

The Network

Vol. 2 Issue 6 | April - September 2016

A Voice for the indigent persons in Uganda



LASPNET Launches Cost Benefit Analysis for the National Legal Aid Policy

Ms. Sophie Racine (centre) DGF chats with Hon. Mwesigwa Rukutana after the launch as LASPNET Board and staff members look on.

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Executive Editor's Message



Dear readers,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you another issue of the Network Newsletter. Sharing highlights of our work with you not only makes us feel accountable but also provides an opportunity for feedback from you on how LASPNET is progressing.

This is a bi-annual issue with highlights on activities stretching from April to September so we hope you find it engaging and informative on matters of legal

aid and access to justice in general.

We have witnessed a heightened level of involvement by members and our stakeholder in the activities of the Network, something we hold in high esteem. We do not take your support and trust for granted.

In this issue, you will read about the Cluster Meetings, the Membership Peer Learning visits, the Cost Benefit Analysis research on the NLAP, the launch of the Legal Aid Pilot Project in Lwengo District, the unfortunate office break-ins and our continuous capacity building initiatives, among other things. We welcome comments, ideas and articles from you to help improve our subsequent bulletins.

Our appreciation goes to the Democratic Governance Facility that continues to financially support the work of the Network and to all members, partners and stakeholders who contribute to the growth and sustainability of LASPNET.

Look out for details about our 7th Annual General Meeting where a new Board will be elected, partnership engagements and much more in our next issue.

I wish you good reading.

Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa
Executive Director



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LASPNET Launches Cost Benefit Analysis for the National Legal Aid Policy



L-R: Hon. Mwisigwa Rukutana, Deputy Attorney General hands a copy of the Research to Mr. Samuel Herbert Nsubuga, Board Chairperson LASPNET during the launch at Africana.

The Legal Aid Service Provider's Network (LASPNET) in partnership with JLOS and other key stakeholders in access to Justice have been at the forefront of advocating for the adoption of a NLAP as a key ingredient for establishing a national public legal aid service scheme. The biggest problem was the lack of information on the cost and benefit of legal aid to government. At the same time, there is limited appreciation among key decision makers on the benefits of state funded legal aid especially in terms of reducing the overall costs of judicial administration.

LASPNET with support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and in partnership with the Justice Law and order Sector conducted a Cost Benefit Analysis

research (CBA) as a means of providing information for government to make an informed decision. The study interrogates the cost and benefit of the NLAP by analyzing the status of legal aid delivery as it is now as well as the benefits of legal aid in Uganda and also provides an estimated cost of establishing a national legal aid body as well as the required restructuring of the oversight body (Law Council) into the National Legal Aid Board.

The report containing the findings was launched on 6th May 2016 at Hotel Africana by Hon. Mwisigwa Rukutana, the Deputy Attorney General who also doubles as the State Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs. Hon. Rukutana commended LASPNET for taking the lead in providing

benchmarked information on the required costs and benefits of establishing a national scheme that would help them engage the responsible institutions on the importance of having state supported legal aid.

In her remarks, Ms. Sophie Racine who represented the DGF appreciated the ground breaking research and said she hoped that it would convince all stakeholders, including Ministry of Finance, Cabinet and Parliamentarians that a legal aid policy and corresponding legislation are paramount for a meaningful strategy towards "Justice for All".

Ms. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director LASPNET recognized the contribution of the various justice system actors and stakeholders who had eased the process of developing the report. "This report is a haven of information to various stakeholders on the costs and benefits of a National Legal Aid Policy. I have no doubt that if we get the policy and law passed, there will be unimaginable benefits for the poor and marginalized", she said.

The launch was preceded by a weeklong awareness campaign under the theme, "Investing in Access to Justice for Equitable Development: - A Call for State Funded Legal Aid" through various media to inform the general public and key stakeholders about the status of access to justice in Uganda, and its importance to foster social and economic development.

Representation came from JLOS, Judiciary, legal aid service providers, development partners, academia and the media.

LASPNET Conducts Peer Review and Exchange Learning Visits to LASPs

LASPNET conducted peer review and experience sharing visits to members between 12th April and 15th June 2016. The visits were aimed at seeking members' views on whether to amend the Constitution to cater for gender parity representation on the Board; identifying good practices, innovations and concerns on access to justice and legal aid; track progress, provide support on IIMS installation and utilization; and documenting emerging issues to inform LASPNET's advocacy and lobbying strategies. Eighty two offices in West, East, Northern and Central Uganda were visited by the end of the exercise, including members, partners and like-minded organizations.

The visits were led by the Membership Committee of the Board supported by regional representatives and Secretariat staff.

Members received support on technical back stopping, enrollment and utilization of the IIMS. The exercise also helped improve the mapping of LASPs and JLOS institutions to support case referrals, this was mostly done using the global positioning system (GPS).

Some of the key recommendations that arose from the visits included the following:

- » To have a more streamlined communication system where information trickles all the way down to organizational branches and not just at the headquarters that are mostly urban based.
- » To make cluster meetings more regular and organize trainings and other events at regional level to allow better participation by up-country

LASPs, among others.

