

# GCI Annual Report for 2008

Report presented by Chief Executive  
Officer Samba Churchill

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## Staff/Volunteers/Interns

We are able to achieve our endeavours in 2008 thanks to the GCI staff, Volunteers and interns. The GCI staff remains feeble because we can not afford money to recruit professionals. The staff remain largely untrained but they were supported by local volunteers and international interns who bring in new ideas and varied experiences. Without our international interns, I must say, we will remain in the dark and our name will still be little known.

GCI has only two staff, the secretary and my self and we have been assisted by a number of volunteers. We had, in 2008, 13 youths assisting us at different times in volunteer capacities. These youths braced the odds to serve GCI and we remain indebted to them. Certainly, they have engraved their names on GCI and GCI will hopefully be able to show her appreciation any how with time.

We received our first international intern, Niamh Browne from Ireland, in January of 2008, and she spent three months in our office. Niamh started work on the prisons project; she carried out a survey of the Kumba Prisons facility and designed the roadmap that we now follow in our prisons project. She handled many administrative and communication responsibilities and recruited most of the other international interns that we received in 2008.

Last summer was quite memorable at GCI. With about ten interns from all over the world in our office, we experienced a heat in the office that attracted lots of questions and concerns from the administration and the public at large. The interns revitalized and revamped a number of GCI's programmes that had remained a conception only.

## Staff/Volunteers/Interns

The Human Rights Hour over Ocean City Radio was relaunched. Interns researched various topics that the discussed on air in a bid to inform the Kumba public on human rights. This discussions are very important in our human rights education and advocacy campaigns. The programme continues to gather new steam and new interns add vigour to the discussions.

The prisons project took a new dimension and we started publication of a newsletter, Behind Bars, that addressed the very pressing issues of the prison Community. The Prison or Access to Justice project interns also produced a hand book for prisoners that we are still looking for funding to publish.

Some other international interns also worked effortlessly in the CAMs project; bracing horrible road conditions to create mediation committees within existing local structures managing petit disputes. The CAMs interns worked in over forty villages and communities conducting a survey of existing low level dispute resolution structures and then tailored a training for local councilors on corruption and mediation. They also produced a mediation manual that we currently use for training in the office.

I must state that they interns, while working on their projects, also took active parts in all the other activities of GCI and immensely assisted in the day to day running of GCI activities.

## Staff/Volunteers/Interns

Meanwhile, we received Ms. Kate Armstrong as our Volunteer Communication officer in June 2008. Kate Armstrong has since then handled the very demanding responsibility of Communication. She continued from where Ms. Niamh left off with recruitment of interns, directing the Human Rights Hour programme, writing news releases, media alerts and preparing papers, receiving complaints of human rights violations in the office and writing petitions. She has also been writing and editing and proofing the website. Kate Armstrong continues to handle this and more responsibility with any compensation whatsoever. As she will be leaving us sometime in June, I wonder if we would be able to find another person to wear her shoes. I suggest we get someone now to learn from her before she comes to the end of her internship, or propose that we look for the necessary funds to integrate her as a paid staff.

We also had the privilege of receiving Ms. Arwen Kidd from Canada as an intern. Arwen, with a broad experience in Journalism brought in a wealth of experience having worked with NGOs in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Ghana and other countries. Arwen worked as Project Officer and wrote many project proposals that we are presently inviting funding for. She started the Media Watch project and carried out a survey of the English media landscape in Cameroon. She wrote a proposal for the project that we submitted to an international donor organisation. She also wrote another proposal for a Kumba Community based human rights resource centre that we submitted to the British Challenge fund.

Arwen worked three months in GCI but the feeling remains in the office like she spent a year in Cameroon. She continues to provide valuable assistance to the GCI as we look for someone to take her place.

Toward the end of 2008, we received yet other interns who worked to evaluate and continue the work of previous interns.

## Staff/Volunteers/Interns

Lydia Bulmer from Australia and Leanne Johannson from South Africa spent Christmas with us in Cameroon working on the Centres for Arbitration and Mediation. The two made an evaluation of the project and also started an Environmental Health Rights Project and a Plastic Reduction project proposal for Kumba municipality. Lydia has built a new website for the CAMs project and Kate is giving it the necessary finishing. The site is now available and can be visited at [www.cams.gcicamereroon.org](http://www.cams.gcicamereroon.org)

Leanne, a very dexterous and studious intern from South Africa carried out an investigation into allegations of extortion and corruption in the Meme Divisional Transport Delegation and the Kumba City Council. Her report has attracted partners who are now working with GCI to get the situation legally corrected. Leanne continues to follow our activities and contribute in our work.

