



LASPNET

LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK

LASPNET END OF YEAR NEWSLETTER

PERIOD: JULY-DECEMBER 2019



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MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear esteemed members, stakeholders and development partners, I am glad to present to you the LASPNET end of year Newsletter for the period July to December 2019. This period was remarkable to us because we celebrated 15 years of existence through coordinating Legal Aid Service delivery in Uganda. It was worthwhile a fulfilling experience to reach thus far and I would therefore like to take this opportunity to commend the support of our Development partners specifically our premium DGF; and UNDP; ICNL; ActionAid Uganda; OXFAM all of whom have been a part of the Network's journey for now 11 years.

In the reporting period, the Network was able to intensify its efforts through undertaking various activities clustered in our thematic areas of Research and Knowledge Management; Lobby and Advocacy; Networking and Partnerships as well as Institutional Capacity building. Among the key activities implemented include: The LASPNET@15 celebratory activities including the Corporate dinner which could not have been possible without the immense support of our development and strategic partners; members and other stakeholders; the Access to Justice Conference which offered the opportunity to have deeper reflections on the nexus between corruption and access to justice; the East African Regional Stakeholders' Dialogue on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information; the UWOPA Consultative meeting which solidified our engagement with MPs to ensure fast tracking the enactment of the proposed Legal Aid law and lastly the launch of the cost-effective legal aid models in Kayunga.

The Network remains committed to consolidate the achieved gains in above thematic areas as it maximizes existing opportunities relevant to the advancement of Human rights, Access to Justice and Rule of Law in Uganda. It's imperative to note that, next year 2020 we plan to rigorously pursue the enactment of the Legal Aid law, evaluate our Strategic Plan (2015/2020) with an aim of assessing our performance in order to inform future programming and strategies for the next 5 years (2020/2025). We therefore seek your support once the process is rolled-out.

More importantly, I would like to appreciate the invaluable support of our development partners; who have been significant in providing both financial and technical support to the Network; the Membership for the trust and confidence in the Network; the Board of Directors for the oversight, the Secretariat for supporting the day to day project implementation.

Lastly, as we break off for the festive season, allow me to wish you all happy Christmas and prosperous New year!!!

Dr. Sylvia N Mukasa

LASPNET@15 ACTIVITIES

This year 2019 marked exactly 15 years since LASPNET started, as an organization, mandated to coordinate all Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) in Uganda. Throughout its existence, the Network has gained a proven track record of enhancing access to justice for all. As such, LASPNET's contribution in the field of access to justice, rule of law and human rights has been recognized by different stakeholders including the Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) in 2016 and Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL) in 2017.

At the height of its 15-year celebrations held under the theme; *"Celebrating Legal Aid service delivery in Uganda, consolidating gains, drawing on lessons and opportunities for improved access to justice for all,"* LASPNET lined up a series of activities including the Nakawa Market Outreach; Prison Visit; PRE-AGM and Corporate Dinner among others.

GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY THROUGH THE NAKAWA LEGAL AID OUTREACH

The celebrations of LASPNET @15 were kicked off with a community Legal aid outreach held at Nakawa Market held on 23rd October 2019. It commenced with assembly of LASPs, stakeholders, and renowned professional kickboxer Golola Moses among others at the Lugogo KCCA grounds. The Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule, Judge of Court and also the Chief Walker in his remarks before flagging off the participants appreciated LASPNET for celebrating 15 years of long-standing commitment of enhancing access to justice for the poor and vulnerable. He further noted that the Nakawa Market Legal Aid Outreach was a good gesture espoused by the Lawyers and Advocates to leave their offices and take legal aid services closer to the people.



The Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule, LASPNET ED and Golola leading the matching.

To ignite the matching exercise Golola moved along with the procession as he received cheers from the crowds while at the outreach venue. Mr. Charles Okuni, the LC I Chairperson commended

LASPNET for selecting Nakawa market to be part of its 15-year celebrations and noted that many market vendors were in need of legal aid services. He also remarked that the outreach was a good opportunity for vendors to engage lawyers on complex legal issues they are faced with since majority of them cannot afford costs of Private lawyers.

Golola who had already excited the crowds, passionately spoke about the need to enlighten the public on their rights and existing laws. He emphasized that through sensitization, the youth will be saved from unlawful arrests for crimes such as Idle and disorderly. On finding recourse, he advised the public to seek pro bono services from Legal Aid Service Providers and concluded by calling upon the market vendors to engage the lawyers on pressing issues affecting them including land and family matters.

Similarly, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director of LASPNET appreciated Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule the champion of legal aid in Uganda for accepting to participate in the Nakawa Legal Aid Outreach and noted that his participation was a sign of humility and unwavering commitment to LASPNET and the vulnerable. Dr. Namubiru expounded more on LASPNET's mandate and emphasised the fact that it has been at the forefront of advocating for the National Legal Aid law that will enable the indigent to access free legal services. It's on that note that she urged the public to exert pressure on their MPs and demand for the enactment of the proposed Legal Aid law.



Golola, Dr. Sylvia and Mr. Okuni speaking to the market vendors at the legal aid outreach.

LASPNET Board Chairperson Ms. Sandra Oryema, before inviting the Hon Justice Kasule, passed on her appreciation to the different LASPs that participated in the outreach and these included the Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC); Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CEPIL); Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL); Justice Centres Uganda (JCU); Community Justice and Anti-Corruption Forum (CJAF) among others. She emphasised that Lawyers should ensure that the needs of the clients are addressed and further contacts of those LASPs shared with the public for future consultation.

The Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule underscored the need for a state funded legal aid scheme to facilitate access to justice for the poor and vulnerable. He requested the Chairperson to provide space for the establishment of a human rights desk within the market to handle disputes related to rights violation. Regarding the same, he cautioned the public against mob justice which he said is rampant within the public and as a result advised them to follow the right channels to resolve their disputes. The market vendors appreciated Justice Kasule with a package and also christened upon him the title of "Peoples' judge." His speech was later followed up with provision of legal aid by the LASPs.

