MEMBERSHIP CHARTER

LASPNET

LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK

August 2014

LASPNET Secretariat
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1.0 About the Charter

Before applying for membership to the Legal Aid Service Providers Network, the applicant must read and agree to the membership charter below.

The membership charter requires Members to recognise their obligations in supporting and committing themselves to LASPNET's core values. It further tasks the Secretariat to ensure that it meets the member expectations.

This document – LASPNET Membership Charter – addresses the ways in which member organisations to the Network are expected to conduct themselves so as to bring into practice its vision, mission and objectives.

2.0 About LASPNET

LASPNET is a national member-based NGO established in 2004 to provide strategic linkages and a collaboration framework for the Legal Aid Service Providers as well as maintain a common front to relevantly interface with the Justice, Law and Order Sector in Uganda.

The organisation targets three critical aspects of coordination: a collective role bringing together different legal aid service providers for solidarity in strategising, sharing lessons and experiences, while minimising duplication; capacitating them through collaborative research and analysis in order to link the international/regional developments on legal aid to national interventions; as well as documenting, providing needed feedback, and amplifying voice on key issues regarding access to justice/legal aid at national level.

The organs of the Network are the General Assembly, the Board, and the Secretariat. However, the General Assembly may from time to time establish any other organ or Committee to undertake or perform specific duties, roles and functions as they may deem fit.

The General Assembly shall be constituted by representatives of the fully paid up Ordinary and Associate members. Each member organization shall be represented by one person nominated by the organization, who must be in position to take decisions on behalf of the organization.

Honorary members may attend meetings of the General Assembly and may contribute during the deliberations but shall not have the right to vote at such meetings.

2.1 Mandate

To coordinate and harmonise/standardise legal aid services provided by the different service providers.

2.2 Vision

An effective and professional legal system that is accountable, affordable, sustainable and accessible for all.

2.3 Mission

To strengthen access to justice for all by utilising the synergies of legal aid service providers

2.4 Objectives

(a) To improve the cost effectiveness of legal aid service providers, increase geographical coverage and enhance the quality of legal aid services;

(b) To build and strengthen institutional and human resource capacity of legal aid service providers;

(c) To harmonise the provision of legal aid and facilitate the development and use of common standards and guidelines;

(d) To lobby and advocate for issues relevant and appropriate to the promotion of access to justice;

(e) To research, document and disseminate information on the provision of legal aid;

(f) To mobilise resources for legal aid service providers;

(g) To strengthen the voice and visibility of legal aid service providers;

(h) To do all such other lawful things that are incidental or conducive to the attainment of any or all of the above objectives.

2.5 Core Values

(a) Transparency;
(b) Integrity;
(c) Accountability;
(d) Cooperation
(e) Excellence;
(f) Non-discrimination; and
(g) Professionalism.

3.0 About the Membership

(a) LASPNET brings together legal aid service providers across various thematic and geographical areas in Uganda.

(b) LASPNET membership is open to any non-profit/non-governmental organisations that comply with established eligibility requirements.

(c) Being a member to LASPNET will allow an organisation to further develop its potential and gain greater recognition across the Justice, Law, and Order Sector.

(d) Membership allows member organisations to work collectively in enhancing access to justice.

3.1 Composition

The Network membership shall be composed of such Members as stipulated under the LASPNET Constitution (as amended).

3.2 Categories

The Network membership shall be comprised of the following categories:

(a) Ordinary membership: This shall be granted to organisations that meet the membership eligibility criteria under 3.3 below.

(b) Associate Membership: This shall be granted to an organisation involved and interested in the promotion of the objectives of the Network.

(c) Honorary Membership: This may, with the approval of the General Assembly, be granted to individuals, networks or organisations that have identified with, contributed or rendered distinguished services to the promotion of the Network's objectives.

3.3 Eligibility

Without prejudice to 3.2 (b) above, Ordinary Membership to LASPNET shall be open to organisations that satisfy the following eligibility criteria:

(a) Must be registered as an entity under the laws of Uganda
(b) Must be licensed by Uganda Law Council to provide legal aid services
(c) Must be involved in providing at least one of the following services:
    i. Legal aid
    ii. Human rights education
    iii. Legal education with the ultimate aim of increasing access to justice for the vulnerable people
(d) Must have been in operation for at least two years;
(e) Must possess audited accounts for at least one year preceding the year of application for admission to membership;
(f) Must have a physical address where it can be contacted and where it conducts its business;
(g) Must have at least four members of staff, one of whom must have, as a minimum, a Diploma in Law.

