

MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT MADE A RESOLUTE COMMITMENT TO FAST TRACK THE ENACTMENT OF THE LEGAL AID LAW AT THE BREAKFAST MEETING HELD ON 29TH JUNE 2020 AT SHERATORN HOTEL, KAMPALA



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

On 29th June 2020, LASPNET in partnership with the Greater North Parliamentary Forum (GNFP) convened a Breakfast meeting to engage the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee of parliament about fast tracking the passing of the delayed legal aid Law. The meeting was aimed at briefing this cluster of MPs with the ongoing lobby efforts to have a private member led legislation for the comprehensive provision of Legal Aid Law in Uganda in-order to generate robust strategies to fast track its enactment before the end of the 10th Parliament. The meeting was graced by 41 participants (20 Male: 21 Female) including a Cabinet Minister; Development partners; MPs; National Working Group and LASPs.

Hon. Adolf Mwesigye, Cabinet Minister for Defense and Veteran Affairs represented the Right Honorable Speaker Rebecca Kadaga who failed to make it due to other state obligations which interrupted her Programme at the last minute.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Chief Executive Officer of LASPNET echoed the importance of the Legal Aid law which is intended to establish a State funded Legal Aid scheme in-order to enhance access to justice for the indigent and vulnerable persons. Due to the noticeable delay to enact Legal Aid law, she appealed to members of parliament to fact track the remaining process, pass the law as e the best gift that the 10th Parliament can accord to the people of Uganda.

Dr. Rosiwtha Kremser, the Chairperson of the JLOS Development Partners Group and Member of the DGF Board also underscored the rationale of the Legal Aid law. She said the law will go a long way in promoting access to justice for vulnerable groups such as Women and Children adding that as Development partners they are fully on board supporting its enactment and hence calling upon the MPs to fast track its enactment.

Hon. Adolf Mwesigye, Cabinet Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs who represented the Hon. Speaker of Parliament, appreciated the Network for its consistency its advocacy campaign for access to justice related laws including the Children Amendment Act (2016); Administration of Justice Act (2020) and now the pending Legal Aid law. He pledged his total support to the on-going efforts of processing the law and called upon Parliamentarians to have a resolute commitment to fast track this law before transitioning into the electoral process. At the end of his speech the Minister was informed that LASPNET had collected 80,000 signatures from people of Uganda petition parliament to consider this law as very relevant to their needs, sample book was handed over by Ms Sandra Oryema , the chairperson Board of Director.

On his part as the Private Mover of the Legal Aid law, Hon. Lyandro Komakech, the Gulu Municipality MP and Chairperson GNPf assured the meeting that majority of the MPs are in support of the law and soon that it will be included on the order paper for further legislative processes. After his presentation the lead drafts counsel Mr Tamale took the members through the salient features of the law and mentioned the law was geared at harmonizing all the fragmented laws relating to legal aid service provision in Uganda, most importantly the fact that it was necessary to have a state led legal aid service delivery institution. In his presentation he pointed out the key stumbling fact that is containing the release of certificate of financial implication being mainly that the proposed Justice Centres Uganda is not anchored in any law and the government put a moratorium on establishing boards and or authorities

The plenary was moderated by Hon. Veronica Bichetero –MP Kaberamaido County and Seconded of the Private Members Bill and on the outstanding issues raised about the institutional framework of the Legal Aid law, some MPs were of the view that Justice Centres Uganda was rightly placed to oversee the implementation of this law whereas others stated that its not established by law, the recommendation was to have the law introduced in parliament and debated in which the outstanding issues will be resolved on the floor of On the whole, members were unison to say the law is important and long over due

The meeting was closed off by Hon. Aol Betty Woman MP Gulu District and Leader of Opposition who retaliated the fact that the enactment of the Legal Aid law is a very important subject to marginalized communities such as Northern Uganda as a war-ravaged region with striking poverty levels. She added that if passed, the Legal Aid law will enable the widows to access justice since this category of persons is vulnerable to several property and land injustices. Hon. Aol also remarked that the Government owes an obligation to pass this law because legal aid is not a charity but an indispensable duty for the state so it should be taken serious and never to be debatable.

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

The meeting was very informative to the MP of the legal and parliamentary committee who with no doubt provided an array of hope that this law could easily be given due consideration by the 10th Parliament as anticipated.