JUSTICE SYSTEM ACTORS CONVENED TO DISCUSS CORRUPTION & ITS IMPACT ON A2J

On 25th October 2019, LASPNET with support from DGF convened the 5th Annual Access to Justice Conference under the theme; "Joining efforts to fight corruption in the justice system as a Pre-requisite to enabling the poor, vulnerable and marginalized Access Justice," at Hotel Africana.



Participants pose for a group photo during the PRE-AGM Conference.

The Conference was officiated by the Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule, Judge of Court of Appeal who also delivered the key note address. Justice Kasule underscored the fact that corruption remains a severe impediment to the realization of Access to Justice. Noting that Justice institutions such as Police and Judiciary have not been spared by the vice.



Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule giving a Key Note Address.

He recommended practical mechanisms and strategies to effectively fight corruption which among others include: increased funding for anti-corruption agencies particularly under investigations and case management; leveraging modern technologies to fight sophisticated corruption; strengthening cooperation and collaborations among Anti-Corruption agencies; enacting comprehensive legislations on Witness Protection and Asset Recovery; adopting investigative journalism as well as empowering the public to fight corruption.

The key note address was discussed by Professor, Frederick Ssempebwa, Founding and Senior Partner at KATS and Ms. Cissy Kagaba, the Executive Director ACCU. According to Ms. Kagaba, the fight against corruption can be meaningfully achieved through a coordinated approach by anti- corruption agencies. She also noted that creation of more anti-corruption bodies is not the panacea to corruption but rather leads to undermining of the already existing structures. She recommended that the justice institutions such as Courts and Police need to reclaim their trust among the public lest they will remain to be perceived corrupt.

Professor Frederick Ssempebwa argued that corruption is not only limited to the justice sector and therefore it should be viewed from a wider perspective. He alluded that expenditure beyond one's means is an enabler of corruption while adding that this is the push factor for majority of the public servants to engage in corruption. He further added that CSOs such as LASPNET still have an uphill task of building the capacity of the public to report corruption.



Professor Frederick Ssempebwa and Ms. Cissy Kagaba during the discussion of the key note speech.

The Executive Director of LASPNET, Dr. Sylvia N Mukasa, shared the position paper on the Access to Justice trends of 2019 where she reported new developments in the justice sector such as the intensification of technology and automation of Courts, launch of the video conferencing facility in Courts, launch of the Judiciary Performance Enhancement Tool and Judiciary Toll-Free Customer Feedback. She further highlighted the continuous challenges affecting the dispensation of access to justice and these include: inadequate man power, corruption in the Justice system, unfacilitated Court mediators, inadequate funding of the judiciary and delay of disposal of cases.

Dr. Ibrahim Kasirye, the Consultant who undertook the development of the Impact Assessment report on the Corruption Monitoring Project highlighted some of the project milestones which include among others: the increased awareness on corruption through development of over 20,000 IEC posters which have been translated into 4 local languages in Luganda, Luo, Runyankole and Lugisu. Additionally, over 30 radio talk shows have been aired on CBS; Radio One; Crooze FM; Open Gate FM and Mega FM in collaboration with JLOS institutions i.e. Judiciary, IGG, ODPP, Police; JSC.

He further noted that the project has helped to trigger further investigations into judicial corruption which led to the development of the Vision Investigative story and also development of the SAYITApp which is an innovative application for supporting the youth to report corruption. The report made various recommendations such as fast-tracking automation to minimize corruption tendencies; capacity building for Judicial and Police officers in investigations and case management; enactment of pending legislations such as Witness Protection, Legal Aid law and Judiciary Administration Bill as well as the development of reporting templates for tracking progress on implementation of the JACS.



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa presenting a position paper on the Annual Trends Analysis report on Access to Justice and Dr. Ibrahim Kasirye presenting the impact report of the LASPNET Corruption Monitoring Report.

A panel moderated by Mr. Arthur Nsereko, Coordinator NETPIL reacted to the report findings and this was comprised of Musa Modoi, Technical Advisor of Human Rights and Accountability JLOS; Mr. Richard Kayira, Deputy News Editor Bukedde TV; Ms. Winfred Ahimbisimbwe, Assistant DPP in charge of Prosecutions and Quality Assurance and ACP Anatoli Muleterwa, in Charge of Community Policing, Uganda Police Force.

Ms. Ahimbisimbwe, appreciated the report findings and noted that they will help in influencing policy direction in her department. She further stated that the ODPP has been very proactive in responding to the corruption institutional reports submitted by LASPNET. And as a result, there are ongoing investigations to that effect. Ms. Ahimbisimbwe also stated that the ODPP has established a toll-free to aid and strengthen complaint handling regarding the conduct of State Attorneys.

ACP Muleterwa, representing Uganda Police Force also concurred with LASPNET's findings and informed the participants that Police administration is willing to spearhead the corruption fight. To demonstrate their efforts to fight corruption, he added that Professional Standards Unit was established to receive public complaints against errant Police officers. He also mentioned some of the reforms that have been undertaken by Police out of LASPNET's recommendations. These include amendments in the Police Form Bond to include a watermark indicating "*Police Bond is Free*" and also the establishment of the SUMA App which is intended to help the public lodge complaints to the Police against errant officers.

Mr. Kayiira, added his voice to the previous panelists and commended LASPNET for the its corruption monitoring initiative which has significantly facilitated further investigations by the Vision Group. He argued that media is a strong force in bursting corruption and that the Vision Group Investigative story is one such example of the power of the media. It should be recalled that through that investigative story, the Chief Justice was prompted to appoint a Task Force to investigate allegations of corruption within the Judiciary. Finally, he called for more funding to undertake investigative stories and consistent media messages on radio and TV is critical in raising awareness of the public on corruption.

On the other hand, Mr. Modoi, argued that LASPNET's whistleblowing initiative should further be popularized across the country so that we cultivate a culture of reporting corruption and maladministration. He however, noted that there should be an enabling legal framework to fight corruption such with as Witness Protection and Asset Recovery. In the plenary session, Mr. Aaron Besigye, National Coordinator Justice Centres Uganda noted that the poor living standards of Police officers is the key driver to corruption within the force and therefore urged for reforms intended to better the conditions of the "men in uniform." Hon. Lyandro Komakech, MP Gulu Municipality also appreciated LASPNET for organizing such a conference hinged on an important issue of corruption. He retaliated the fact that we need stringent policies including Asset Recovery to deal with the corrupt.

