

# LASPNET BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

**PERIOD: JANUARY-JUNE 2020**



**INSIDE THIS EDITION**

**LASPS' BOARD MEMBERS TIPPED ON GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION**

**UPHOLDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE AMIDST THE COVID19 PANDEMIC**

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER	2
LASPS' BOARD MEMBERS TIPPED ON GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION.	3
LASPNET CONVENES CLUSTER MEETINGS TO REFLECT ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES FOR THE YEAR 2020.	4
ADVOCATES AND BAILIFFS RECOMMIT TO SUPPORT EXECUTION OF COURT ORDERS PROJECT AT PIATO RESTAURANT.	5
MEDIA PERSONEL AND ADVOCATES EQUIPPED ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE UNDER THE ICNL JUSTSPEECH PROJECT.	6
UPHOLDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE AMIDST THE COVID19 PANDEMIC: EMBRACING THE NEW NORM AT LASPNET	7
THE LASPNET DGF FUNDED SITUATIONAL ROOM BRINGS A NEW PERSPCTIVE TO LEGAL SERVICE DELIVERY	12
LASPS SENSITIZED BY THE JUIDICARYI ON THE ON GOING DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC COURT CASE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ECCMIS).	13
LASPNET WELCOMES RESOLUTE COMMITMENT FROM MPS TO FAST TRACK THE LEGAL AID LAW	14
OTHER NEWS	16
LASPNET NEWS	18
LASPNET BI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE IN PICTURES	20
LASPNET UPCOMING EVENTS	21



**HON. JUSTICE BART KATUREEBE RETIRES AS CHIEF JUSTICE OF UGANDA**



**LASPNET BI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE IN PICTURES**

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**D**ear esteemed members, stakeholders and development partners, I am glad to present to you the LASPNET bi annual Newsletter with highlights of activities undertaken by the Network between the period of January to June 2020.

In this period the Network was able to intensify its mandate of upholding Access to Justice for all by implementing activities clustered under its four thematic areas of Research and Knowledge Management, Lobby and Advocacy, Networking and Partnership as well as Institutional capacity building. Just like all other sectors across the world, the outbreak of COVID 19 and the subsequent lockdown posed far reaching disruptions on the programming of the Network as well as its members.

COVID had unprecedented impact on Access to Justice following the closure of institutions such as Courts of Law and LASPs from April 2020 and the continued human rights violations meted out on innocent civilians for breaching the Presidential directives among others. As a Network, we scaled down on most of our operations to abide to the measures put in place to curb the spread of the pandemic.

Despite the lockdown and with support from our premier donor DGF, we were able to secure funds to implement COVID-19 activities which include the establishment of the Situational Room to respond to human rights violations in a timely manner; Social Web Application to provide online legal advice and intensification of legal rapid response project.

In addition, the Network remained relevant during the lockdown. This was through developing several petitions to address human rights violations. Key among these include the petitions on congestion in prisons, human rights abuses by law enforcement officers, failure to recognise legal services as essential services, and the continued violation of the right to education while other sectors of the economy were getting back to normal with standard operating procedures. The Network also coordinated lawyers who provided legal rapid response to majority of people who suffered unwarranted detentions for violating the Presidential directives and maintained the operations of the call center during the lockdown to respond to call in clients.

As a Network we commit to continue implementing activities clustered in our thematic areas to uphold access

to justice, human rights and the rule of law through embracing the 'new normal' which includes more virtual engagements as opposed to physical interactions and observing social distancing measures put in place by the Ministry of Health to curb the spread of COVID19.

I would therefore like to appreciate the continued technical and financial support from our development partners, the Board of Directors for their oversight function and guidance and our Membership for trust and confidence.

Lastly, I call upon each and every one to stay safe and uphold the social distancing measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID19 as we go about our work.

Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa  
Chief Executive Officer



# LASPS' BOARD MEMBERS TIPPED ON GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

LASPNET with support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) convened a two-day thematic capacity building training on Governance and Resource mobilization for LASPs Board of Directors from 30th to 31st January 2020 at Country Lake Resort Garuga.

The training was intended to among others strengthen the capacity of Board Members in governance and resource mobilization. The training was a follow up of the first one held from 22nd and 23rd August 2019 in Jinja., attended by 35 participants (12 Male: 13 Female) and facilitated by Promise Consults International (PCI).

In her remarks, LASPNET's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru

Mukasa stressed the purpose of the training which was to equip board members with knowledge and skills in governance and resource mobilization. She added that since board members play critical oversight roles in organizations and the training would help in promoting efficiency and organizational sustainability.

The modules covered roles of the Boards, ways of evolving effective boards, and succession planning which were discussed by the participants in groups from which they later presented. Strategies of effectively managing multiple donors such as donor relationship building, implementation, financial management,

timely reporting, focus on project impacts, understanding donor classification

The training was closed off by Hon. Flavia Munaaba, one of the Network's honorary members who in special way appreciated the DGF and LASPNET management for the tremendous job done in building the capacity of members. She implored the training beneficiaries to replicate the knowledge learnt at the training to undertake resource mobilization.