Definitely it will not be easy and convenient for me to give you here the details of which interns we received in 2008, the duration of their internships and their contributions to our work. I have prepared below a table of the names of interns, their countries of origin, the duration of their stay and the projects they worked on. More on these can be found on the website or you may request copies of their reports.

## Staff/Volunteers/Interns

No.	Intern	Country	Duration	Project	Remarks
1	Niamh Browne	Ireland	Jan - March	Prisons	Carried out a survey of the Kumba prisons and wrote proposal for prison project
2	Caroline Thomas	United Kingdom	February	Prisons	Conducted interviews in the prison, police and gendarmerie stations
3	Casey Swegman	USA	May - August	CAMs	Surveyed local community structures for low level dispute management, developed a training manual on corruption and mediation and trained over fifty local councilors in mediation
4	Alexa Swift	Canada	May - August	CAMs	
5	Laura Griffins	Canada	May - August	CAMs	
6	Emmanuela Macek	France	June - August	CAMs/Prisons	
7	Hanah Sporer	USA	May - July	Prisons	Interviewed prisoners in the Kumba prisons and assisted them get legal representation; secured the release on bail for many prisoner; produced four issues of Behind Bars newsletter and produced a Hand book for prisoners. Organised three talshops on the issue of bail in Kumba
8	David Kienzler	USA	May - August	Prisons	
9	Karen Kielcweski	USA	May - August	Prisons	
10	Stephanie Matter	Switzerland	May - July	Prisons	



## Staff/Volunteers/Interns

11	Arwen Kidd	Canada	June - August	Media Watch	<p>Surveyed the Anglophone media landscape in Cameroon; developed the Media Watch project and wrote two project proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Watch</li> <li>• Human Rights Centre</li> </ul>
12	Francesco Perrone	Italy	July	Prisons	<p>Conducted interviews in the prisons and hospitals and reviewed and edited the Prisoners Handbook</p>
13	Lydia Bulmer	Australia	Nov - Feb	CAMs & Environmental Health	<p>Field visits to CAMs and evaluation. Organised a fund raising event; facilitated 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the UDHR and helped raised fund for support for prisoners. Designed a website for the CAMs project.</p>
14	Leanne Johannson	South Africa	Dec - January		<p>Field visits and evaluation of CAMs; Developed the Environmental Health and Plastic Reduction Projects; and investigated allegations of corruption in the transport office and City council.</p>

## National Interns

Each year we receive students from the Department of Women and Gender Studies of the University of Buea on field placements. We received five students from the department and they worked through the month of August. Regrettably our interns from Buea in 2008 left so much to be desired, compared to the work of past interns. This year we will address a letter to the University regarding the field placement activities of students and we would have to select students before allowing them in our office. We received many other applications from Cameroonians wishing to do internship in our office. Regrettably, many of the interns expected to get pay for the work they will do in our office. We are not able yet to pay for the work of interns and or volunteers.

## Local Volunteers

I will like to revisit local Volunteers who have been working with us in 2008. I will list the names and details of the volunteers, the time they spent with us and what they did in our office.

No	Volunteer	Position	Duration	Role	Remarks
1	Tazi Ivan	Volunteer Coordinator	Has been working part time since 2005	Direction and supervision of the work of local volunteers and interns	Tazi continues to work part time but his present office gives him very little time to assist us
2	Ntebo Ebenezer	Protection Officer	Since 2007 as full time volunteer	Receiving international interns and arranging their accommodation and general wellbeing. Assisted interns get to the CAMs villages, facilitated visits for prison interns, mobilised logistics for GCI events and managed the finances of the organisation	Presently Administrative Assistant in the GCI

### Local Volunteers (Cont'd)

3	Tawe Elvis Ngala	Health Supervisor	Since 2006 as part time volunteer	Assisted with GCI health programmes, facilitated investigations in the office, assisted with organisation of GCI events, also assisted in GCI's advocacy campaigns	Continues to assist us part time but without any defined roles
4	Ajebe Gilbert Akame	Prison Supervisor	May – Dec as part time volunteer	Assisted Prison interns with knowledge of the Cameroon Judiciary and the prison system, facilitated and supervised the work of interns in prisons, provided legal representation to some prisoners and facilitated GCI talkshops	Ajebe Gilbert left in December for further studies in Sweden and continue to make contributions to our work

