



LASPNET

LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK

2023-2024

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

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IDEOLOGY

A Centre of Excellence for Legal Aid

OUR IDENTITY

Our Vision

A free and just society.

Our Mission

To Provide Effective Advocacy, Networking and Collaboration for sustainable Legal aid services, Human Rights, Rule of Law and Access to Justice for the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

Our Goal

To improve networking, collaboration and coordination among legal aid service providers in Uganda.

Mandate

To provide strategic linkages and a collaborative platform for legal aid service providers (LASPs) in Uganda and maintain a common front to relevantly interface with Justice Law & Order (JLOS) on access to Justice and Rule of Law.

Strategic Pillars

- Lobbying and Advocacy
- Networking, Coordination and Partnership
- Research and Knowledge Management
- Institutional Strengthening and Development of LASPNET

OUR VALUES

- Team work
- Integrity
- Transparency and Accountability
- Inclusiveness
- Creativity & Innovativeness
- Excellence

OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS 2023 - 2024



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



Creating a Culture of Justice
International Development Law Organization

ICNL

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW



include.innovate.influence.

**EAST • WEST
MANAGEMENT
INSTITUTE**

*USAID/Uganda Civil Society
Strengthening Activity (CSSA)*

 **Austrian
Development
Cooperation**

LIST OF ACRONYMS

A2J	Access to Justice
ADC	Australian Development Cooperation
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASF	Avocats Sans Frontiers
CEHURD	Center for Health, Human Rights and Development
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSSA	Civil Society Strengthening Activity
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
HRs	Human Rights
ICNL	International Centre for Not for Profit Law
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IDLO	International Law Development Organization
IIMS	Integrated Information Management System
IRCU	Inter-Religious Council of Uganda
ISO	Internal Security Organisation
KCCA	Kampala City Authority
LASPNET	Legal Aid Service Providers Network
LASPs	Legal Aid Service Providers
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NLAB	National Legal Aid Bill
PTD	Pre- Trial Detention
SL	Strategic Link
UGANET	Uganda Network on Law Ethics and HIV/AIDS
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes

1.0 FOREWORD BY BOARD CHAIRPERSON

“ I may not find the right words to appreciate you but from the deepest part of heart, I am heavily indebted to you all. ”



Dear distinguished members, partners and stakeholders, once again, I am privileged to present to you the LASPNET Annual Report for the period 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024. In my capacity as the Chairperson Board of Directors and on behalf of the entire Board, I wish to appreciate the entire Network for having entrusted us to serve you for the last two years (2022-2024).

Literally one could say our tenure as the outgoing Board has been fast spent. Nevertheless, I am glad that at this 15th AGM we shall be electing a new Board of Directors for the Network. However, before passing over the mantle to the incoming Board, allow me to shed a light on some of the milestones steered by the outgoing Board.

Firstly, during our tenure LASPNET was able to sustain its public trust and confidence within the Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS). For instance our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was nominated to seat on several committees within the Judiciary including the Case Management,

Case Backlog and the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) sub-committees. This is no mean achievement as it will go a long way in entrenching the Network into the justice sector.

Our advocacy initiatives for the enactment of the National Legal Aid Bill (NLAB) continued despite the consistent lack of political will from the Government. However, this has not lowered our spirit but only tightened LASPNET's resolute towards continued advocacy for this long awaited piece of legislation. In that realm, the Network produced a Socio-Economic Cost Benefit Analysis report on State funded Legal Aid in Uganda 2023. We appeal to stakeholders to utilize the findings of this report in pursuit of advocating for the enactment of the NLAB.

Towards institutional building, we have been able to sustain our current donors including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), USAID under the Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA) implemented by International Centre for Not for Profit Law (ICNL) and East West

Management Institute (EWMI), International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and Austrian Development Agency (ADA) under the Pre-Trial Detention (PTD) project implemented in partnership with Avocats Sans and Frontiers (ASF). The Network remains focused on exploring more fundraising opportunities in order to enhance financial sustainability.

Further, the Board together with Management, were able to act on the recommendation of the 14th AGM by concluding the vetting and approval process for the Board of Trustees (BOT). I can therefore authoritatively mention that the BOT is fully constituted by eminent persons of good standing and with unquestionable integrity. These are expected to safeguard the reputation of LASPNET in addition to providing oversight to the business arm of the organization in order to realize institutional sustainability.

As we wound up our tenure as the outgoing Board, allow me to commend the Network for the unwavering support that enabled us to seamlessly discharge our oversight function.

To the incoming Board, I wish to encourage you to work towards sustaining the reputation of the Network that has been built overtime. One of the top priorities for the incoming Board is fundraising for the establishment of the LASPNET home having spearheaded the fundraising drive during our tenure as the outgoing Board. We further promise to avail ourselves whenever our support or expertise is needed by the incoming Board and the Network at large. I can assure you that if you work collectively

as the Board, your generous contribution coupled with the support of the Network will keep LASPNET's ideology as a "*Centre for Legal Aid Excellence*", alive.

My sincere appreciation goes to the CEO for having steered the Network in the right direction amidst the turbulent times characterized of dwindling donor funding - her patience and hard work shall not be in vain.

Finally, I wish to render my utmost gratitude to our development partners both past and present for the continued financial and technical support towards the Network. To the membership, I may not find the right words to appreciate you but from the deepest part of heart, I am heavily indebted to you all.

I wish you an insightful reading of our Annual report.



Karen Saidi
Board Chairperson

2.0 THE ANNUAL STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

“

Just like many CSOs, the year 2023/2024 was punctuated with dwindling funding – affecting mainly the Access to Justice and Legal Aid sector

”



Our dear partners and members and staff of the Network, I am excited to share LASPNET's Annual Report for the period 2023-2024. Guided by the LASPNET's strategic plan (2021-2025), the Network successfully delivered on various aspects of its mandate namely Research and Knowledge Management; Networking, Coordination and Partnerships; Lobby and Advocacy and Institutional Building and Capacity Development.

Among the many opportunities that LASPNET seized in the year 2023/2024, was participating in key international events such as the Inaugural Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid held in New Delhi -India from November 27th to 28th 2023; the 33rd Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) held from 13th to 17th May 2024 in Vienna, Austria and the Justice and Rule of Law Global Forum on fostering inclusive and sustainable development held in Washington DC June from 25th to 26th 2024.

Suffice it to note that during the year specifically in November and December 2023, LASPNET undertook 19 districts across the country to introduce the UNODC project titled ***“Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme.”*** Actually we were overwhelmed by the warm reception accorded to us by all the selected districts.

Whereas we realized our intended objective of introducing the UNODC project in all the selected districts, LASPNET was stunned by the proliferation of drug abuse among the youth often perpetuating crime and violent extremism. In a bid to prevent and respond to some of the above challenges, LASPNET is coordinating various implementing partners like Justice Centres Uganda; Uganda Law Society; Law Development Centre; Justice Defenders and Hiil to provide legal representation to convicts and convicts; establish two (2) community empowerment centres as safe spaces for youth; development of handbook and manual on provision of holistic legal aid services for prisoners and ex-prisoners and conducting mindset change campaigns among others.

LASPNET's advocacy efforts during the reporting period were mainly reflected under the Pre-Trial Detention (PTD) project implemented in partnership with Avocats Sans Frontiers. We for instance advocated for the promotion of procedural and constitutional rights of pre-trial detainees through conducting district coordination forums and round table dialogues with key stakeholders within the justice system. Furthermore, as enumerated by the Board Chairperson, our advocacy efforts for the enactment of the NLAB remain

stified. Our hope remains in empowering the public with information underscoring the importance the National Legal Aid Law so that pressure is exerted on their leaders so that this the enactment of this legislation is expedited. Furthermore, with support from UNDP, LASPNET was able to conclude its Advocacy Plan 2023 which is a guiding document informing advocacy interventions of the Network.

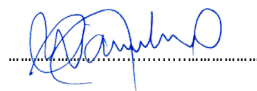
Our work under the CSSA included the revitalization of the Enabling Environment Working Group (EEWG) which is a space coordinated by LASPNET to facilitate dialogue and advocacy on emerging civic space issues affecting CSOs in their diversity. The EEWG is currently comprised of CSOs drawn from the Health, Education, Youth, Women, Environmental sectors. Among the activities of the EEWG that have been agreed upon by the membership include acting as a think tank for CSOs in addition to advocating for constructive legal and regulatory reforms aimed at creating a conducive environment for CSO operations.

Our pulse on the Network's membership remains active having attracted new members including Eternal Life Organization International Uganda and three (3) Individual Associate Members at the 14th AGM. We envisage interesting more like-minded organizations and individuals for purposes of growing the quality of the Network. More still, LASPNET during the year under review and with support from IDLO conducted peer-learning visits in the Central and Eastern region where 11 LASPs were interacted with to share their milestones, capacity gaps and opportunities for growth. The outcome of these PLE visits was the generation

of a comprehensive report to the donor highlighting potential areas for funding and capacity building.

Just like many CSOs, the year 2023/2024 was punctuated with dwindling funding – affecting mainly the Access to Justice and Legal Aid sector – which has continued to limp day by day. However, that did not suppress our passion and tenacity to serve the indigent. Amidst the distressing financial and emotional meltdown, LASPNET Management introduced a fellowship programme through which staff and interns were able to receive counselling, spiritual nourishment and psychosocial support. Notwithstanding the above, LASPNET will continue using different spaces to sound the bell for more investment and or funding for Access to Justice from both the Government and Development partners.

I wish to end by appreciating our development partners for the year 2023/2024 that is UNODC, Voice OXFAM, ADA, ICNL, IDLO and EWMI for the financial support. In a special way, allow me to extend my sincere gratitude to the outgoing Board of Directors for their relentless services to the Network. To the membership, we thank you for the trust and ability to meet your membership subscription. Finally, I commend the team at the Secretariat, thank you for the demonstrated resilience and supporting me throughout this period.



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa
Chief Executive Officer

3.0 THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



7 Radio Talk shows



4 Capacity Building initiative



2 Board meeting & **2** taskforce meetings



7 Rapid response Lawyers and **1** continued to provide Legal Rapid Response



25 Lawyers and **31** Paralegals facilitated and Coordinated under the ADA Project



500 IEC materials on Access to Justice and Corruption, GBV distributed



78 Networking & partnership meetings including **4** International interfaces



5 TV Talk shows



351 Cases handled and closed while **177** referred under the LASPNET Call Center.



90 Rapid Response Cases handled and closed



3 Researches conducted



19 Local Government introductory visits



5 LASPS sub granted under the UNODC Project

4.0 THE YEAR 2023-2024 IN PICTURES



1. *A photo moment with some of the delegates who attended the 1st Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid in India from the 27th to 28th November 2023.*
2. *LASPNET CEO standing with Mr. Sam Muller, the CEO of HiiL together with other delegates at the Justice and Rule of Law Global forum held from the 25th to 26th June 2024 in Washington DC.*
3. *Dr. Sylvia Namubiru attending a meeting with the Ugandan delegation at the UNODC Head offices in Austria during the 33rd CCPJC on 16th May 2024.*
4. *Secretariat staff with the consultants; Prof. Christopher Mbazira and Dr. George Bamugemereire after the internal validation meeting for the handbook and training manual on holistic legal Aid provision for detainees, prisoners & ex-prisoners.*
5. *The LASPNET team posing for a group photo with Hon. Flavia Munaaba (In middle with books) during the PLE visit in Central.*
6. *A photo moment of all participants after attending a consultative meeting that was organized by the East African Legal Aid Network in Zanzibar on 29th August 2023.*

5.0 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS INTO THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT OF LASPNET FOR THE YEAR 2023/2024

This year's LASPNET (2023/2024) Annual Report makes a comparative analysis of the operating environment and its impact on LASPNET programming in the last one (1) year. The analysis is based on two (2) indicators namely; Membership composition, Manifestation of threats to LASPs and Challenges affecting LASPs.

a) **Membership composition**

- (i) **Current membership:** During the reporting period, LASPNET received one (1) new member, Eternal Life Organization International Ministries (ELOIM) and three (3) Individual Associate Members, these were all admitted by the 14th AGM. LASPNET continues attracting new members under the various categories as a way of diversifying and strengthening the Network's mandate of networking, coordination and partnerships. As at this 15th AGM, the current number of LASPs is 56 while the honorary members stand at 13 and 14 Individual Associate Members.
- (ii) **Incorporation of the Board of Trustees:** Arising from the resolution passed by the 14th AGM, a new governance structure which is the Board of Trustees (BOT) to safe guard organizational integrity, accountability, management of property and overseeing the management of the Social Enterprise of LASPNET in addition to advising on effective income generating ideas that can be leveraged by LASPNET to cultivate its sustainability. Through a vetting process based on a rigorous criteria focusing on diverse professional background, credibility, trust, regional representation, professionalism and value addition to the trust, a total of ten (10) BOT members were finally considered and approved by the Board of Directors during their Board meeting that sat on 12th February 2024. Furthermore, LASPNET filed the resolution for the BOT and Trustee Deed with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) and the same was incorporated on 9th September 2024.

The table below highlights the approved list of LASPNET BOT for the period 2024/2029.

No.	Name	Institution
1.	Rtd Hon. Justice Remmy Kasule	Judiciary (Court of Appeal)
2.	Hon. Justice Eva Luswata	Judiciary (Court of Appeal)
3.	Hon. Flavia Nabugere Munaaba	Public Defenders Association of Uganda (PDAU)
4.	Mr. Nsubuga Herbert	African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV)
5.	Ms. Grace Nakulira	Private
6.	Ms. Sheila Muwanga	Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)
7.	Mr. Odongonyoo Francis	Human Rights Focus (HURIFO)
8.	Ms. Karen Saidi	LASPNET (Board Chairperson)
9.	Ms. Grace Nayiga	LASPNET (Honorary General Secretary)
10.	Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa	LASPNET (Chief Executive Officer)

b) **Manifestation of risks and threats to LASPs**

The overarching threats to LASPs during the reporting period 2023/2024 continued to be survival characterized by limited funding towards their operations and project implementation. Imperative to note is that the funding terrain for access to justice and legal aid has drastically reduced. This has grossly led to closure and scale down of many LASPs both at the national and sub national level. The legal aid sub sector, as a result of the financial meltdown, has significantly experienced brain drain. Majority of the staff trained under LASPs have left for greener pastures to institutions like Judiciary, Government, and Private sector. Whereas this can be looked at as a positive trend, positioning LASPs as one of the major contributors to the country's human capacity development, the flipside of it is that it will in the long run facilitate deterioration of standards in legal aid service delivery. Additionally, the rationalization of the NGO Bureau and its anticipated consequences which include delayed processes in registration and renewal of operational permits will further directly affect LASPs by virtue of being NGOs.