While closing off the conference, Ms. Semyano Faridah, Principal Legal Officer at Judicial Service Commission congratulated LASPNET for making 15years and informed participants that Judicial Service Commission has worked coherently with LASPNET in the fight against corruption. She further noted that LASPNET IEC materials have significantly helped to sensitize the public on corruption during the community barazas held by the Commission. By and large, she called for more collaborations between both state and non-state actors in the corruption fight.

LASPS MEET AT THE SECRETARIAT FOR 10TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On 25th October 2019, LASPNET members convened at the LASPNET Secretariat for the 10th Annual General Meeting (AGM). It was attended by 50 participants (27 male and 23 female) with representation from 28 organizations including UCLF; MCJL; IWILAP; UGANET and PILAC.



Participants posing for a group photo at the 10th Annual General Meeting.

Ms. Sandra Oryema, the Board Chairperson emphasized the need for LASPs to move by the trends and embrace innovations in the delivery of access to justice and legal aid; encouraged members to engage the Secretariat on areas of partnerships to promote and increase visibility of their interventions.

It was also indicated in the Membership report presented by the Vice Chairperson, Mr. Vincent Mutonerwa that the Network had increased in number from 54 to 55 LASPs spread across 80 districts in Uganda. He further commended the membership for the hard work and Secretariat for continuously capacitating its membership to achieve their goals and objectives.

During the AGM, New Plan Group was admitted as an associate Member. The organization is an engineering firm dealing in gas and oil engineering services and also offers Legal Aid services to the vulnerable people such as those affected by oil spills and oil pipelines. Additionally, Osillo & Company was re-appointed as the external institutional auditors of LASPNET to serve for another financial year 2019-2020.

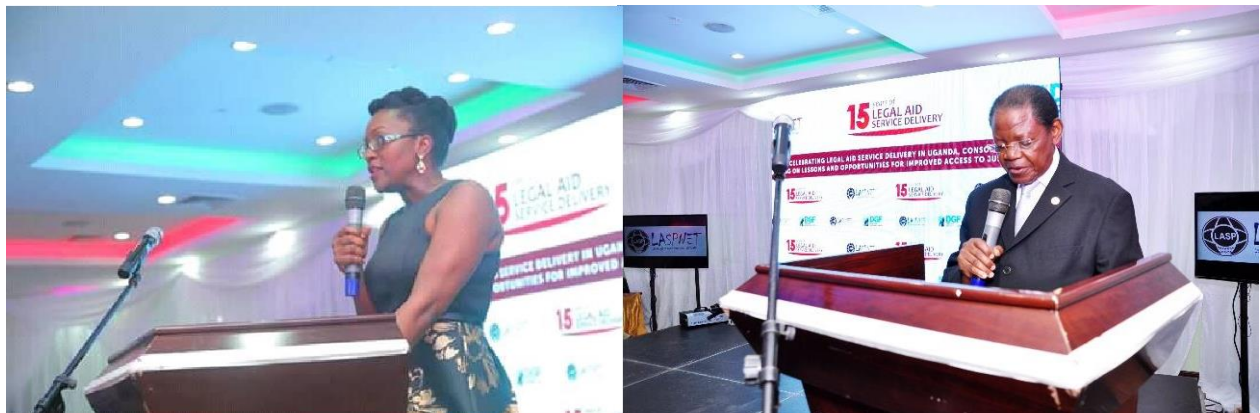
Finally, as a best practice and following international standards the General Assembly resolved to change the title of Executive Director to Chief Executive Officer.

LASPNET HOLDS A CORPORATE DINNER TO CELEBRATE 15 YEARS OF EXISTENCE

To crown off its 15 years of existence celebrations, LASPNET held a Corporate Dinner on 25th October 2019 at Imperial Royale. The dinner which had a touch of class attracted many guests ranging from Embassies; Diplomats; Development and Strategic partners; Government; JLOS; LASPs and Media.

Ms. Sandra Oryema, the LASPNET Board Chairperson welcomed all guests and informed them that LASPNET's journey is a testimony of hard work, resilience and experience. She noted that amidst the shrinking civic space, LASPNET has managed to make its niche and apparently is one of the formidable and vibrant Networks in the Uganda. She however urged the Network to focus on sustainability and adapt innovative approaches in the delivery of legal aid with the use of cost-effective legal aid models.

On the other hand, Justice Remmy Kasule, Court of Appeal Judge and one of the Honorary Members of the Network in his remarks thanked LASPNET for organizing a colourful dinner which brought together different actors to reflect on the journey of legal aid provision in Uganda. He further noted that he was glad to witness LASPNET celebrate this milestone because he was a part of its journey since inception. In more 15 years to come, Justice Kasule urged LASPNET to continue influencing enactment of key legislations to enhance access to justice for the poor and vulnerable including the passing of the Legal Aid law.



L-R Ms. Sandra Oryema, Board Chairperson and Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule making their remarks.

The Irish Ambassador, H.E William Carlos was the Chief Guest and in his key note, thanked LASPNET for reaching thus far. He recognized the Network for being at the epitome of access to justice through its coordination role of Legal Aid Service Providers in Uganda adding that it is for that reason that Development partners such as the DGF always want to associate and support the Network. The Ambassador also added that over the years, LASPNET has been pivotal in advocating for key reforms such as the Legal Aid law which is intended to ensure provision of free legal services to the indigent by the state. He urged LASPNET to consolidate its gains and remain afloat in the access to justice space. Lastly, he read out the Irish Prayer and dedicated it to the Network.

“May God hold you in the palm of His hand.....May your days be many and your troubles be few, May all God's blessings descend upon you, May peace be within you, May your heart be strong, May you find what you're seeking wherever you roam.”



L-R Dr. Sylvia N Namubiru, Ms. Sandra Oryema and H.E William Carlos at the Dinner.