### Local Volunteers (Cont'd)

5	Miriam Fekeme Mbigno	Promotion Assistant	2007 – Nov 2008 as intern and later as part time volunteer	Worked with CAMs interns on survey and in training, received complaints of human rights abuses in the office, counseled victims, intervened in the police and gendarmerie, wrote petitions and letters, and managed office files	Left GCI sometime in November.
6	Egbe Minet Orogo	Promotion Assistant	Feb – June full time	Assisted with recruitment of interns, facilitated GCI trainings.	Now works full time as Office Assistant. Her position need to be confirmed and her role clearly defined
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## Professional Development (Cont'd)

Professional development is very crucial to the survival of any institution. Staff need to learn new skills, exchange experiences and learn best practices, especially in forums where they are able to exchange ideas with professionals from different backgrounds. In house training is the first stage of the advancement of the skills of staff. In 2008, we had three in house sessions where staff learnt new skills and examined their weaknesses. This sessions have not however produced the desired results for a number of reasons:

1. Inadequate training materials
2. Lack of competent resource persons
3. Volunteer's lack of interest
4. Poor timing of sessions
5. Lack of funds for training

Volunteers participated in a few out of office professional events such as seminars, workshops and symposiums but their participations were principally on individual basis and no reports were submitted to the office. The knowledge acquired at this events have hardly been passed on to other workers.

At the international level, the Chief Executive participated in two very important events on the continent. In February of 2008, He attended the African Commission on Human and People's Rights workshop for Journalists from West Africa. He was nominated Communication Officer for the newly created West African Human Rights Journalist's Network and GCI helped draft the constitution of the network. The GCI Chief Executive was also appointed the ACHPR's focal point for journalists in Cameroon.

Following in the same vein, Global Conscience had the privilege and responsibility of mobilising Journalists from the Central African Sub region for a similar training in Cameroon. The workshop took place in Yaounde between December 16 – 18, and once again the GCI Chief was nominated to handle communications for the Central African Sub region and built a weblog for the network

## **Professional Development (Cont'd)**

These international forums provide an opening for advanced skills beside providing opportunities for networking. The skills acquired from these important events has helped GCI immensely in its advocacy programme and has advertised GCI to the international Community.

Regrettably, we were invited to attend the first World Justice Forum on the Rule of Law in Austria in June but our participation was frustrated by the Belgian embassy in Yaounde. The World Justice Project of the American Bar Association fully sponsored our participation at the event.

We have also received, in 2008, many invitations to attend international events but could not sponsor our participation. We should mobilise enough resources in 2009 to meet up with this challenge. We stand to gain so much from participation in professional development events. These prevents provide us with enviable opportunities to showcase our work and discuss our challenges with experts from varied backgrounds.

## Partnership

No civil society organisation or association can ever hit its mark without cooperation with other organisations involved in like kind of ideas. Global Conscience renewed its efforts to forge new partners and involve various civil society organisations in its mission to achieve peace for the Kumba Community in Particular and Cameroon at large. In some instances these partnerships have been very helpful while we have to continue exploit new ways of putting the other partnerships to fruition.

The National Commission on Human Rights Freedoms in Cameroon remained our first partners. We wrote over twenty letters to the Commission on cases of human rights abuses. The response to the commission to our worries have been very slow but in a few instances, we succeeded to get the commission take action that resituated some victims in their human rights.

I must say that we did not get the full collaboration of the National Commission as partners. The commission sidelined us in many training and information sharing events and we received little or no material or other support from the commission. Mails from the Commission always arrived by post and many months after the issues we raised. We understand that the commission has facilities for faster communication but deliberately underutilises these facilities. We have the onerous duty of challenging the National commission to sit up to her responsibility.

In 2008, we worked very closely with the Coalition for the International Criminal Court CICC. We exchanged releases and campaigns and we were invited to the Seventh session and the first and second resumed sessions of the Assembly of State parties. We could not participate in this events because of finances.

