



The Legal Aid Forum

Working Together For Equitable Access to Justice



2022 ANNUAL Report

Foreword

I am delighted to present this report on the impactful endeavors of the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) in 2022. When it comes to the rule of law and access to justice in Rwanda, it goes without saying that LAF remains one of the key players in ensuring that vulnerable groups are fully protected by the law.

It is our firm belief that Access to justice should not be a right enjoyed only by those who are able to pay for it. It must be accessible to and affordable to all citizens, including the poor and vulnerable groups. A fair and well-functioning system of legal aid is vital to ensuring justice, fairness, equality, and development.

LAF plays a significant role in monitoring the indicators set by the state institutions in their policies on access to justice with information gathered from our network, and through targeted research projects. From the findings of the research, recommendations are made to relevant institutions which lead to concrete actions being taken to address human rights issues, reduce capacity gaps, and introduce innovative solutions to justice problems.

In line with previous years, our efforts in 2022 focused on advocating for equitable access to justice. This involved strengthening cooperation and synergy among legal aid providers, improving the quality and availability of legal aid services, enhancing the capabilities of legal aid actors, conducting research and advocacy activities on legal matters affecting vulnerable communities in Rwanda, contributing to the establishment of an efficient and sustainable legal aid system, and mobilizing resources and technical support to enhance legal aid.

This report presents an overview of the various activities undertaken by LAF throughout 2022. It highlights noteworthy accomplishments such as conducted research, evidence-based advocacy, professional capacity development, legal education, and community awareness campaigns in refugee camps, provision of legal advice and representation, active participation in international treaty body reporting cycles, provision of grants to LAF members, and more.

Through these initiatives, LAF is actively contributing to the development of an efficient and sustainable legal aid system in Rwanda, ensuring that individuals who are indigent and vulnerable have equal access to justice.

We remain resolute in our commitment to enhancing the quality of justice and legal aid services in Rwanda and supporting the nation's ongoing recovery from the pandemic.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners whose invaluable support enables us to continually expand access to justice for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations.

Me Andrew Kananga

Executive Director

List of Acronyms

A2JP : Access to Justice Project

A4ID: Advocates for International Development

ADEPE : Action pour le Développement du Peuple

AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA : Association de la Jeunesse pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et le Développement

ARDHO : Association Rwandaise pour La Defence des Droits de l'Homme

ARJ : Association Rwandaise des Journalistes.

ATI: Access to Information

CLAM: Center for Legal Aid and Mediation

CSOs: Civil society Organizations

DIDE : Dignity in Detention

DKU: Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera

DPC: District Police Commander

FoE: Freedom of Expression

GBV: Gender based Violence

GOR: Government of Rwanda

HRF: Human Rights First Rwanda Association

ICT: Information and communication technologies

IECMS : Integrated Electronic Case Management System

ILPD: Institute of Legal Practice and Development

IVR: Interactive voice response

KIAC : Kigali International Arbitration Center

LACSF: Legal Aid Civil Society Fund

LAF: The Legal Aid Forum

LAPS: Legal Aid Performance Standard

LOH: Lawyers of Hope

MINEMA: Ministry in charge of Emergency Management

MINIJUST: Ministry of Justice

MLAC: Mobile Legal Aid Clinic

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

MTN: Mobile Telephone Network

PIL: Public Interest Litigation

PSEA: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

RBA: Rwanda Bar Association

RFL : Rwanda Forensic Laboratory

RGB: Rwanda Government Board

RMC: Rwanda Media Commission

RNP: Rwanda National Police

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SGBV: Sexual-Gender Based Violence

TANLAP: Tanzania Network of Legal Aid Providers

TIR: Transparency International Rwanda

TV : Television

UN : United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UPR: Universal Periodic Review