- » To clearly reflect the gender aspect on the executive positions of the Board. This refers to the position of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, General Secretary and Treasurer. Thus, two positions were recommended to be strictly for males and two for females.
- » Make the position of the Chairperson rotational on a gender based model- thus, if in a particular election a male person is chosen/elected, then at the next election, the Chairperson must be a female.
- » The other alternative is that if the chairperson is male, then the vice chairperson should be a female

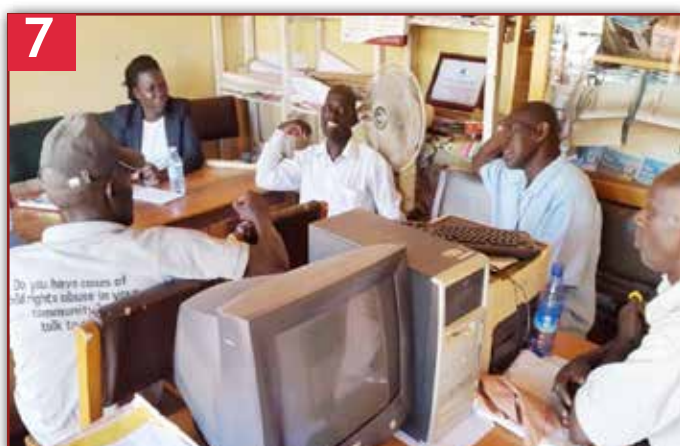
The recommendations especially on the gender composition will be further shared at the 7th Annual General meeting for more deliberation and consensus.

Organisation visited



1. Muslim Center for Justice and Law (MCJL)
2. MIFUMI, Masaka Branch
3. Refugee Law Project (RLP)
4. Uganda Christian Lawyers' Fraternity (UCLF), Kasese Branch
5. Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)
6. Legal Aid Project of Uganda Law Society, Arua Branch
7. Kamuli Community Based Paralegals Association (KCOBPA)
8. Platform for Labour Action, Iganga Branch

M&E VISITS PICTORIAL 2016



DGF Convenes Inception Meeting for Leap II Partners



▲ *Ms. Sophie Racine Speaking at the Leap Partners Meeting*

The Democratic Governance Facility hosted an inception meeting for the LEAP II on 20th/4/2016 at Hotel Africana. The event which was highly attended by legal aid service providers highlighted the enormous task that LEAP Partners have in ensuring access to justice for the vulnerable and marginalized in Uganda.

Despite great steps taken to ensure legal aid service provision to those in most need of it, the meeting noted that some of the districts or communities have no legal and service provider while the few that are located in some communities tend to be overwhelmed by the high number of cases. For instance, a conflict prone area like Kasese only has one legal aid service provider- the Uganda Christian lawyers Fraternity.

Mr. Francis Gimara, the then newly elected president for the Uganda law society, while speaking to participants called on all legal aid and justice stakeholders to rally together and speak the one language in order to deal with issues of impunity in the judicial system, which hampers access to justice. He recommended intensive advocacy as well as educating people to take more responsibility regarding safeguarding their own rights.

In relation to gender based violence, Action Aid Uganda called for the involvement of men in the struggle to address it given that they are majorly the perpetrators.

On her part, Ms. Sophie Racine, the DGF Component Manager, Rights Justice and Peace advised LEAP Partners to utilize more statistical information in their reporting with practical case stories to create more visibility for their work. She also called on LASPNET to avail basic laws on issues such as land and children through their communication channels like the website for ease of access by those who may need them.

Still on communication, Ms. Martha Nanjobe urged LASPs to make legal aid information more accessible to beneficiaries in a cost-effective manner by utilizing avenues like drama. She noted that despite DGF's presence in 74 districts, the partners were not felt deeply enough by the lowest communities. She advised partners to make themselves more relevant to their beneficiaries. The call from DGF to partners was "let us be the best we can".

In his response to queries raised on the role of JLOS, Mr. Musa Modoi the JLOS Technical Advisor on human rights and governance asked LASPs to join hands with JLOS so as to address the ills plaguing the sector. He also reiterated earlier sentiments raised by presenters noting that the right information, victims / citizens expectations remained different from what the courts of law offer.

The meeting was attended by mostly heads of institutions and Programme Mangers from LASP organisations and the DGF Rights, Justice and Peace Programme Management Unit.

LASPNET Clusters Groups, a Think Tank for Advocacy and Lobbying

LASPNET's goal is to provide a platform for networking, collaboration and coordination amongst Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) in order to enhance legal aid delivery and access to justice for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. One such forum is the Cluster groups. This platform complements LASPNET's mandate to strengthen coordination, advocacy and networking of LASPs. The Cluster groups held their meetings on the 13th–14th April and 19th May 2016.

What transpired in the Cluster Meetings?

In the meetings, members were able to review the previous minutes, define their terms of reference, address emerging issues and provide a way forward. The 6 thematic Cluster meetings of Social Justice, Land Justice; Criminal Justice; Child Justice; Traditional / Transitional Justice and Gender Justice were held at the Namirembe Guest House and LASPNET Secretariat. The highly participatory and interactive meetings attracted participation from: Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC); Platform for Labour Action (PLA); National Union for Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU); Defence for Children (DCI); Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity (UCLF); Legal Aid Clinic of the Law Development Centre (LAC-LDC); Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL); Paralegal Advisory Services (PAS); Community

Legal Action and Integrated Development (COLAID); Child Rights Empowerment and Development Organization (CEDO); Kamuli Community Based Paralegal Association (KCOBPA); Community Justice and Anti-Corruption Forum (CJAF); Uganda Land Alliance (ULA); Asha Razyn Foundation (ARF); World Voices Uganda (WVU); Centre for Reconciliation and Rehabilitation (CRR); Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL); Abantu for Development (AFOD); Action Against Violence (AAV); Alliance for Integrated Development and Empowerment (AIDE) and Women's Lawyers Association in Uganda (FIDA) plus Uganda Public Rescue Foundation (UPRF).