*A Group Photo of the Participants; Standing Extreme Left Ms. Christine Mulindwa (LAPD) in the Centre Is Mr. Vicent Mutonerwa (LASPNET Board Vice Chairperson); Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa (CEO LASPNET) extreme Right Mr. Fred Ebil (FAPAD).*

# LASPNET CONVENES CLUSTER MEETINGS TO REFLECT ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES FOR THE YEAR 2020



*LASPs deliberate on key issues at the combined cluster meeting*

LASPNET provides a platform for networking, collaboration and coordination amongst Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) to enhance legal aid service delivery and access to justice for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. One way of doing this mandate is through thematic clusters which include Land Justice, Criminal Justice, Gender Justice, Juvenile Justice, Social Justice and Tradition Justice Clusters. The basis for forming these thematic clusters is to enable the different members assigned to each cluster to provide technical input

and address emerging issues affecting access to justice for the poor and generating recommendations on how to improve legal aid services. The most recent combined cluster meeting was at the Secretariat on 13th February, 2020 to reflect on their 2019 activities; status of implementation; challenges and recommendations and to plan for the year 2020. The meeting was attended by 26 participants (10 Male and 16 Female) from different LASPs including RETRAK, AFCOD, CEPIL, CEDO, FHRI, LAC among others.

The participants discussed and agreed among others to support Platform for Labour Action to undertake and generate data on the impact of Ugandan labour migrants on families; communities and the country at large and MCJL to develop guidelines and handbook on gender and human rights standards in the Quadhi courts. Furthermore, World Voices Uganda agreed to involve the different clusters in its planning for the funding and capacity building of its members



# ADVOCATES AND BAILIFFS RECOMMIT TO SUPPORT EXECUTION OF COURT ORDERS PROJECT AT PIATO RESTAURANT

LASPNET in partnership with the Uganda Court Bailiffs Association (UCBA) held its 3rd Bi-Annual meeting on 13th March 2020 at Piato Restaurant. The meeting was aimed at creating a platform for stakeholders to receive the project updates and deliberate on emerging issues under the project. The meeting brought together a total of 21 participants including Bailiffs, LASP Advocates and Legal Aid Managers.

Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa Chief Executive Officer in her opening remarks made reference to the tangible results achieved under the project, which among others include increased project outputs which now start at 3 cases resolved per quarter. She expressed her gratitude to the Bailiffs and Advocates for their relentless efforts in enhancing access to justice for the indigent clients. She however emphasised the Network's, zero tolerance policy to corruption, and

urged all stakeholders and partners to refrain from soliciting for funds from clients.

Mr. Paul Baingana, the UCBA General Secretary highlighted some challenges met while undertaking the executions which among others include : uncooperative Judgement Creditors and Advocates; communication gaps; some judgment debtors being too elderly to be arrested, and lack of subsistence support from LASPNET to Judgement Debtors. He however recommitted to providing timely support in ensuring completion of cases.

To address the challenges and gaps, participants made several recommendations including Advocates to manage their clients' expectations and cooperate with Bailiffs to speed up execution processes, Bailiffs to refrain from asking clients for money so as to avoid tarnishing the profession, and creation of a WhatsApp group

to bridge the communication gap between Advocates and Bailiffs. The UCBA President, Mr Ronald Basoita further suggested that LASPNET should consider introducing the project to the new Head of the Execution and Bailiffs Division, Hon. Justice Henrietta Wolayo and organise sensitisation clinics to educate the public on Bailiffs' roles.

Day by day the LASPNET execution Project is growing stronger and is no doubt one of those DGF supported innovations that has strengthened the work of LASPs in collaboration with partners like UCBA to make a change in lives of the poor and vulnerable. On this note, LASPNET appreciates DGF for its continued financial support towards the activities of the Network and the fulfilment of its mandate to ensure access to Justice. We further thank the UCBA; Bailiffs, advocates and legal Aid managers for their tireless efforts of supporting access to justice for the poor.



*Participants pose for a group photo during the bi-annual meeting at Piato Restaurant*

## **MEDIA PERSONEL AND ADVOCATES EQUIPPED ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE UNDER THE JUST SPEECH PROJECT.**

LASPNET under the ICNL project titled “Just speech”; and in partnership with Chapter Four and Freedom of Expression Hub from 21st to 22nd March 2019 conducted a 2 day media training for Advocates and Journalists at Fairway Hotel on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. Following this training, a refresher training was conducted on the 5th and 6th March, 2020 at Imperial Royale Hotel Kampala. This training was attended by 40 participants from LASPs including CJAF; MCJL; FHRI and PLA; and Journalists from various media houses in the country. The trainers were skilled media practitioners and human rights advocates who introduced the participants to the situational analysis on freedom of expression and access to justice; guidelines for covering elections, and techniques for undertaking investigative journalism; among others.

While making introductory remarks, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa made reference to the upcoming 2021 general elections cautioning participants that it is not going to be a smooth road to sustain the rights to freedom of expression and access to information. She observed that the new aspiring presidential candidates are already being denied the chance to make consultative meetings, referring to the Makerere protests that had journalists brutalized and arrested. She emphasized that these manifestations are not new and were experienced in the 2016 general elections that were marred with gross rights violations, with Government depriving opposition politicians of access to media coverage and internet, harassment, arbitrary arrests and confiscation of journalists’ equipment.