6.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

LASPNET's key achievements under the reporting period 2023/2024 has been clustered according to its thematic areas namely; Networking, Coordination and Partnerships, Lobby and Advocacy, Research and Knowledge Management and Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development of the Secretariat and Membership. These summary achievements are highlighted below;

6.1 Networking, Coordination and Partnerships

In the year 2023/2024 LASPNET sustained its collaborative platforms in several ways which among others included:

- ASF in partnership with UHRC with technical support from LASPNET convened the National Dialogue on the Promotion and Protection of Procedural Rights in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Uganda on the 26th October 2023 at Golf Course Hotel.
- OXFAM and LASPNET in partnership with Strategic Link (SL) convened a two days Inception and Kick off meeting from the 4th to 5th December 2023 at Esella Country Hotel.
- LASPNET entered into a partnership with UGANET to carry out trainings on 8th, 12th & 15th September 2024, that aimed at creating awareness and advocating for the human rights of People Living with HIV (PLWHIV) by LASPs in Uganda.
- LASPNET represented by the CEO attended the 1st Inaugural Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid held in New Delhi -India from November 27th – 28th 2023.
- LASPNET represented by the CEO participated in the Justice and Rule of Law Global Forum on fostering inclusive and sustainable development held in Washington DC from 25th to 26th June 2024.
- LASPNET undertook introductory visits in 20 districts and later inception meetings in Kakumiro and Kibaale districts under the implementation of the UNODC project.

6.2 Research and Knowledge Management

In the reporting period, LASPNET undertook key research to strengthen evidence-based advocacy as well as provide relevant information for use by its members which included among others;

- Avocats Sans Frontiers (ASF) in partnership with LASPNET produced a survey report assessing the level of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of key stakeholders towards Pre-trial Detention under the Criminal Justice system in Uganda.
- LASPNET with support of a consultant developed the Socio-Economic Cost Benefit Analysis of State funded Legal Aid in Uganda, October 2023.
- In collaboration with the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), LASPNET

validated the National Gender Assessment research on the Access to Justice Sub Programme.

- A research paper titled "Justice Needs of the People" was prepared and delivered by the CEO at the National Court Open day held on 15th April 2024.

6.3 Lobby and Advocacy Engagements

On Lobby and Advocacy front, LASPNET achieved some of the following;

- LASPNET supported ASF to conduct a total of 15 sensitization campaigns in the Northern and Central regions on procedural and constitutional rights of suspects.
- Development of the Lobby and Advocacy Strategy of LASPNET and the membership (2023 – 2027) with funding from UNDP Spotlight Initiative.
- LASPNET made five (5) TV and seven (7) radio talks appearances focusing on awareness raising on topics such as access to justice and human rights, GBV, NLAB and crime prevention.

6.4 Institutional Strengthening and development

In the reporting period, LASPNET built the capacity of its members through the following;

- LASPNET with support of Internews developed an Information Security Management Plan and Protocol.
- LASPNET with funding from IDLO convened a two (2) days residential training 27th to 29th September 2023 at Eureka Hotel to train Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) in the utilization and application of the training curriculum.
- LASPNET interfaced with LASPs during Regional Peer Learning and Evaluation Visits in Eastern and Central Uganda during the months of August and September 2023.
- LASPNET convened its 14th Annual General Hybrid Meeting (AGM) on the 27th October 2023 at the Secretariat.
- LASPNET supported by UNODC organized a retreat and planning meeting for the LASPNET staff and UNODC implementing partners from 20th – 22nd December 2023 at Imperial Botanical Hotel Entebbe.
- A total of 5 staff wellness and fellowship sessions held at the Secretariat.

7.0 THE YEAR 22/23 IN DETAIL

7.1 NETWORKING AND PARTNERSHIP

This section highlights various networking and partnership activities undertaken during the reporting period.

7.1.1 LASPNET participated in the National Dialogue on the Promotion and Protection of Procedural Rights in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Uganda

Avocats Sans Frontiers and Uganda Human Rights Commission with technical support from LASPNET convened a National Dialogue on The Promotion and Protection of Procedural Rights in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Uganda under the theme *“Safeguarding procedural and constitutional rights for Pre-Trial Detainees in Uganda: A reflection on challenges and opportunities.”*

The dialogue which took place on 26th October 2023 at Golf Course Hotel Kampala was attended by over 60 stakeholders including Development Partners, Judicial Officers, Human Rights activists, Police and Prison officers as well as members



A picture showing participants in session during the meeting at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala

from Academia. The major outcome of this dialogue is fostered dialogue

and collaboration among Government Agencies, Legal Professionals, Civil Society Organizations and Media towards the promotion of procedural rights for pre-trial detainees in Uganda.

7.1.2 Uganda Voice Grantees oriented on the Voice: Linking and Learning Project

OXFAM and LASPNET in partnership with Strategic Link (SL) held a two days Inception and Kick off meeting with the overall objective of orienting the new Voice grantees on the Voice policies and procedures as well as the Linking and Learning project activities. The kick-off meeting was part of the Linking and Learning activities under the new grant project 'Voice(s) Connected & Amplified: Linking & Learning Facilitation' project in Uganda. The meeting which took place from 4th to 5th December 2023 at Esella Country Hotel was attended by a total number of 54 (21 Female: 23 Male) participants including Grantees; VOICE/ OXFAM Ugandan team; Strategic Link and LASPNET facilitators.

At this meeting, both Ms. Fiona Ibanda, the Voice Project Manager and Ms. Milly Tiwangye, the Voice Linking and Learning focal person appreciated LASPNET and Strategic Link for successfully steering project implementation noting that there were visible outcomes reaped from the project evidenced by through increased empowerment and capacity building of the grantees in the areas of advocacy and documentation.

While closing off this meeting, Mr. Badru Walusansa who represented the Chief Executive Officer of LASPNET appealed to the grantees to cascade the lessons learnt from each other into their organizations in addition to appreciating VOICE-OXFAM for the funding towards the successful implementation of the Voice Linking and Learning project in Uganda leading to international recognition by VOICE Global.



A group photo of participants after the kickoff meeting

7.1.3 LASPNET joined the East African Regional Legal Aid Network to discuss the State of Legal Aid Service Provision in Uganda

As a member of the East African Regional Legal Aid Network, LASPNET represented by Mr. Badru Walusansa the Director of Programmes participated in the regional legal aid consultative meeting held on 29th August 2023 at Golden Tulip hotel in Zanzibar.

This meeting also featured Legal Aid Networks from Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi who among others discussed the state of legal aid in their respective countries especially in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic.

Some of the key recommendations from this meeting included the need to pursue joint advocacy for legal and policy reforms underpinning legal aid service provision both at national and regional

level, the need to undertake learning exchange programmes in order to enhance knowledge sharing as well as mootng for operationalization of the secretariat for the East African Regional Legal Aid Network for effective coordination of the Network's mandate.



Mr. Badru Walusansa speaking at the panel

7.1.4 UGANET sought partnership with LASPNET to enhance rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV)

LASPNET entered into a partnership with UGANET to continue with conducting capacity building trainings that aimed at creating awareness and advocating for the human rights of People Living with HIV (PLWHIV) by LASPs in Uganda. Riding on several trainings conducted in all the four regions of Uganda, follow up review meetings were later held accordingly;

- The first meeting was held in Gulu (Northern Uganda), on 8th September 2023 at Virgin World Suites;
- The second meeting was convened on 12th September 2023 at Ataco Country Resort in Fort Portal-Kabarole District in Western Uganda whereas Eastern and Central regions jointly held the last meeting in Jinja on 15th September 2023 at Bilkon Hotel.



A group photo moment after a follow up review meeting with all participants at Ataco Country Resort Hotel in Fort Portal on 12th September 2023

All these meetings brought together a total number of 90 (35 Male: 55 Female) LASPs lawyers drawn from MCJL, UCLF, AAV, LAP/ULS, LAC-LDC, FIDA-U among others. Astoundingly, LASPs lawyers committed to prioritize advocacy for PLWHIV through favorable laws and policies. Due to its effective coordination of LASPs to participate in the above activities, LASPNET received a recognition and appreciation award from UGANET during the Philly Lutaaya Memorial Dinner held on 13th December 2023 at Hotel Africana in Kampala.



CEO LASPNET accompanied by the NCPO receiving the recognition award from UGANET

7.1.5 The CEO represents LASPNET at the 1st Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid

The Inaugural Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid was held in New Delhi -India from November 27th – 28th 2023 under the theme “Strengthening Access to Justice in the Global South.” The conference was presided over by the vice president of India His Excellency Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar accompanied by the Chief Justice Hon. Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud.



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa posing in a photo with the Hon. Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud – the Chief Justice of India (on left) at the conference

The conference which was organized under the auspices of the National Legal Services Authority under India’s Ministry of Justice with support from the International Legal Foundation, UNICEF and UNDP, brought together over 100 justice leaders and influencers including Chief Justices, Ministers of Justice, Technocrats and CSOs across the globe to foster dialogue and

collaboration aimed at elevating the role of justice and rule of law as a key driver of development. At this meeting LASPNET was represented by Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the CEO.

Arising out of this conference was the development two critical documents namely the ***“New Delhi Roadmap for Strengthening Access to Justice in Global South by Improving Access to legal Aid Services”*** and the ***“New Delhi Principles on the Role of Judiciary in Ensuring Equal Access to Justice for All in the Global South”***. Furthermore the Forum emphasized the need to innovate justice, adopt use of digital systems and AI as well making investment in justice as an economic driver for development.

More importantly, since the Government of Uganda had no representative at the conference, the CEO leveraged this opportunity to share the above outcome documents with the Senior Technical Advisor JLOS and Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs for reference and planning purposes.

7.1.6 LASPNET makes a case for funding legal aid and access to justice at the Development partners meeting

LASPNET on invitation of the Austrian Development Corporation (ADC) and represented by the CEO made a presentation on the status of legal aid service provision in Uganda. This presentation was made on the 14th February 2024 at the ADC Boardroom and in attendance were several development partners such as IDLO, UNDP, USAID, European Union and the Royale Danish Embassy.

Prior to this meeting, LASPNET requested LASPs to submit their experiences and needs for donor consideration. Furthermore the presentation made by Dr. Namubiru highlighted the dwindling funding towards legal aid service provision in the wake of DGF exit in Uganda; government's continued inaction to enact the National Legal Aid law; close and scale down of LASPs operations. She also highlighted the priority funding areas of LASPs which included making a case to fund LASPs interventions; amplifying advocacy for the enactment of the NLAL and providing capacity building initiatives for LASPs in a bid to enhance delivery of quality legal aid services.



Dr. Sylvia making a presentation at the Development partners meeting while Mr. Aaron Besigye looks on

Generally, the donors appreciated LASPNET for the well-researched presentation that didn't only highlight the status of legal aid service delivery in Uganda but also made pragmatic recommendations for donor's consideration. Particularly, donors advised LASPs to develop resource mobilization strategies to guide their fundraising efforts, LASPs were also advised to leverage new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence to modify their approaches to legal aid service provision.

7.1.7 LASPNET participated in the National Court Open day 2024 in Kampala

The Judiciary, held its inaugural National Court Open Day on 15th April 2024 at Kololo Independence Ceremonial grounds. The event marked a significant milestone in Judiciary's overriding commitment to promote a people-centered approach to justice. The Open Day was presided over by the Chief Justice, the Hon. Justice Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny Dollo and in attendance were Justices and Judges, Judicial officers of Lower bench, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, LASPs, Corporate companies and the General public.

In preparation for this event, LASPNET at the invitation of the Judiciary coordinated a total of 8 LASPs (JCU, LAP-ULS, LAC-LDC, CJAF, UGANET and RLP) that participated in the activity. The National Court Open Day aimed at strengthening accountability, scaling up stakeholder engagements, sensitizing court users and obtaining feedback on services provided by the Judiciary as well as offering legal aid support services to the members of the public by LASPs.



The Chief Justice and Deputy Chief Justice at the National Court Open Day

Addressing the public, Principal Judge, Dr. Flavian Zeija, cited Article 126(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, noting it bestows judicial power the people. He stressed the fact that events such as Court Open days are accountability measures for the Judiciary to report to the very public it serves. ***“Judicial officers and all staff of the Judiciary must keep it in mind that we are servants of the people”*** he said.

The development partners represented by the UNODC head of office, Ms. Sharon Nyambe appreciated the Judiciary for the holding the inaugural court open day. She called upon the Judiciary to uphold inclusion and participation of court users in its activities for people-centred justice to be realized.

Presenting on behalf of all LASPs and CSOs, the CEO of LASPNET Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa appreciated the Judiciary's aspiration to be people-centred and further argued the public to meaningfully utilize the event to know more about judicial processes. She further made strong recommendations in line with strengthening the supply side of justice. Key among these included fast tracking the amendment of the Magistrates Court Act 2007; Improving criminal justice delivery mechanisms; improving family justice mechanisms; the need to strengthen handling of domestic violence and Gender Based Violence cases and incorporation of artificial intelligence in the ECCMIS system.

The Court users and general public highlighted several issues affecting them while interfacing with the judicial system such as trekking long travel distances to access court services, shortage of judicial officers coupled with absenteeism limited

access to legal aid services, delayed judgements due to case backlog among others.