USSD: Unstructured Supplementary Service Data

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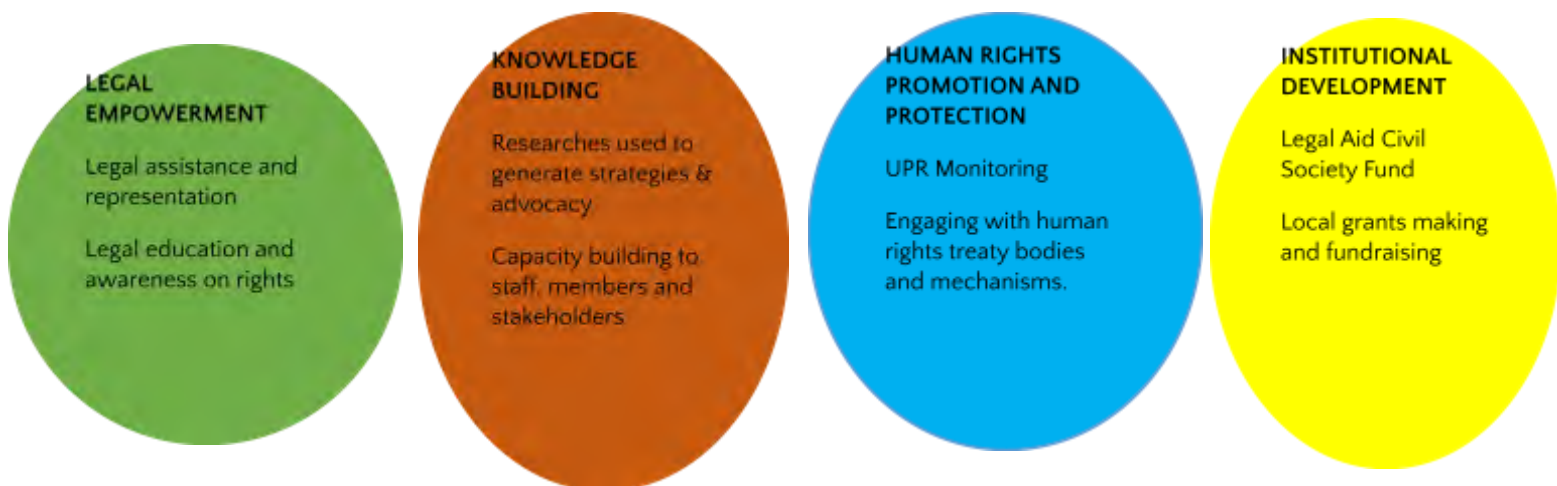
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INTRODUCTION

The Legal Aid Forum (LAF) was established in 2006 in order to create a space where organizations who wished to provide legal aid to indigent and vulnerable groups could share information and best practices as well as collaborate in capacity building, research and evidence-based advocacy. Through a collaborative process of 30 civil society organizations, LAF was born. Today, LAF is the leading non-state legal aid provider in Rwanda, composed of 38 national and international NGOs, professional bodies, universities Legal Aid Clinics and faith-based initiatives. The organization operates across a wide range of legal areas, recognizing the interconnectedness of different aspects of people's lives and the need for comprehensive legal support.

The 2018-2022 strategic plan of LAF outlines four strategic objectives, which are depicted in the diagram below. These objectives are designed to complement and strengthen each other, with certain activities of the organization cross-cutting in different areas. For instance, the training of LAF members can contribute to both knowledge-building and institutional development.



This report offers a comprehensive summary of the activities conducted and the corresponding outcomes accomplished by the LAF network throughout 2022. It encompasses the activities and initiatives of both member organizations and the LAF secretariat, providing a holistic view of the collective achievements.

PART I: PERFORMANCE BY LAF SECRETARIAT

1. KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

1.1. Research

Drawing on its legal expertise, casework, engagement with beneficiaries, and the extensive reach and experience of its member organizations, LAF has built a reputation as a national hub of knowledge on access to justice and legal aid.

In 2022, LAF effectively utilized its expertise to conduct three significant research projects grounded in evidence, around areas of expropriation in the public interest and their impact on land rights, laws and policies that affect access to justice for the vulnerable groups, and the impact of use of technology on access to justice in Rwanda. which led to concrete changes in law, policy, and practice.

1.1.1. Assessment on Practices of Expropriation in the Public Interest and their Impact on Land Rights in Rwanda

Given that expropriation practices continue to raise concerns and critics among citizens in Rwanda, including concerns of lack of transparency in determining the nature of public interest of expropriation projects, undervaluation of landowners property, delays in payment of fair compensation among others, LAF conducted a comprehensive research on expropriation practices, focusing on procedures that still generate controversy and discontent among affected landowners, and their impact on land rights in Rwanda. This research commenced from December 2021 to June 2022.

Findings from this research revealed some practices that violate land rights of affected landowners like; limited Public notice and consultation prior to implementation of expropriation projects, cclaims of unfair valuation of land and property, among others. Rrecommendations suggested that the government should;

- Conduct legal reforms and amend the existing 2015 expropriation law to clearly establish and define criteria for what constitutes the public interest,
- Recognize and compensate for damages caused due to partial expropriation,
- Improve and streamline procedures in payment of fair compensation to ensure timely payment.
- Improve coordination and planning of expropriation projects by allocating sufficient budget before implementing them.
- Increase opportunities for landowners' participation in expropriation decisions, among others.