Issues Highlighted

The Cluster meetings discussed issues on the challenges with the of execution of court orders; the over stay on remand for children, access to justice for persons with disability; stalemate on the Marriage and Divorce Bill; highlighted the challenges and the unique needs faced by Persons with Disability with the Judiciary and other stakeholders; and the delay in conducting local council elections in light of their important role in Justice System particularly land and juvenile justice. Other issues discussed were; advocate to the Judiciary for Court to hold periodic sittings at different remand homes; campaign for the passing of the transitional justice policy; document issues of misconduct

of judicial officers; and the concept of preventative arrest.

The cluster members forged a way forward through actionable points some of which have since been followed through for example, the National Dialogue on Execution of Court Orders was held as a result of recommendations from the land justice cluster; Engagement with the Judiciary on issues of disability and juvenile justice was undertaken with presentation of the petition to the Hon Chief Justice of Uganda; follow up meeting on way forward for the Marriage and Divorce bill convened at FIDA-U offices. Others included, raising a voice for Preventative arrest; follow up with the Electoral Commission on the local council elections; Documentation of best practices in informal justice which is ongoing, amongst others.

Overall, the Cluster meetings met their objective and the strategic objective of LASPNET which is to provide a platform for LASPs to have a collective voice on issues on access to justice and legal aid. This underscores the role of LASPNET to create synergies amongst its members. The next cluster meetings are scheduled for the second week of November and will take place at the various offices of the Legal Aid Service Providers.

Civil Society joins hands to Protest Office Break-ins

Solidarity is a key aspect of a network, and if well utilized can produce positive results leveraging on numbers and a bigger voice. This is what NGO's did on 23rd may 2016 when they convened at the premises of Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) for a joint press conference to protest the office break in and murder of a security guard. HRAPF an NGO that advocates for the rights of all persons and a member of LASPNET, woke up to the devastating news of the break-in of their premises located at Apollo Nsibambi road and the murder of their

guard. Although some offices were ransacked and a few documents taken, most electronic gadgets were left untouched raising queries as to what the burglars were after.

The press conference called for speedy investigations and apprehension of the suspects with the help of the CCTV footage that showed the faces of the intruders. Government was also tasked to support the rule of law.



▲ *CSO members during the Press Conference.*

Statistics indicate 35 break-ins in civil society organisation offices to have happened in the past four years with no case having been concluded.

LASPNET mobilized members and the media to cover the press conference and many attended in a great display of solidarity. A statement by CSO's was read out during the press conference, calling for swift and transparent investigations in to the wave of office break-ins targeting human rights NGO's.

Over 60 people from 30 NGO's were in attendance with good representation from key media houses in the country.

Break-in at Refugee Law Project Office (RLP)

A month later, the Kampala offices of Refugee Law Project, also a member of LASPNET, were broken into and ransacked in the early hours of 21st June 2016. A number of gadgets were stolen and the Police after checking the premises promised to do an investigation although no report has ever been produced.

This puzzle of office break-ins is not over yet as no conclusive investigations have been done and neither any reports shared by the Uganda police. This has put civil society in a vulnerable position and requires concerted efforts by all stakeholders to defend and protect the rights of Human rights defenders.

Implement Plea Bargaining to Reduce Case Backlog

By Aisha Natembo (Volunteer Lawyer-LASPNET)



▲ *Hon. Justice Yorokamu Bamwine, the Principal Judge addresses the training*

This was an appeal made by several speakers like Hon. Principal Judge, Justice Yorokamu Bamwine at the plea bargaining training held on Monday 6th June, 2016 at Kabira Country Club.

The one day training and sensitization workshop organized LASPNET in collaboration with the Judiciary was done to equip both public defenders and advocates offering Legal Aid services with skills and strategies for implementing plea bargaining.

During the workshop, participants understood the plea bargaining and sentencing procedures, its benefits and the roles of the various justice system actors (the judge, prosecutor and defense attorney). They also acquired skills and strategies in implementing the plea bargaining programme. Issues emerging from

the training included: the standards of sentencing in plea bargaining, judicial interference of a sentence in an already signed Plea Bargaining Agreement, who presents a Plea Bargaining Agreement in Court and the period in which parties can plea bargain inter alia.

The workshop brought together 119 participants who included 4 females and 78 males comprising of advocates from LASPNET's membership, State Attorneys from the Directorate of Public Prosecution, Judges, the Registrar, Technical Advisor from the Judiciary, and the Media.

The knowledge shared focused on the benefits of plea bargaining, strategies on how to market plea bargaining, the law on plea bargaining, how to record

a plea bargaining agreement in court, the situations under which court can reject a plea bargaining agreement, and finally the best practices and challenges arising from the Plea Bargaining Pilot Programme 2013.