3.4 Application

(a) Applications for membership of LASPNET shall be in writing and shall be made in such manner as the Board may determine.

(b) The Board shall consider and approve all membership applications during its meetings held once every three month.

(c) An organisation wishing to become a member submits to the LASPNET Secretariat, a duly filled Membership Application Form together with the following:
    i. A copy of the Certification of Registration as an entity;
    ii. A copy of the Organisation's Constitution; and
    iii. A copy of the most recent Annual Report.

(d) A certificate of membership will usually be given after approval of the application.

3.5 Benefits

There are a number of benefits that accrue to LASPNET Members, including the following:

(a) **Collective voice and influence:** As a member, you will be joining various other organisations, committed to working together to contribute to the development of the country. LASPNET's ever growing influence is as a direct result of working with Members and therefore as a member, your organisation will be part of a collective and united voice to engage and influence Government and other stakeholders on issues of concern to NGOs.

(b) **Collaboration and networking:** LASPNET facilitates networking among Members, other NGOs and the wider civil society through its 'platform' character that fosters sharing, reflection and open debate on important issues for engagement. Through Members' events including Membership Symposiums; Membership Days etc. Members have an opportunity to share, learn and profile their work through best practices, case studies, experiences, success stories, professional knowledge and materials with other Members and partners.

(c) **Profiling member organisations:** We shall also document and profile our Members' work as a DVD to accompany our annual report. Members can also access the Members Database and Directory, which is a great network of hundreds of NGOs. This would be distributed extensively and regularly updated.

(d) **Sector-wide representation:** LASPNET represents Members' views and interests and lobbies for relevant change at national fora. In addition, all Members are eligible and can be requested to represent the LASPNET family at national, regional and international fora on matters of concern to the NGO sector and development.

(e) **Ownership and involvement:** Members have opportunity to participate in shaping the strategic direction of the organisation and to influence decisions on LASPNET policies, priorities, and actions, and to raise issues of concern.

(f) **Information resources and updates:** Members are entitled to access the Information Unit and Resource Centre for updated, accurate and current information, reports, briefings and feedback on news about LASPNET, what is happening in the legal aid sector; and on other key collective civil society concerns on access to justice. You are also notified from time to time of funding and capacity building opportunities as well as upcoming NGO Meetings and Events at national, regional and international fora. LASPNET also acts as a conduit for Members to receive current information, updates, publications etc from government and other stakeholders; to allow them engage on the relevant issues. Receive a copy of *the Network,* the official newsletter of LASPNET; which focuses on current issues and key activities undertaken by the Network, member organisations and other NGOs. Members can contribute to the newsletter through submission of articles. The member organisations will have free access to a special member's area on the LASPNET website to share information and experiences and to interact with other Members online. All the member organisations shall be recognised on the website.

(g) **Leadership and authority:** All Members are eligible to stand for election to LASPNET Governance Organs of the organisation such as the Board. Members can provide comment and offer recommendations to the Governance Organs on matters relevant to the activities of LASPNET. This way, we provide opportunities to live and practice democracy.

(h) **Solidarity and support:** LASPNET will support, mobilise NGOs to stand in solidarity with its Members who may be illegally threatened in the course of their work and promotion of democracy and citizen's interests. Recommendation to development partners, other NGOs and Government for relevant support to your organisation. Membership allows you to receive technical and specialised advice and support on different aspects to enable your organisation grow and improve its work. The Membership and Constituency Servicing Team will regularly review the above Member Benefits, identify new ones and create valued products for Members.

4.0 About the Secretariat

The main obligations of the Secretariat to the Members are:

(a) To ensure timely implementation of activities spearheaded by the Board;

(b) To coordinate and support projects of member organisations;

(c) To ensure timely preparation of progress reports to development partners and other stakeholders;

(d) To devise innovative fundraising methods and techniques to sustain the Network;

(e) To oversee expenditure and ensure value for money in the activities of LASPNET;

(f) To recommend project proposals, as well as sanction reviews and financial audit of grants received by member organisations;

(g) To receive applications for membership, conduct due diligence and submit such applications to the Board.

