and procedure," he says. "This, together with my other objectives, all required me in a relatively short time to fully grasp an area of law, practice and national policy in which I had no prior experience."*

However, Khan not only managed to finalise a policy document for publication but wrote a handbook on the relevant laws around domestic violence and successfully publicised the new law on national television and radio.

*"One of my most rewarding experiences was hearing my summary of the new legislation being read out on national TV by the Attorney General as part of one of his speeches. I wonder what the chances are for this ever happening in the UK?"*

Khan says the three months was also a great life experience:

*"Although I had travelled independently in the past I had never worked in a foreign country, and aside from a few pro bono sessions as a trainee I had never experienced such rewarding work. I would never have dreamt that being a lawyer could in fact make such a positive difference to the lives of so many people."*



**CWW Delivery Partner:**

Odhikar, Bangladesh

**CWW Volunteer:**

Michael O'Hagan

Michael O'Hagan, a law graduate from Glasgow, returns to the UK in December 07 after a six-month placement with Bangladesh human rights organisation Odhikar.

A leading Bangladeshi NGO, Odhikar's main objectives are to raise the awareness of human rights and its various abuses, in order to create a wider monitoring system and to create a vibrant democratic system through election monitoring.

O'Hagan, who previously worked for Scottish Power in business development, has been working with Odhikar training in research, and developing a comprehensive documentation system to record the impact of Odhikar's different activities. He has a great experience, enjoyed the work and has a special bond with Bangladesh. In one of his last weekly reports he wrote -

*"I'm very much aware that I've not got long to go before I'll be coming home - I'll be happy to see everyone at home of course – especially as it'll be Christmas – but I'll be very, very sorry to leave Bangladesh."*