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa- CEO of LASPNET presenting during the National Court Open Day on 15th April 2024 at Kololo Grounds

Mr. Bernard Oundo the then President of the Uganda Law Society (ULS) appealed to the Judiciary to uphold judicial independence and accountability as this will help to address some of the above challenges raised by the public while the Hon. Justice Jane Frances Abodo, Director Public Prosecutions urged the court users to reject pleas by prosecutors who demand for money emphasizing that prosecutors are paid by the Government to serve the people of Uganda.

The courts comprising of among others Criminal division of the High Court, Anti-Corruption Court, International Crimes Division, the Civil Division, Family Division, Industrial Court, Commercial Division and the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) were all represented and freely interacted with members of the public.

Relatedly, the Deputy Chief Justice Hon. Justice Richard Buteera was very convinced that if sustained, the Court Open days have the potential of restoring and further building public trust in the Courts. He appealed to the general public to ensure that they visit the available stalls to appreciate the works of different entities in enhancing justice.

Hon. Norbert Mao the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs applauded the Chief Justice and the Judiciary for organizing such a well-attended National Court Open day. He noted that the Judiciary should be seen administering people centred justice at all time and thus committed to follow up all the key policy recommendations raised at the court open day.

7.1.8 LASPNET alongside other JLOS institutions participate in the 33rd CCJP in Vienna, Austria

Coordinated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the 33rd Session on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) was held in Vienna, Austria from 13th to 17th May 2024. The session brought together member states and stakeholders to deliberate on crime prevention and criminal justice. This year's theme was *"Promoting international cooperation and technical assistance to prevent and address organized crime, corruption, terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and other forms of crime, including in the areas of extradition, mutual legal assistance and asset recovery."*

The Ugandan delegation at the 33rd CCJP was led by the Hon. Deputy Chief Justice Richard Buteera.

Furthermore, Uganda held a side event under the theme: **“Role of the Sector-wide approach in criminal justice reform: The Uganda JLOS Experience.”** The core objective of the side event held was to showcase the JLOS – chain-linked approach to criminal justice reform in Uganda – leveraging people-centred justice models; multi-stakeholder engagement at local, regional, and national levels; transformative leadership and digital innovation.

The well-attended side event was moderated by Mr. Sam Rogers Wairagala, Deputy Senior Technical Advisor (JLOS Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, and Constitutional Affairs) and featured Hon. Justice Jane Frances Abodo, Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP); Ms Rachel Odoi-Musoke, Senior Technical Advisor (JLOS Secretariat, Ministry of Justice, and Constitutional Affairs); and Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, Chief Executive Officer of the Uganda Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET).



The Ugandan Delegation led by the Deputy CJ meeting the UNODC Executive in a closed Boardroom high-level meeting

Other notable speakers at the event included H.E Amb. Stephen Mubiru, Ambassador of the Republic of Uganda

to Germany (Ministry of Foreign Affairs); H. E Amb. Maurice Makoloo, Permanent Representative of Kenya in Vienna; Ms. Sharon Lesa Nyambe, the UNODC Head of Office in Uganda; and a representative from the Government of Sudan.

The event was organised by the Republic of Uganda with the support of the Republic of Kenya, Republic of Sudan and the UNODC Regional Section for Africa and the Middle East.

7.1.9 Voice Grantees and Rights Holders Convened for the Annual Linking and Project Closeout Events 2024

OXFAM and LASPNET in partnership with Strategic Link (SL) convened a three days Annual Linking and Voice Project Close Out Event from 29th to 31st May 2024 at Hotel Africana - Kampala. The overall objective of the event was to share experiences, facilitate learning, and celebrate the lessons learned and good practices from the eight years of active grant-making and linking and learning activities in Uganda.

The event which was anchored under the Voice grant project titled 'Voice(s) Connected & Amplified: Linking & Learning Facilitation' was attended by a total number of 54 Participants (29 Male: 25 Female) for the first two days of the annual learning event whereas the third day of the Voice Project Closeout had 113 Participants (64 Male: 49 Female:) including Grantees; rights holders; VOICE/OXFAM representative, Strategic Link and LASPNET facilitators.

The close out event was flanked by Ms. Inez Hackenberg, the Voice Global Coordinator who attended virtually, Ms. Milly Tiwanye, the Voice Linking and Learning Focal Person and Amplification Officer and Dr.

Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, CEO LASPNET.



A group photo of participants at the closeout event.

In addition to sharing grantee experiences with Voice, participants were equipped with knowledge and good practices on fundraising and resource mobilization from Mr. Fredrick Kawooya, the Programme Manager at the Royale Danish Embassy. Furthermore, the grantees appreciated VOICE for the financial and technical support which contributed towards their organizational growth.



Dr. Sylvia receiving a certificate of recognition for the Voice project. Handing it over to her is Dr. Moses Isooba, the Executive Director of NGO Forum

7.1.10 LASPNET participated in the Justice and the Rule of Law Global Forum in Washington DC

At the recommendation of HiiL, LASPNET represented by the CEO participated in the Justice and the Rule of Law Global Forum in Washington DC from June 25th to 26th June 2024. The forum was held by the World

Bank under the theme "Fostering Inclusive and Sustainable Development" and attracted over 200 delegates from different countries including senior government and judicial officials, WBG leadership, international and civil society organizations, private sector representatives, and academia.

Generally the forum aimed at fostering dialogue and collaboration within a broad ecosystem of stakeholders to reaffirm the role of justice and the rule of law as an essential element of development.



LASPNET CEO standing with Mr. Sam Muller, the CEO of HiiL, Ms. Theresa Smout, Programme Director and Dr. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme, Botswana's Ambassador to Geneva at the Justice and Rule of Law Global forum held from the 25th to 26th June 2024 in Washington DC

7.1.11 Provision of legal aid services through the Call Centre

In the period under reporting, the call centre remained a flagship intervention in making access to justice possible for all with the support of IDLO and UNODC, through provision of timely responder services and referrals to the vulnerable, marginalized and poor person in Uganda.

A total of 528 (328 Male: 200 Female) cases were received and handled in the Call Centre. The cases handled cut across Civil (320), Criminal (104), Human Rights (59) and general inquiries/others (92). Out of registered cases, only 351 were closed whereas 177 are still under follow up at the distinguished referral points. The cases were mainly referred to LASPs such as LAC-LDC, JCU, ULS, PLA, FIDA, UCLF, former JLOS (Current Security & Governance Program) institutions such Police, Local Council Courts and Government Ministries among others.

Generally the call centre has registered satisfaction from the services being rendered based on some of clients' feedback:

"I thank LASPNET for being helpful in the time I needed them most. I called them on a toll -free line and explained my situation where I was being demanded 6 million that arose from interest and fines on a loan of 500,000 that I failed to pay due to COVID 19. LASPNET referred me to their office called Justice Center in Mubende that took on my matter to court and mitigated the 6 million debt to 1.4 million. I was so grateful for this breakthrough", Fred (Not real name).

"I called LASPNET Call Center on behalf of my mother whose land and house were

being grabbed by relatives. I was given legal advice and later referred to Justice Center Mengo which was very supportive and the matter ended successfully as my mother regained her land and the house", Janat (Not real name).

"I called LASPNET through its Call Center toll-free line with a land issue and I was given immediate legal advice that calmed me down. I was later referred to LDC legal Aid Clinic where I was supported to secure my land that was at the verge of being grabbed. I received the kindness that I had not expected from both LASPNET and Legal Aid Clinic of LDC", Hajara (Not real name).

7.1.12 Coordination of Rapid Legal Response Mechanisms for HRDS

LASPNET with support of EWMI and ICNL provided legal rapid response support to a total of 54 activists (43 Male: 11 Female) charged with inciting violence and criminal violence. The LASPNET legal rapid response lawyers drawn from LASPs such as Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity (UCLF), Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL), Africa Foundation for Community Development (AFCOD) and Legal Aid Clinic of Law Development Centre, were able to secure bail, bond and mediation for all the above supported activists

7.1.13 Sustaining Collaborations and Partnerships to Influence Access to Justice, Rule of Law and Human Rights

During the reporting period, LASPNET attended of 78 (Seventy-eight) external membership and partners meetings, attended by the Board and Secretariat and key among these included the following;

- Uganda Law society's 14th Annual pro-Bono held at Railway Gardens in Jinja

on 1st September 2023 attended by the RKMM.

- UNDP spotlight End of project review meeting held on 7th September 2023 at UNDP offices and attended by DOP.
- Consultation meeting on marriage Bill 2022 held on 5th October 2023 at Fairway Hotel attended by LAO.
- The 6th Memorial lecture of Benedicto Kiwanuka at High court at the Judiciary on 21st September 2023 attended by Mr. Badru Walusansa, DOP.
- The First Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid in New Delhi, India on 27th & 28th November 2023 which was attended by Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, CEO.
- GOU-Development partners' access to justice sub program annual review held on 1st December 2023 at Imperial Royale Hotel attended by Mr. Badru Walusansa, DOP
- The World Bank meeting on "Justice and Rule of law Global forum" held from the 25th to 26th June 2024 in Washington DC and attended by the CEO. The invitation came on recommendation of CEO by our partners HiiL with non-transferable rights of the nominated participant
- The 33rd session on the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held from the 13th to 17th May 2024 in Vienna, Austria and attended by the CEO. This was also by nomination from the head of delegation the Director of Public prosecution. At this meeting the CEO was further nominated to be part of the delegation that met with Madam Ghada Waly the CEO of UNODC lead by the Deputy Chief Justice of Uganda Hon Justice Richard Buteera.
- The Launch of the 2024 Justice Needs and satisfaction survey Report held

on 21st March 2024 at Mestil Hotel and attended by the CEO as a panelist to digest the findings.

- On 30th April 2024, Management also engaged NSSF about renewing the collaboration between LASPNET and NSSF to support legal aid open days in the different parts of Uganda. The meeting was attended by the CEO, DOP, NCPO and TMO.

7.1.14 Strengthening ongoing partnerships and New Development and Strategic Partners

LASPNET continued to sustain its partnerships with both state and non-state actors as a key strategy to achieve its mandate. In the reporting period, LASPNET continued to work with several partners such as Wakiso Human Rights Committee, Judiciary and Media among others. The project interface with partners is further elaborated below;

7.1.15 Activities conducted under Exiting Partnerships

a) International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

LASPNET in 2023 continued to implement the IDLO project titled; "Supporting Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) to enhance access to justice for the poor, vulnerable and marginalized in Uganda," aimed at promoting community justice initiatives. Some of the main activities implemented under the IDLO project included;

- Convened a two (2) days residential training for Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) focusing on the utilization and application of the training curriculum. The training was

held at Eureka Hotel from the 27th to 29th September 2023 and attended by 29 participants (17 M: 12 F).

- Conducted the PLE visits in the Central region from 19th to 22nd September 2023. The visits provided an opportunity for LASPNET to enlist feedback from LASPs regarding their institutional updates, operating context as well as emerging access to justice, human rights and rule of law issues.
- Prepared and submitted the end of IDLO project narrative and financial reports which were approved on 26th October 2023.
- The CEO together with Ms. Nambowa Justice, the Training and Membership Officer (TMO) participated in the IDLO project review meeting held from 11th to 12th December 2023 at Protea Hotel in Entebbe to review project milestones, challenges and next steps.

b) Australian Development Agency- Avocats Sans Frontiers (ASF)

LASPNET in partnership with Avocats Sans Frontiers (ASF) with funding from ADC in 2023 continued to implement a two-year (2020-2022) project; "Protecting procedural and constitutional rights through access to justice." The project seeks to enhance access to justice and human rights through promotion of procedural rights for pre-trial detainees.

Key among the project activities undertaken in the reporting period include;

- LASPNET coordinated and facilitated Advocates/Paralegals where a total of 329 visits were

undertaken by 31 paralegals (22M: 9F) and 25 Advocates (6M: 19F) to police stations, prisons, court cells and remand homes for purposes of monitoring and identifying violations of procedural rights for pretrial detainees in Kampala, Wakiso, Arua, Gulu, Kitgum, Masindi, Lamwo and Hoima districts from the 1st – 25th August 2023.

- LASPNET in conjunction with ASF and Uganda Human Rights Commission convened a National Dialogue on the Promotion and Protection of Procedural Rights in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Uganda. The dialogue took place on 26th October 2023 at Golf Course Hotel Kampala and was attended by key different stakeholders such as Development Partners, Judicial Officers, Human Rights activists, Police and Prison officers as well as members from Academia. During the event they awarded the best performing institution was Uganda Prisons Service, best performing LASP was LDC and five (5) individual advocates and four (4) paralegals.
- LASPNET convened a virtual project review meeting with Advocates and Paralegals on 14th September 2023 and was attended by a total of 53 (25M: 28F) participants. The meeting provided a briefing to the Advocates and Lawyers about the project closure in respect to the pending cases among others.

c) OXFAM- VOICE Linking and Learning

LASPNET continued to coordinate Strategic Link to implement the OXFAM funded linking and learning project which closed its 5 year funding on 30th June 2024. The main activities implemented under the project during the report period included;

- The Linking and Learning facilitators coordinated and participated in the 16 days of activism commemorated from 25th November to 10th of December, which is the Human Rights Day. The facilitators documented a newsletter highlighting the efforts of grantees against gender-based violence in solidarity with the Global Movement against gender-based violence against women and girls.
- The linking and learning facilitators collaborated in a mini – campaign in November 2023 together with Voice Kenya and Voice Tanzania, aimed at amplifying the voices of our Voice grantees from the East Africa region by developing a slide presentation with poster messages on gender-based violence (GBV) interventions. This campaign shed light on the significant work carried out by Voice grantee partners in preventing violence against women and girls.
- The LL facilitators represented by Ms. Edith Nantongo (Communication and Knowledge Exchange Specialist) participated in the Voice Global Coordination Team organized a Mindful Inclusion Workshop that was held at Outback Lodge, Machakos Kenya from the 27th November to 1st December, 2023.
- LASPNET in partnership with Strategic Link (SL) convened a two days Inception and Kick off meeting for New grantees with the aim of orienting them on the Voice policies and procedures as well as the Linking and Learning project activities. The meeting took place from 4th to 5th December 2023 at Esella Country Hotel and was attended by 54 participants including Grantees; VOICE/OXFAM Ugandan team; Strategic Link and LASPNET facilitators.
- The Linking and learning facilitators together with other facilitators from the ten Voice implementing countries and the Voice global team attended a Linking and learning knowledge exchange workshop to reflect on the Voice journey from the 19th to 23rd February 2024 at Jinja Nile Resort.
- The facilitators convened a capacity strengthening meeting for the Voice grantees on the 6th and 7th March 2024 at Esella Country Resort. The two-day event witnessed participation of 47 participants (Male 25: Female 22), including representatives from the 19 grantees, external facilitators, and the Linking and Learning Facilitators from LASPNET and Strategic Link Consult.
- The facilitators conducted two (02) Onsite capacity strengthening on M&E for UWOCASO staff on 27th March 2024 and a session on strategic planning and policies development for Talents Enabling Uganda held on the 5th April 2024 at their offices.
- The disability Inclusion and knowledge exchange workshops were held for the Voice grantees

on the 15th and 16th May 2024 at UWOCASO Offices. The disability inclusion had an attendance of 38 participants whereas the knowledge exchange meeting had 33 participants in attendance including of grantees, rights holders and facilitators.