A number of recommendation came up which included; the need for LASPNET to conduct the similar training on security and sensitivity of investigative journalism to journalists out of Kampala; need for proper regulation of journalism through the creation of a body to regulate all journalists in Uganda; need for Uganda Media Council to develop a compendium of laws on journalism in Uganda; need for Uganda Communications Commission to issue licenses to media houses that should be backed up with job security obligations to pay journalists as this will help curb the exploitation of journalists by media houses; need to make the public broadcasting more competitive by opening it up to all media houses and not only UBC and the need to regulate UCC into becoming an independent body free from Government interference



*Participants pose for a group photo on day 1 of the refresher training of Journalists & Advocates on freedom of Expression and Access to Information at Imperial Royale Hotel Kampala.*

# UPHOLDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE AMIDST THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC: EMBRACING THE NEW NORM AT LASPNET

Efforts to promote access to justice have been impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which has had an unprecedented impact on different sectors of economy. Presidential directives were issued on 18th March 2020 banning public movement and gatherings among other things, for 14 days and later with extensions. While other services were listed as essential and continued to operate during the lockdown, legal services were not considered essential. This affected the operations of the Courts of law hence limiting timely responses to the countless human rights violations occurring in the period; for example, violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane and degrading treatment perpetrated by law enforcement officers in upholding the COVID-19 guidelines.

This state of affairs profoundly affected programming and implementation of activities; and consequently, the Secretariat scaled down its operations. Nonetheless, Management of the Network and the Staff have innovated ways to remain relevant while operating remotely to further the Project's goals. Some of LASPNET's advocacy initiatives geared towards improving A2J during the lockdown include; -



## Joining with ASF , Chapter 4 to Advocate for the decongestion of Prisons

On 27th June 2020, LASPNET in association with its partners, Avocats San Frontieres (ASF), Chapter Four and Moslem Council for Justice Law issued a Press statement highlighting the plight of prisoners and called upon the observance of their rights during the lockdown. One of the outstanding recommendations was to consider release of detainees whose sentences were nearing completion in order to decongest prisons which have high risks of COVID-19 transmission. As a result, the President pardoned 833 prisoners on 27th April 2020. See: <https://bit.ly/3a1wTGb>.



## Persistent Advocacy engagements on the classification of legal services as essential services amidst the ongoing COVID 19 lock down

In Uganda, the legal services were not included among the essential services to continue operating during the lock down. As a Network, we came up with ways of engaging the responsible stakeholders to recognize the importance of legal services amidst the lockdown several activism activities were undertaken, among others.





**Holding a Twitter Chat:**

On the 10th of April a Twitter Chat was held under the theme “Essential or non-essential; locating the relevance of legal services during the lockdown” and the Hashtag #A2JinCOVID19. It comprised of four Panelists, including; Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa - CEO LASPNET, Ms. Pheonah Wall - Vice President Uganda Law Society Mr. Anthony Masake - Program Assistant Chapter Four and Mr. Peter Magelah - Program Director Chapter Four. The chat was moderated by Mr. Iguma Gabriel, a Presenter at Radio One.



**Petition on classification of legal services as essential services amidst the ongoing lockdown:**

LASPNET petitioned the Chief Justice; Attorney General and JLOS justifying the need to consider provision of legal services during the lock down. In the petition we pointed out that legal services were needed due to the increasing human rights violations and abuses, bringing to his attention Article 28 of the Constitution on the right to a fair hearing that has been contravened by law enforcement officers who have held accused persons in custody for more than the stipulated 48 hours without producing them in courts, perpetrated the cruel and inhuman treatment of Ugandans. See: <https://bit.ly/33rGrcq>

As a result of both the Twitter Chat and the Petition, legal services were recognised among essential services in one of the preceding presidential updates with the Ministry of Works awarding 100 stickers to Uganda Law Society for lawyers to freely move and offer legal services.





**Petition to Government to consider reopening schools and all institutions of higher learning amidst the ongoing partial lockdown:**


LASPNET together with some of its members and strategic partners like NETPIL, CJAF, UCLF MCJL and the Uganda Girls' Guide Association petitioned the Right Hon. Prime Minister, Hon. Ministers of Education and Sports and Health, to consider lifting the ban on closure of Schools and all institutions of Higher Learning amidst the partial lockdown drawing their attention to the fact that the continued closure undermines the Right to Education as enshrined under Article 13 of the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ISECR) and Article 30 of the 1995 Constitution and exposes children and students to risks which are contrary to Section 7 of the Children Act as amended in 2016 that protects children against any harmful practices and decisions.

In the Petition, LASPNET and its members pointed out some of the challenges that have resulted from

the continued closure of schools like the fact that it has put at stake the livelihoods of many teaching and non-teaching staff in Schools and Higher institutions of Learning. This is because majority of these staff especially in private schools have not received their salaries since the lockdown and closure.