While presenting the 15-year story line of LASPNET, Dr. Sylvia N Mukasa, revealed that the Network has since grown from a loose coalition of 6 members to now 55 LASPs spread across 80 districts in Uganda. Furthermore, in a special way appreciated the DGF which has been supportive of the Network since 2008 when it was still the Legal Aid Basket Fund (LABF) till present. She also thanked other Development partners who have been paramount in funding the Network i.e. UNDP, ICNL, US Embassy; OXFAM and ActionAid.

Speaking about the milestones of the Network, Dr. Sylvia noted that LASPNET has influenced various policy reforms including the Legal Aid Law and Children's Amendment Act; established strategic partnerships with NSSF; EOC; ULGA; UCBA among others. In addition, the Network has undertaken several researches key among them include the Cost Benefit Analysis (2015); Poverty Vulnerability Marginalization in the Context of Access to Justice (2016); Annual Access to Justice Trends Analysis reports and Access Justice Rule of Law and Security Needs of Refugees in Arua and Isingiro (2018).

While speaking about the challenges of the faced by the Network, she highlighted the changing donor priorities which has eventually led to lack of funding by LASPs; shrinking civic space such as continued office break-ins and delays by Parliament to enact the Legal Aid law. She summed up her presentation by stating that in the next 15 years, LASPNET envisions having its own home and leveraging possible opportunities such as being a member of the East Africa Legal Aid Network, to influence reforms at the regional level and beyond



Dr. Sylvia N Mukasa, LASPNET ED presenting LASPNET's journey at the Dinner.

During the dinner, several personalities and organizations were awarded for their contribution towards the Network. These included among others: Justice Remmy Kasule (Legal Aid Ambassador Award); Mr. Musa Modoi (Legal Aid Ambassador Award); Ms. Anne Kampire (Founder Award); JLOS (Strategic partnership Award); DGF (Development partner Award); MCJL and UCLF (Active Membership Award) and Mr. Kenneth Lukwago (Media Personality Award).

The guests were entertained by 446 Band and later treated to a sumptuous dinner.



H.E William Carlos handing over an award to MCJL while on the right Dr. Sylvia after receiving an appreciation award from LASPNET staff .

ANNUAL PEER LEARNING EVALUATION VISITS

This year the Annual Peer Learning and Evaluation support visits and regional engagement meetings for 2019 were conducted from 24th July-20th September 2019 in all regions of the country. The purpose of undertaking such visits and engagement meeting was to provide an interactive platform between the management, staff and LASPs on issues related to the operation LASPs; rule of law & A2J, membership & partnership activities, capacity building interventions among others.

During the regional engagement LASPs and stakeholders raised a number of issues affecting access to justice which among others included: Case back long and delayed hearing of cases; poor remuneration of mediators; limited scope of services offered by LASPs; perceived and real corruption especially with some courts and police stations; poor infrastructure and limited facilities at court and detention facilities and lack of sustainability of LASPs.

The visits and regional engagement meetings provided LASPs with an opportunity to have a peer review of each other; to take stock of progress made in strengthening access to justice and devise strategies to ensure sustainability of the members among others. The meetings made key recommendations which include among others: strengthening internal accountability mechanisms; continue tracking access to justice trends; strengthening ongoing efforts of equipping communities with information on law and human rights; undertaking peer learning exchange visits amongst regional members as well as putting in place a membership monitoring unit that can undertake impromptu visits and evaluations exercise in a bid to strengthen standards and compliance of LASPs.



LASPNET Secretariat staff led by the Executive Director during the PLE regional visits.

REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE ON AJZ FOR JOURNALISTS

LASPNET with funding from ICNL organized a Regional stakeholders' dialogue on Freedom of Expression and Access to information under the theme: "Promoting *Access to Justice for journalists: Perspectives from East Africa on how to build a resilient legal aid response mechanism.*" The dialogue which kicked off from 23rd to 24th August 2019 was held at Best Western Hotel and was attended by a total of 70 delegates from different East African countries i.e. Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. More still, the delegates were drawn from different sectors including: Development partners; CSOs; Government MDAs; Judiciary; Academia; Paralegals and Media.



A group photo of the participants at the dialogue.

The intention of this dialogue was to among others facilitate knowledge transfer and engage the different stakeholders in the region on using Legal aid and paralegal Networks as a means to strengthen outreach and legal support on Freedom of Expression and Access to information issues for journalists in urban and remote areas. It further sought to ensure a safe and enabling environment for journalists and media houses to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals.

The Executive Director of LASPNET Dr Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa emphasized that the media shines a light on many accountability issues including corruption, thereby contributing to transparency and good governance. She added that the media is the eyes and ears of the public especially when they apply the technique of investigative journalism. She concluded by stating that the dialogue would provide a platform to share innovative practices and forge a way forward to efficiently promote Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.

Hon. Mwesigwa Rukutana, the Deputy Attorney General and State Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, gave a key note address at the dialogue in which he observed that all countries in East Africa are alive to Freedom of Expression, Speech and rights of

Access to information as stipulated in their constitutions. He however noted these rights come with obligations that all persons need to observe and respect. As he concluded, he urged all stakeholders to propose practical strategies that governments can pursue to strengthen the promotion of the Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.

The key note address was delivered by Mr. Lawrence Mutte, the African Union (AU) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to information, who observed that there is need to balance between justifiable limitations and the enjoyment of rights guaranteed by the African Charter of people and Human Rights and different Constitutions across the region. He further emphasized that states should work towards decriminalizing repugnant laws that undermine the exercise of Freedom of Expression.



L-R Deputy Attorney General Hon Mwesigwa Rukutana officially opening and The AU special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression giving Keynote Address.

The dialogue also featured notable Speakers and panelists who included: Mr. Robert Kirunda, a Lawyer and Law Don at Makerere University; Mr. Demas Kiprono, Campaign Manager Safety and Dignity, Amnesty International Kenya; Mr Victor Bwire from the Media Council of Kenya; Hon Justice Lydia Mugambe (Judge), Mr Nicholas Opiyo of Chapter Four, Catherine Anite of Freedom of Expression Hub and Anthony Wesaka of Daily Monitor.