LAF presenting research findings and recommendations to relevant stakeholders in a conference

Currently, this research is bearing impact and greatly contributing to ongoing policy discussions and review processes of amending the existing 2015 law relating to expropriation in the public interest.

1.1.2. Policy Research on the Implementation of Alternatives to Imprisonment in Rwanda

Under our Legal Aid Civil Society Fund (LACSF), this year, we partnered with our member organisation, Transparency International Rwanda (TIR), to conduct a policy research on the implementation of alternatives to imprisonment in Rwanda, with the overall objective of promoting and advocating for the effective and improved use of alternatives to imprisonment in the justice system.

Findings from this research revealed that the existing alternatives to imprisonment in Rwanda are applied at a very lesser extent or not applicable at all. From this research, some reasons that lead to limited use of alternatives to imprisonment in Rwanda were identified to be; lack of public awareness about the existence of alternatives to imprisonment, the excessive use of imprisonment especially during pre-trial detention by law enforcers, limited resources to support systems on the implementation of alternatives, among others.

It is with great fulfilment that the findings and recommendations from this research were in line with the measures that had been by the Ministry of Justice to promote ADR mechanisms, and the ministry considered the concern of prisons' overcrowding hence adopting the Criminal Justice Policy and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy.

These two policies are currently being looked at as key mechanisms that will inform various changes in regards to how justice is rendered in the country hence addressing the key concern of our research of using other alternatives to imprisonment.

1.1.3. Survivor Engagement Research for Anti-slavery and Anti-trafficking Organizations in Central and East Africa.

1.1.3. Survivor Engagement Research for Anti-slavery and Anti-trafficking Organizations in Central and East Africa.

This year, we participated in a very interesting research on Human trafficking titled; Survivor engagement for anti-slavery and anti-trafficking organizations in Central and East Africa, that was led by Free the Slaves and HAART-Kenya. This research aimed at assessing how CSOs engage survivors of human trafficking beyond service delivery, the existing gaps hindering survivors of human trafficking, and recommendations for best practices.

Findings from this research were presented during a regional freedom from slavery forum, and discussions evolved around different approaches that would enable local engagement as well as synergies to address the raising issue of modern-day slavery.



Participants from all over the East and Central African region during the Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum that discussed findings from the research

Important to note is that during the forum, movement leaders cross the world and different stakeholders discussed the external factors that exacerbate modern day slavery and ways of combatting them. Participants also shared their different best practices from their countries and measures to engage and empower victims of human trafficking. LAF is proud to have participated in this important research, which later served as a basis of advocacy on the issue of human trafficking in Rwanda and the world at large.

1.1.4. Assessment on Laws and Policies that Impact Access to Justice by vulnerable Groups in Rwanda

Despite the fact that the Government of Rwanda is making remarkable progress in developing its legal and policy frameworks that promotes Access to Justice to all citizens, especially the vulnerable, Rwanda still faces some challenges in enabling complete access to justice for all its citizens when it comes to availability and provision of legal aid. It is repeatedly raised by some citizens that, issues of insufficient representation in criminal matters and scarcity of legal aid providers make it difficult for them to attain full access to justice.

It is from this background that in this year, LAF conducted a comprehensive assessment on laws and policies that impact access to justice for the vulnerable groups, focusing on those that provide for legal aid to GBV victims and people involved in criminal matters.

This assessment aimed at analysing the existing GBV related laws and policies in Rwanda, focusing on how they take into account access and provision of legal aid for vulnerable groups especially women and children. It also aimed at analysing the existing laws and policies that provide for legal aid in the Rwandan criminal justice system, focusing on how justice actors comply with provisions that provide for legal aid in criminal matters. The two assessments are still ongoing, and findings shall be published and disseminated to the general public in June 2023.

1.2. The Impact of Use of Technology on Access to Justice in Rwanda

Considering that the rapid advancement of ICT has opened up new opportunities that have significantly improved the administration of justice in Rwanda, this year, LAF partnered with Kituo Cha Sheria Legal Advice Centre, a Kenyan-based organization, to conduct a comparative research on how the use of technology has promoted access to justice in Rwanda.

This research aimed at assessing the familiarity of self-representing court users in navigating electronic court systems and accessing legal services. Furthermore, this research also aimed at assessing the technical capacity of legal aid service providers in Rwanda, to use electronic court systems in legal aid provision. Lastly, this research further aimed at assessing the expedience of digitalizing legal services as a measure to curb effects of covid-19 on access to justice by the vulnerable people in Rwanda.