In his key note address, the Hon Principle Judge observed that JLOS in general and the Judiciary in particular are concerned about the plight of prisoners, most especially remand prisoners who are presumed innocent until proven guilty. He emphasized that in the spirit of Article 28(l) of the Constitution which provides for speedy trials of accused persons, the Judiciary had introduced plea bargaining as a way of decongesting prisons and providing exceptions to the general rule of first in prison, first out in fulfilment of Article 126(2) (d) that reconciliation between parties to a conflict shall be promoted.

His lordship further stated that the

main message under the policy of plea bargaining is that whoever is ready to admit their offences, voluntarily and genuinely, will be treated differently from one who insists on full trial, as a sign of remorsefulness and an indication that such a person is ready to change and live a better life after serving their sentence.

He said,

“The Programme of Plea Bargaining allows the accused persons, through their Advocates either on private brief or state brief to bargain for the possible sentence of imprisonment. Whereas the final decision is with the presiding Judge, at least the accused has a chance to participate, which is not the case with ordinary sessions. This is a chance offenders should take advantage of.”

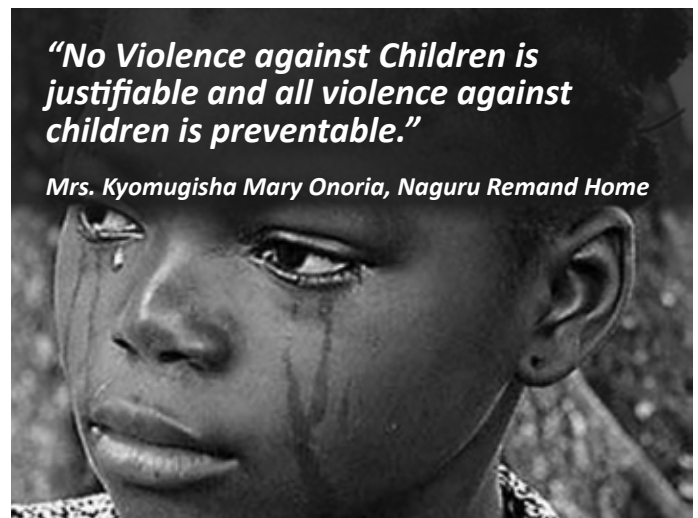
He also appealed to the victims, relatives of victims, the community and all those offended by acts of an accused person to forgive them and receive them back into society after serving their sentence since every one of us is a sinner in the eyes of God. The judge noted that the gesture of pleading guilty is usually taken as evidence of remorsefulness. He further appealed to them not to commit offences again.

This is a great cost effective model of the JLOS which if embraced fully shall help reduce case backlog, encourage the victims and the accused to participate in the sentencing process. All justice system actors were therefore called upon in a bid to deepen access to justice for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized to market, love and cherish Plea Bargaining.

LASPs Discuss Ending Violence against Children in Partnership with UCRNN

By Violah Ajok,
Research and Knowledge Management Officer

Currently in Uganda, 63% of children experience violence in schools and family. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) make an explicit, bold and universal commitment to ending violence against children, in all its forms. In target 16.2 and other violence-related targets of the SDGs, UN Member States commit to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children by 2030. Given the widespread prevalence of violence and its detrimental impacts on a child’s human rights and dignity, the achievement of this commitment will be critical. Children, by reason of their physical and



mental immaturity, need special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.

It was against this background that Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) organized a two-day National learning event during which different actors-policy and implementers, children and their parents/guardians, discussed strategies on how to end all forms of violence against children. The National Learning event was presided over by the Hon. Minister of Education & Sports and First Lady who also facilitated

a session where LASPNET attended.

LASPNET was identified as a key stakeholder in the protection and promotion of access to justice through harnessing synergies with its membership to support the National Learning Event. In doing so, it convened a parallel session on 14th June, 2016 at Silver Springs Hotel-Bugolobi under the theme: “Violence against Children and Access to Justice”. It was attended by representatives from the Judiciary; the Police; Lawyers and State Attorneys; representatives from not-for-profit organizations working with children in a social work capacity; and members of LASPNET. The key presentation was done by Mrs. Kyomugisha Mary Onoria, who provided the situational analysis of children in contact or conflict with the law where she emphasized that *“No Violence against Children is justifiable, & all violence against children is preventable.”* Other presentations were delivered by Ms. Agatha Kafuko and Mr. Timothy Opobo both of the Afri-Child Centre on findings on case study child protection mechanisms in fishing communities such

as Kiyindi fishing community in Buikwe.

Closing Remarks were given by His Worship Karamani of Buganda Road Court who encouraged participants to keep up the spirit of having the children’s cause at heart. The session brought to the fore the violence that children experience and the gaps with the protection mechanisms despite the progress that has been made.

Over all it was resolved that the justice system needs to define who a vulnerable child is and stakeholders need to redouble efforts for to engage state funded legal aid for children. Whatever children might have done or who they are or where they are, in re-echoing the words of Justice Margret Mutonyi, Resident Judge of Mukono High Court Circuit, children deserve to be loved even when they don’t deserve it.

▼ *Participants who attended the Parallel Session.*



Lawyers Equipped with Mediation Skills

By Aisha Natembo
Volunteer Lawyer at LASPNET

Mediation has become a mandatory procedure for all litigants and as such Lawyers were imparted with these skills. This was done at a two and a half days training organized by LASPNET in partnership with PILAC, with support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) on 7th, 8th and 10th June, 2016 at Piato Restaurant.