Participants from the East African region in Panel Discussion on Access to justice for media practitioners/Experiences and challenges faced by Legal Aid Paralegal Networks in protecting freedom of expression.

One of the outcomes of the dialogue was a Communique which highlighted the need to utilize the East African Community Bodies to ensure uniform approach through engaging the EAC legislative assembly for passing of laws that promote Freedom of Expression and Access to information; Repealing of laws that undermine Freedoms of Expression; Speech and Access to information and utilizing international and regional human rights mechanisms such as Universal Peer Review Mechanism, AU Special Rapporteur and East African Court of Justice to document and report violations of the aforementioned rights.

Mr. Abdu Salam Waiswa, the Head of Legal at the Uganda Communications Commission in his closing remarks urged Journalists to adhere to the “rules of the game” which includes balanced reporting. He also pledged that UCC would welcome strategies that can be employed to ensure a harmonious relationship between media practitioners and the Commission.



Mr. Waiswa Head of Legal Department of Uganda Communications Commission giving his closing remarks.

KAYUNGA BECOMES FIRST DISTRICT TO SCALE UP THE LWENGO LEGAL AID MODEL

On Tuesday 27th August 2019, partners including LASPNET, UCLF, FHRI, MCJL and ULGA trekked to Kayunga district to fulfil a long-awaited mission of launching the Lwengo legal aid pilot extension project. The partners were welcomed by the District Chairperson Mr. Tom Sserwanga, a committed leader with willingness to empower the vulnerable and marginalized.

Her Worship Irene Akello, the Grade one Magistrate Kayunga officiated at the event on behalf of the Resident Judge Mukono, Justice Margaret Mutonyi. She noted Kayunga district was privileged having been selected for the project. Additionally, she expressed pleasure for opening a legal aid clinic and opined that it would help in the reduction of case backlog. Lastly, she decried the high level of ignorance of the law among residents and the lack of representation that makes many shun court.

On the other hand, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director of LASPNET noted that the sustainable legal aid model was first piloted in Lwengo and due to its traction, that it was considered for scaling up in other districts including Kalangala and Omoro. She further urged the district leadership to embrace the innovation and ensure that its effectively implemented in order to realize access to justice for the poor and vulnerable.



A group photo of the participants who attended the launch. Seated in the middle is H/W Irene Akello.

Ms. Josephine Sebulima, the Membership Manager of ULGA on behalf of the Secretary General was applauded LASPNET and other partners for extending a much-needed service to the local governments. She called for joint efforts to strengthen the capacity of local governments to deliver efficient services relevant to the people's needs. She further urged the local leaders to give space to the lawyers to sensitize people and improve their understanding of the law.

LASPNET in partnership with Uganda Court Bailiffs Association (UCBA) on the 23rd September 2019 held an induction training for newly licensed court bailiffs on execution of court orders at a Silver Springs hotel, Bugolobi which recorded an attendance of over 80 court bailiffs. The training was aimed at equipping bailiffs with practical knowledge and skills on effective management of execution of court orders in a bid to interest them into adopting a Pro-bono service spirit in bailiffs' work.

The participants were trained on various topics which included; overview of the law and practice on execution procedures in Uganda, Completion of chain of justice for the poor and vulnerable: Emphasizing pro- bono service by bailiffs; Different Types of Court Orders, and role of bailiffs in the administration of justice, Legal requirements and Practical aspects of Execution and there was sharing experiences.

Hon. Justice Duncan Gaswaga, the Head Execution and Bailiffs Division then recognized the role played by Court bailiffs in the administration of justice. On this issue, he noted that bailiffs are crucial actors in completing the chain of justice. He added that without the services of bailiffs, litigants are unable to realise the fruits of judgement and as result cannot access justice. Furthermore, his Lordship added that the court Bailiffs profession as a whole was viewed as a profit- making venture hence many bailiffs lack professionalism while conducting their work. He also urged the bailiffs to act professionally bearing in mind that they are officers of Court and their service should be people-centred hence avoiding unethical conduct as they execute

their obligation to the court of law.

Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director LASPNET facilitated a session on Completion of chain of justice for the poor and vulnerable emphasizing pro- bono service by bailiffs. During her presentation she underscored the benefits of pro bono in ensuring that the indigent access justice. She also challenged bailiffs to consider pro bono services stating that the ability to have a clear understanding of pro bono for it is a key ingredient in completing the justice chain. "It is critical that court bailiffs embrace the pro bono initiative." She noted.

To ensure gender equality, she called upon the UCBA to encourage more women bailiffs to join the profession as well as join Uganda Law Society during the annual pro bono days conducted. This will in turn will improve the image of the profession. Dr. Namubiru further urged bailiffs to remain committed to fairness, have instincts to justice and not to subvert the law and the justice system as the same may cause the public to lose faith in the work undertaken by the bailiffs.

HW Ayebare Tumwebaze, Assistant Registrar High Court discussed the different types of Court Orders and roles of Bailiffs in the administration of justice and conduct of an officer of court before the general public. Mr. Ronald Baisota, President of UCBA moderated breakout sessions undertaken by the participants. From their presentations, he warned bailiffs from undertaking consent agreements with debtors. This is attributed to the fact that their powers are limited only to

execution of Court orders in accordance with the law. For instance, in cases of vacant possession, should be conducted between 8am-5pm.

Lastly, the participants at the training made some recommendations which include; conducting of court open days by the Execution and Bailiffs Division; bailiffs were encouraged to act professionally in execution of court orders, continuous capacity building training to equip bailiffs with skills and knowledge in executing their duties.

At the end of the training, the participants had grasped the key concepts under execution of court orders and equipped with skills and knowledge as observed in the breakout sessions. Also key to the training was the fact that many expressed interests to join the LASPNET/UCBA probono project on execution of Court orders.



A group photo of the participants who attended the Bailiffs training at Silver Springs, Bugolobi.