Findings from the research were shared to Cha Sheria, to inspire the Kenyan justice sector on Rwanda's best practices that can be adopted in regard to promoting the use of ICT.

1.3. Advocacy

As our vision drives us to see a Rwanda where the indigent and vulnerable groups have equitable access to justice, advocacy for positive changes in law, regulations, policy, and practice in the provision of legal aid services, access to justice and protection of human rights has always been our main goal.

During the year 2022, LAF conducted various advocacy activities that aimed at advocating for positive policy changes and improved respect of human rights through publication of research reports, participation on radio and TV talk shows, attending high-level influential conferences, dialogues and meetings, use of the media like Facebook, Instagram and twitter spaces as well as direct engagements with policy makers.

Some of the remarkable and outstanding advocacy activities conducted by LAF in 2022 include:

1.3.1. Advocacy and awareness raising on Gender Based Violence during 16 days of Activism.

Given that today's world is mostly internet-centred, LAF conducted a series of advocacy activities on its internet platforms including Instagram, twitter Facebook, and we were able to

engage with at least 3,374 twitter users on laws and policies affecting GBV victims in Rwanda from November 25th to December 2022. During these series of advocacy activities, we hosted a very important discussion on twitter space, on the issue of Access to Justice for GBV victims. At least 467 twitter users joined LAF's senior legal aid attorney, the quality assurance specialist at Rwanda forensic laboratory and the senior policy expert, and discussions evolved around existing challenges and limitations faced by GBV victims while seeking justice and as well as necessary action points that could be taken to address the issue.

1.3.2. Participated in consultative workshops to review the 2015 law on expropriation in the public interest

Following the assessment we conducted on practices of expropriation in the public interest and their impact on land rights in Rwanda, we continued to advocate for improved respect of land owners land rights during expropriation practices within the legal framework. The Ministry of Environment actively engaged use in a serious of consultation workshops and meetings that aimed to review and amend the existing 2015 expropriation law, given our research findings.

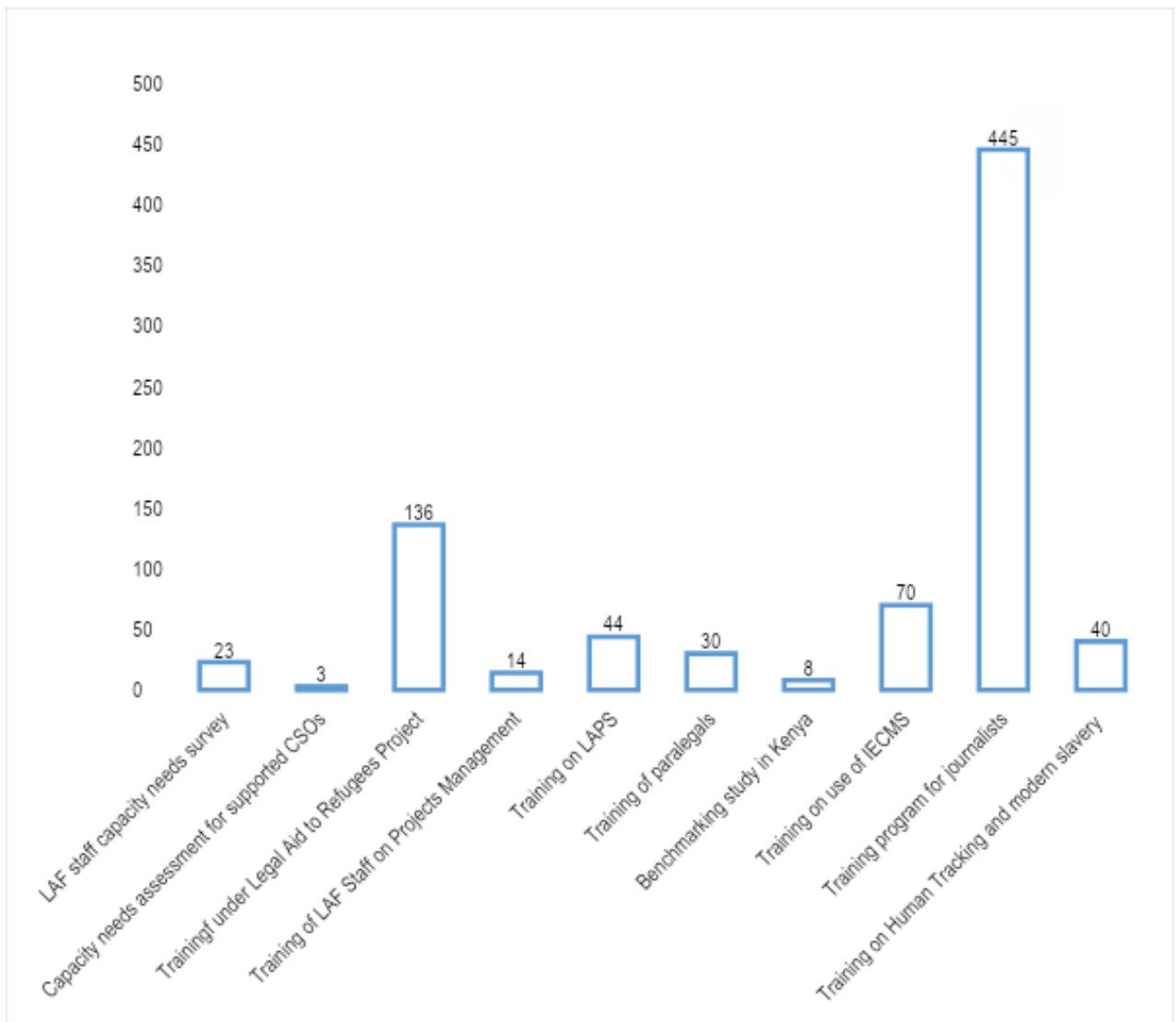
We are proud to witness key recommendations from our research bear impact in the ongoing legal reforms of the expropriation law, and we believe that with the adoption of the new law relating to expropriation in the public interest, Rwanda shall attain fair and just expropriation practices.