- The Voice Annual Linking and Closure meetings were also held from the 29th to 31st May 2024 at Hotel Africana and attended by all Voice grantees, selected rights holders among other stakeholders. At the closeout, LASPNET received a certificate of recognition from VOICE-Oxfam for having successfully implemented the Voice grants.
- LASPNET with guidance from Voice Oxfam sub granted funds to grantees under their respective Community of Practices (CoPs) of Media Advocacy and Community Engagement to support them execute joint grantee activities in the months of May and June 2024. Smile Again Family Project on behalf of the Community Engagement members received a total of UGX 137, 082,384 and Organization for Community Empowerment received on behalf of the Media Advocacy CoP a total of UGX 48,698,116.

7.1.16 Ongoing projects/ partnerships

a) UNODC Project

LASPNET continued to implement Implementation of the UNODC "Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme (2022-2027)". The project is being implemented in collaboration with various sub group

members who include HiiL, ULS, Justice Defenders, Justice Centers and LDC-LAC. Some of the activities implemented under the project included;

- Conducted 20 introductory visits in various Programme districts (Iganga, Kabarole, Kibaale, Lira, Mbarara) from the 12th to 22nd November 2023 to purposely introduce and orient various Local Governments about the UNODC program as well as seek their buy-in and support as critical stakeholders.
- Executed their MoUs with with Kakumiiro and Kibaale Local Governments. In addition, held two (2) inception meetings and project launches in Kakumiro and Kibaale on the 18th and 19th December 2023 to officially introduce the UNODC project the district stakeholders. The key outcome was that the two districts offered space for coordination of the project on the side line of the launch.
- Sub granted a total of UGX 925,000,000/= (Nine Hundred Twenty-Five Million Shillings) as project funds to UNODC implementing partners like LDC, ULS, HiiL, Justice Centres Uganda and Justice Defenders to effectively execute their projects.
- Engaged a consultant that is Professor Christopher Mbazira and a reviewer that is Dr. George Bamugemereire to develop a Handbook and Manual on provision of holistic legal aid services prisoners, ex-prisoners and communities.
- Procured branded equipment and items including 200 bicycles, 6 motorcycles, 155 vest jackets, eight (8) pull up banners and six (6) tear

drops.

- Facilitated 20 District NGO Monitoring Committees with resources to hold sittings to assess and admit LASPNET into the districts of project implementation as legally mandated under the NGO Act (2016).
- Convened a three (3) days Annual Staff and UNODC Implementing Partners Retreat and Planning Meeting at Imperial Botanical Beach hotel Entebbe, from 20th to 22nd December 2023.

In the first six months of the year 2024, there was delayed funds disbursement by the donor and as a result there was no activity implementation undertaken under the project. However, immediately in July the activities resumed and will be reported on fully in the subsequent year 2024/2025.

b) Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA)

LASPNET with the support of CSSA project facilitated and coordinated the convening of the following activities;

- Provided legal rapid response support to a total of 54 activists (43 Male: 11 Female) from Central, Eastern and Western regions charged with inciting violence and criminal violence. The LASPNET legal rapid response lawyers drawn from LASPs such as Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity (UCLF), Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL), Africa Foundation for Community Development (AFCOD) and Legal Aid Clinic of Law Development Centre, were able to secure bail, bond and mediation for all the above supported activists.
- Conducted an inception meeting for the Enabling Environment Working Group on the 23rd February 2024 at Imperial Royale Hotel.

7.2. RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

LASPNET has continued to strengthen its evidence-based research and knowledge management thematic component. In the reporting period ending June 2024, some of the researches and reference tools undertaken include;

7.2.1 Validation of the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) study on Pre-Trial Detention in Uganda

Avocats Sans Frontiers (ASF) in Partnership with LASPNET under the project *"Protecting procedural and constitutional rights through access to justice"* carried out a survey to assess the level of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of key stakeholders towards Pre-trial Detention under the Criminal Justice system in Uganda. The survey was undertaken in four locations including; Gulu, Arua, Lamwo and Kampala with key areas of study including Knowledge, Attitude, Practices and Perspective of duty bearers.

The key study concerns surrounding these areas included; the level of knowledge of community members, police detainees and prison inmates regarding their procedural and constitutional rights on

arrest and detention at police as well as during the remand period; the knowledge of key provisions such as police bond and mandatory bail and the way they affect their trust in criminal justice institutions and their perceptions of justice among others.

7.2.2 Development of the Socio-Economic Cost Benefit Analysis of State funded Legal Aid in Uganda

As part of its advocacy interventions, in 2016 LASPNET developed a Cost Benefit Analysis research with support from Democratic Governance Facility. The research assessed the costs and benefits of implementing the national legal aid policy. However, the information generated in 2016 became obsolete and thus needed to be updated with the current emerging legal aid context. Therefore, and as part of the build-up on the 2016 Cost Benefit Analysis Research, LASPNET with support of Freedom House developed a research paper on the Socio-economic cost-benefit analysis of state funded legal aid services in Uganda, 2023, the impacts of establishing a Government supported legal aid scheme in Uganda, the costs and benefits of implementing the National Legal Aid Policy.

The research paper which was developed with assistance of a Consultant, Dr Kasirye Ibrahim, for period of four (4) months was virtually validated on 13th October 2023 and was graced by participants such as former Mover of NLAB and Gulu Municipality MP Hon.



A group photo of participants who attended the validation meeting in Hoima District

Lyandro Komakech, Mr. Aaron Besigye, the National Coordinator of Justice Centres Uganda; LASPs such as ACTV, AAV, Justice Defenders, IRCU among others. The research paper highlighted various benefits of enacting the NLAB and implications for failure to enact the law into place. Some of these are; reduction of government expenditure by over 30%, decongestion of prisons, reduce case backlog and speedy trials in fulfilment of the right to fair hearing.

Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the CEO of LASPNET informed participants during the validation meeting that the updated cost benefit analysis study will help stakeholders with information justifying the need to fast track the enactment of the NLAB. She added that the study revealed that government required to a tune of Ugx 63,756 billion for government to fund legal aid and rolling out its implementation in year one would need a paltry Ugx 31 billion.

The validation meeting was also attended by Hon. Lyandro Komakech, the first mover of the NLAB and Honorary Member of LASPNET. He commended LASPNET's tireless efforts and investment into the NLAB further noting that it will arm various stakeholders with much needed information on why state funded legal aid is important.

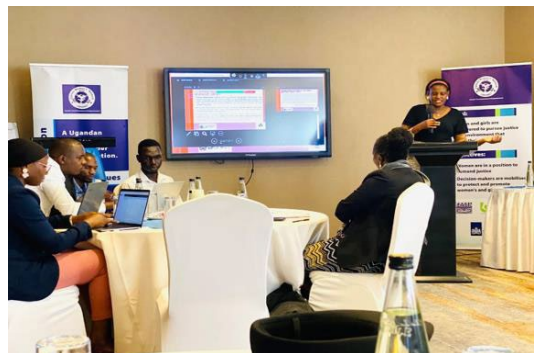
Ms Karen Saidi, the LASPNET Board Chairperson welcomed the study and urged the Network to ensure it is widely disseminated to whoever matters in the advocacy process for the NLAB.

Finally, the research was approved and disseminated to the Office of Speaker of Parliament, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs as well as the Attorney General's chambers in a bid to popularize

the findings and to use the updated study as a tool to harness consensus and buy-in to pass the Legal Aid Bill 2022

7.2.3 Validation of the UWONET National Gender Assessment research on the Access to Justice Sub Programme

LASPNET as the consulting organization for UWONET presented the draft National Gender Assessment research at the validation meeting held on 12th October 2023 at Gold Tulip Hotel. Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the lead researcher while presenting the report findings highlighted the strides made by key justice institutions like the Judiciary and Police towards the development of Gender policies, recruitment of more women across the Judiciary, Police and ODPP, establishment of special nursing rooms and or child care centres in the Judiciary and Prisons, empowerment of local councils to respond to gender-related matters. She further shared significant gaps that still persist in ensuring gender equality and equity within the justice sector include limited trust in the formal justice system, cultural norms and stereotypes, corruption and sexual harassment.



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru presenting the draft National Gender Assessment report on the Access to Justice Sub Programme

Overall, the draft report received a good appraisal and review from stakeholders in the Access to Justice Sub Programme of the Governance and Security Programme, Police, Prisons and Women rights organizations. In her remarks, Ms. Lucy Ladira, Technical Advisor Gender appreciated LASPNET for the thorough and well written report. She added that the report will be used to inform policy and practice change. On 12th November 2023, after addressing comments from the validation, LASPNET was able to submit a final report to UWONET which it was later approved for their use.

7.2.4 Development of a training manual and handbook on holistic legal aid provision to prisoners and ex-prisoners developed

LASPNET with funding from UNODC contracted a consultant (Prof Christopher Mbazira from Makerere University) and an Expert reviewer (Dr. George Bamugemereire) to develop a training manual and handbook on *"Holistic legal aid service provision to prisoners and Ex-prisoners"*.



A cross-section of participants at the validation meeting for the Training Manual and Handbook on Holistic Provision of Legal Aid Services for Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners in Uganda

The draft manual and handbook was

subjected to an internal validation before it was validated by the wider stakeholders on 1st July 2024 at Imperial Royale Hotel. It's anticipated that the handbook and manual will be utilized by district focal persons, LASPs and community actors in the process of executing their community work.

7.3 LOBBY AND ADVOCACY

During the reporting period, LASPNET undertook various lobby and advocacy initiatives under the UNODC, UNDP, and CSSA projects aimed at enhancing Access to Justice; Human rights and Rule of Law as highlighted below;

7.3.1 LASPNET conducts sensitization campaigns in the Northern and Central regions of Uganda

In a bid to raise awareness and advocate for procedural rights of Pre-Trial Detainees, LASPNET supported ASF to conduct a total of 15 sensitization campaigns in the Northern and Central regions. The campaigns were held from 1st to 25th August 2023 in form of Radio talk shows, Prison sensitizations, Public outreaches as well as sensitization of local leaders about procedural rights of suspects. The districts where these campaigns were conducted included Kampala, Wakiso districts, Arua, Gulu, Kitgum and Lamwo districts.

Hon. Justice Alfonse Owiny Dollo receives a campaign portrait from ASFLASPNET team in Kitgum on 23rd August 2023

During the sensitization campaigns, LASPNET together with ASF were also invited to participate in the Kitgum Legal Aid Open day convened by the Judiciary

which took place on 23rd August 2023 at the Kitgum Chief Magistrates court grounds and was graced by the Hon. The Chief Justice, His Lordship Alfonse Owiny Dollo, H/W Sarah Langa Siu, the Chief Registrar, various Judges of the High Court, Magistrates, LASPs among others. In his remarks, the CJ appreciated Civil Society Organizations like LASPNET for their support towards the Judiciary in ensuring access to Justice for all and in his words noted thus ***“Access to Justice has been a challenge in Uganda especially in Rural areas but the Judiciary and with the support of civil society organization like LASPNET, ULS, RLP among others are working together to change this narrative despite numerous challenges”***



Hon. Justice Alfonse Owiny Dollo receives a campaign portrait from ASFLASPNET team in Kitgum on 23rd August 2023

The project team from ASF and LASPNET used this opportunity to advocate for the respect and upholding of procedural and constitutional rights for victims of unlawful detentions under the campaign tagline ***“Detainees rights matter.”***

7.3.2 LASPNET developed the Lobby and Advocacy Strategy for the period 2023 to 2027

It's exciting to note that following the expiry of the previous advocacy strategy 2017-2020, LASPNET with funding from UNDP Spotlight Initiative commissioned a consultant to develop another Lobby and Advocacy Strategy for the period 2023-2027. The strategy is anchored under LASPNET Strategic Plan (2021-2025), which lays emphasis that LASPNET ought to leverage its strategic position within the CSO sector to lobby and advocate for pro-poor laws and any emerging threats on access to justice, human rights and rule of law. The strategy that was developed by the Consultant, Mr. Joseph Nyakana, was validated on 1st November 2023 by various stakeholders during an online meeting.

The Lobby and Advocacy Strategy focuses on various advocacy areas which include the NLAB, Human Rights Based Approach; GBV among others. It also highlights a cocktail of advocacy tools to use such as media, policy briefs, and diplomatic engagements, to mention but a few.

Dr. Sylvia during the validation meeting implored members to utilize this strategy in a bid to foster evidence-based advocacy throughout their work. She also thanked UNDP that funded the development of the strategy as well as Mr. Joseph Nyakana, the consultant who developed the strategy.

The Late Imela Prossy, the Board Representative Central, officiated the validation meeting and while closing off the event, she appealed to the members to apply the strategy in their day to day work.