LEGAL SERVICE PROVISION EXTENDED TO THE PEOPLE OF ARUA-VURRA

LASPNET with support from UNDP held a Legal Aid Outreach on 14th November, 2019 in Arua at Vurra Sub County grounds. The Outreach was held under theme “Promoting Legal Aid Accessibility and Access to Justice for all,” and presided over by Mr. Stephen Abunyang the Regional Community Sensitization Officer (RCSO) on behalf of H/W Daniel Lubowa, the Chief Magistrate of Arua. In attendance were 234 participants who included other key dignitaries such as Mr. Nyeko Thomas the DISO Arua and Mr. Adaku Nackson, LC III Vurra Sub-county among other leaders.



Participants pose for a group photo at the Outreach.

Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, in her remarks noted that the rationale of such Legal Aid outreaches is to take services closer to the public. She highlighted that there are insidious barriers affecting access to justice such as high litigation costs; language barrier; procedural aspects and corruption which need to be dealt with in order to improve access to justice for the poor and vulnerable. Finally, she urged vulnerable persons including women, youth and PWDs to seek knowledge about the law and their rights.

Mr. Abunyang appreciated UNDP for supporting the Access to Justice activities for the poor and vulnerable. He noted that the delays in passing the legal aid law has social, economic and political constraints hindering access to Justice adding that having a National Legal Aid law in place would go a long way in enhancing access to justice for the poor and vulnerable. Whereas Mr. Nyeko called upon the residents of Vurra to utilize the LASPs in the region but also cautioned LASPs against inefficiencies especially not concluding matters brought to them.

During the outreach over 250 signatures were collected as an appealing signal to MPs requiring them to fast track the enactment of the Legal Aid law. In addition, participants raised several concerns related to

inheritance of property; rights of spouses during and after dissolution marriage; child neglect and failure of parents to provide and meet educational needs of their children; delays in disposal of cases both at Legal Aid Clinic and in Courts of Law and corruption in the judicial system.



One of the lawyers attending to a client during the outreach.

WOMEN AND GIRLS GROUPS DISCUSS THE LEGAL AID LAW AND HOW IT WILL END SGBV



A group photo of the participants who attended the Women and Girls Groups Meeting at Hotel Africana.

On 19th November 2019, LASPNET with support from UNDP under the Spotlight Initiative convened a Women and Girls' groups interactive meeting to obtain their views on the proposed Legal Aid law. The meeting which took place at Hotel Africana was attended by 41 (4 Male: 37 Female) participants) including MPs; UNDP; Community and Religious Women Leaders; a Student activist and LASPNET staff.

While making her remarks, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director of LASPNET appreciated UNDP for supporting different initiatives including the advocacy efforts to enact the Legal Aid law with an aim of empowering vulnerable groups such as women and girls to access redress for human rights violations meted i.e. SGBV. She added that 70% of women have been exposed to SGBV however they lack redress mechanisms including legal aid to ensure that the perpetrators are handled as the law requires.

“The advocacy efforts of the Legal Aid law are timely and therefore we need to fast track it as Legislators so that women and girls who mainly fall under the poverty trap are able to access free legal services.” Dr. Namubiru.

Ms. Mukisa Diva, the Programme officer at UNDP informed the participants that Spotlight Initiative is intended to among others support partners to advocate for reforms intended to empower women and girls in society. She further remarked that since the Legal Aid law is among the laws which are intended to improve access to justice for women and girls, government should prioritize its enactment.



Ms. Diva Mukisa from UNDP making her remarks.

The panel composed of Mr. Aaron Besigye, the National Coordinator, Justice Centers Uganda and an advocate for women’s rights, Ms. Ritah Atukwasa, the Executive Director Institute for Social Transformation and Ms. Peace Namuyanja, a Youth Leader and Student Advocate from YWCA contributed to the discourse. All panelists agreed to the comprehensiveness of the law however added that the law should also make provision for cost of forensic evidence required to prove a matter such as DNA. They also called for inclusion of women in politics and businesses (SME) in law, massive community awareness of the law as well as the need to complement it with witness protection among others.



L-R Ms. Peace Namuyanja, Mr. Aaron Besigye and Ms. Ritah Atukwasa on the panel.

Hon. Komakech Lyandro, Gulu Municipality MP and Private Mover of the Legal Aid law, closed off the meeting. He reassured the participants that both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker were all in support of the law and that efforts are being made to finalize consultative processes with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs before tabling the bill in Parliament. He finally appreciated both DGF and UNDP for supporting LASPNET which has been able to establish a working relationship with Greater North Parliamentary Forum (GNPF) to steer advocacy efforts for the enactment of the proposed Legal Aid law.



Hon. Komakech giving his closing remarks.

NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH UWOPA ON THE PROPOSED LEGAL AID LAW

LASPNET with support from UNDP under the “Spotlight Initiative” held a consultative meeting with the Uganda Parliamentary Women's Association on 25th November 2019 at Hotel Africana. The intention of this meeting was to engage Women MPs and enlist their support and views into the proposed Legal Aid law. A total of 41 (13 Male: 28 Female) participants including Development and strategic partners; MPs and LASPs attended the meeting.



Participants pose for a group photo at the National Consultative Meeting.

To situate the conversation around the proposed Legal Aid law, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director of LASPNET, noted that currently Uganda has no state funded scheme for Legal Aid yet majority of the population is poor and as such cannot afford costs of a Lawyer. She added that DGF and UNDP have been significant in supporting LASPNET to advocate for the enactment of the Legal Aid law.

“It’s imperative to note that the advocacy efforts for the Legal Aid law have been on for now 10 years hence the need to expedite the process,” Said Dr. Namubiru. She also mentioned that LASPNET developed an advocacy strategy in 2017 to purposely revamp

advocacy efforts for the Legal Aid Law in partnership with Greater North Parliamentary Forum. While concluding her remarks she urged MPs to join the advocacy drive of enacting this law before the end of 2019.

Mr. Akena Moses, one of the drafters of the law informed MPs that by other countries have legal aid funds and as such, the draft legal aid law is intended to establish one for Uganda to ensure access to justice for all.

