

# Global Conscience Initiative Annual Report 2009



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## Introduction

Global Conscience Initiative is a Cameroon-based, grassroots nonprofit organization working for a peaceful world through the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy, governance, social justice and the rule of law. We operate offices in both Kumba and Buea of the Southwest Region of Cameroon.

Journalist Samba Churchill wrote the Constitution of Global Conscience Initiative (GCI) in 1999 after he was severely tortured by a local militia of the paramount traditional ruler of Kumba and Central Committee member of the ruling Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement, CPDM Party.

Global Conscience Initiative's two main projects concern access to justice issues and that has become our area of expertise within the human rights domain. However, we operate additional projects as there are many human rights issues of concern in this region.

The following annual report highlights our many accomplishments in 2009.

## Staff, Volunteers & Interns

Global Conscience Initiative would not have gotten anywhere in 2009 without its dedicated permanent staff, volunteers and interns. This year, the organization invited an unprecedented number of interns to work on our projects. As you can see from the chart below, they came from all over the globe.

### Permanent Staff:

All of the following individuals worked as staff at GCI over the course of 2009:

Samba Churchill – Chief Executive Officer  
Justine Lucas – Programme Director  
Ntebo Ebenezer – Administrative Officer  
Kate Armstrong – Communication Officer  
Esong Honorine – Communication Officer  
Kengne Clovis – Finance Officer  
Ashu Sylvester – Finance Officer  
Egbe Minet Orogo – Office Assistant  
Nayuoh Vera – Office Assistant  
Chamango Blaise – Office Assistant  
Elad Theodore – Office Assistant  
Ezekiel Yinkfu – Assistant  
Samuel Dingana – Research Assistant  
Niba Brian – Office Assistant

### Volunteers:

Ngala Elvis Tawe  
Kukwa Chiangeh Isaac

### Consultants:

Quincy Diep

### Interns:

<b>NAME</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>NATIONALITY</b>
Alexander Baker	Prisoners' Rights Project	Canadian
Angela Garcia	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	Columbian
Barbara Schuler	Prisoners' Rights Project	Swiss
Ben Rix	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	British
Brendan Fletcher	Prisoners' Rights Project	American

Cliona Martyn	Prisoners' Rights Project	Irish
David Wallis	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	American
Davide Marchesi	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	Italian
Elizabeth Sterling	Grant writing	American
Emilien Tambe	Various	Cameroonian
Ernest Arthur	Various	Cameroonian
Fosab Annabel	Prisoners' Rights Project	Cameroonian
Francesco Frigerio	Prisoners' Rights Project	Italian
Giorgio Franco	Media Watch Project	Italian
Heather Mckinnon	Media Watch Project	Australian
Ida Bektas	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	Swiss
Ida Brittesland	Human Rights Clubs	Swedish
Jeffrey Austin Price	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	American
Jordan Pearlstein	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	American
Laura Bartkowiak	Prisoners' Rights Project	American
Leanne Johansson	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	South African
Linn Akerstedt	Human Rights Clubs	Swedish
Lydia Bulmer	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	British
Marlies Rotschuizen	Prisoners' Rights Project	Dutch
Melissa Gang	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	American
Michele Sanna	Media Watch Project	Italian
Sigal Liberman	Prisoners' Rights Project	Dutch
Tanya Castle	Centres of Arbitration & Mediation	Canadian
Tiffany Hu	Prisoners' Rights Project	Canadian

## Board of Directors

Global Conscience Initiative's Board of Directors met three times in 2009. The first was in April for the annual gathering. This meeting was held at the Vianello Hotel and was well attended by GCI's constituents. In May, the Board re-convened for a Constitutional Review meeting. An edited version of the By-Laws of the organization was distributed to Board members prior to this meeting for review. Then the Board met to discuss the edits and submit their changes. The year-end meeting was held in November. This meeting served primarily as a programmatic review of the project activities to date and as a farewell to the Program Director. There was hope the new set of By-Laws would be voted into action by the Board at this meeting, however, there was not a quorum.