The petition also pointed out that the E-learning platforms had certain limitations regarding inclusion, geographical location, concentration levels, practicability especially for Science lessons and the mode of facilitation did not offer learners the opportunity to engage with the facilitators into deeper understanding of different concepts and it is very expensive because learners cannot access enablers such as Televisions; Radios; Computers and Phones and Internet infrastructure. As a results, the office of prime minister and interagency ministerial COVID-19 taskforce Convened a meeting to further appreciate the petition content and make appropriate recommendation to policy makers. add it and indicate date

- Abantu for Development Uganda 1.
- MSD Survivors Foundation of Uganda 2.
- Action Against Violence 3.
- Action for Poverty Reduction and Livestock Modernisation in Karamoja 4.
- African Prisons Project 5.
- Avocats Sans Frontieres 6.
- African Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims 7.
- Association of Human Rights Organisations 8.
- Centre for Legal Aid 9.
- Centre for Public Interest Law 10.
- Community Justice and Anti-corruption Forum 11.
- Community Legal Action and Integrated Development 12.
- Defence for Children International 13.
- Facilitation for Peace and Development 14.
- Fundation for Human Rights Initiative 15.
- Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum 16.
- Human Rights Center Uganda 17.
- Inter Religious Council of Uganda 18.
- Justice and Rights Associates 19.
- Kamuli Community Based Paralegals Association 20.
- Land and Equity Movement in Uganda 21.
- Law and Governance Advocates Uganda 22.
- LDC Legal Aid Clinic 23.
- Legal Action for Persons with Disability 24.
- Legal Aid Project of the Uganda Law Society 25.
- Micro Justice Uganda 26.
- MIFUMI 27.
- Muslim centre for justice and Law Uganda 28.
- National Union for Disabled Uganda 29.
- Platform for Labour Action 30.
- Public Defender Association of Uganda 31.
- Public Interest Law Clinic 32.
- Refugee Law Project 33.
- Retrak Uganda 34.
- Street Law Uganda 35.




# LASPNET

LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK


The Secretariat  
Plot 10, block 75 bahatunza Road Mengo,  
Kampala – Uganda.

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Our ref: LASP 050-2020**



**The Right Hon. Prime Minister  
& Chairperson of the National Task Force COVID19,**  
P.O Box 341,  
Kampala (Uganda)



Dear Sir,

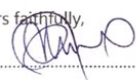
**RE: LASPNET PETITION TO GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER RE-OPENING SCHOOLS AND ALL HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING AMIDST THE ONGOING PARTIAL LOCKDOWN**

Warm greetings from the Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET)!

On behalf of the Network, and its Strategic Partners, I hereby forward to you our **Petition to Government to consider re-opening Schools and All Higher Institutions of Learning amidst the ongoing partial lockdown.**

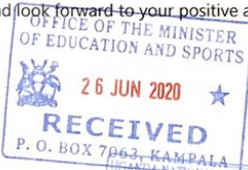

We appreciate your selfless service and look forward to your positive attention to our request.


Yours faithfully,



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**CC: The Hon. Minister of Education and Sports,  
CC: The Hon. Minister of Health,  
CC: The Hon. Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development,  
CC: The Chairperson National Council of Higher Education  
CC: The Chairperson Uganda Human Rights Commission  
CC: The Chairperson Uganda National Teachers Union**



OUR VISION:  
A free and just Society

P.O. Box 8488, Kampala-Uganda Tel: +256(0)312513733 Email: secretariat@laspnet.org Website: www.laspnet.org

*Received Human Rights Commission  
FR 26/6/2020*



### Issuance of press statements on Human Rights Violations in the wake of COVID-19

LASPNET has proactively developed a press statement on the ongoing human rights violations and on 2nd April, 2020 issued it in the media to influence advocacy and real time change. The salient issues highlighted in the press statement included; Calling upon the President to exempt Lawyers and allow them continue operating during the lock down; prevail over Local Defence Unit to minimize on the human rights violations and torture against citizens; respect maternal health rights and decentralize authorization to LCs to allow expectant mothers and terminally ill patients to access health care, and ensuring transparency and accountability in the distribution of food relief items. As a result, the President in his following address, cautioned LDUs to refrain from torturing the citizens; instructed the State House Anti-Corruption Unit to investigate into allegations of corruption in the distribution of food relief and now pregnant women have been allowed to move without first seeking permission from the Resident District Commissioner which was not the case before All the statements issued by LAPSNET. can be accessed on our website: [www.lapnet.org](http://www.lapnet.org) or by Clicking on the Link <https://bit.ly/3keXB30>



### HRDs and victims of Covid19 arrests supported during COVID 19 lockdown

The Legal rapid response lawyers have been very instrumental in supporting HRDs and victims of arrests in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are a group of lawyers from different legal service providers(LASPs) like NETPIL, CEHURD, CJAF, FHRI, LDC, FHRI, PILAC and UGANET who at the request of LASPNET, take on cases of the marginalized and vulnerable people in their areas. They constitute the legal support program in place that has come in handy during this lockdown which has been marred with human rights violations and abuses including unlawful detentions with no access to lawyers. The Rapid Response lawyers are also responsible for making grassroots follow ups on detention facilities to counsel and ensure rights of all including inmates are protected while documenting the existing human rights violations for advocacy purposes. They are supported by LASPNET secretariat to provide these legal services to HRDs, the marginalized and vulnerable people.