From the plenary session moderated by Hon. Isala Bichetero, Kaberamaido Woman MP and seconder of the motion to introduce a Private Members Bill, all MPs pledged their support once the bill is presented on the floor of Parliament. They however emphasized that the law should be tough on Lawyers who lack integrity and as such solicit bribes from their clients; that it should widen on the scope of vulnerable persons to include Sensory disabilities covering sight, hearing and dumbness. Further, the MPs suggested that there should be specific timelines for offering Legal Aid in the Bill to avoid endless litigation.

The interaction with UWOPA was very insightful and signaled the readiness that MPs have to enact the proposed Legal Aid law. In order to intensify more advocacy efforts of the said law, MPs suggested that there should be more engagements with the different caucuses within Parliament to enable them digest and ably debate when the law finally finds its way in Parliament.

HIGH-LEVEL JLOS STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE ON LASPNET CORRUPTION PROJECT

On 23rd November 2019, LASPNET with support from DGF convened the High-Level Stakeholders Dialogue at Imperial Royale Hotel to share findings of the Impact Assessment Report for the Corruption Monitoring Project with different JLOS Institutional Heads; Managers and Policy Makers. The Dialogue was a follow up of the Annual Access to Justice Conference held on 24th October 2019 where the different justice system actors discussed the findings and proposed different strategies to fight corruption in the justice sector.

The Dialogue was presided over by the DPP, the Hon. Justice Mike Chibita and also attended by key dignitaries from DGF; GIZ; State House Anti-Corruption Unit; JLOS; Police; JSC and LASPs. Dr. Sylvia N Mukasa, the Executive Director of LASPNET appreciated the DPP for his availability and continued support towards LASPNET's Corruption Monitoring project. She briefly noted that the Impact Assessment Report provided an account of Corruption Monitoring Project for the last 3 years (2016-2019) since inception. She also thanked DGF for the financial and technical support and the different JLOS institutions including Police; Judiciary and ODPP.

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Vicent Mutonerwa, the Vice Chairperson of LASPNET Board appreciated all stakeholders and asserted that LASPNET's Corruption monitoring efforts are aimed at contributing towards Sphere 3 of DGF on: Protection of Human Rights, Access to Justice and Gender Equality. He further noted that the stakeholders' dialogue presents a rare opportunity for LASPNET to deliberate on the progress of the Corruption Monitoring project as well as receive feedback from the JLOS institutions that we are working with on this project.



A group photo of participants at the High-Level Stakeholders Meeting. Seated in the middle is the DPP.

In his remarks the DPP, Hon. Mike Chibita appreciated LASPNET the undertaking the corruption monitoring project and noted that it has helped to strengthen accountability reforms in the justice

sector. He however noted that legal frameworks alone cannot entirely eradicate corruption hence emphasizing the need to promote ethics and integrity. He recommended automation and the enactment of stringent legislations such as Asset Recovery and Witness Protection as deterrent measures of corruption.

Mr. Musa Modoi, the Technical Advisor of Human Rights and Accountability of JLOS moderated the plenary session. The participants highlighted the need for collaboration between the state and non-state actors in the fight against corruption; conducting evidence-based studies to measure corruption vs the use of perception studies. The Uganda Police Force (UPF) also committed to follow up the Corruption Institutional reports submitted to them by LASPNET in order to ensure that the loose ends are tied.



Hon. Justice Mike Chibita (DPP) giving a Key Note address as the participants look on.

THE SECOND NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON EXECUTION OF COURT ORDERS

On the 27th November 2019, LASPNET in partnership with the Uganda Court Bailiffs Association (UCBA) and with support from the DGF held the 2nd National stakeholders dialogue meeting on the Execution of court orders under the Theme: *"The role of Court bailiffs in promoting A2J in Uganda: Drawing on lessons learnt and opportunities from the UCBA / LASPNET Execution Project."* The dialogue was attended by various stakeholders who included Judicial officers; Advocates, Bailiffs, LASPs; Justice Centers Uganda and Media.



A group photo of participants at the National Stakeholders Dialogue on Execution of Court Orders. Seated in the middle is the DPP.

Hon Justice Duncan Gaswaga, the Head of Execution Division of High Court was the Chief guest. He highlighted in his key note address the improvements at the Division, which include among others the; open door policy, installation of CCTV camera to enhance transparency and accountability and reorganization of the registry to avoid loss of files with plans underway to digitize the system. Furthermore, he emphatically called upon all stakeholders to work with the Division to ensure effective execution processes as well as Bailiffs to fully embrace Pro- bono initiatives.

At the dialogue Mr. Badru Walusansa, Research and Knowledge Officer on behalf of the Executive Director LASPNET who was away on other official duties presented the progress of the execution of court orders. The report noted that there was increased number of bailiffs enrolled on the LASPNET Execution of Court Orders probono initiative, i.e. from 4 to 16 Bailiffs. Out of the 46 cases forwarded for execution, 18 cases were resolved while the rest are pending finalization. The report recommended UCBA to strengthen public awareness about the role of Bailiffs as well as embracing the LASPNET Break the Silence on Corruption campaign since the profession is alleged to be marred with corruption among others.

One of the project beneficiaries Mr. Otigo Sam shared his experience and applauded LASPNET for

enabling him to access justice through execution of his case on pro bono. However, he asserted that some of the bailiffs' ride on the ignorance of the clients to manipulate them; thus, calling for stringent measures to deal with such errant bailiffs.

The dialogue also featured a panel presentation comprised of His Worship Ayebare Tumwebaze, Mr. Kayensige Brian, a Court bailiff, Ms. Gorreth Ayebare, Centre Manager Justice Centres Uganda and SP Sentamu George William from the Land and Protection Unit Kibuli, who shared their experiences, lessons learnt from the Execution project. Notably from their presentations was the emphasis of the importance of the Bailiffs to provide free services to strengthen access to justice through completion of the chain of justice. The other issue of concern raised was corruption amongst some bailiffs which needs to be dealt with.

From the plenary, participants at dialogue made key recommendations for strengthening the project including but not limited to: the need to formulate guidelines to regulate bailiffs on pro bono services; provision of capacity trainings of bailiffs and bouncers to conduct executions in a human and decent manner; tightening supervision of bailiffs work by the UCBA and imposing punitive measures for culprits.