1.4. Capacity building

Rwanda boasts a significant number of justice actors, including Civil Society Organizations, dedicated to supporting access to justice. However, it is essential to take a step back and evaluate the effectiveness of legal aid service delivery. With this in mind, in 2022 we have embarked on a mission to develop and enhance the capacity of legal aid service providers in Rwanda. Our goal is to ensure that every individual seeking legal services is met with competent service providers and receives excellent legal assistance.

In 2022, our capacity building initiatives focused on both State and non-state legal aid providers, human rights advocates, and various other actors involved in the justice system. We also occasionally involved recipients of legal aid services provided by LAF to ensure that their perspectives and experiences inform our efforts. This is the case of journalists, beneficiaries of our legal support initiatives.

In total, 813 beneficiaries accessed our capacity building initiatives in 2022 as per below summary:



In total, LAF capacity building initiatives in 2022, benefited 813 beneficiaries made of members of justice sector, legal aid providers, journalists and 3 organisations.

Through these capacity building sessions, we aimed at achieving the Enhancing Service Provider Skills; Strengthening Legal Aid Networks; Promoting Human Rights-Based Approaches and Monitoring and Evaluation.

By focusing on capacity building, we envision a legal aid landscape in Rwanda where service providers are equipped to meet the legal needs of all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background. Through collaboration and continuous improvement, we strive to create an inclusive and accessible justice system that upholds the rule of law and protects the rights of every Rwandan citizen.

Capacity building initiatives conducted in 2022

1.4.1. LAF staff capacity needs survey

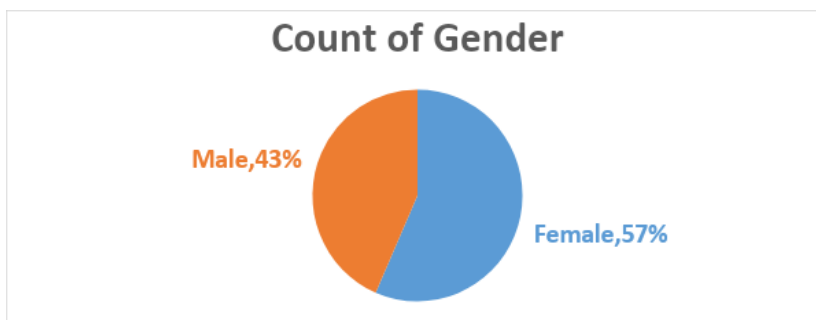
The Senior Capacity Development Officer conducted a mini-survey among LAF secretariat staff to gather their input for planning capacity building initiatives. A total of 23 staff members responded to the survey conducted through a Google form. The feedback received highlighted the staff's interest in training on the following topics: Project Management, Gender Based Violence and child protection, Advocacy tactics and strategies, Universal periodic Review (UPR), and Mediation. These topics were the most selected from the long list proposed to the staff. Based on this feedback, the report recommends focusing on these areas for the upcoming capacity building sessions.