GCI has both a Board of Directors and an Advisory Board. The Board of Directors live within the Southwest Region and thus can actively engage with the organization. The Advisory Board members often do not live close enough to attend meetings, but provide guidance and support wherever possible.

Global Conscience Initiative's Board of Directors:

*Board Chairman:* Barrister Pende Eddie Nelson – Pens Law Firm

*Vice President:* Ayuk Agbor Raymond - Radiologist

Sako Emmanuel Enyanson – Trade Unionist

Barrister Pende Eddie Nelson – Pens Law Firm

Barrister Ngenko

Honorable Chief Norbert Mbile

Barrister Ambo Daniel

Barrister Awutah Philip

Mawoh John Chokeh

Dorothy Takang – Women's Empowerment Center

Global Conscience Initiative's Advisory Board:

Kingsley Belle

Nkea Emmanuel

## Partners / Collaborators

Much of GCI's work has to do with access to justice issues. Thus legal advice and guidance is extremely valuable to our organization. Not only are our pro bono legal affiliates valuable to the work of our Prisoners' Rights Project, but they provide many hours of general guidance as human rights abuse cases come forth. In 2009, we partnered with eight firms. At the end of the year, these firms were awarded with certificates of service as we were incredibly grateful for their support.

### Pro Bono Partners:

- 1) Mpako & Associates Law Firm - Kumba
- 2) Amumba Law Firm - Kumba
- 3) Eyambe-Ebai Law Firm - Kumba
- 4) Pens Law Firm - Kumba
- 5) Ambo-Esah Law Firm - Kumba
- 6) Ngenko Law Firm - Kumba
- 7) Njilla Esq & Associates - Buea
- 8) Tako Chambers - Buea

In addition, GCI has a number of partners on both an international and local scale without which our work would not be possible. Here is a list of additional partners we worked with this year:

***Ocean City Radio:*** GCI has had a long-standing partnership with this radio station and we are forever grateful for all of their support. In Kumba, Ocean City hosts our weekly human rights radio hour and has now, for over a year.

***CIVICUS:*** An international organization with which GCI partnered this year.

***National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms:*** GCI worked very closely with the NCHRF both on the regional level in Buea and on the national level in Yaounde. They followed our work closely, especially in regards to the case against the prison administration in Kumba.

***Volunteers for Prison Inmates:*** VPI is a local nonprofit in Kumba that works for the betterment of prison conditions and for justice for prisoners. This organization provided GCI with a lot of support in gaining information on prisoners when we lost access to the prison.

***Anti-Corruption Cameroon:*** GCI worked closely with this Yaounde-based organization in investigating corruption in the transport sector in Kumba. Although we were not able to bring a case forward because of the fear of many individuals to testify, we hope to continue working with this organization in the coming year.

## Projects

### ***Prisoners' Rights Project***

Our Prisoners' Rights Project was extremely successful this year and absolutely achieved one of the greatest victories that GCI as an organization has seen to date. The goal of this project is two-fold: to investigate and address the human rights abuses in the prison and to pair awaiting trial detainees with legal defense. Although we faced frustrations with access to the prison in Kumba, we were still able to take on 25 awaiting trial detainee cases over the course of the year. Furthermore, GCI officially partnered with 8 law firms in 2009. The interns on this project did an excellent job at fostering and maintaining strong relationships with these partners.

As we all know, a major part of this project is investigating human rights abuses in the prison. The international interns utilized the first half of 2009 to collect massive amounts of data while they had access to the prison. Additionally, they conducted many interviews outside the prison and visited the families of those that lost their lives while in the Kumba Principal Prison. They then began work on an initial document that illustrated the human rights abuses they found through their investigations. One of the major things that was uncovered was an incident of torture that began on August 18, 2008 where chains were welded onto the wrists and ankles of 23 detainees, subsequently resulting in the deaths of three inmates. Specifically regarding this incident of torture, a declaration of facts was presented to the Senior State Counsel and all of the hierarchy; which resulted in a police investigation that validated all of our facts.