(h) To help in the human capacity building and organisation development of the member organisations;

(i) To assist Members in sharing their experiences, success, failures, knowledge and plans with each other through networking;

(j) To promote coordination and networking among service providers as in ways that improve effectiveness of legal aid programmes;

(k) To develop and disseminate periodic publications, such as a Newsletter, brainstorming on various issues among Members;

5.0 Rights and Obligations

5.1 Members have the right:

(a) To fully participate in the activities of the Network;

(b) To use and access facilities provided by the Network for Members;

(c) To express themselves without undue interference or influence by other Members;

(d) In the case of Ordinary and Associate Members, to stand or vote for elective positions on the Board of Directors, provided that they have complied with all appropriate requirements, including payment of all applicable membership and subscription fees;

(e) To withdraw their membership of the Network.

5.2 Members have the obligation:

(a) To pay all prescribed fees;

(b) To uphold and abide by this Constitution and any other bye-laws or regulations made hereunder;

(c) To conduct themselves in manner that is not prejudicial to the interests or contrary to the objectives for which the Network has been established;

(d) To express their opinions in a democratic, orderly and fair manner, having respect for the rights of other Members;

(e) To participate and contribute towards the activities and attainment of the Network's mission and objectives.

6.0 Code of Conduct

LASPNET Members are expected to conduct themselves in keeping with these principles through adherence to the agreed code of conduct. LASPNET may refuse to renew the membership of any organisation that it determines, in its discretion, has engaged or engages in behaviour that harms the collective effort of Members and mission of the organisation.

7.0 Involvement

LASPNET offers opportunities for member involvement and participation in its programmes and activities. LASPNET also recognises other organisations that are not its Members and will create opportunities for open exchanges with them.

a) LASPNET programmes offer a wide range of activities in which all Members are encouraged to participate. The following are some examples of how you can participate:

i. **Capacity building and institutional development:** This is a continuing process in which all stakeholders participate in creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks, human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems. LASPNET will develop such initiatives as those that improve governance, leadership, mission and strategy, administration (including human resources, financial management, and legal matters), programme development and implementation, fundraising and income generation, diversity, partnerships and collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and policy change, marketing, positioning, strategic planning, as well as various skills in personal and professional development.

   Members are invited to participate in the following ways:
   - Share information about the current state of their organisations and highlight their contribution to the communities they serve.
   - Participate in human and institutional capacity needs analyses to enable effective mapping of existing expertise
   - Contribute ideas, data, information, analyses, and case studies to facilitate action learning processes.

For further information, please contact: pm@laspnet.org

ii. **Collective research and advocacy:** This is a search for knowledge through a systematic investigation, with an open mind, to establish relevant novel facts and

thereby support viewpoints that influence policy, regulations, and standards-setting. LASPNET will encourage collaborative legal research among its Members for heightening awareness of pertinent issues before key decision-makers. This will be strengthened by collective interventions in advocating for responsible policies and practices which improve access to justice for the poor. The research findings will also facilitate an action learning process for enabling a deeper understanding of the issues involved, a reflective reassessment of the identified problems, and an exploration of the ways forward.

Members are invited to participate in the following ways:

- Identify and suggest policies that may require collective engagement by legal aid service providers in Uganda;
- Contribute updates and analyses about existing legal concerns in the local communities so as to enable monitoring of occurrences at national level;
- Actively participate in policy engagement consultations organised by LASPNET at national, regional and sub-national level.
- Engage collectively in national, regional and global level advocacy on the issues that emerge from research and consultations.
- Participate in Working Groups and share ideas, experiences, lessons learnt; and to shape the policy engagement agenda of the Network.

For further information, please contact: rao@laspnet.org

iii. **Publicity and information management:** This is a rigorous drive for sharing information and acquiring knowledge to promote the legal aid agenda. It will be achieved through online and traditional media such as news coverage, feature articles, talk show interviews, and blog postings. However, some form of public relations will also be initiated to protect and strengthen the credibility of the Network. LASPNET will employ a number of ways to enhance its image, develop goodwill and influence attitudes. This will be done in several ways that include special events, newsletters, annual reports and news releases. On the other hand, publicity will be complemented with the ability to capture, manage, preserve, store and deliver the right information to the right people at the right time. It will involve the organisation of and control over the structure, processing and delivery of information. LASPNET will ensure proper application of policies, processes, technologies and best practices through an elaborate process of information management.