*Some of the Rapid Response Lawyers handling cases at Police and in the community.*



**Responding to public legal needs through the LASPNET call centre Amidst covid19 lockdown.**

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on institutions, the LASPNET Call Centre operations remained functional through providing on-spot legal advice to clients to clients. Since its establishment on 5th December 2019 to June 2020, the Call Centre has received a total number of 791 cases. The cases received range from Criminal, Civil, Land, Human Rights, Family, Employment, Professional misconduct and others. Out of the total cases received the centre boasts of having handled and closed of 76% of the cases received while the 24% have been referred to different member LASPs and JLOS sector which include FIDA Uganda, Uganda Law Society, Muslim Centre for Justice and Law, Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, Law Development Court, Justice Centres Uganda and others. The majority of these cases are from male clients compared to female as the statistics indicate 61% and 29% respectively while 10% did not disclose their gender ).



*The Call Centre Coordinator supporting the call agents during a session*



**Do you need a Lawyer or Legal Advise?**



**Our Call Centre Service:**

**Toll Free Line: 0800100155**

**Monday - Saturday  
8.00am - 5.00pm**



**SUPPORTED BY:**



 @LaspnetUganda

 Legal Aid Service Providers Network

 [www.laspnet.org](http://www.laspnet.org)



# THE LASPNET DGF FUNDED SITUATIONAL ROOM BRINGS A NEW PERSPECTIVE TO LEGAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Following the approval of the DGF reallocation budget of 2020, new activities such as the Situational Room were established and are currently being operationalized. The facility saw the recruitment of short term volunteers who include; the Situational Room Coordinator and Document Specialist. The uniqueness of the Situational Room is that it provides a holistic and immediate response to social, economic, political and civil rights violations.

The other distinction about the Situational Room is that clients who call in distressed receive a calming voice from the Situational Room Coordinator who further provides them with psychosocial support to ensure that all their problems are significantly addressed. In only one month of its establishment in June, the Situational room has attended to a total of 22 clients (16 Male: 6 Female).

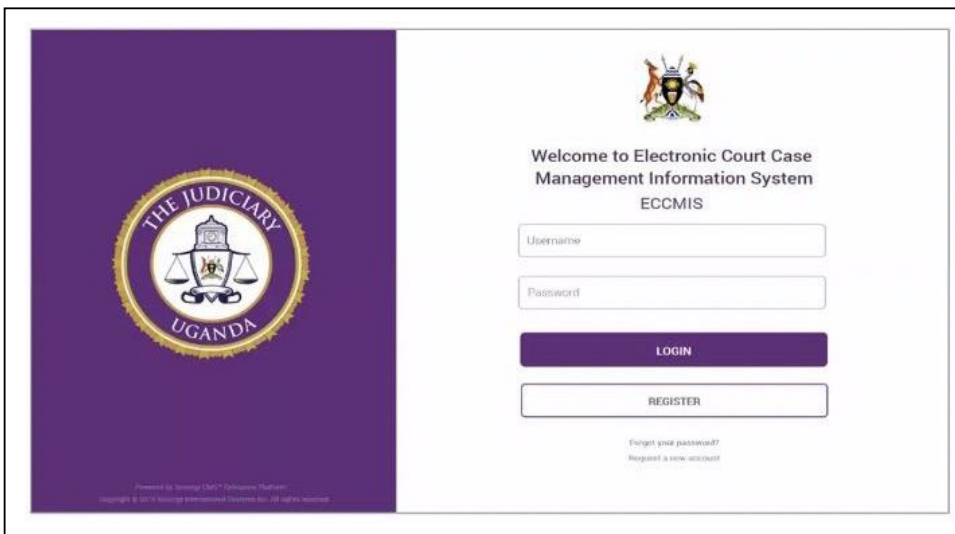
One such case handled under the Situational room was that of an HIV positive patient from Kyeizoba, Mbarara district who could not access her medication due to the lockdown. The patient registered a complaint with the LASPNET Situational room on 8th June 2020, and requested for support in order to access her medication. Through follow up with the Senior Principal Nurse and District Health Officer, the patient was subsequently able to receive her medication.



*Ms. Nambowa Justice, the Situational Room Coordinator handling a client during a session at the LASPNET Secretariat.*



# LASPS SENSITIZED BY THE JUDICIARY ON THE ON GOING DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC COURT CASE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ECCMIS).



The Judiciary is developing a cases management system (ECCMIS) aimed at making justice more accessible to citizens through automation of court process. Therefore in a bid to popularize and sensitize stakeholders, LASPNET and its members benefited in the on line sensitization meeting held through zoom on 2nd June 2020. The training was attended by LASPs who among others included; MCJL, PLA, FIDA, RLP, PILAC, ASF and CEDO. The meeting was opened by Hon. Justice Stephen Egonda Ntende,

the Chairperson of the Steering Committee on ECCMIS.

Other speakers included Hon. Justice Geoffrey Kiryabwire Chairperson ICT/Law Reform who emphasized the need to partner with rights based CSOs in order to have a smooth move from paper to online. Ms. Julian Rweju, the ECCMIS Technical Adviser took the participants through the layout and functions of the system. The key functionalities of ECCMIS include electronic case filing, judgement

procession, contact database and case management calendar system.

The training provided a chance for LASPs to be alert on the ongoing efforts of the Judiciary to automate Court processes; share their views and recommendations. In her closing remarks were given by Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the LASPNET CEO expressed their commitment as CSOs to work with the Judiciary in popularising ECCMIS at the grassroots.