7.3.3 LASPNET kicked off implementation of the UNODC project with introductory visits in 19 districts and later holding inception meetings in Kakumiro and Kibaale districts

Starting from 12th to 22nd of November 2023, LASPNET with support from United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime under the project titled "Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme in Uganda", carried out introductory visits in the 19 selected districts of project implementation and these included Mubende, Hoima, Kabale, Kassanda, Kibaale, Kagadi, Kakumiro, Mbarara, Kabarole, Masindi, Jinja Iganga, Tororo, Mbale, Moroto, Lira, Adjumani, Yumbe and Arua.



LASPNET team headed by Dr. Sylvia Namubiru having a meeting with CAO of Kabarole District Mr. Stephen Rubaihayo and other district leaders

The main purpose of these visits was to introduce and orient various Local Governments leadership about the UNODC program as well as seek their buy-in and support as critical stakeholders in the successful implementation of the above program.

The Western team was headed by the CEO of LASPNET Dr. Sylvia Namubiru whereas Northern and Eastern team was headed

by the Director of Programmes Mr. Badru Walusansa, all supported by LASPNET staff and representatives from implementing partners such as Justice Centres Uganda, Uganda Law Society, Justice Defenders and Law Development Centre and Local Government in the 20 selected program districts.

During the visits, the LASPNET's team met with different district leaders such as Chief Administrative Officers, LCV, Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Community Development Officers, Probation Officers and Secretaries for Social Services among others. The methodology for these visits encompassed interaction with the district leadership, presentation of the project brief by the heads of the delegation, plenary and discussion of next steps.

Overall, the district leaderships welcomed and appreciated LASPNET for having considered their districts for the program. They noted that the program is very timely since their districts are currently experiencing high incidences of crime amidst limited prevention and response mechanisms. The district leaders also decried the scale down in operations of Legal Aid Service Providers in their districts following the exit of DGF as well as the non-functioning of remand homes due to logistical challenges such as lack of transport of juveniles to courts of law. It was therefore expected the UNODC program would help to close the gap in legal aid service provision, which was the basis upon which the program was fully embraced and welcomed in all the visited districts.



A photo moment with LASPNET team and Lira District leadership during introductory visits in Northern Uganda

During the engagement, the team leaders also briefly highlighted the key proposed program strategic outcomes namely (i) strengthening mechanisms for court administration and case management; (ii) increasing access to quality legal aid services for vulnerable groups; (iii) promoting alternatives to imprisonment, crime prevention among the youth & prevention of violent extremism and (iv) protection of the economy of Uganda from illicit financial flows and money laundering. These would be realised through to be execution of activities under the program which include: provision of legal aid services to prisoners and ex-prisoners; development of a manual and IEC materials on crime prevention and legal aid service provision; conducting of trainings for different penal actors on rehabilitation programs and alternatives to imprisonment; establishment of Community Empowerment Centres as well as conducting advocacy initiatives arising out of the program activities.

Additionally, LASPNET underscored the issue of promoting and respecting the rights of all stakeholders under the program. For instance, under the program brief, several marginalized groups such as women,

children, youth and PWDs were highlighted for purposes of ensuring that they benefit from the project because often times they are left behind.

In a nut shell, the project brief was summed up with an assurance made to the district leadership to the effect that LASPNET has in the past collaborated with LGs to implement successful projects such as cost-effective legal aid models in Lwengo and Omoro as well as the GBV elimination project implemented in Buikwe, Mukono and Kayunga with support from the European Union.

These visits provided ground breaking for LASPNET in the implementing districts to commence with the implementation of the UNODC program. The acceptance and readiness with which the program was welcomed across all the Local Governments gives a positive impression that the program will be a success.

7.3.4 LASPNET launched the UNODC project on Criminal Justice in Kakumiro and Kibale

Following the introductory meetings, Kakumiro and Kibaale districts expressed readiness and preparations to convene their inception meetings which would also act as launches for the UNODC project in the two respective districts.



A photo moment of all participants at the town hall of Kibaale district on 19th December 2023 during the UNODC inception meetings

a) LASPNET held two UNODC Inception and meetings in Kakumiro and Kibale

LASPNET under its flagship programme of strengthening crime prevention and drug abuse which is a programme funded by United Nation Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 18th and 19th of December 2023 conducted Inception Meetings at Kakumiro and Kibaale district town halls respectively.

These meetings were attended by members across different sectors like the district leadership, Civil Society, the police, prisons, religious leaders, members of the public among others.

The Chief Executive officer in her maiden speech commended all the two districts for having welcomed LASPNET and reiterated the fact that she was impressed by the way, these districts were quick to embrace the programme.

She explained that the initiative was intended to bring justice closer to the people of Kakumiro and Kibaale districts and hence underscored the need to reduce the culture of recidivism and embrace attitude change.

The speakers in their remarks uploaded the project and appreciated the funders as well as the Network for the consideration. In his remarks, Mr. Erisu Enos, the Deputy CAO in his remarks stated that Organizations like LASPNET fill in the gap where local government could have missed out and went on to comment that Projects like UNODC Programme, address challenges/ gaps that Local Governments face unable to address due to unavailability of resources.



The Deputy Chairperson of Kakumiro Ms. Grace Batarigaya together with her boss Mr. Sentayi Joseph LCV chairperson (on left) and Rtd. Major David Matovu (on right) – RDC of Kakumiro launching UNODC Programme in Kakumiro District

Relatedly, Mr. Batekege Jared, the Deputy LC5 of Kibaale District expressed gratitude to LASPNET and its partners for choosing Kibaale district to benefit from the Cost-effective Legal Aid model, noting that Kibaale is one of the districts in Bunyoro Sub region with enormous access to justice challenges stemming from absence of a LASP; one judicial officer; domestic violence cases exacerbated by ignorance of the law among the population and many other issues.

The event was crowned off with a launch and signing of MOUs with the District Local Government officials who pledged maximum cooperation to ensure the UNODC Programme finds a smooth operation on the ground including the fact that they offered office space for LASPNET and it's implementing LASPs to use while coordinating the project activities.



Hon. Retired Justice Remmy Kasule- LASPNET Honorary Member, paying a courtesy visit to LASPNET's stall during the National Open Day

LASPNET in conjunction with the Judiciary coordinated and participated in the National Court open day at Kololo Independence Ceremonial grounds on 15th April 2024 as highlighted under the networking, coordination and partnerships section.

7.3.5 LASPNET participated in the Legal Aid camp in Kayunga

LASPNET in collaboration with Eden Miracle Ministries coordinated and participated in the Legal aid camp from 20th to 26th May 2024 in Kyelima Subcounty in Kayunga District. The legal aid camp was convened at the side-line of the Ministry's divine camping and crusade. Purposely the legal aid camp was aimed at providing legal aid services to the indigent alongside the gospel mission.

Three Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) who included Legal Aid Project of Uganda Law Society (LAP/ULS), Center for Health, Human Rights & Development (CEHURD) and Uganda Christian Lawyers' Fraternity (UCLF) responded positively LASPNET's call to extend legal aid services during the legal aid camp.

A full week event featured activities such as door to door evangelism, daily crusades, community charitable work such as construction of water sources, medical and legal aid services. Specifically, the Legal aid camp featured setting up of legal aid desks by participating Legal Aid Service Providers in order provide legal aid and advisory support services including advice and counselling, mediation, sharing or IEC materials and other related information



LASPNET team of lawyers offering legal advice during legal camp in Kayunga district

During this period, a total of 55 (34 female: 21 male) walk-in clients were handled at the LASPNET desk. The cases handled were related to GBV, land, child maintenance, and bail applications, including counselling, mediation, sharing or IEC materials and other related information.

Eden Ministries appreciated LASPNET and other LASPs for the legal aid support

services the team had rendered to the people of Kayunga district.

7.3.6 LASPNET participated in the Family Festival on strengthening Families

LASPNET coordinated LASPs such as AFCODE, CEDO to offer legal aid support services to the public during the Family Festival convened by IRCU in conjunction with the Government of Uganda and Global Peace Initiative at Kololo Independence grounds on 29th June 2024. The event was graced by the president of Uganda, HE Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the First Lady H.E Janet Kataha Museveni, among other government representatives and members of the diplomatic core.



A religious leader addressing the media at the Family Festival

During the Festival, LASPNET's stall attracted over 100 clients who not only received legal aid services but also were acquainted with the work of the Network.

7.3.7 Statements, Petitions and Position papers on A2J and Human Rights

In the reporting period, LASPNET prepared one press statement was prepared as highlighted below;

- A press statement on the ongoing Developments and concerns about the NGO sector in Uganda in light of the rationalization of the NGO Bureau and its impact on operations of NGOs in Uganda. This was also aired on Radio One and Kaboozi ku Biiri on the 30th April 2024. Furthermore, the Director of Programmes provided a comprehensive commentary about this statement to the UN Office of the High Commissioner in Kenya.

7.3.8 Access to justice, Rule of Law and Human Rights enhanced through media and related information forums

Media continues to be a vital tool in amplifying LASPNET's advocacy work.

Radio Talk shows:

A total of seven (7) radio talks appearances were featured to educate the public on various access to justice and human rights issues such as GBV, NLAB, strengthening crime prevention among others as elucidated below;

- On 8th July 2023, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, appeared on Salt TV in the morning discussing issues surrounding DNA saga and current social and political emerging issues.
- LASPNET and ASF, were read in news on Radio one on the 26th October 2023 after hosting the National dialogue on pretrial detention successfully.
- On 27th October 2023, the CEO featured in a special report about "why are clients rejecting some lawyers to represent them in courts of law" which was broadcasted on NBS TV.

- Still on 19th December 2023 the UNODC Project Coordinator, Ms. Stella Namiiro together Mr. Badru Walusansa (DOP) and Mr. Ronald Sekaggya (Formerly JSC) appeared on Kagadi -Kibaale Community Radio station to introduce UNODC programme in the districts of Kibaale and Kakumiro.
 - The release of press statement on the ongoing Developments and concerns about the NGO sector in Uganda in light of the rationalization of the NGO Bureau and its impact on operations of NGOs in Uganda. This was also aired on Radio One and Kaboozi ku Biiri on the 30th April 2024.
 - The CEO also appeared in a special report on Women's day on Delta TV on 8th March 2024.
 - Salt media released a special women's day coverage profiling of CEO on International Women's Day by on the 8th March 2024. The coverage covered her career as a lawyer, leadership portfolios and her impact as a woman leader championing access to justice.
- Human rights limited access to legal aid in rural areas contributes to an increase in detention – on UBC TV <http://youtu.be/B8guNqzOzgM?feature=shared>
 - Bannakyewa Baagala Etteeka eriggya liyambeko Bannayuganda abavundira mu makomera- BBSTV <https://youtu.be/zif8onSmv3l?feature=shared>
 - Salt TV Talk show https://www.youtube.com/live/fv-F5Qss_i0?feature=share

c) Use of documentary and short videos

The L&L Facilitators worked closely with Video Documentary service provider to conduct documentation field support visits to more than 12 Voice grantee organizations to collect video footage for the video documentary on promising approaches of work. The grantee partners visited included Sorak Development Agency, GWED-G, Joy Initiatives Uganda who were part of the nine influencing grantees whose grants ended during the months of January – March, 2024.

This Video Documentary was disseminated to the grantee partners and rightsholder groups and other Voice stakeholders via the Voice Global Website (<https://voice.global/>)

d) Press statements

On 29th April 2024, LASPNET released a Press Statement about the ongoing developments and concerns about the NGO sector in Uganda. It was covered on Radio Akaboozi, Radio One and CBS FM news bulletin.

b) Television Talk shows

In the reporting period, LASPNET appeared in news on local TVs such as BBS TV, NBS TV, and UBCTV as well as both in the daily newspapers and online especially during the ASF-LASPNET National Dialogue on Pre-Trial Detention;

- Uganda sees drop in pretrial detention figures https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/uganda-sees-drop-in-pretrial-detention-figure-Nv_173572
- 48% of detainees in Uganda not tried-study-PML daily. <https://www.pmldaily.com/news/2023/10/48-of-detainees-in-uganda-not-tried-study>

MEDIA ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENTS IN PICTURES



UNODC Eastern Africa @UNODC_EA · in
We are delighted to collaborate w/ @LaspnetUganda on efforts to increase access to quality legal aid & legal information targeting vulnerable groups in 🇺🇬. This collaboration will enhance access to justice for those living in poor & vulnerable settings. #legalaid #accesstojustice

You and 6 others

Legal Aid Service Providers Network. @Las... · 5h
Currently, we are launching @LaspnetUganda-@UNODC_EA project titled "Strengthening crime prevention & criminal justice system in Uganda" at Kibaale District headq...



7.4 INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

LASPNET has remained pivotal in enhancing the standards of service delivery for its members. This has largely been realized through capacity-building initiatives including holding trainings meetings, IIMS utilization, undertaking targeted organizational resiliency and resource mobilization. The details below illustrate some of the actions undertaken;

7.4.1 Development of the Information Security Management Plan and Protocol

Towards enhancing information security practices, LASPNET with support of Internews developed an Information Security Management Plan and Protocol which is aimed at providing safeguards for organizational information. Subsequently on 12th July 2023, LASPNET conducted a comprehensive training session on the operationalization of the Information and Security Management Plan and Protocol (ISMPP) at a Piato Restaurant. This training initiative aimed to reinforce LASPNET's commitment to protecting sensitive data, upholding confidentiality, and ensuring uninterrupted access to justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

The training brought together a total of 36 (24 Male: 12 Female) participants who included LASPNET staff, Board Members, and LASPs. It was conducted by Mr. Ben Kerry Mawejje, information security expert who equipped participants on information risk management, compliance, secure data handling, incident response, and the practical implementation of the ISMPP.

Through interactive sessions and practical exercises, attendees gained invaluable insights and skills to navigate the complex realm of information security.



A group photo of participants after the training at Piato Restaurant on 12th July 2023

7.4.2 Conducted support visits to Legal Aid Service Providers and other stakeholders under ADA Project

ASF together with LASPNET conducted two (2) support visits to LASPs working under the Pre-Trial Detention- PTD project as well as stakeholders from the Access to Justice Sub Programme including Police, Judiciary and ODPP from the Albertine and Central Regions.