The training among others was intended to enable Advocates, Student Lawyers, and Paralegals learn the practical skills, strategies and techniques necessary for competent mediation practice. It focused on conflict,

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its characteristics and causes; the mediation and negotiation processes; the BATNA principles, how mediators can deal with difficult situations like emotions, anger, threats, deadlocks and power imbalances; how to effectively communicate during mediation, the importance of counseling/psychotherapy skills in a Legal Aid Service Psychosocial setting and the tenets of counseling.

In his remarks, Mr. Walulya Fred, the General Secretary to the LASPNET Board urged LASPNET and PILAC to organize more of such trainings since trends keep changing and

that requires keeping abreast with the different ways of handling matters. He further requested LASPNET to conduct monitoring and evaluation to gather feedback on the effectiveness of these trainings, if the skills acquired have been put to use.

Over 40 participants benefited from the training widening the pool of lawyers from the Network to benefit from court annexed mediation and also provide the necessary support to the poor and vulnerable in need of the services.

Disability Actors Meet Chief Justice on Mental Health Concerns



▲ *Hon. Bart Katureebe (in purple tie) with disability actors, JLOS staff and LASPs after the meeting held at the High Court on 7th/07/16.*

By Jamidah Namujanja

Disability stakeholders led by the National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU) convened at the High Court on Thursday 7th July 2016 for a meeting with Hon. Bart Katureebe, the Chief Justice of Uganda. They presented a memorandum on inclusion of persons with mental illness in access to justice. This followed a petition filed by Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) and Yiga Daniel in partnership with NUDIPU suing the Attorney General and challenging the use of derogatory language in Uganda's criminal laws as well as the criminal procedures followed in case an accused person is found to be mentally ill. This petition had followed an earlier ruling in *Bushoborozi Eric Vs Uganda* where his Lordship Batema David declared that the autonomy of the Judiciary should not be usurped by the Executive in the administration of justice for persons with disability.

Medi Ssengooba, the Program Officer, Africa Region (Ghana and Uganda) for Disability Rights Fund (DRF) presented the memorandum on behalf of the coalition partners calling on the Judiciary to treat the issues with the priority they deserve. The coalition partners include: NUDIPU, Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET), and Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities (LAPD) Heart Sounds, Mental Health Uganda (MHU), and Uganda National Association for the Blind (UNAB) and Uganda National Association for the Deaf (UNAD).

Mr. Edson Ngirabakunzi, the NUDIPU Executive Director presented a plaque of appreciation to the Chief Justice for always according them time and ensuring that their voice is heard.

The Chief Justice was very pleased to receive the award presented to the judiciary noting that often the institution is blasted and

associated with corruption. It was therefore good to recognize the small efforts that they do to administer justice adding that despite the few bad apples, the Judiciary have well-meaning and committed men and officers ready to dispense justice.

In response to the memorandum, the Chief Justice pointed to the spirit of the constitution which was intended to ensure that no one is left behind. The challenge, he said, was with ensuring that the words in the many book of law become factionalized. He also observed that the times had changed when disability was looked at as a bad omen in the family. He was therefore pleased to see more professionals defying society norms and beliefs to join careers including law.

He reiterated his commitment and using his position in JLOS to ensure reforms, inclusion and mainstreaming rights and services for all disabled persons. He specifically committed the

Judiciary to work with those responsible for different buildings where courts are located to ensure that PWDs have access and are therefore not inconvenienced.

He urged all relevant actors to create awareness and sensitize the public about disability matters to reduce the stigma that comes from ignorance. “We all have relatives and friends who are disabled and we can do better to empower them and help them overcome their limitations to be something. Let us not confine them to our homes”, he said. He also called on PWDs to learn to seek medical care.

On the use of derogatory terms, Hon. Bart Katureebe said that referring to PWDs as stupid should be condemned as it limits planning for them in the national budget. “Access to justice is about how one’s impairment is attended to such that they receive justice, said the Chief Justice.

He advised NUDIPU to come up with draft rules which the rules committee would consider in consultation with stakeholders.

He concluded by appreciating the coalition partners for the great work they were doing and committed to support their cause. He said a helpline would be created by the Judiciary to enable PWDs access justice.

A Humanitarian Legacy Breeds Passion for Legal Aid



▲ Ms. Sandra Oryema during the interview

Sandra Oryema is the Legal Aid manager at the Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC) of Makerere University. She spoke to **Jamidah Namuyanja** about her passion for legal aid and what distinguishes a legal aid lawyer from those in private practice.

Story continued on Page 14

Mr. Peter Oryema (R.I.P) may have passed on but his humanitarian legacy lives on through his daughter Sandra. The 3rd born out of 7 siblings, Sandra credits her passion for her work to her late father who worked as a Secretary General with Uganda Red Cross. "He built my spirit of wanting to give back to society at a very young age" she says of her late father.

Straight out of university in 2007, Sandra packed her bags and headed to Pader district in Northern Uganda. This was her first posting by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), her first place of work. The opportunity was a defining moment for her career because it shaped what she would do for the rest of her life. On how she faced life upcountry having grown up in the city, she responds, "I was very flexible to change in lifestyle."

Her biggest challenge was gaining the trust of elders in the community who doubted her ability because of her young age and gender. However, her work providing legal awareness and counseling to people in IDP camps helped vindicate her as it spoke for itself. She says legal aid became more crucial when people affected by the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency began returning home and issues of land conflicts became rampant. Land that had been abandoned had been taken over by new inhabitants and most of the returnees were widowed, elderly and those with HIV/AIDS; land and property rights became key areas for intervention.

"Legal aid lawyers serve in difficult circumstances even without pay, something that is not common in private practice. Passion for your work and diligence are must-haves," says Sandra.

Joining PILAC

She was informed about the opportunity at PILAC by her late friend Juliet Opoka in 2012 after NRC closed. The less formal setting at PILAC provides space for innovation, she notes about law clinic. There, she has the ability to mentor young minds into social justice consciousness which gives her great satisfaction.

Her motivation stems from the faces of beneficiaries, the people she works with, lasting friendships built over time and former students who are now making a difference through social justice.

Sandra calls on LASPS to use a holistic approach and put their clients in to context so as to provide the best services. **"All LASPs cannot provide the same services so building a strong referral network and activity mapping is important because where one LASP falls short, another comes in. Therefore, working in isolation makes us lose the goal of access to justice."**

On the state of the Judiciary, she says she's disappointed by the political interference that makes it difficult for the Judiciary to check other organs of government. **"Once we have a strong and independent judiciary, then we can have rule of law."** She concludes by advising young lawyers to follow their passion because if one studies what they do not like, it will show in their work.

"Do not go in to legal aid work hoping to make money but to create change by making an impact in someone's life," she ends.

NUDIPU'S Edison Ngirabakunzi on Life beyond Disability

By: Jamidah Namuyanja

Uganda in the 1970's was characterized by total breakdown of law and order and poor infrastructure including health, so when Edison Ngirabakunzi became disabled due to polio at only 4 years, his mother didn't know what to do with him. Children with disabilities were at that time kept hidden from the world as most parents deemed them shameful. Edison's family however

sought to change this narrative and for this they have no regrets given his current position and contribution to the disability rights fraternity.

The father of five states calmly but passionately about the importance of speaking for the voiceless. The ability to voice the concerns of persons with disabilities

grants him a sense of peace, he says. Having joined the National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU) as a Programmes Assistant, he has risen through the ranks to become the Executive Director in 2012. NUDIPU has been in existence since 1987.

Despite the strides that have been made, Edison says society's negative attitude towards persons living with disabilities remains an impediment. He also decries the limiting school infrastructure and teachers who do not appreciate PWD's.

The need to address such injustices is what drove his unsuccessful bid to stand as a Member of Parliament in 2016. *"The current politicians are not pursuing the key agenda for PWD's. The rights of citizens should be the position of government,"* he says.

As a Legal Aid Service Provider, Edison believes it would be naive to ignore the great role partnerships play given that disability is a cross cutting matter. *"Disability has been coming last which is why we decided to speak about it,"* he says in reference to the memorandum delivered to the Hon. Chief Justice on 7th July 2016 by disability rights actors. The memorandum called on the Justice Law and

Order Sector to prioritize and mainstream disability issues in its work.

He calls for better role models for parents and children to show that there is life beyond disability. *"Children with disabilities deserve the same life as others because they can still make a contribution to society hence the need for continuous sensitization and government engagement at policy level to ensure that key things like special needs education for PWD's is put in place."*

As stated in the memorandum to the Chief Justice, Edison notes that, for life beyond disability to be a just one, the law books have to change the wording on PWDs to that which is non-derogatory and the development of the Disability Strategy for JLOS should be expedited.

▼ Mr. Edison Ngirabakunzi at his office in Ntinda during the interview.



Lawyers Condemn Siege at Makindye High Court



▲ LASPNET Board Members, Staff and LASPs during the Press Conference

On 10th August 2016, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) and seven of his colleagues were expected to appear in Makindye Chief Magistrates' Court to answer charges of police brutality against innocent civilians in: *Criminal Miscellaneous Application No.6061 of 2016, Uganda Vs IGP General Kayihura and 7 others*.

These civilians were on 13th July 2016 caught up in the fracas that ensued following the release of the former Forum for Democratic Change Presidential Candidate, Dr. Kizza Besigye who had spent almost two months in jail. Although the IGP and his co-accused did not show up in Court which in itself shows total disregard for the Rule of Law and contempt of Court, mobs holding placards in support of the IGP plagued the Court premises threatening to lynch the lawyers involved in the case. The lawyers were barricaded in the Magistrates chambers and stopped from leaving, with some having their cars vandalized in the process.

The above unfortunate incident drew outcry from all corners of justice all the way to the Chief Justice who stated that the country cannot be governed by mobs but by rule of law.

LASPNET mobilized lawyers from the legal aid fraternity at a press conference held on 11th August 2016 at the Secretariat in Mengo, to express their discomfort and worry at the turn of events that indicated a break down in the rule of law and abuse of court processes.

In a statement read by the Treasurer on the LASPNET Board, Mr. Anthony Mutimba together with the Executive Director on behalf of the Network spoke against the intimidation and harassment of lawyers while in the line of duty.

The lawyers demanded that justice prevails; that they are respected and supported in the execution of their work in addition to according them an operating environment conducive for effective service provision to clients.

This matter has since been taken over by the Directorate of Public Prosecution with a constitutional petition filed by a legal practitioner in public interest in court of appeal seeking orders to stop the cases in Makindye Chief Magistrate's Court. We continue to follow these issues pertaining to rule of law as they unfold.