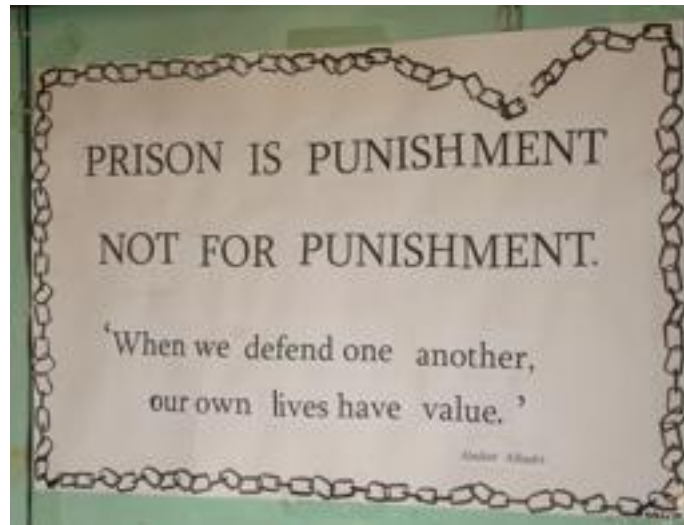
Brendan Fletcher joined the project with his legal expertise in July and fleshed out a legal framework to accompany the teams' facts. This was made into a thorough presentation of why all the abuses are illegal both in domestic and international law captured in a report entitled *The Forgotten Rights of the Kumba Principal Prison Population*. Mr. Fletcher, the Programme Director and the Board Chairman then traveled to Buea to present this to the Procurrer General and then to Yaounde to the Ministry of Justice and the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms.

The 18<sup>th</sup> of August declaration, the investigation that followed, the report and pressure from hierarchy and our partners have resulted in the Senior State Counsel's decision to prosecute the Prison Superintendent and 5 warders for torture leading to death of inmates. This is an unprecedented accomplishment for human rights work in West/Central Africa and will set an example for all Cameroonian penitentiary institutions that these acts will not be tolerated.

This project also produced a regular publication called Behind Bars that highlighted the work of the project as well as issues specific to the prison population.



In Buea, the project kicked off mid-year and much work was done on habeas corpus applications on behalf of individual prisoners. Much work was also done in sourcing for partners. Alex Baker even established a Prisoners' Rights Project blog; which is now covering the work done in both offices. This is an incredible resource for the international community!



### ***Centres of Arbitration & Mediation Project***

As one of GCI's oldest projects, CAMs has taken on many phases over the course of its history. The goal of the project has always been to improve the traditional village councils' ability to administer justice. This goal evolved over the course of 2009 turning this project into a sustainable and groundbreaking initiative.

The year was kicked off with the completion of a thorough evaluation of the project to date. It highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the project up to that juncture. In the first quarter of 2009, the international interns on the CAMs project utilized this evaluation to determine that visiting the councils for workshops would have the greatest impact and that corruption and mediation would be appropriate topics for these workshops. They were able to meet with many councils during their stay.