## LASPNET WELCOMES RESOLUTE COMMITMENT FROM MPS TO FAST TRACK THE LEGAL AID LAW



*A Group Photo of the participants at the breakfast meeting with The Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee*

On 29th June 2020, LASPNET in partnership with the Greater North Parliamentary Forum (GNPF) convened a Breakfast meeting with the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee. The meeting was aimed at providing a status of the Legal Aid Law to MPs in order to generate robust strategies to fast track this Law before the end of the 10th Parliament. The meeting was graced by 41 participants (20 Male: 21 Female) who included; A Cabinet Minister; Development partners; MPs; National Working Group and LASPs.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Chief Executive Officer LASPNET echoed the importance of the Legal Aid Law which is intended to establish a State-led Legal Aid scheme to enhance access to justice for the indigent. She later highlighted the advocacy journey of the Legal Aid Law which dates back 12 years ago. Since the enactment of the Legal Aid Law has been long overdue, her plea to the Policy Makers was that it is the best gift that the 10th Parliament can accord to the people of Uganda.

Dr. Roswitha Kremser, the Chairperson of the JLOS Development Partners Group and Member of the DGF Board also underscored the rationale of the Legal Aid Law as it will go a long

way in promoting access to justice for vulnerable groups such as women and children. She added that Development partners are on full board and in support of the Legal Aid Law and on that note called upon the MPs to fast track its enactment.

Hon. Adolf Mwesigye, Cabinet Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs who represented the Hon. Speaker of Parliament, appreciated the Network for its consistency advocacy campaign for access to justice related laws including the Children Amendment Act (2016); Administration of Justice Act (2020) and now the pending Legal Aid Law. He further pledged Parliament's resolute commitment to fast track this law before transitioning into the electoral process.

On his part as the Private Mover of the Legal Aid Law, Hon. Lyandro Komakech, the Gulu Municipality MP and Chairperson GNPF assured the meeting that majority of the MPs are in support of the law and soon that it will be included on the order paper for further legislative processes. The plenary was moderated by Hon. Veronica Bichetero - MP Kaberamaido County and Second of the Private Members Bill, and one of the outstanding issues raised was about the institutional framework of the

Legal Aid Law. Some MPs were of the view that Justice Centres

Uganda was rightly placed to oversee the implementation of this law whereas others stated that it is not established by law. However, it was later resolved that that would be discussed in Parliament.

In her closing remarks, Hon. Aol Betty Woman MP Gulu District and Leader of Opposition informed the committee that the enactment of the Legal Aid Law is a very important subject to marginalized communities such as Northern Uganda, a war-ravaged region with striking poverty levels. She added that if passed, the Legal Aid law will enable the widows to access justice since these are often vulnerable to several property and land injustices. Hon. Aol also remarked that the Government owes an obligation to pass this law because legal aid is not a charity but an indispensable duty for the state so it should be taken serious and never to be debatable.

As she finalized her remarks, she thanked LASPNET for the unwavering contribution it has invested in advocating for access to justice, human rights and rule of law in Uganda.



# IDLO FUNDS LASPNET TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR THE POOR, VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED IN UGANDA

**O**n 25th June 2020, LASPNET formally welcomed on board a new Development Partner - the International Development Law Organization (IDLO). IDLO is the only inter-governmental organization exclusively devoted to promoting the rule of law. Uganda is a member party of IDLO. Under this partnership, LASPNET received a total amount of UGX 332,013,301 (Three Hundred Thirty-Two Million Thirteen Thousand Three Hundred One Shillings) to implement a one-year Project titled “Supporting Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) to enhance access to justice for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized in Uganda.”

The LASPNET project is part of the wider Community Justice Programme (CJP) being implemented by IDLO with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The CJP seeks to enhance the accessibility, quality and sustainability of justice services delivered at the national and community levels in Uganda. Under the CJP, IDLO is providing financial and technical support to several organizations including LASPNET, Uganda Law Society (ULS) and FIDA Uganda. An additional seven non-state partners will also be selected in the course of the year. Similar financial and technical support is also being provided by IDLO to state Justice,

Law and Order Sector (JLOS) institutions. LASPNET as an Implementing Partner of IDLO’s CJP in Uganda, will implement a series of interventions anchored under IDLO Strategic Plan (2017-2020) towards strengthened delivery of quality services for LASPs; improved coordination of legal aid response to communities and strengthened capacity of LASPNET Secretariat to execute its mandate. The project interventions will translate into several project outputs including:

- Dissemination of standardized legal aid resource materials to facilitate legal empowerment.
- Equipped LASPs with knowledge on project management in a bid to strengthen their delivery mechanism.
- Improved IIMS and feedback mechanisms through reporting and documentation of cases.
- Enhanced Information sharing amongst LASPs.
- Strengthened LASPNET Secretariat Human resource.

In the partner’s virtual inception and induction meeting held on 23rd June 2020, IDLO pledged both its technical and financial support to its Implementing Partners to ensure successful implementation of their respective projects. The meeting also included representatives of three non-state institutions that are being funded by

IDLO under its Global Regulatory and Fiscal Capacity Building Programme on Promoting Healthy Diets and Physical Activity (Global RECAP). The Implementing Partners were taken through IDLO expectations especially on reporting, financial management and accountability. Speaking at the meeting, Mr. Felix Kyalo, the IDLO Country Manager-Uganda appreciated the inaugural selected Implementing Partners and noted that IDLO had high expectations that their projects which will significantly contribute towards enhancing Access to Justice for all in Uganda. He encouraged the partners to work closely amongst each and also with complementary state justice institutions to widen the reach of their projects.