The dialogue was closed by Mr. Ronald Basoita, the President of UCBA, who called for more engagement meetings with all stakeholders involved in execution in order to ensure the project meets its intended objectives.

LASPNET CALL CENTRE LAUNCHED TO ENHANCE FAST RESPONDER LEGAL AID SERVICES

LASPNET with support from DGF launched a Call Centre on 5th December 2019 at the Secretariat. The fully-fledged facility is intended to among others enhance access to justice for the poor and vulnerable through provision of legal aid advice and counselling.

Ms. Martha Nanjobe, the Deputy Programme and Learning Manager of DGF who presided over the launch as the Chief Guest appreciated LASPNET for the new innovation and noted that it will help in strengthening referral mechanisms while reducing on forum-shopping. She however challenged the Secretariat to monitor and establish lessons on the operationalization of the Call Centre.

Dr. Sylvia N Mukasa the Executive Director commended DGF for the financial support for establishment of the facility. She further emphasized that the Call Centre is an enabler to improving and reducing costs incurred by clients to access legal services. This is because, in order to access legal services, the public is only required to make calls at a free cost through the toll-free line (0800-100155) and hot-line (0417-893500).

Partners organizations at the launch included PILAC; UCU and LDC-LAC and these were appreciated for embracing the innovation and allowing their student lawyers and advocates to man the facility.



Ms. Martha Nanjobe giving her remarks at the launch of the Call Centre while on the right being taken through its operationalization.

ANNUAL MANAGEMENT, STAFF REVIEW AND PLANNING RETREAT HELD IN KALANGALA

LASPNET with support from DGF held the Annual Management, Staff Review and Planning retreat from 9th to 12th December 2019 at Brovad Hotel in Kalangala. The retreat was intended to among others take stock of the year's performance including how staff had applied and used the knowledge of the previous capacity development to improve performance. During the retreat, staff were offered an opportunity to rethink working strategies to ensure effective project implementation for the year 2020.



A group photo of LASPNET staff at the Retreat.

While opening the retreat, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director informed staff that it was important to reflect on the milestones; challenges; lessons learnt and opportunities for 2019. She further appreciated staff for their continued support to project implementation and highlighted key activities that were well executed including the LASPNET@15 activities; Report launches and the Regional East African Dialogue on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. Lastly, she encouraged staff to adapt the spirit of efficiency and effectiveness as they undertake their activities next year.

Staff were also engaged in individual and departmental evaluations and work planning for 2020. To spice up the retreat, Mr. John Jacobs, an organization capacity development specialist delivered a motivational speech hinged on *“Realizing the potential that lies within everyone.”* He emphasized the issue of personal development through creating an impressive brand that is valuable in the workplace. Further, Mr. Jacobs took staff into practical sessions to demonstrate and appreciate the power of team work.

To close off the retreat, Ms. Sharon Kwikiriza, LASPNET Central Board Representative appreciated DGF for supporting the Secretariat to undertake the retreat in such a serene environment. She also appreciated staff for their commitment towards realizing the vision of the Network. In addition, she encouraged them to remain to improve on their performance in order to ensure that the Network is able to consolidate its gains.

Other social activities carried out at the retreat include the Nature walk; Barbeque and Exchange of gifts aimed at strengthening a cohesive team.



Mr. Jacobs taking staff through the motivational session while on the right staff participate in the team building session.

IN OTHER RELATED NEWS

NAWJU AWARDS OUTSTANDING FEMALE JUDICIAL OFFICERS

On 12th December 2019, the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJU) held their annual dinner at Protea Hotel Kampala. The dinner which was presided over by the Permanent Secretary of Judiciary, Mr. Pius Bigirimana, saw different female judicial officers awarded for their outstanding service. These included among others Lady Justice Dr. Esther Kisakye. Our Executive Director, was also proud recipient of an Appreciation award for championing Access to Justice for the Vulnerable.



Dr. Sylvia receiving an appreciation award for promoting A2J for the vulnerable from Justice Kisakye while on the right female judges cutting a cake.

LADY JUSTICE LYDIA MUGAMBE SCOOPS VERA CHIRWA AWARD

Lady Justice Lydia Mugambe of Criminal Division was recently awarded the Vera Chirwa Human Rights Award which is a prestigious award bestowed upon distinguished human rights activists who have tremendously contributed to the promotion of human rights in their countries. Congratulations Lady Justice!



Justice Lydia Mugambe receives the Vera Chirwa Award from Mr. Bernard Rey the Head of Cooperation at the European Union Delegation in South Africa.

FIDA UGANDA RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FROM UN WOMEN



Our members FIDA Uganda received a prestigious award from UN Women for their unrivaled contribution towards promoting gender equality and girl-child empowerment. Congratulations FIDA!!!

LASPNET RECOGNIZES BEST STAFF OF THE QUARTER OCT-DEC 2019

Ms. Joy Namulinde, the Accounts and Administrative Assistant emerged as the best staff of the Quarter Oct-Dec 2019. She received an award of good performance from Ms. Sharon Twikirize, LASPNET Central Board Representative at the staff retreat. The second runner up was Mr. Duncan Keitirima, a volunteer under Lobby and Advocacy.



L-R Ms. Joy Namulinde and Mr. Duncan Keitirima receiving their awards at the retreat.

PICTORIAL FOR THE PERIOD JULY-DECEMBER 2019



H.E William Carlos and Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule at the dinner.



LASPNET staff take a nature walk during the retreat.



DGF Team taking LASPNET staff through an Organizational Capacity Development Assessment.



Some of the epic moments at the 2019 Staff Retreat.



Dr. Sylvia and Golola getting ready for the match during LASPNET@15 celebrations.



Professor Ssempebwa and Ms. Cissy Kagaba at the PRE-AGM Conference.



Dr. Sylvia signing an MOU with the leadership of Kayunga district.



Justice Remmy Kasule receiving a bunch of Matooke from the vendors in Nakawa.

DO YOU HAVE A LEGAL PROBLEM OR NEED A LAWYER

YES, I CAN HELP YOU

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