Findings

In total, LAF secretariat counts 32 staff and 23 of them participated in this survey.

Gender

Of the respondents, 57% are female while 43% are male.



Participants per department

The Programs department has more respondents than other departments. This is in conformity with the fact that the programs department has more staff than others.



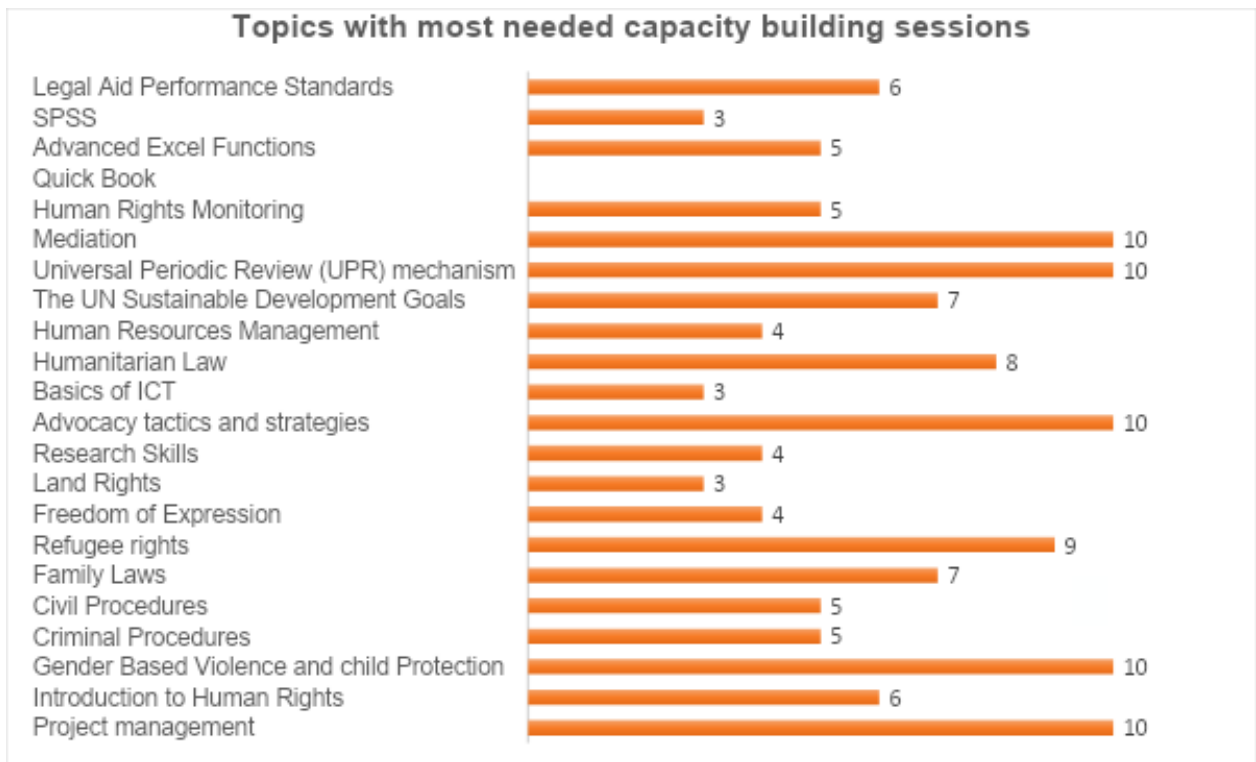
Years of experience with LAF

In regards to the experience with LAF, 15 of the respondent staff worked with LAF more than three (3) years.



Topics with most needed capacity building sessions

In total we suggested 22 topics (namely: Project management, Introduction to Human Rights, Gender Based Violence and child Protection, Criminal Procedures, Civil Procedures, Family Laws, Refugee rights, Freedom of Expression, Land Rights, Research Skills, Advocacy tactics and strategies, Basics of ICT, Humanitarian Law, Human Resources Management, The UN Sustainable Development Goals, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, Mediation, Human Rights Monitoring, Quick Book, Advanced Excel Functions, SPSS and Legal Aid Performance Standards (LAPS)). The staff were asked to suggest at least 5 topics they wish they benefit training from in 2022.



According to their feedback, the top five topics most of the staff wish to cover are:

1. Project Management
2. Gender Based Violence and child protection
3. Advocacy tactics and strategies
4. Universal periodic Review (UPR) and,
5. Mediation

Other topics like: Refugee rights, Humanitarian Law, The UN Sustainable Development Goals, LAPS, family laws and child Rights follow among the topics they staff wishes to cover.