LASPNET team and legal team from different LASPs posing in a group picture with a team from Masindi main prison

The visits were held from the 24th to 27th July 2023 in Hoima and Masindi districts respectively and later on 1st to 9th August 2023 in Wakiso and Kampala districts. The support visits were aimed at providing a platform for LASPNET, ASF and on ground LASPs to identify lessons learnt, opportunities and challenges in order to strengthen the effective implementation of the PTD project.

Additionally, the visits intended to among others; create strategic linkages between LASPs and justice actors as well as other relevant stakeholders for effective project implementation as well as provide platforms to share knowledge, experiences and learnings derived from the project for proper implementation.

7.4.3 Legal Aid Service Providers trained on the utilization and application of the Training Curriculum

LASPNET with funding from IDLO convened a two (2) days residential training to train Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) in the utilization and application of the training curriculum. The training was held at Eureka Hotel from the 27th to 29th September 2023, and attended by 29 participants including Development Partners (IDLO); LASPs such as UGANET, HURIFO, Justice Defenders, FIDA -Uganda, CEWOCHR, ANARDE, URRP, MIFUMI among others; Facilitators; and selected Secretariat staff. The training that was facilitated by Promise Consults International, aimed at building the capacity of LASPs on the utilization and application of the Training Curriculum for LASPs.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Badru Walusansa, the Director of Programs-LASPNET, noted the numerous previous

capacity building trainings organized by LASPs and yet each organization has their own training methodologies, structures and content which manifested the lack of a well-structured framework to follow that would provide for standardized skills and knowledge which prompted LASPNET with the support of IDLO to engage a consultant to undertake the development of a training curriculum for LASPs in order harmonize and standardize the approaches to training.



Participants pose for a photo at the Training of LASPs on the Utilization and application of the training Curriculum at Eureka Hotel

"This training curriculum is going to offer a comprehensive set of learning objectives, content, materials and methods of delivery, methods of assessing participant attainment of knowledge and skills acquired of the various harmonized trainings. With this guiding framework it's anticipated that the effective utilization and application will help to streamline standardization of legal aid services" he said.

Ms. Jannete Abalo a Gender Expert working with Promise Consult International, cautioned the participants to avoid being gender biased and manifest inequalities that would be detrimental to achieving their training goals. She however underscored the need for gender responsive trainings

that promote equity and equality between women, men, girls and boys, in accessing training.

In her closing remarks, the Late Imela Prossy, the LASPNET Board representative Central, commended IDLO for the financial and technical support that yielded the development of the Training Curriculum and its training and hence implored participants to use the knowledge and skills obtained in the training and make the Training Curriculum as their reference tool for all their planned training. She reminded them about their role in ensuring that they introduce and interest other members/ staff of their organizations about the training curriculum.



The Late Imela Prossy giving closing remarks during the training

The 2- day training of trainers on the utilization and application of the Training Curriculum for LASPs in Uganda provided a platform for the LASPs to appreciate the significance of the training curriculum that would serve as a reference tool to conceive trainings and ensure standardization of trainings.

7.4.4 LASPNET interface with LASPs during Regional Peer Learning and Evaluation Visits in Eastern and Central Uganda

During the months of August and September 2023, LASPNET Board, management and staff conducted Peer Learning visits to its members. The Learning visits are one of LASPNET's institutionalized activities conducted by the Network and this time, the activity was supported by IDLO. The main objective of the visits is to connect the Secretariat with its members on various fronts such as Access to justice, Rule of Law, Legal aid, Sustainability and Membership concerns.

The visits provided an opportunity for LASPNET to enlist feedback from LASPs regarding their institutional updates, sustainability, operating context as well as emerging access to justice, human rights and rule of law issues and their impact on the provision of legal aid services. The findings obtained by LASPNET from the visits are being used to shape the annual trends access to justice analysis research in addition to generating actionable points for follow up.



A photo moment with LASPNET team headed by CEO Dr. Sylvia Namubiru (seated in the middle) and the ED of WORl, Ms. Rose Kigere (seated 2nd from left) and other members

For the Eastern region, the visits were conducted from 8th to 11th of August 2023 and in Central region from 19th to 22nd September 2023. Prior to the visits a pre-assessment survey was conducted in June 2023 and arising out of the exercise a total of 12 LASPs from Eastern and Central regions underlined various thematic areas to lay emphasis on and these included; institutional governance and management practices; IIMS utilization; institutional sustainability; effective networking and partnership; M&E and resource mobilization among others.

The team that traversed Eastern included Dr. Sylvia Namubiru- the CEO of LASPNET, the Late Imela Prossy - Board Representative from Central, Ms. Flavia Zalwango -Board Member on Merit Mr. Nyakana Joseph – a consultant, and 10 secretariat staff.

Some of the LASPs that were visited included; Kamuli Community Based Paralegals Association -KCOBPA, Women Rights Initiative- WORI, Action Against Violence- AAV, African Foundation for Community Development -AFCOD, Women with a Mission -WWM, MIFUMI, Advocates for Natural Resources and Development (ANARDE), Urban Refugee Rights Program (URRP), Uganda Public Rescue Foundation (UPRF), Public Defenders Association Uganda (PDAU), among others.

The peer learning visits reawakened the need to reflect on the recommendations arising from the visits and to effectively develop an implementation strategy; the need to develop a sustainability plan away from donor support by adopting the social enterprise scheme; the need to monitor ensure LASPs legal compliance with the

various regulatory frameworks for NGOs in order to avoid the consequences of non-compliance including closure.



A team from LASPNET interacting with Hon. Flavia Munaaba- PDAU President in her office -Kampala

The PLE visits were generally a success as they met the intended objectives. LASPNET observed a mixture of both vibrancy and lethargic among various LASPs. For instance, various LASPs have maintained the vibrancy in their organizations demonstrated through initiating social enterprise projects. Whereas most of the LASPs visited appreciate the need for sustainability and are embarking on that to develop strategies of survival. Conversely, there are other LASPs that are experiencing notable challenges ranging from lack of donors to loss of office equipment and information due to the fact that they couldn't afford rent thus finding themselves in such a precarious situation.

7.4.5 LASPNET held its 14th Annual General Meeting

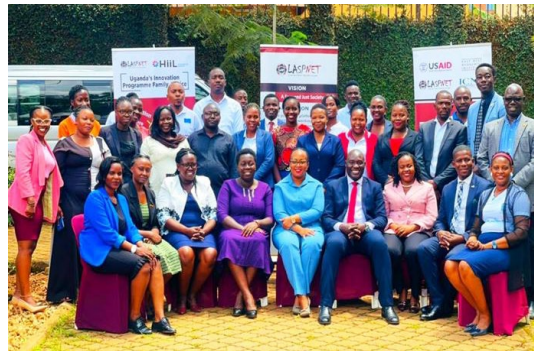
On 27th October 2023, LASPNET convened its 14th Annual General Hybrid Meeting (AGM) at the Secretariat. The hybrid meeting was both physical and virtual attendance and was attended by a total of 74 including LASPNET members and Staff of the Network.

This was the first AGM under the new leadership of Ms. Karen Saidi as the Chairperson Board. Among the key dignitaries that graced the AGM was Hon. Lyandro Komakech, LASPNET honorary member and the former MP of Gulu Municipality and the first mover of NLAB during his reign in Parliament.

In her report, the Chairperson-Board appreciated the Network for embracing the new leadership and the support accorded during their first year in office. She further went on to underline the milestones registered in the reporting period such as conducting a successful research about ***“National Gender Assessment study for the Access to Justice Sub Programme”*** after being engaged by UWONET and this study was precisely analyses mainstreaming of gender across four selected justice institutions of Uganda Police Force (UPF), Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and Uganda Prison Services (UPS).

She informed members about the continued advocacy and mobilizing influential constituencies to support the enactment of the Legal Aid law whereby LASPNET joined hands with the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda to convene a stakeholders meeting for the National Legal Aid law targeting religious leaders that received a multitude of different religious leaders from the different denominations. The Network was able to secure their support, assurance and commitment that they will cascade the clarion call to have this legislation enactment in their engagements with His Excellency the President of Uganda.

However, despite the achievements mentioned, the Chairperson cited some of the challenges faced by the Network. For instance, the loss of LASPNET institutional donor after closure of DGF remains a great challenge to the institution. This has affected the maintenance of our Programmes as well as the implementation of the LASPNET Strategic Plan (2021/2025). Furthermore, it has created a burden of maintaining and retaining of the institutional staff which demotivates the team, affects livelihoods and productivity.



A group photo of all participants during the 14th AGM 2023 on 27th October 2023 at the Secretariat

The Chief Executive Officer of LASPNET Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa in presenting the Annual Report of 2022-2023, informed members that LASPNET continues to leverage and consolidate its niche of being at the forefront of promoting legal aid as a vehicle for enhancing access to justice; in order for LASPs to deliver standardized legal aid services to the poor and vulnerable persons.

Key among the milestones registered by LASPNET and shared by the CEO include the development of the National Gender Assessment for the Access to Justice as well as the Lobby and Advocacy plan 2023/2027 for LASPNET and its members;

convening of the stakeholders' consultative dialogue between formal and informal justice system actors for input into the draft Alternative Justice System Strategy and ADR Policy; holding of the 8th CEO forum and launch of the fundraising drive for the Legal Aid House, to mention but a few.

In her conclusion, she promised members that LASPNET will continue to leverage the existing opportunities to consolidate itself as the centre for legal aid excellence in Uganda. Significantly, efforts to ensure institutional sustainability will continuously be pursued while putting more emphasis on securing an institutional donor.

At the same function one organisation "Eternal Life Organisation International-Uganda and Three Individual Members: Ms. Emily Nabiryo, Ms. Naluyange Faridah Lule and Mr. Odong Samuel Baker were admitted to the Network.

Additionally, the Network usually recognize its outstanding members at the AGM and hence Uganda Law Society emerged as a winner of the most outstanding participant in LASPNET activities in the year 2022-2023 and FIDA – Uganda was presented with an award for being the most active member in the utilization of LASPNET's IIMS from 2022 – 2023.

The 14th AGM was closed off by Hon. Lyandro Komakech who appreciated the Network for inviting him to be part of the meeting. He urged all members to have a strong faith in whatever happening within the Network and their organizations because people are monitoring whatever is done within NGO sector. Lastly, he implored all members within the Network to rally behind LASPNET and push for Legal Aid Law.

7.4.6 LASPNET convened retreat and planning meeting for Staff and UNODC Implementing Partners Retreat

The Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET) supported by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized a retreat and planning meeting aimed at enabling the LASPNET staff and UNODC implementing partners to review and assess the performance of the programme as well as plan for the year 2024.

The event that took place from 20th-22nd December 2023 at Imperial Botanical Hotel Entebbe served as a platform for the staff to review and evaluate the annual project performance, take stock of project implementation in order to deliberate on the milestones, challenges and lessons learnt.



A group photo moment with all participants after the meeting at Imperial Botanical Beach – Entebbe

7.4.7 Voice grantees capacity strengthened in project implementation

LASPNET in partnership with strategic link convened one (1) Capacity strengthening training on the 6th to 7th March 2024 at Esella Country Hotel for the Voice grantees. The two (2) days non-residential training supported by OXFAM Voice was facilitated



Ms. Edith Nantongo facilitating during one of the sessions

by the Linking and Learning facilitators with support of Mr. James Nkuubi, the CEO of Network for Public Interest Lawyers (NETPIL), Ms. Ritah Asiimire, Communications Officer, Centre for Centre Governance (CCG) as external facilitators and Mr. Mutebi Peter (NCPO) at LASPNET.

The training helped to strengthen the capacity of Voice grantees in Uganda by providing them with comprehensive tools and skills for effective project execution, fostering an environment of robust knowledge exchange, and supporting their strategic development goals among others. A total of 29 participants (25 M: 22 F) attended the training from grantees such as SAFP, OCE, Sensitise Uganda, UWOCASO, TEU, Mbeleni Foundation, She crafts, MHU among others.

7.4.8 LASPs continuously supported on the use of IIMS

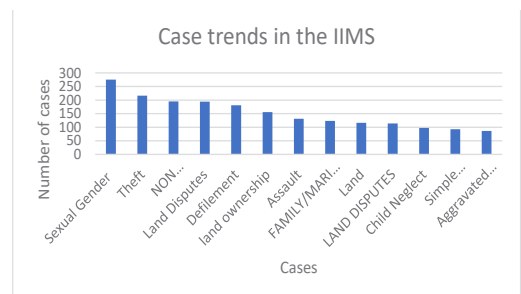
During the reporting period, a total of 32 LASPs were enrolled in the IIMS. However, usage of the system remains limited, with only four LASPs—FIDA-Uganda, CJAF, PILAC, and LDC-LAC—actively entering cases. The ongoing challenges contributing to the slow adoption of the IIMS include a lack of funding for certain LASPs, the

presence of parallel IIMS systems, and general apathy.

a) Cases Registered on the IIMS System

Arising from the continued support to LASPs, a total of 10,245 cases were entered into the IIMS. Of these cases, 6,230 were civil, while 4,001 were criminal. The gender disaggregation showed 3,383 cases involving males and 6,855 involving females. Unfortunately, during the reporting period, with exception of FIDA-Uganda, almost no other LASP entered cases or used the IIMS. The use of IIMS has drastically dropped and this is cause to worry amongst the users because while the Judiciary is going digital, use of IIMS among LASPS is instead dropping, which is itself a mismatch of expectations.

A graph showing the number of cases reported on the IIMS



7.4.9 LASPNET Board and Committees meetings convened

A total of two (2) board meeting was held in the reporting period and two (2) taskforce meetings were held as below;

- Two (2) board taskforce meetings were held on the 29th September and 23rd October 2023 to review and approve documents as well as assess the preparedness of the

- Secretariat towards the 14th AGM.
- Furthermore, two (2) board meeting were held on the 12th February 2024 to discuss and approve various draft documents such as the management report, proposed BOT members, Trustee Deed, Reserve Policy, Annual institutional Work plan and Annual institutional budget for the year 2024.