LASPNET greatly appreciates IDLO for considering LASPNET as one of the premier Implementing Partners and SIDA for the financial support to the CJP. It is a welcome opportunity that is intended to strengthen Access to Justice for all in Uganda through community and mainly grass-root legal empowerment. As a Network we pledge our total commitment to realizing the project goal and purpose and further call upon LASPs and other strategic partners to embrace and support the successful implementation of this project.

## OTHER NEWS

# HON. JUSTICE BART KATUREEBE RETIRES AS CHIEF JUSTICE OF UGANDA



**R**t. Hon. Chief Justice Bart Katureebe was appointed Chief Justice in March 2015, and retired on 20th June 2020 after dedicating 36 years of his work to public service, 21 of which he worked in Government as a State Attorney and Minister and, 15 years in the Judiciary including 5 years as the Chief Justice. Key among his

achievements as Chief Justice include the passing of the Administration of the Judiciary Act 2018, commissioning of the new building that will house the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, lobbied for better pay for the Judicial officers as well as the appointment of more judges which would deal with the issue of backlog, introducing of I.T in the Courts of Law that allowed taking of

evidence by visual means, the process of Plea Bargaining gained momentum in 2015 and 2016 and the Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECCMIS) is on course.

He will be remembered for his humility and passion for access to justice In the

legal aid sector, the Hon chief Justice was always available to embrace and support our new programming and invitation as evidence at the first innovations conference (LAICON 1) held on 8th September 2017 where he noted that A2J is a critical element of the rule of law and integral for society development that is not just formal ability in court but involves a holistic approach with a whole range of adjudication and dispute resolution mechanism that strive to remove all systematic barriers faced by the different members of the community.

Rt. Hon. Chief Justice Bart Katureebe has left an impeccable record of service and we were honoured to have engaged with him. LASPNET wishes you a happy retirement!



*Rt. Hon. Chief Justice Bart Katureebe at the Legal Aid Innovations Conference in 2017.*

# ADMINISTRATION OF THE JUDICIARY BILL FINALLY SEES LIGHT

On 2nd June, 2020 Parliament finally passed the Administration of the Judiciary Act, 2018, that will among others handle the retirement benefits of Judges and it was assented to by His Excellency the President of Uganda on 19th June, 2020 the same day the Hon. Chief Justice Bart Katureebe retired from Office.

LASPNET in partnership with Justice Centres Uganda and Uganda Law Society with support from UNDP and DGF played a major role in lobbying for the passing of the Administration of the Judiciary Bill, 2018 into law through convening meetings with stakeholders, developing facts sheets, holding breakfast meetings with

Members of Parliament, participating in coalition meetings with members of the Judiciary.

This law goes beyond the provision of continued monthly payment of salary to the retired Chief Justice and Deputy Chief Justice as widely perceived by the public. Our Member Organization, Center for Public Interest Law (CEPIL) expounded on the content of the bill on their website <https://bit.ly/31b7W72> stating that it was formulated by the Coalition in support of the independence of the judiciary in 2018.

The rationale behind the Bill is to operationalize Chapter 8 of the Constitution which expressly provides for the independence of the Judiciary which for a long time has not been financially independent. Following a number of reports on the performance of the Judiciary, issues of case backlog and ineffective and inefficient performance of the Judiciary were alluded to its lack of financial autonomy thus leaving it prone to external influence. This Act has come in place to make the Judiciary self-accounting and provide for detailed administration of the Judiciary headed by the Chief Justice.

## Key provisions in the Act

- The Act, in its entirety, seeks to give the Judiciary self-autonomy and accountability.
- The Act gives the Chief Justice the sole responsibility to administer and supervise all courts in the country to be assisted by the Deputy Chief Justice and the Principal Judge.
- It also spells out the powers of the Chief Justice while carrying out his or her duties ranging from issuing orders and directives to establishing performance and evaluation systems for the Judiciary.
- The Act also establishes the Judiciary Administration Council, a body responsible for advising the Chief Justice on matters concerning the administration of the Judiciary, and the chief justice shall be the chairperson of the council among many others.



## OTHER NEWS

### LASPNET STAFF OF THE QUARTER (JANUARY - MARCH 2020)

It is LASPNET's practice to recognise the best staff of the quarter in appreciation of their hard work and efforts to uphold committed service to the organisation. In the quarter January to March, the winners were Ms Nadhifah Mohammed followed by Mr. Duncan Keitirima. In the quarter April to June the winners were Ms. Olivia Nakawombe followed by Ms. Acheing Prossy