Other suggested topics to be focused in 2022 when training

The staff were given chance to suggest other topics that were not proposed on the list. The following are other topics most of them suggested:

1. ADR
2. ICT skills and PowerPoint presentation skills
3. IECMS
4. Human Resource Software and Asset Management Software
5. Cyber Crimes and Media Laws,
6. Sign language

Requested length of training sessions

The Staff suggest training should last between 3 and 4 days. They had three options. 3, 4, and 5 days.

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For how long do they think each training might last?



Where the trainings should be conducted from

On the question where they wish to take training from, the majority (53%) said they should place in Kigali.

Conclusion

This exercise was conducted for planning purposes. The wishes may not be done 100% but future training sessions shall take into account the feedback from the staff accordingly. The general comment from staff is that they thank LAF for the initiative to boost my capacity that will help them to perform effectively in their respective responsibilities. They suggest they may receive training calendar ahead of time for better planning.

1.4.2. Capacity building needs assessment for cornerstone supported civil society organizations

The Cornerstone Project that later changed the name to “Legal Pro Bono Rwanda project” is a partnership initiative between Advocates for International Development (A4ID) and the Legal Aid Forum Rwanda with the technical and financial support by Clifford Chance aimed at supporting three (3) civil society organisations providing free legal services to the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Kigali. The selected project CSOs include Human Rights First Rwanda, HAGURUKA NGO (non-governmental organisations) and ARDHO. As part of the implementation stage of Cornerstone Project, A4ID and LAF engaged the 3 CSOs in mapping survey to document their needs in term of capacity building. This capacity

needs assessment to supported CSOs was necessary to enable development of relevant modules by A4ID, LAF and Clifford Chance Team lawyers, in close collaboration with local experts from Rwanda to meet the training needs identified. These modules or training materials will be adapted to the Rwandan context and tailored for responding to the needs of supported CSOs.

The analysis of the findings from the survey presents a picture of the needs of local CSOs in terms of capacity building limited to trainings for up skilling their employees for better service delivery then make greater impact in the community.

The list of needs presented by order of importance constitutes a baseline from which Clifford Chance experts, A4ID, LAF and local experts will develop tailored modules and training materials that will be adapted to local context.

Considering the findings, the priority areas for trainings per order of importance is the following:

❖ **Trainings related to legal service provision.**

- Effective approach to influencing national policies and laws in order to improve the scale of access to justice.
- The best and effective strategies to attracting external partnership at local and international level for legal support (i.e. from law firms, legal partners, CSOs, volunteers etc).
- Establishing a sustainable system for regular up skilling legal aid practitioners to providing good quality services to the people in need.
- The best approaches for advocacy and measuring impact from legal aid services to improved livelihood.
- The best approach to instilling pro bono culture and influencing the legal community for being more attractive to contribution for global development.
- Developing the best strategies and programmes specific for legal aid improvement.
- Linking legal profession to sustainable global goals and define the role of legal practitioners.

❖ **Trainings related to project management:**

- Project design and development of key project documents (i.e. Logical Framework approach, MEL, action plan, budgeting...).
- Fundraising methods.
- Improving the ability to applying effective approaches to meet targets (i.e. participatory methods).
- Improving the capacity to collect and assess baseline information about the beneficiaries/mastering how to learn from collected data, and documenting impact.
- Improving the ability to prepare strategic plan and periodic action plans.
- Improving the ability to handle multiple projects and tasks simultaneously.
- Keeping updated and informed about the latest techniques/ competencies/ policies/ trends in its area of expertise.
- Establish and maintain human capacity development system for regular upskilling the employees.

- Improving organizational development that encourage team work towards achieving results.
- Improving accounting information systems and inputs controls.
- Advanced training in assets and logistic management and other efficient e-systems (specific software like SAGE etc).

1.4.3. Capacity building initiatives under the “Legal Aid to Refugees Project

In 2022, under the Legal Aid to Refugees project that LAF was implementing in partnership with UNHCR-Rwanda, people of concern were trained on conflict resolution techniques and key new laws. The training were planned following the Government of Rwanda’s programme on refugee community empowerment and self-reliance aiming at creating learning opportunities for Refugee leaders in camps and host communities, to become frontrunners in supporting their communities to solve their conflicts in a non-violent way.

Some of the major conflicts faced by refugees as experienced by LAF include civil loans or debit/bank Lambert. This has been one of the primary causes of family conflicts since shifting UNHCR assistance from food to cash-based. Land is also a source of family conflict to some extent. The other facts contributing to these conflicts are drug abuse, alcoholism etc.