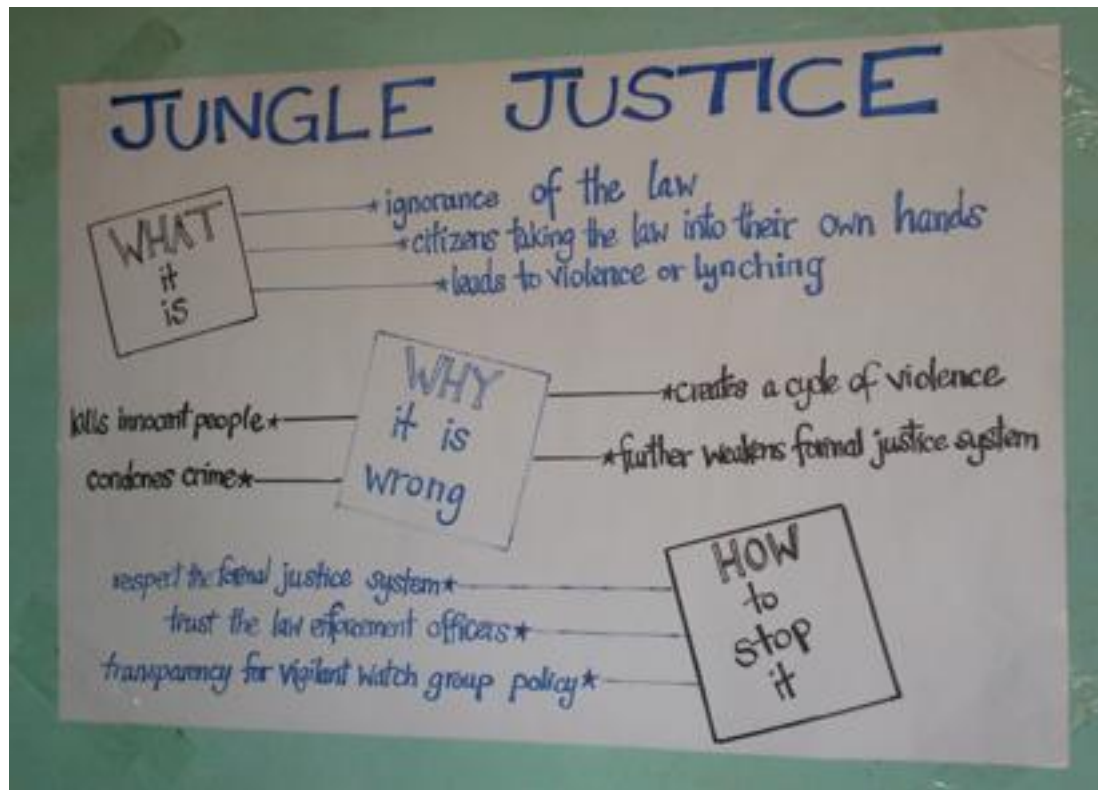
Through analysis of the work done in the Spring was conducted by the incoming summer interns. They interns determined that they could have a greater impact by working with fewer councils and doing multiple workshops with these councils. Thus they would form strong relationships with the council and have a more sustainable impact on each council. They formulated a series of four workshops with interactive materials and successfully worked with four different councils. The impact we had on these councils was very evident when we re-visited some of them in the Fall.

Meanwhile, Jordan Pearlstein began work on a CAMs project in Buea. Utilizing her knowledge of the project planning process, Jordan took a step back and did a thorough needs assessment in the Buea region to determine if our work was in line with the actual needs of these communities. Utilizing her findings, a new goal and objectives was determined collectively by the Programme Director and the four interns working on the project at that juncture. Furthermore, a specific subdivision was identified where there was the greatest need for this project. The result of which was a new overall goal for the CAMs project: *To increase the low-income population's ability to access appropriate and effective forums of justice in the Mbonge Subdivision, Meme Division, Southwest Cameroon.*

Thus, at this juncture, implementation of the project was put on hold. Utilizing the guidelines of the interns who had identified the new goal, the survey data collected by everyone in 2009 and all the previously conducted workshops, the Fall interns began the project design process for 2010. Five villages were identified in Mbonge Subdivision: Ediki, Mbalagi, 3 Corners Ekombe, KwaKwa and Mofako Bekondo. Many trips were made to these villages in order to understand the dynamics and challenges of each village, the village councils, and the community and church groups that were active there. The CAMs project team successfully formulated a project plan that utilizes some of the past council workshops, but additionally works with community and church groups, vigilant groups and the radio to meet the identified goal: *To increase the low-income population's ability to*

access appropriate and effective forums of justice in the Mbonge Subdivision, Meme Division, Southwest Cameroon. Not only will this project plan ensure a sustainable impact on these communities, but it will also allow GCI to apply for resources necessary to support the project in the long term.

The CAMs project is looking forward to a very successful 2010!



### ***Human Rights Clubs***

This project is one which GCI has been trying to get off the ground for a long time and 2009 was the year that it really got underway. It was something that interns and staff members would work on in their free time, but in September, two interns arrived to work solely on this endeavor. During their time in Cameroon, they were successful in establishing ten active and sustainable clubs in Kumba over the course of the Fall semester. The clubs have been supported by school principals and facilitated by teacher coordinators appointed by the respective principals. All clubs also have elected executive student leader.