We received and continue to receive very useful informational materials from the CICC and assist the CICC in its campaign to get Global recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. We still have the responsibility of persuading the Cameroon state and government to ratify the Rome Statute of the international Criminal Court.

As mentioned earlier, we enjoyed the partnership of the African commission. We participated in two ACHPR training events, and received lots of resource materials from the Commission. We hope to work hard on this partnership and to obtain NGO observer status with the Commission in 2009.



## Partnership (Cont'd)

We worked with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have received two consignments of books from the Office and also received materials for the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 2008. We expect much more than resource materials from the OHCHR.

We have also worked, and continue to work with Interights UK on a number of projects. We are working with Interights to get a two cases before either the African Commission or the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. We also benefitted from the legal expertise of Interights in some cases where we have filed writs of habeas for some captives. Interights continues to provide useful counsel to GCI and we are looking forward to work with Interights on a good number of cases in the future.

Very importantly, we made the best of our relationship with Idealist in 2008. All our interns in 2008 saw us on Idealist.org. We owe Idealist all that we have achieved in 2008 through our international interns and volunteers. We have put an idealist logo and link on our website as our meagre contribution to spread the news of idealist. We cannot afford not to commend Idealist as a partner.

We also had the support and collaboration of Browell Smith and Co. solicitors in the UK. We carried out some research for the law firm and for many other international law firms connected to us by Browell Smith. We also benefited from a small financial support from the law firm and they provided us good counsel in our case against the department of public prosecution in Kumba on the issue of fiscal stamps on complaints and information to that department. Today, Mr. Alex Bell who first worked with us from Browell Smith operates his own Law Firm, Alex Bell Immigration Law. We enjoy good cooperation in the exchange of information.

We also had in 2008 very useful exchanges with the Centre for the Protection of Journalists. We received and used releases from the CPJ and participated in their campaigns against the abuse of the rights of journalist around the world. The CPJ proved a very resourceful partner and we benefitted so much from their information store.

## Partnership (Cont'd)

Still at the international level, we forged partnerships with some organisations as UBUNTU and the Advocacy Project. We have participated in some UBUNTU and Advocacy campaigns and have written many petitions on their behalf. We have also involved them in our campaigns and the feed back we have got is very positive. We have a long way to go to exploit our international partnerships. Some of these organisations charge a minimum fee for partnerships and we are unable to pay these fees. We have so much to benefit from these partnerships indeed.

We have received resources, and information from Witness and we are working with Witness on seeing how to use videos in our advocacy. Witness is a US based NGO that uses video advocacy in the fight against human rights abuses. We received many of their newsletters for 2008

On the local level, we enjoyed a fruitful partnership with the Ocean City Radio and with some local media organisations as The Post, The Horizon, The Herald, The Guardian Post, Eden, Headlines, and media other newspapers and radio stations that have taken interest and participated in our activities and publicising them.

We also owe much of 2008 to our probono affiliates. Amumba Law Firm, Eyambe-Ebai Law Chambers, Ngenko Law Firm, Ambo Law Firm provided us with supervision for our interns and free counseling to victims of rights abuses. They also legally represented many victims of prolonged and false imprisonment on our behalf.

We had a terse relation with the Legal Department but towards the end of last year, and with the putting in a place of a new Chief State Prosecutor, we have enjoyed good cooperation. We made a donation of human rights resources to the Legal Department and to the Court of First Instance. We have their assurance that they will use this materials as resources to facilitate our trainings. We enjoyed their support and that of the Office of the Attorney General for the Southwest region in accessing the prisons.

The Centre for the Family and Women Empowerment in Kumba also facilitated our work. The provided us with their hall for free for the UDHR 60 anniversary celebrations and massively participated in the events.

It is worth mentioning that we also enjoyed the collaboration of many divisional delegations in Meme. The delegations of Labour and Employments, Secondary Education, Social Welfare, Women's Affairs, Youths Affiars assisted us in many cases that fell under their jurisdictions. I must also commend the cooperation we enjoyed from the Christian community in Kumba.

We also worked with all the communities in Kumba, we had good collaboration on the CAMs projects that are currently running in most of these communities and they continue to express the need for our services.

## **Partnership (Cont'd)**

We can not leave out the various schools and school principals that have supported our human rights clubs in their schools and colleges. They are enviable partners in our quest for a peaceful, human rights respectful and protective Community.