Members are invited to participate in the following ways:

- Share information, research, experiences, best practices and opportunities of their organisations through web-based platforms, discussion groups, regularly produced information briefs/newsletters and the like.
- Mobilise other organisations to promote and defend the legal aid cause in the interest of indigent, marginalised and vulnerable persons.

- Participate in membership events organised to profile and promote the work of legal aid service providers
- Participate in client satisfaction surveys and propose value addition programmes for the benefit of Members
- Represent and advocate on behalf of other legal aid service providers at work-related meetings when called upon.

For contributions or further information, please contact: icdo@laspnet.org

iv. **Sector-wide collaboration and dialogue:** This will be promoted to enable participation of legal aid service providers in the existing cross-institutional development and sector-wide initiatives so as to encourage consistency and generate efficiencies. This is intended to nurture a practice for information sharing on internal policies and guidelines among the sector players as well as increase mutual cooperation and ensure effective communication. In this way, the large institutions and smaller institutions can work together to develop collaborative platforms that reduce costs, create efficiencies, increase discoverability, and share expertise. LASPNET will therefore develop a record of documents, case studies, and statistics (whether internally, cross institutionally or sector-wide) which demonstrate the benefits of such open access. The Secretariat will coordinate the membership to include measures of impact, shared reuse of and access to information in their key performance indicators. It will ensure that value is measured beyond client turnover to incorporate various outcomes of open access as a desirable requirement in strengthening legal aid service provision

   Members are invited to participate in the following ways:
   - Mobilise other stakeholders and participate in dialogue with government to ensure good governance models and effective service delivery
   - Involve in the JLOS symposiums and other multi-sector events organised to profile and promote the work of Members
   - Participate in programmes for other member organisations and make value addition proposals in their programme design
   - Represent and advocate on behalf of LASPNET and its membership in local JLOS meetings and other relevant fora
   - Propose and support various innovative ways of promoting sector-wide collaboration and dialogue with all other relevant sectors.

For contributions or further information, please contact: ed@laspnet.org

b) LASPNET thematic clusters offer opportunities for periodic engagement of Members in programme activities. Each member organisation is attached to one thematic cluster but may also take part in the activities of other clusters. The Network will utilise the thematic clusters to provide technical input into identified areas of contextual relevance and thematic interest. All the

meetings of thematic clusters are financially resourced and supported by the LASPNET Secretariat. The following are the seven clusters in which a member should participate:

i. **The cluster on Pre-trial Justice:** This focuses on promotion of appropriate alternatives to excessive and arbitrary incarceration of suspects, without their trial, by influencing relevant policies that can help in expanding access to legal aid services as well as determining practical actions in deploying paralegals and community volunteers to intervene earlier in the justice delivery process.

ii. **The cluster on Traditional Justice:** This focuses on the role of customary governance in enhancing access to justice among the grassroots by promoting innovative traditional justice mechanisms that complement conventional judicial systems but also capacitating them to observe human rights, avoid discrimination and apply principles of procedural fairness.

iii. **The cluster on Children Justice:** This focuses on policy, system, structure and legislation that relate to delinquency among young offenders to influence attitudes as well as promote options that enable necessary child protection, age-appropriate support, and responsive diversion of deserving cases from the custodial justice system while considering the general access-to-justice issues for children.

iv. **The cluster on Gender Justice:** The thematic cluster on gender justice focuses on providing input for changes to legislation, practice, and procedure which will improve the gender justice system as well as promoting programme actions such as mediation, awareness – raising, counselling and empowerment through linkages with actors in health, education, and law enforcement agencies.

v. **The cluster on Transitional Justice:** This focuses on promoting judicial and other effective measures to constructively redress past atrocities by rebuilding coexistence as well as contributing to processes for reconciliation and reformation from a divided history to a shared future in communities affected by legacies of massive human rights abuse.

vi. **The cluster on Social Justice:** This focuses on strengthening the impact of interventions for promoting equal access to opportunities and rights, fair system of law and due process, recognition of human value and wellbeing, as well as legal support and protection of key targeted groups/persons who are underprivileged, marginalised or vulnerable.