To kick off the project, the interns executed basic human rights workshops in eleven schools. Through these workshops, they reached more than 500 students with messages on human rights. In addition, they held a leadership workshop to give the leaders of those clubs the skills necessary to further ensure their sustainability. The students were all extremely eager, involved and dedicated to their pursuit of human rights knowledge.

A goal of this project was to make these human rights clubs sustainable far beyond the stay of the interns. This was ensured through the election of student leadership, leadership training, topic guides for club meetings the following semester and through the development of a keen interest in human rights in general. We are confident these clubs will continue to be active in 2010 spreading human rights knowledge to thousands of Kumba's children.

Under the scope of human rights education, the interns and volunteers on this project continued the outreach for resource materials for the library and the students they were working with. They were successful in getting many materials sent from international organizations. They also played a crucial role in much of the human rights radio hour during the last quarter of 2009.

As an end of the first term of the academic school year, interns and staff of GCI organized an event to acknowledge the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10th. This event served as an opportunity for students to deepen their scope of knowledge on the theme of the event: The Right to Education. During the event, students performed drama, presented poems and papers and engaged in a lively debate. The event was well attended and was an excellent educational festivity to close out the year.

## ***Media Watch Project***

The Media Watch Project was something that had started in 2008, but this year the project really accomplished a great deal. . Upon reading a report done by a previous MediaWatch intern, the group felt that more interviews with journalists and media professionals were needed in addition to further research, in order to write a comprehensive report on the state of the Anglophone media in Cameroon. The completed report provides a background for future interns and illuminates the problems faced by the private media. Twenty-plus interviews were conducted with media professionals in Kumba. The data from these interviews and general research was compiled with data from the previous work. The interviews were also used as a way of setting up a contact database and establishing rapport with media professionals in Kumba for networking purposes and possible future collaborations.

Following the completion of the report, strategies for practical help, such as training workshops, were then devised according to the problems presented. Also, the interns submitted a funding proposal to apply for a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy.

A big part of this project was establishing relationships and continuing research. The interns attended editorial meetings at the Post Newspaper, a general meeting of the Cameroonian Association of English Speaking Journalists (CAMASEJ) and a meeting with the School of Journalism at the University of Buea.

Another arm of this project was education. The Project hosted a successful workshop on news writing skills in August, attended by fifteen working journalists. The interns also created a MediaWatch project website which has launched and is now regularly updated. It includes analysis of media articles as part of the project's intention to monitor lapses by the media in good reporting and the reporting of human rights. This will definitely be a window for the international community to understand the media situation in Cameroon.

Additionally, the project continually monitors harassment of journalists or closure of media outlets and has acted against these with letters of protest sent to relevant authorities.

### ***Human Rights Radio Hour***

Global Conscience Initiative's Human Rights Radio Hour is a project that has been constant for over a year now. Every single week, GCI speaks to the Kumba community and its surrounding areas about various human rights topics. Every single intern, volunteer and staff member participates in this project with 3 or 4 members of the GCI community speaking live on the air each show. The project would not be possible without the generosity of Ocean City Radio Kumba.

GCI would choose topics for the show that highlighted international human rights days, human rights issues that were particularly pertinent to Kumba that week or were requested by community members. We often had special guests on the show that speak more knowledgably on a topic. This show is well listened to by the Kumba community and is an excellent example of how GCI believes in constant education on human rights.

## Human Rights Resource Center

Global Conscience Initiative began building a human rights resource center in 2008, but this really kicked into full gear in 2009. The organization, with the help of a donation from the Programme Director, purchased a large bookcase for the office. At the start of the year, GCI reached out to numerous international organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International and there was a very positive response. Amnesty International is now regularly sending their human rights publications to GCI free of charge and the United Nations has sent books and copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The human rights resource center is rapidly filling up and is open to the public during office hours.