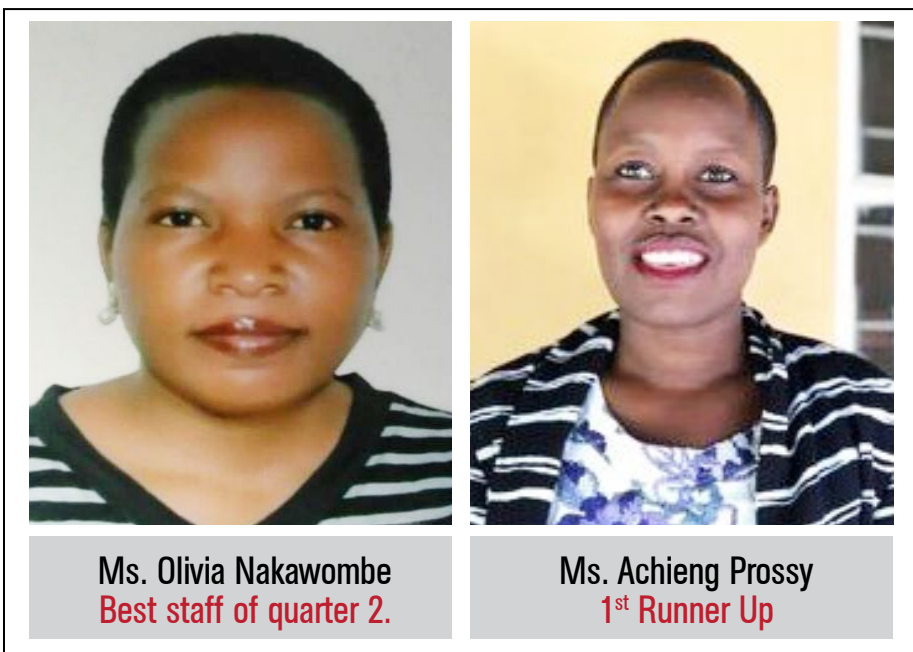


Ms. Nadhifah Muhammad,  
Best staff of the quarter



Mr. Keitirima Duncan,  
1<sup>st</sup> runner up

### LASPNET STAFF OF THE QUARTER (APRIL-JUNE 2020)



Ms. Olivia Nakawombe  
Best staff of quarter 2.

Ms. Achieng Prossy  
1<sup>st</sup> Runner Up

## STAFF WEDDINGS AND NEWBORNS

- On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2020 Mr. Badru Walusansa the Director of Programs and Ms. Nadhifah Mohammed the Executive Assistant got married and welcomed their baby boy on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020
- Ms. Ruth Kwagala the Project Assistant ICNL welcomed a bouncing baby boy on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and got married on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- Ms. Jane Ndagire, the Finance Assistant welcomed her baby boy on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

## OBITUARY

- Ms. Olivia Nakawombe, Lobby and Advocacy Officer lost her mother in law
- Mr. Kenneth Okao, Project Assistant lost his grandmother.
- Mr. Cyrus Ssemwezi, the compound cleaner lost two paternal uncles.
- Ms. Ndagire Jane, the Finance Assistant-Linking and Learning project lost an aunt.
- Mr. Arnold Namwoyo, ICT Volunteer lost his grandmother.
- Mr. Ivan Eguru the programme driver lost two cousins.

**May their Souls Rest in Peace!**



# LASPNET BI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE IN PICTURES



*Hon Adolf Mwesige, Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs receives a book with signatures. From the public expressing their need for the Legal aid law at the meeting with the legal and Parliamentary Affairs committee on enactment of The legal aid law.*



*LASPNET staff after meeting the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee on the passing of the Legal aid law.*



*Hon. Justice Duncan Gaswaga, Deputy head of the Commercial Division of the High Court pays a courtesy visit to the secretariat.*



*Combined cluster meeting at the Secretariat*



*Staff awareness on COVID19 by a representative from IAA*



# LASPNET UPCOMING EVENTS JULY TO DECEMBER 2020

No	Activity	Tentative Dates	Planned Implementation Strategy
1.	Trial Advocacy Training for LASPs	September-October 2020	Online
2.	Validation of the SDG 16 Research	16th July 2020	Physical & Online
3.	National Paralegals Dialogue	28th August 2020	Physical & Online
4.	Validation for the Cost-Effective Legal Aid Models research	24th August 2020	Physical & Online
5.	National Dialogue on Elections	11th August 2020	Physical & Online
6.	Annual 7th CEOs Breakfast forum	14th August 2020	Physical & Online
7.	Annual Peer Learning visits and Regional Engagement Meetings	18th August – 2nd September 2020	Physical meetings
8.	Thematic training for LASPs on how to cope and remain relevant during pandemics such as COVID 19.	14th -26th August 2020	Physical & Online
9.	Extension of the Lwengo Legal Aid Model to Omolo District	2nd September 2020	Physical
10.	Annual Media Training	18th and 19th September 2020	Physical
11.	The 2nd Legal Aid Innovations Conference	21st and 22nd Oct 2020	Physical & Online
12.	The 11th Annual General Meeting	23rd October 2020	Physical

### Contact Us:

#### Legal Aid Service Providers Network

Plot 10, Block 75, Balintuma Road, Mengo

P.O. Box 8488, Kampala

**Tel:** +256(0)393513733

**Toll free line:** 0800100155

**Email:** secretariat@laspnet.org



[www.laspnet.org](http://www.laspnet.org)



Legal Aid Service Providers Network



@LaspnetUganda

<http://websocial.laspnet.org/index.php?u>

### Supported by:

