



Advocate and Advance – A Manifesto to Promote Access to Justice for the Poor, Vulnerable and Marginalized

The 2016 election period in Uganda is a key opportunity to secure a targeted commitment from candidates vying for political office to focus on access to justice.

Why Access to Justice Matters in Uganda

- Access to justice is a critical human right.
- It is “a process which enables people to claim and obtain justice remedies through formal or informal institutions...and in conformity with human rights standards” (United Nations).
- Providing access to justice to all citizens of Uganda would allow those locked in chronic poverty to assert their rights and move towards changing their status quo.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.”
- Nelson Mandela (2005)

The Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET), a non-state organization of 47 members organizations providing legal aid services across Uganda, together with its key stakeholders, **calls for all candidates vying for political office to:**

1. Ensure that access to justice is upheld during free and fair elections,
2. Include policies addressing access to justice for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized in their manifestos,
3. Continue to advocate for these groups after they are elected to Parliament,
4. Commit to amending the Bill of Rights to include a broad right to legal aid, and
5. Work towards enacting the wide range of pro-poor and vulnerability laws that are currently being delayed

Commitment 1:

Ensure that access to justice is upheld during free and fair elections, including:

- Respecting freedom of association and assembly,
- Avoiding voter intimidation, corruption and bribery, and
- Conceding defeat based on the voters' voice.

Commitment 2:

Include policies addressing access to justice for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized in their manifestos;

Continue to advocate for them after they are elected

Commitment 3:

Continue to advocate for these groups after they are elected to Parliament, including:

- Advocating for the rule of law, and separation of powers
- Supporting a better resourced and independent judiciary.

Commitment 4:

Commit to amending the Bill of Rights to include a broad right to legal aid as well as to create a National Legal Aid Body.

Taking this action would ensure that Uganda upholds its commitments under international and regional legal frameworks including the United Nation's International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and the African Charter on Human Rights

Commitment 5:

Work towards enacting the wide range of pro-poor and vulnerability laws that are currently being delayed including the:

- Marriage and Divorce Bill
- Children (Amendment) Bill
- Legal Aid Policy and Bill
- Succession (Amendment) Bill

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Martin Luther King Jr.