

Centre for Hope and Life in and after Prison Initiative - Uganda

CHALAPI-UG – A VOICE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



What have CHALAPI been up to recently?

They have been.. Standing up for the Local Community and Transparency

On 11th May 2021 Godfrey wrote a letter to the Chief Administrator of Kasese District Local Government. In it he submitted a request, seeking access to records and information about how a certain special fund known as Emyooga, has been spent in the Kasese district. This is a central Government supplied fund which aims to support community groups and small-scale businesses as a way of helping to alleviate poverty. Kasese District has received 1 billion Ugandan Shillings from the Government for this cause – approximately £200,000. CHALAPI has submitted business concept papers applying for some of the funds, as have numerous other community groups, yet none have received any. And now it appears the money has gone. Frustrated and angered by this, Godfrey has demanded details about where the money is.

The Local Government had until 25th May to respond but as of today, June 1st, they have not responded. This means that tomorrow, CHALAPI will have to take them to court and sue them. CHALAPI have taken on a sympathetic and supportive local lawyer to assist them in the legal aspects, which has so far cost £200, of which local people have contributed a total of £50 in support of the work. The lawyer has so far found 'lots of mess with government structures' and has found many other community groups who have also not received promised funds.

By taking this action, Godfrey has effectively accused the Local Government officials of corruption, which is a dangerous thing to do in his part of the world. He is confronting powerful people, who could lose their jobs and even end up in prison (ironically), who could try to stop him or seek revenge. But his conscience means he is prepared to pursue this to the end on behalf of poor and disadvantaged people in his local community, many of whom are ex-prisoners.



When Godfrey first wrote the letter, he was very isolated and felt too unsafe to leave his home, although he has the full support of the Board of CHALAPI. He was then invited to speak on the local radio station where many people called in with stories of similar injustices and he obtained evidence of even more groups not receiving any money. He has support from his Church family and many other local people but he and his family could remain at risk.

We really hope that the funds were all dealt with properly, but if not, our hope is that having been challenged, the local government will in future be transformed, become more accountable and be a true representative of the people it serves. Please join us in praying for this.

Please check out our website at <http://www.chalapi.com> for more information

..Improving Prison Facilities - In the last newsletter we informed you that the toilets at Nyabirongo Prison needed fixing – there are 3 toilets for up to 90 prisoners. Well, this work has now been done, with grateful thanks to Nurse Robert Baluku and his team from Kagando Hospital who do the monthly medical outreaches to the Prison. The septic tank was overflowing so this was emptied, and a sewage pipe that had fractured and was leaking was also fixed. Additional windows were also installed to bring much needed light and ventilation into the building. All inmates are very grateful.



These pictures show one of the toilets, the entrance to the septic tank and the repairs to the dormitory wall

..Encouraging former Prisoners - At Easter, CHALAPI celebrated with the Royal Guards and prisoners who were released without charge after 4 years in custody in Kampala. The theme was 'I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert', which is very relevant for these people and their families who have suffered so much.

..Asthma - Godfrey now has a steroid inhaler to help control his asthma. It had to be ordered from Kampala because they are not widely used in Uganda. He says it is effective and he is feeling better and we hope that it will protect his lungs from further asthma attacks.

..COVID - We are grateful that COVID infections in the Kasese District remain low. The vaccine has arrived there but Godfrey has not been able to have a dose yet as health workers are being prioritised. We hope he will not have to wait too long.

..Training Police - On April 28th CHALAPI were invited to run a workshop with the Police at Maliba sub county Police Station, on the role of the police in speeding up justice, as there has been an issue of people remaining in police custody for long periods before they are taken to court. CHALAPI were asked to do some education in how the Police could speed this process up, reducing the number of people in detention unnecessarily because Ugandan Police station cells are very poor and unhealthy places to be. The training was well received.



..Collaborating - On 6th May CHALAPI were asked by the Ugandan Human Rights Commission to organise a workshop in Kasese District on peace building and conflict resolution and CHALAPI were chosen out of all the organisations in Kasese to organise this. They had just 5 days' notice to make all the preparations! The training was attended by 71 participants representing minority clan groups, members of the district interreligious council, representatives of cultural institutions, security agencies, civil society organisations and the media. Topics covered included the concept of human rights, conflict resolution, sustainable peace building and basic understanding of the rule of law. Godfrey spoke on the concept of human rights and referred to the cruel, degrading and inhumane treatment in places of detention. He challenged participants that to 'deny any person their lawful and God given human rights is to challenge their very humanity', a quote from Nelson Mandela. He says "we came up with a number of recommendations for the Human Rights Commission:

1. To investigate and publish reports on the Human Rights violations in Kasese district
2. To visit detention facilities in Kasese and make recommendations on areas of improvement to the Government.
3. To support rehabilitation of victims of violence
4. To support the translation of some of the existing laws, for example the constitution, into the local language.
5. To train police, army and prison officers in the concept of human rights
6. To work hard to mitigate the increased case backlog by increasing the number of magistrates
7. To teach peace and conflict resolution in all institutions of learning
8. To use all platforms to preach peace.

Participants all signed the recommendations, which will be submitted to the Commission. The Commission appreciated and recognized CHALAPI's effort in organising the training and promised to consider a Memorandum of Understanding with CHALAPI for future collaborations."

Thank you for supporting this life changing and life transforming work!
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