A Synopsis of membership activities

During the reporting period, LASPs undertook numerous activities and these included:

- Continuous provision of legal aid and support to the vulnerable and marginalised indigents. This was done through Legal advice, Court representation, Alternative Dispute Resolution and Referrals.
- Advocacy activities were also undertaken by the members on various topical issues and human rights violations. LASPs continued to use the various media platforms to advance their cause through holding radio talk shows, appearances on TVs, newspapers, social media which helped to raise awareness and rally support from various stakeholders.
- Capacity building initiatives were also undertaken through conducting of trainings for various actors to empower them with the skills and knowledge
- Finally, the members also engaged in community sensitisations and outreaches. These were used to air

out messages, raise awareness, as well as offer legal services.

Board Score Card

The board has been vibrant and vigilant in undertaking its representative role of members to various platforms and engagements. Various Board members have for instance attended and participated in activities like peer learning evaluation visits, opening and closing events of trainings and workshops, inspection of prospective members among others.



CRITERIA FOR MEMBER RECOGNITION AT THE 15TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN LASPNET EVENTS: JULY 2023 TO JUNE 2024

No.	LASP	Annual General Meeting (7th October 2023)	National Court Open day held at HoHo Independence grounds on the 31st April 2024	LASPNET Eden Miracle ministries Legal Aid Camp in held on 20th-26th June 2024 at Kiboga District, Kigezi region in western Uganda held on 6th-20th	Development of the information system for the general public project held on 12th July 2023 at	Support visits to LASPs and other stakeholders under the ADA project application of the Training	LASPs training on the utilization and application of the Training	LASPs regional Peer Learning Evaluation visits in central and	Validation meeting of the Training Curriculum held at Fairway Hotel on	LASPNET Retreat and planning meeting for staff and UNODC implementing partners held at	Validation meeting of the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices	LASPNET research report on the socio-Economic Cost Benefit Analysis on the state funded Legal Aid in	National Dialogue on Promotion and protection of procedural rights in the Administration of the criminal Justice	LASPNET UGANET Review meeting on advocacy for Human Rights for FIDA at World World Studies in LRA & between 12th-22nd November 2023	Enabling Environment working Group inception meeting at Goff	CSA Bi-Annual consultative meeting held on 3rd July 2024 at Kiboga District	First Periodic meeting for Enabling Environment Working Group held at	Regional support visits to trained paralegals in eastern and northern	Rapid response programme June 2023-September 2024 under CSA project	Utilization of the IIMS system	Payment of Member ship Subscription for the financial year	TOTAL	Ranking		
1	AAV	1																			1	7	7th		
2	ANARDE	1																				1	6	8th	
3	ACTV	1	1																			1	6	9th	
4	AFOD				1				1	1												1	6	10th	
5	AFOD																								un ranked
6	AHURIO	1		1									1										5	16th	
7	ARELIMOK																								un ranked
8	CEOD	1																					1	36th	
9	CEHURD	1	1	1																		1	4	18th	
10	CEPIL	1																				1	2	32nd	
11	CJAF-UG			1									1	1	1							1	8	5th	
12	CLA																								un ranked
13	COLAID	1																					1	35th	
14	CRED	1																					1	4	21st
15	CRR																								un ranked
16	CEWOCHR	1																					1	5	17th
17	ELOI Ministries	1																					1	2	31st
18	FAPAD																						1	4	19th
19	FHRF	1	1																				1	8	6th
20	FIDA	1	1																				1	10	3rd
21	HOPE FOR JUSTICE	1																					1	1	36th
22	HRAPP	1	1																				1	3	29th
23	HRCU																						1	3	28th
24	HURIFO	1																					1	4	20th
25	IRCU	1																					3	3	27th
26	IWILAP	1																					1	1	37th
27	JCI		1																						un ranked
28	JURIA																								un ranked
29	JUSTICE DEFENDERS	1																					1	6	14th
30	KCOBPA																						1	8	6th
31	LAC/LDC		1																				1	8	4th
32	LAP/ULS																								un ranked
33	LAPD																								un ranked
34	LEMU																						1	1	38th
35	LHU																								un ranked
36	MCJL	1																					3	3	25th
37	MIFUMI																								un ranked
38	MJU																								un ranked
39	NEWPLAN																								un ranked
40	NUDIPI																								un ranked
41	PDAL																								un ranked
42	PILAC																								un ranked
43	PLA	1																							un ranked
###	RLP	1	1																						un ranked
###	SODANN																								un ranked
###	STREET LAW																								un ranked
###	UCLF	1		1	1																				un ranked
###	UGANET	1	1																						un ranked
###	ULS	1	1	1	1																				un ranked
###	UMSC																								un ranked
###	UPRF																								un ranked
###	URRP	1		1																					un ranked
###	WCC	1																							un ranked
###	WORI	1																							un ranked
###	WVU																								un ranked
###	WWM	1		1																					un ranked
###																									un ranked
23																									un ranked

Guiding notes:
 *Active Participation means being a participant, trainer, presenter, discussant, undertaking research, volunteering to attend meetings on behalf of or serving as a member of the board of directors
 *Feedback means providing timely responses to requests for information and involvement or participation, sharing ideas on how to improve legal aid service provision and the network in particular
 *A=Attendance (1 mark) *Y=Yes (1 mark)
 The highest possible score for General participation in LASPNET activities is 1 for each activity and for IIMS is 5
Highest Scores:
 1) General participation in LASPNET activities: 1.ULS- 15 pts 2. FIDA - 14 pts 3. UCLF - 9 pts
 2) IIMS Utilization : 1. FIDA-Uganda - (4205 cases) 2. COLAID (1012 cases)

Board Scores for the for their participation in LASPNET Board activities for the year July 2023 to July 2024									
Board Activities	Ms. Karen Said	Mr. Okwalinga Moses	Ms. Grace Naigga	Mr Ddugu Adrian	Her Worship Bridget Nassira	Ms. Aljano Elizabeth	Ms. Betty Bailcalamu	Late Prossy Inela	Ms. Flavia Zalwango
	Chairperson - Board	Vice Chairperson	General Secretary	Treasurer	Western Representative	Northern Representative	Eastern Representative	Central Representative	Member on Merit
Board Meetings - (29th August 2023)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Organisational Development Sustainability Committee(14th August 2023)				1	1				
Governance and Administration Committee Meeting - (15th August 2023)	1			1					
Planning and Programme Committees - (16th August 2023)			1	1		1			
Public Interest Litigation Committees - (16th August 2023)			1						
Audit and Finance Committees - (17th August 2023)				1					
Advisory Committee on Governance and Corruption - (18th August 2023)									1
1st AGM Task force meeting - (29th September 2023)	1		1	1	1	1			1
2nd AGM Task force meeting - (26th October 2023)	1		1	1	1	1			1
Annual General Meeting -27th October 2023	1		1	1	1	1			1
Board Meetings - (16th February 2024)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Review and approval of documents	6	3	6	4	4	1	1	1	1
Participation in LASPNET activities as speakers and/or as part of participants	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	5
Total	13	9	14	12	9	6	6	10	11

Guiding Notes

During the reporting two board meetings were held. However, there were no committee meetings held because of limited funds and scale down in activity implementation.

Ms. Grace Naigga has the highest score of 14 points accumulated through representing LASPNET in various meetings and/or activities.

7.4.11 THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023/2024



Ms. Karen Saidi
Chairperson



Mr. Okwalinga Moses
Vice Chairperson



Ms. Nayiga Grace
General Secretary



Mr. Adrian Ddungu
Treasurer



Ms. Elizabeth Alyano
**Northern
Representative**



Late Prossy Imela
**Central
Representative**



H/W. Bridget Nasasira
**Western
Representative**



Ms. Balisalamu Betty
**Eastern
Representative**



Ms. Flavia Zalwango
Member on Merit



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa
Chief Executive Officer

She is the overall Senior manager who and responsible for providing overall Administrative and Strategic leadership to the secretariat. In addition, she oversees the day to day running of the Programmes and financial sustainability. She also links the organization to key stakeholders and board members.



Mr. Badru Walusansa
Director of Programmes

He is a senior manager responsible for overall development, programming and functioning of the Programmes department through provision of technical and supervisory support to the programs team.



Mr. Geoffrey Lutaaya
Director Finance and Administration

He a senior Manager responsible for overall development and functioning of the finance and administration department where he provides technical and supervisory support to the finance team.



Ms. Stella Namiiro
Research and Knowledge Management Manager/Project Coordinator UNODC

She is the Manager responsible for research and knowledge management at LASPNET. In addition, she is also responsible for coordination and implementation of the UNODC Project.



Ms. Nakawombe Olivia
Lobby and Advocacy Officer

She is the officer responsible for Lobby and Advocacy functions of the Network.



Mr. Martin Ojambo
Information and Technology Officer

He is a technical officer responsible for managing and day to day maintenance of the computer systems within LASPNET. He is more specifically responsible for the smooth running and functionality of the Integrated Information Management System (IIMS) at LASPNET.



Ms. Justice Nambowa
Training and Membership
Officer

She is the officer supporting the Training and Membership component of the Network and is currently the responsible Project coordinator for the implementation of the IDLO project



Mr. Mubiru Peter Mutebi
Networking, Partnerships
and Coordination Officer

He is the Officer responsible for maintaining, developing and coordinating memberships partnerships as well as branding and communication.



Ms. Namulinde Joy
Finance and
Administrative Officer

She was the Officer responsible for Administration , procurement of logistics and Assets management and finance management of assigned projects



Mr. Kenneth Okao
Membership Officer

He is the officer in charge of managing membership affairs. He further maintains the documentation and archiving of the records and continuously updates the membership directory of the Network.



Mr. Mawanda Hakim
Program Coordinator Oxfam
Project

He is the Officer providing coordination support to the Oxfam Voice Linking and Learning Project.



Mr. Kayanja Denis
Inhouse Counsel ADA

He is the Project officer responsible for coordination of the ADC-ASF project.



Mr. Keitirima Duncan
Coordinator Call Centre

He is the Project officer providing coordination of the Call center agents as he supports day to day running of activities in the call Centre unit.



Mr. Fabiano Onyango
ICT Assistant

He is the project Assistant responsible for providing ICT support services to the organization.



Ms. Nalwiga Scovia
Finance Officer

She is the officer responsible for all accounting processes and financial management of the organization's funds. In addition, she provides finance and accounting support to the CSSA Project.



Mr. Barongo Barnabas
Project Accountant

He supports with administrative and accounting functions of the ADA project.

LASPNET VOLUNTEER TEAM



Mr. Rica Byaruhanga
M&E Advisor

He is a technical officer who has provided part time services since April 2023. He supports the functioning of the M&E system through development of tools, frameworks, results monitoring, planning, reporting, supporting project evaluations, quality improvement initiatives, data use, data quality, assessments, capacity building and feedback for program improvement among other duties.



Ms. Susan Lumu Nabirye
Senior Legal Advisor

She is a part time technical officer that has provided her services on a needs basis since December 2022.



Ms. Nakazibwe Doreen
Volunteer ADA

She joined in December 2022 and provides Volunteer support to the ADA project.



Ms. Shamira Nantale
Volunteer Reception

She was a Volunteer staff responsible for providing front desk management from January 2023 to April 2024.



Ms. Nakalyana Edith Mukisa
Volunteer Call Center Agent

She provides support services to the LASPNET Call center from November 2022 to date.



Ms. Namuli Cynthia Leonora
Volunteer Call Center

She provided volunteer services to the Call Center since February 2023.



Mr. Paul Sebagere
Volunteer Driver

He provides volunteer services of safe driving and reliable delivery services to LASPNET.



Mr. Enock Ssentumbwe
Volunteer Driver

He provides volunteer services of safe driving and reliable delivery services to LASPNET.

8.0 ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNT, RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

8.1 Achievements

During the reporting period, LASPNET registered the following achievements;

- Securing an additional donor namely United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to implement a five-year program titled "Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program". Through UNODC funding, LASPNET to some extent has been able to sustain a few institutional staff.
- Increased project visibility and trust garnered by LASPNET from the 20 district local governments where the UNODC project is being implemented. The fact that these districts overwhelming embraced LASPNET is a testament that it's a trusted institution.
- Increased relevancy and recognition at international level enabling us to break barriers and contribute to the access to justice and rule of law at a global level.
- Establishment of the LASPNET Board of Trustees and its incorporation through causing the Board of Directors on the advice of the AGM to approve the selected list of eminent persons as the Network's BOTs.

8.2 Challenges

LASPNET encountered contextual and operational challenges during the reporting period, which among others include the following;

a) **Dwindling funding towards Legal Aid and Access to Justice**

The year 2023/2024 was challenging for the Legal Aid sector generally. It was marked by dwindling funding thus affecting organizational operations and programming. Sadly it forced many LASPs to close some of their clinics while others have scaled down hence creating service delivery gaps. To LASPNET a number of projects came to a close without clear indication of renewal, these include IDLO and Voice Oxfam whose 5 year project implementation came to an end.

b) **Frustrations continued in the Networks quest for enactment of the NLAB 2022**

Government's inaction to fast track the enactment of the NLAB was witnessed by the move made by the Attorney General to thwart the legislative processes for this law in Parliament on account that it would be expensive for government to implement a national legalaid scheme. This unfortunate stand will continue affecting the indigent who represent the biggest percentage of Uganda's population.

c) **Delayed release of funds by Donors**

This was experienced under the OXFAM and UNODC projects. Despite the fact that money was later released, the experienced delays affected the timely implementation in addition to affecting the staff welfare benefiting from those respective projects.

d) **Complex regulatory and red table compliance processes**

LASPNET experienced unnecessary delays in the process of securing an MOU with the Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) as a requirement for permit renewal at NGO Bureau. The delays largely stretched from the bureaucracies at KCCA explained by the overtly lengthy clearance processes of the Internal Security Organization (ISO). However, this challenge was later overcome by securing a recommendation later from Kibale district. This therefore enabled the organization to obtain a 5-year NGO operational permit from the NGO Bureau.

e) **Continued laxity to pay membership**

Whereas some member organizations have responded and paid their subscription, a few others remain laid back with many in arrears beyond two years. Secretariat has also noticed a tendency of new members being admitted and failing to meet the membership and annual subscription. This unfortunately demonstrates a mismatch in numbers vs. membership subscription.