vii. **The cluster on Land Justice:** This focuses on identifying, understanding, documenting and addressing obstacles especially faced by the poor people, including communities that practice customary ownership in securing land rights and tenure security as well as propose better policy alternatives as complemented by appropriate dispute resolution.

c) LASPNET working groups comprise of representatives from the thematic clusters who are selected depending on their expertise in relation to the matter under discussion. Every working group will have one representative from each thematic cluster. The working groups will assess the recommendations of the thematic clusters to inform priority actions. The decisions taken at these meetings will be approved by the Board of Directors. All the meetings of thematic clusters are financially resourced and supported by the LASPNET Secretariat. The following are three working groups in which a member can participate:

i. **The working group on Technical/Access to Justice Concerns:** This focuses on priorities that involve experiential and specialised guidance to address the identified hitches in ensuring an effective and professional legal system that is accountable, affordable, sustainable and accessible for all.

ii. **The working group on Institutional Development Matters:** This focuses on priorities that enable the exploration of existing strategic approaches, internal policies and systems, as well as inter-organisational relationships to provide tools for promoting needed capacity and harmonised standards but relying on high-level political support and the participation of all key stakeholders on a sustainable basis.

iii. **The working group on crosscutting issues:** This focuses on priorities that will advance provision of legal aid services to traditionally excluded groups through thematic analysis of issues for integration into programmes and activities.

8.0 Payments

Upon first becoming a Member, applicants pay both the Membership and Subscription dues but membership fee is a one-time payment. The subscription to the Network expires annually and is renewable by the 31st day of March of each calendar year. The membership fees, based on category, are structured as below:

Membership Category	Membership fee	Annual subscription
(a) Ordinary membership:	UGX 100,000	UGX 100,000
(b) Associate Membership:	UGX 100,000	UGX 100,000
(c) Honorary Membership:	NIL	NIL

Membership fees may be revised from time to time as circumstances dictate, and endorsed by all Members at the General Assembly. However, Members may give any additional support to LASPNET in form of donations.

The Bank Account details are:
Barclays Bank (U) Limited, Plot 16, Kampala Road, P.O. Box 2971, Kampala.
Account name: Legal Aid Service Providers Network
Account number: 0341187621

9.0 Disputes

a) If and whenever any dispute shall arise between the Network and any of the Members or their respective representatives, touching the construction of any of this Constitution herein contained or any act or thing made or done, or to be made or done, or committed in regard to the rights and liabilities arising hereunder, or arising out of the relation existing between the parties by reason of these presents or of the law, such difference shall be referred for mediation by an independent Mediator agreed on by the parties in dispute.

b) Failing an amicable resolution thereof by mediation, the dispute shall forthwith be referred to an arbitrator agreed on by both parties, or failing such agreement, to a panel of three Arbitrators, one to be appointed by each party, and the third jointly appointed by the two Arbitrators appointed by both parties, who shall enter into consideration of such matters referred to them, and such reference shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the laws of Arbitration for the time being in force in Uganda

10.0 Termination

a) Any member may voluntarily resign its membership of the Network.

b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 7(a) of this Article, ordinary, associate or honorary membership of LASPNET may be terminated by the Board of Directors, with the approval of the General Assembly, on the following grounds:

i. If the member organisation ceases to operate within the criteria that qualified it for membership;

ii. If the member organisation has no physical address/office where it can be contacted and conduct its business for a continuous period of six months;

iii. If the member organisation fails to meet its membership obligations for a period of twelve months;

iv. If the member organisation conducts its business contrary to any policy guidelines or codes of conduct adopted by the General Assembly;

v. If the member is involved in unethical or illegal activities that tarnish the image or credibility of the Network;

c) The Board shall on learning of conduct of a member that would constitute a ground for dismissal, give notice to such member requiring it to appear and explain themselves to the Board.

(d) The Board shall, where no satisfactory explanation is given, recommend to the General Assembly or Extra Ordinary General Meeting that the member be suspended or dismissed from the Network.

(e) Membership of LASPNET shall not be terminated unless two-thirds of the Members present and voting at a General Assembly or Extra Ordinary General Meeting endorse the' decision.

(f) A member whose membership has been terminated shall remain liable to pay all debts or sums due to the Network at the time of termination.