Lwengo Gets New Lease of Life through Legal Aid Project

By Daphine Achen - Volunteer Lawyer at LASPNET



▲ R-L: Mr. Christopherr Mbazira - Coordinator PILAC, Ms. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, Executive Director - LASPNET, Ms. Lilian Adriko Byarugaba, Legal Aid Manager - FIDA and Mr. Gerald Abila, Executive Director Barefoot Law at the Project Launch.

Together with its partners FIDA, PILAC and Barefoot Law, with support from the Democratic Governance Facility, LASPNET launched a legal aid pilot project in Lwengo district on Friday, 16th September, 2016 at the district headquarters.

The project is aimed at extending legal aid to Lwengo District as a pilot Public private partnership, which when successful could be rolled out to other local governments through establishing a holistic, effective and sustainable legal aid delivery model to strengthen access to justice.

The project intends to have: a cost effective and sustainable legal aid service model through private-public partnership; enhance community ownership and participation in legal aid service delivery through initiating and implementing crowd funding as a sustainable mode of legal aid funding; contributing to reducing vulnerability and increase economic empowerment of poor and

vulnerable people in Lwengo through implementation of the Self Actualization Model (SAM) model by FIDA ; and the Small and Medium Enterprise(SME) garage by Barefoot Law; as well as increase the social justice consciousness of law students and pick lessons from the pilot to advocate for best practices for sustainable, efficient and cost-effective legal aid services.

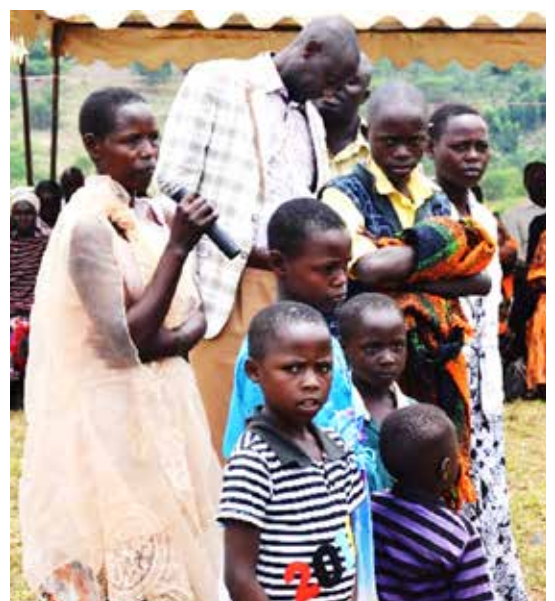
The activities envisaged under this project include: establishment of a Legal Aid Clinic run by FIDA-U; organizing mobile Court sessions; provision of legal information; establishing a "virtual lawyer" mechanized system to provide legal assistance at selected police stations and schools; initiating crowd-funding for legal aid services for poor and vulnerable people and promoting economic empowerment through implementation of the SAM model and the mSME garage.

A key highlight from the launch was the story of Noelina Namusisi a mother of nine and a victim of domestic violence

who had been re-victimized as she knocked on every door of justice but often rejected because her husband was more empowered to bend the rules. Her two decade ordeal at the hands of her husband and an uncaring justice system showed the dire need for legal aid for people in most need like her, who have no hope of affording a lawyer.

In her remarks, the Executive Director of LASPNET Ms. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa urged the people of Lwengo to be hopeful since this was the time for change, and things were never going to be the same again in their district. She explained that the partners chose Lwengo because of its progressive leaders, who are focused, determined and are willing to work for their people, stating, "We cannot sow on infertile land."

His Lordship Flavian Zeija, from Masaka High Court officially launched the project and pledged his support. He also applauded the District Chairperson Lwengo, Mr. George Mutabaazi for his unconventional way of doing work and urged the people of Lwengo to always turn up in case they are required to testify in court since justice cannot be done unless evidence is adduced.



▲ Namusisi (with microphone tells her story surrounded by her children.

LASPs Armed with Labour Dispute Resolution Skills

By Daphine Achen
Volunteer Lawyer at LASPNET

LASPNET in partnership with Platform for Labour Action (PLA) organized a three days labour training for LASPs. The training held on 19th to 21st September 2016 at the Cardinal Nsubuga Leadership Training Center in Nsambya was aimed at equipping lawyers and paralegals with knowledge and skills on how to manage labour dispute resolution.

LASPNET and PLA sought to address the gap of LASPs inability to handle labour related cases preferring instead to PLA. This is because PLA only operates in seven districts of Uganda, making it impossible to handle all labour related cases. The training facilitated by Mr. Epedite Kkaaya from the Law Development Center and Mr. Emmanuel Mukiiza from the Kampala Capital City Authority was highly educative and interactive and equipped participants with understanding the employment relationship, how to handle labour disputes using ADR methods like mediation, and conciliation, knowledge of the various labour laws, both employee and employers rights and responsibilities. They also acquired knowledge on the Industrial Court specifically how it operates, its establishment and which disputes it handles.

✔ *Participants who attended the Labour training.*



Albertine Dialogue on Protection of Land rights and Access to Justice

Land is a globally sensitive matter which has increasingly become complex on a day to day basis. Due to increased population in the country, land disputes have occurred as rights of people or occupants on land are not protected during transfer of these rights on land to another party including individuals and investors such as corporations and governments.

As a result of these irregularities, the most persons affected by these are mainly women and children rendering them helpless when the basic means of their livelihood is taken away, denying them shelter, food, and homes.