8.3 Lessons Learnt

- a) To harness project sustainability especially at the local level, it is always prudent to involve the Local Government to embrace and take charge of project implementation, as it has been demonstrated by LASPNET under the UNODC project.
- b) LASPs ought to vigorously explore social enterprise in a bid to strengthen their financial inflows to at least enable them cover operational costs amidst the dwindling donor funding towards access to justice and legal aid.

8.4 Opportunities

- a) LASPNET has sustained its strategic partnerships with key stakeholders especially the Judiciary where the Network's has been appointed to sit on different committees such as the case management committee and ADR committee. This is a great opportunity for advocacy and collaboration between LASPs and the Administration of Justice Programme.
- b) Working with Local Governments offers various opportunities to CSOs such as obtaining office space as it has been evident with FIDA especially in Iganga and Lwengo. This further helps organizations to reduce operational costs.

8.5 Recommendations

Amidst the challenges encountered by LASPNET during the reporting period, the following recommendations were proposed.

- a) There is need for continuous engagement with development partners aimed at making a case for funding access to justice and legal aid.
- b) LASPs are encouraged to utilize the IIMS to record and store cases and where possible the institutional heads need to tag IIMS utilization on staff appraisal.
- c) There is need to continuously embrace social enterprises to enhance financial sustainability of LASPs.
- d) LASPs should continuously sound a drum for the enactment of the NLAB in different platforms until government takes concrete action. LASPs especially in arrears including

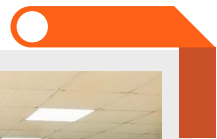
new members in associate, individual and ordinary category admitted should honour their membership obligations.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The year 2023/2024 continued to test LASPNET's resilience significantly. Whereas it was characterized by dwindling funding for the entire access to justice and legal aid sector, LASPNET was able to maneuver the tricky terrain as enumerated in this annual report.

Finally, LASPNET wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to its development partners, strategic partners, secretariat staff and all well-wishers who directly and indirectly supported LASPNET's work during the course of the year 2023/2024.

PICTORIAL



Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa- CEO of LASPNET presenting during the National Court Open Day on 15th April 2024 at Kololo Grounds



A Group Photo of Participants during the Voice Project Close Out Event on 31st May 2024 at Hotel Africana



The Secretariat team interacts with Mr. Mutagonga Lasil, a Paralegal attached to Justice Centers (Hoima district)



From Left to Right: Dr. Sylvia Namubiru M. cutting a cake with 1st quarter babies Mr. Ojambo Martin and Mr. Duncan Keitirima as other staff members chher up



Mr. Badru Walusansa -Director of Programmes (DOP) handing over resource materials to Edwina in Kabarole District



LASPNET team posing for a group photo with Dr. Sylvia Namubiru -CEO of LASPNET during the National Court Open Day at Kololo ceremonial grounds on 15th April 2024



Staff during the social hour, interfacing with one another



LASPNET staff attending a fellowship session led by Pastor Innocent Wafula.



10.0 MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITIES IN FOCUS 2023/2024¹

NO	LASP	Activity detail
1	Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEHURD convened a strategic meeting on 21st February 2024 with cultural leaders in Busoga region to explore collaborative approaches in promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). • On 21st February 2024, CEHURD's legal team conducted week-long legal aid interventions in Kiboga, Gomba and Kyankwazi districts aimed at supporting survivors of SGBV and other victims affected by health violations. • On 27th February 2024, CEHURD hosted a validation meeting with key stakeholders to discuss the findings from their new assessment of Uganda's progress on implementing the UPR 2022 recommendations • In partnership with the Office of the Supreme Mufti, on 28th Feb 2024, CEHURD convened a workshop for Imams and Sheikhs under the theme: <i>"The Role of an Imam in Promoting Good Health."</i> • On 20th March 2024, CEHURD had the privilege of leading the SRHR coalition, consisting of Women with A Mission, Nile Girls Forum and Embibo Initiative under the PISCCA project with support from the French Embassy Uganda.
3	Women Rights Initiative (WORI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 23rd Feb 2024, participated in the Jinja Booster Conference as mentors, engaging with young minds on how to excel in business and become successful entrepreneurs. • In April 2024, WORI participated in a pitch demo day for their social enterprise, organized by Capital solutions and supported by GIZ Uganda. WORI presented their case of tackling period poverty in Uganda with potential investors.
4	Refugee Law Project (RLP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RLP in February 2024 conducted regional Karakin funded psycho-medical & legal aid camp to make access to medical, legal and psycho-social services easier for refugee survivors & victims of torture. • On 24th March 2024, RLP graduated 85 refugee (23 M: 52 F) students graduated from its English 4 Adults course. • RLP on 24th March 2024 hosted a training of Media personalities within Kitgum on Refugee Rights. • In partnership with Women Advocacy, RLP conducted a training of survivor support group leaders on 24th April 2024: Focusing on Human Rights, Understanding Transitional Justice & Reparations • On 21st June 2024, RLP with partners hosted DAC 2024 commemoration at Saving Arms Nursery and Primary School. This year the theme is 'Education for all children in Africa.

¹ Member organization activities reflected are for those organizations that shared their information and fully paid up as at the time of reporting.

5	Centre for Public Interest Law (CEPIL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 19th April 2024, CEPIL joined the Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA) Connect gathering! Together event. • CEPIL participated in the first ever National Court Open Day organized by Judiciary of Uganda at Kololo Ceremonial grounds on 15th April 2024. • On 17th April 2024, CEPIL conducted a training in partnership with East African Court of Justice for Judges and Legal Counsel of the Republic of South Sudan on Good Governance and Rule of Law in the East African Community.
6	National Union of Disabled Persons Uganda (NUDIPU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 18th March 2024, NUDIPU participated in the review of Ministerial policy statements on the rights of PWDs. • NUDIPU & Education Sports Uganda launched the National Teaching and Learning Pedagogy for Teacher Education Institutions in Uganda on 3rd May 2024: Raising Achievement for all Learners. • On 22nd May 2024, with support from Austrian Development Cooperation, NUDIPU extended its services to Nakapipiriti District under the Gender and Disability Inclusive Project phase II. • On 13th June 2024, NUDIPU joined the rest of the world in solidarity to mark the International Albinism Awareness Day. • NUDIPU convened the 2024 DRF/DRAF Uganda Grantee at Hotel Africana under the theme: <i>"Celebrating Achievements, accelerating the implementation of Human Rights for persons with Disabilities in Uganda."</i>
7.	African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTV provided holistic rehabilitation services to survivors of torture and violence to a total of 869 survivors. • ACTVU created awareness to a total of 3,977 Community members (2181 Male and 1794 Female) on torture prevention and accountability in the districts of: Masaka, Gomba, Kabong, Gulu, Kasese. • ACTVU trained 21 Human Rights defenders in stress management and self-care & also 20 journalists from Kayunga, Mukono, Kampala, Gomba, Masaka. • ACTVU trained 118 community volunteers in Masaka, Mityana, Kotido and Kitgum on creating awareness and making referrals for torture cases. • ACTVU celebrated 30 years of existence and further launched a fundraising drive for their own home in June 2024.
8.	Uganda Law Society (ULS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the 16th March 2023, the ULS in partnership with the Rule of Law Club of Cavendish University organized a mentorship event at Cavendish University, Bukoto Street. • ULS in partnership with the Pilgrim Centre for Reconciliation launched a Rule of Law Club at the Islamic University in Uganda, Kampala Campus on 21st March 2023.

9.	FIDA Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 25,327 clients were supported by FIDA Uganda across its 19 Legal Aid clinics & its 3 family Justice Desks between January to June 2024. • FIDA-Uganda also promoted access to legal information for PWDs through translating key laws on GBV into Braille. • FIDA-Uganda in partnership with Albinism Umbrella and UGANET, successfully advocated for and secured essential assistive devices such as wheelchairs for two women with physical disabilities, sunscreen and hats for children with albinism in Moroto and Arua districts in the reporting period. • FIDA-Uganda also partnered with Integrated Disabled Women's Activities (IDIWA) and Busoga GBV and Disability Network & conducted a training for 10 male champions and 5 community paralegals serving women with disabilities in Bugiri district against GBV. • FIDA-Uganda also supported the creation of 10 sexual harassment committees in five schools and five factories in Luwero district to curb sexual harassment in the workplace.
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11. AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK (LASPNET)

Statement of Directors' Responsibilities

for the year ended 30 June 2024

The Directors of Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET) are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of LASPNET at the end of each financial year and of the operating results for the year then ended. In respect of those financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the organisation will continue in operation.

The Directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of LASPNET and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with accounting policies and guidelines of LASPNET and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Directors are ultimately responsible for the internal controls. The Directors delegate the responsibility for the internal controls to management. Standards and systems of internal control are designed and implemented by management to provide reasonable assurance as to the integrity and reliability of the financial statements and to adequately safeguard LASPNET's assets.

The Directors accept responsibility for the annual financial statements, which have been prepared using appropriate accounting policies supported by reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates, in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the requirements of the Companies Act 2012. The Directors are of the opinion that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of financial affairs of LASPNET and of its operating results for the year ended 30 June 2024. The Directors further accept responsibility for the maintenance of accounting records, which may be relied upon in the preparation of the financial statements, as well as adequate systems of internal control.

Nothing has come to the attention of the Directors to indicate that LASPNET will not remain a going concern for at least the next twelve months from the date of this statement.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 21st Oct 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



MS. KAREN SAIDI
CHAIRPERSON



MR. ADRIAN DDUNGU
TREASURER

DDAMBA MUGABI AND ASSOCIATES

Certified Public Accountant
Registration No. AF 0319

Bombo Road Mile 6, Maganjo

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Phone +256 772462350/702462350

Email: cn_ddamba@yahoo.co.uk

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Independent Auditor's Report
to the members of Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET)

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of **Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET)** as set out on pages 11 to 43, which comprise the Statement of Financial Position as at **30 June 2024**, the Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Cash flows and Statement of Changes in Funds for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of LASPNET as at 30 June 2024, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the Organisation's accounting policies set out on Pages 15 to 17 and donor requirements.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Organisation in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Uganda, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Key Audit Matters

Key audit matters are those matters that in our professional judgement were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements of the current period. These matters were addressed in the context of our audit of the financial statements as a whole and in forming our opinion thereon, and we do not provide a separate opinion on these matters. We have determined that there are no key audit matters to communicate in our report.

Other Information

The Directors are responsible for the other information. Other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, but does not include the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

CPA CHRISTINE NAKAWUNDE DDAMBA MUGABI

DDAMBA MUGABI AND ASSOCIATES

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Independent Auditor's Report
to the members of Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET)

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of Directors for the Financial Statements

The Directors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, and for such internal controls as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the Organisation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Organisation or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Organisation's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

DDAMBA MUGABI AND ASSOCIATES

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Independent Auditor's Report
to the members of Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET)

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organisation's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Organisation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We also provide those charged with governance with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

DDAMBA MUGABI AND ASSOCIATES

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Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

The Companies Act, 2012 requires that in carrying out our audit we consider and report to you the following matters. We confirm that:

- i) We have obtained all the information and explanations, which to the best of our knowledge and belief were necessary for the purposes of our audit.
- ii) In our opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Organisation, so far as appears from our examination of those books; and
- iii) The Financial Statements are in agreement with the books of account.

Independent Auditor's Report

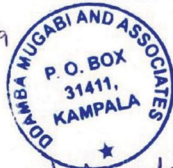
to the members of Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET)

Report on other Requirements

The Engagement Practitioner on the audit resulting in this independent auditor's report is CPA Christine N. Ddamba - P0472.

Christine Ddamba

Christine N. Ddamba.
Engagement Partner



Ddamba Mugabi and Associates

Ddamba Mugabi and Associates
Certified Public Accountant
Kampala, Uganda



23 October 2024

Date

LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK (LASPNET)

Statement of Financial Position at 30 June 2024

		2024	2023
	Note	Ushs.	Ushs.
ASSETS			
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property and Equipment	3	197,500,000	85,000,000
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Bank Balances	4	1,709,643,179	446,847,636
		1,709,643,179	446,847,636
TOTAL ASSETS		1,907,143,179	531,847,636
FUNDS AND LIABILITIES			
FUNDS			
Capital Fund	5	197,500,000	85,000,000
General Fund	6	37,889,483	15,842,124
Restricted Funds	7	1,563,431,631	378,007,471
TOTAL FUNDS		1,798,821,114	478,849,595
LIABILITIES			
Payables	8	108,322,065	52,998,041
		108,322,065	52,998,041
TOTAL FUNDS AND LIABILITIES		1,907,143,179	531,847,636

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 21st Oct 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

 _____ **CHAIRPERSON**

 _____ **TREASURER**

 _____ **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK (LASPNET)

Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024		2023
		Actual Ushs.	Budget Ushs.	Actual Ushs.
INCOME				
Grants	9	5,706,149,787	4,682,552,592	2,356,142,349
Other Income	10	105,732,519	104,230,000	220,240,169
Total Income		5,811,882,306	4,786,782,592	2,576,382,518
EXPENDITURE				
Programme Costs	11	3,443,350,967	3,597,320,585	1,954,371,901
Staff costs	12	890,211,634	927,410,832	1,010,444,036
Administration Costs	13	238,169,431	215,321,175	201,031,358
Total Expenditure		4,571,732,032	4,740,052,592	3,165,847,295
Surplus /(Deficit) for the year		1,240,150,274	46,730,000	(589,464,777)
Balance as at 1 July		393,849,595	-	1,138,346,316
Refund to donors		(32,678,755)	-	(155,031,944)
Fund Balance as at 30 June		1,601,321,114	46,730,000	393,849,595



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