## Talkshops

The goal of GCI's talkshops is two-fold. They provide an educational forum for the community to learn about human rights and they build relationships between vital members of the community. Global Conscience Initiative held a number of well attended talkshops in our office in Kumba in 2009. The topics of these including such things as arbitrary detention and the environment. All members of the public were invited to attend and the events were announced in advanced over the radio. The public was eager for these to continue, but unfortunately we had to temporarily halt these educational forums due to lack of funding. Pending funding, we hope to continue these events in 2010.



## Human Rights Abuses

Global Conscience Initiative does much work beyond its projects. Individuals often come into the office with individual human rights complaints. Although it is not the mission of our organization to help out financially, we do provide guidance and advice on how to navigate the legal system, we can write letters on behalf of individuals and investigate ongoing human rights abuses.

In addition, GCI took on causes where a number on individuals' human rights were being abused. Corruption and extortion are rampant in Cameroon and its pervasiveness makes it a difficult fight to fight. Thus we would take on individual corruption or extortion issues. The office took on individual cases, but also two major cases that affect many of Kumba's citizens.

### *Corruption and Extortion in the Transport Sector*

It was brought to our attention that taxi and okada drivers in Kumba were subject to extortion by poice and gendarmes in raids where all vehicles were pulled to the side of the road. Additionally, drivers were being issued receipts by authorities that did not correspond to the amount they were required to pay. This even applied to the withdrawal of vehicles when they were impounded. After an initial investigation, GCI wrote to Anti-Corruption Cameroon who joined us in our further investigations.

GCI met with the taxi drivers union numerous times to discuss the possibility of bringing a case forward on this issue. Although the union would respond enthusiastically during the meeting, we had difficulty gathering individuals that would be willing to testify on this matter. The drivers were extremely fearful.

While meeting with individual taxi drivers to determine whether they would be willing to testify, it became apparent that the drivers believed their own union was extorting funds from them and they believed the funds they contributed to the senior authorities of the union may be unaccounted for. Thus, they were additionally fearful the union would not be there for them if they went forward with this case. This matter is ongoing.

### *Corruption and Extortion at the Kumba District Hospital*

It is common practice for the Kumba District Hospital to charge more than the receipts issued for medical certificates and medical legal certificates. They charge usually more than double what the receipts indicate. GCI conducted an investigation and brought the matter to the attention of the Senior State Counsel who conducted his own investigation. By the end of 2009, he claimed that his investigation was still incomplete.

GCI also put much pressure on the new Government Delegate to take a stand on this issue. Not only was he new to his office and this is a matter that affects the entire Kumba community, he is Chair of the Board of the hospital. The matter was discussed at the final Kumba District Hospital Board meeting of the year, but to-date no action has been taken.

### *Mob Justice in Kumba*

Mob justice is something that is particularly rampant in Kumba. GCI would investigate these incidents and call the SSC to intervene if they were in progress. Also, we wrote press releases condemning this practice and often discussed it on our human rights radio hour. The Centres of Arbitration & Mediation team added this subject matter to their dialogue with the traditional village councils. One of the main reasons this occurs in Kumba is a lack of trust in the judiciary system by the people.

## Gratitude

This report highlights some of the many accomplishments of Global Conscience Initiative in 2009. However, it is impossible to thank all the individuals responsible for making these happen. An evident place to start is with GCI's amazing staff, volunteers and international interns. These were the individuals that were in the office every day working for the common goal of improving the human rights situation in Cameroon. Although many of these individuals did not cross paths, the work described in this report illustrates that every single one of them had a truly significant impact on the work of GCI and that this work is ongoing, collective and powerful. Human rights work is not easy and is always slow. It takes individuals with determination, patience and commitment and GCI's staff, volunteers and interns all demonstrated these qualities; collectively resulting in a significant impact on the human rights situation in the Southwest Region of Cameroon.

GCI would also like to thank our consultant Quincy Diep for his pro bono services throughout the year that were instrumental to the successes of our Prisoners' Rights Project. Our pro bono legal affiliates donated countless hours in court and in the GCI office to our work and this is also something for which we are grateful. Ocean City Radio is a collaborator that is solely responsible for making our human rights radio hour a reality. We thank the management and staff of this wonderful organization.

GCI would also like to thank the Senior State Counsels of both Buea and Kumba for their constant cooperation.