As a response to the growing socio-economic problem,

Child Rights Empowerment and Development Organisation (CEDO) - Uganda with support from the USAID SAFE Program, commenced a 12month project titled “Community Land Rights for Peace.” The project aimed at increasing community awareness of land rights, increasing access to legal justice for victims of land disputes, and strengthening capacity of local institutions for land administration to promote land rights.

As part of the project implementation, CEDO-Uganda with financial support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Supporting Access to Justice, Fostering Equity and Peace (SAFE) Program, and in collaboration with Uganda

Land Alliance (ULA) and Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET) organized a regional level dialogue targeting Policy Makers, Policy implementers, Local leaders in the region, CSOs and development partners that support land rights and access to justice in Uganda.



▲ *Mr. Abdallah Byabasajja, the Executive Director, CEDO (with microphone) addressing participants at the Dialogue.*

The dialogue held on 29th September 2016 at Kolping Hotel in Hoima was aimed at reflecting on the plight of the vulnerable groups of people in the transfer of rights and interests on land in the oil-rich Albertine region; experiences and lessons from key actors; and practical recommendations on how to engage and build synergies that will ensure observation of land rights and access to justice for victims of unlawful evictions.

Mr. Patrick Tiyo the Grade One Magistrate of Hoima delivered the key note speech and noted that land, a major factor of production in the Albertine Region had become complex due to anxiety, suspicion and speculation. He added that people take advantage of the loose system, do not respect the demarcated boundaries on land, lack knowledge of land rights irrespective of whether they are local leaders or community members; and gender disparities.

Some of the key recommendations highlighted during the dialogue were:

- Politicians, Technocrats, CSO's should maintain

honesty when dealing with communities to avoid suspicion and anxiety

- Lobbying and advocacy on affirmative action and development of a land fund
- Awareness creation and sensitization on land rights for security agencies, refugees, other law enforcers and communities in general
- Strengthening transparency in the Judiciary, Police and other institutions

The dialogue ended on a positive note with all stakeholders pledging to play their role in ensuring that rights of individuals and communities are upheld in land transfer processes in the Albertine region.

LASPNET Board Members Set to Conclude Two Year Tenure

The outgoing Board of Directors for LASPNET will end their term on 28th October 2016 when a new team is elected. During their tenure, they have provided oversight and supported the implementation of activities, policies and advocacy initiatives.

Overall, the Board held a total of 7 Board Meetings to discuss policy and management of programme related issues, 8 Committee Meetings to provide oversight to programme activities, finance, supervision of recruitment, and attended to membership issues as they emerged. They also conducted three rounds of inspection and Peer Review visits to membership in addition to attending all key events of LAPSNET.

LASPNET Partners with Action Aid on FGGII Project

LASPNET and Action Aid Uganda have entered into a five months partnership under the Fair Green and Global II (FGGII) Project aimed at building community resilience to engage and hold the state and corporations accountable for their actions in ensuring that citizens enjoy their rights to a life of dignity. The project intends to create an enabling environment for Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders.

FGG is a global alliance that seeks to enhance the capacities of civil society organisations in developing countries and in emerging economies in representing the interests of local communities and contribute to social justice and environmentally sustainable development.

Volunteers speak out On Working with LASPNET



Natembo Aisha
Volunteer Lawyer,
2016

I'm greatly honored to have had the opportunity to volunteer at LASPNET and I have gained so much during my short stay. The team has been helpful and friendly, and the work has been really fulfilling. My time here has been both rewarding and gratifying.

Although the experience has not been easy for me having come from a world of litigation, I've been fortunate to work people who are the best at what they do and are

committed to their work.

The insightful volunteering exercise has exposed me to the field of advocacy networking and research. I have grown into a person of dedication, integrity, determination and compassion. I've also learnt things about myself; for instance, supporting the Lwengo legal aid project made me aware and exceptionally grateful for the comfortable life that I am privileged to have having interacted with different people who are

vulnerable and marginalized.

The opportunity built my capacity to show compassion & humility for people in the community who are trying hard to overcome difficult challenges in their lives.

Conclusively, I recommend other fresh graduates to seek such opportunities so as to appreciate the dynamics of legal aid provision, networking and advocacy.



“ A learning Environment for Young Minds!

Interning at LASPNET taught me that we are never too young to learn. The institution emphasizes timeliness, individual contribution, selflessness and team work. I have now developed an interest in human rights and child

development and intend to pursue them at a post graduate level.

Priscilla Kimono
Communication Intern, 2015



Secretariat News desk



FAR LEFT: Mr. Geoffrey Lutaaya, the Finance & Administration Manager welcomed a baby boy on 07th/09/16. Congs!!

LEFT: Congratulations to Barnabas Barongo (center) our Accounts & Administration Officer and his wife Leah (2nd from right) upon the birth of a baby girl on 26th/09/16. Barnabas also emerged the best performing staff member for the July - September 2016 quarter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event	Date
Annual General Meeting	28 th October 2016
Consultative Meeting with Stakeholders on Means and Merit Test Guidelines	November 2016
Cluster Meetings	17 th and 18 th November 2016
Annual Staff Retreat	December 2016
Training for Human Rights Defenders under the Action Aid Fair Green and Global Project II	November 2016

A publication of:
Legal Aid Service
Providers
Network (LASPNET)



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