In refugee camps and the neighboring communities, the first decentralized authority in the camp setting is in the place where people should go in case of conflict, which is the village quartier, and camp executive committees. However, for different reasons, the population is not making the best use of this available structural leadership. Among other reasons put forward is a lack of trust by refugee in the camp leadership, the other reason is ignorance of laws, unavailability of the leaders at a time when they are highly needed, a feeling of lack of representation and a view by refugees that their leaders do not possess the necessary skills required, etc.

The overall objective of the training was to empower the persons involved in conflict resolution within the camps and Abunzi from cells and sectors surrounding the camp. To equip the trainees with knowledge of the most valuable laws, skills, and techniques used in mediation and conciliation to mitigate conflicts among communities. To establish cooperation between “Abunzi” and different organs of refugees involved in conflict resolution within the camps.

In total, 136 participants from camps and host communities were trained in basic conflict resolution and mediation skills and new laws; including **80 refugee community leaders** and refugee’s influencers and **56 from the host community**.



Participants during the training in Refugee camps.

1.4.4. Programmes and Projects Management training for LAF Staff





LAF staff during the training on programmes and Project Management

Responding to the results from LAF staff capacity building needs survey, LAF management organised a training on Programmes and Projects Management training for 14 LAF Staff. The training was organised with objectives to:

1. Understand what project management entails and the roles of a project manager.
2. Analyse various types of stakeholders in project management.
3. Analyse problems using a Problem Tree and convert them into solutions using a Solution Tree.
4. Identify possible project risks and how to mitigate them.
5. Understand how to monitor projects and the role of KPIs, including various data collection methods and tools.
6. Practical application on how to transfer learning, do result-based reporting and action planning within projects.

The training was conducted by a renowned training company called MDF that has over 37 years of experience in providing learning trajectories, advisory guidance, facilitation, evaluations, enterprise development, and partnership services worldwide.

1.4.5. Training on Legal Aid Performance Standards (LAPS)

In 2022, The Legal Aid Forum conducted two rounds of training on Legal Aid Performance Standards (LAPS). The first one took place from April 26th to 28th while the second round took place 23rd to 25th August 2022, at the Sainte Famille Hotel. The trainings aimed to enhance the capacity of legal aid providers and familiarize them with LAPS. It also emphasized the importance of accurate reporting and understanding performance standards for vulnerable groups. Over forty legal aid providers, attorneys and advocate interneers in Rwanda participated in the training.



Pictures from the first round of the training

The training focused on equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality legal aid services and establish consistent standards across providers.

1.4.6. Training of paralegals



Training of paralegals on different key laws

Paralegals are crucial in providing legal aid, especially in rural areas, as they possess primary knowledge of various legal issues and offer services such as legal assistance, education, referrals, and mediation. As such, it is very important for LAF to build their capacities in order to improve the quality of their work. In 2022, on 7th and 8th June in Kigali, **30 paralegals**, representing each district in the country, gathered to be trained and discuss their role as primary legal aid providers in society. The objectives of the training were to educate paralegals on key laws encountered in their work (family law, child law, and GBV), teach them how to write success stories, identify challenges faced in their work. The training served also as an opportunity to present certificates and awards to them.

1.4.7. Benchmarking study on legal aid system in Kenya

The Legal Aid Forum, has played a significant role in supporting efforts made by Rwanda that include the development of a fair and accessible justice system to promote good governance and the rule of law following the adoption of The National Legal Aid Policy adopted in 2014. To build on past successes and address existing gaps, LAF and the Ministry of Justice were in 2022 implementing the Access to Justice Project (A2JP), with funding from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands. As part of this project, a benchmarking visit to Kenya has been organized to learn about legal aid systems and practices.



On June 27, 2022, the delegation in meeting with the Court Annexed Mediation Secretariat at Milimani Law Courts to learn best practices and challenges in implementing Court Annexed Mediation.

The delegation to the benchmarking consists of key stakeholders involved in the legal aid policy in Rwanda, including: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) leading in providing legal aid to vulnerable groups, the Ministry of Justice, responsible for the NLAP, the Rwanda Bar Association, governing body of advocates providing legal aid, the Judiciary, tasked with dispensing justice equitably and with integrity.

The benchmarking was conducted with aims to achieve the following outcomes: 1) Increased knowledge of innovative and sustainable practices in access to justice and legal aid, 2) Practical insights and best practices in implementing a progressive legal aid system, 3) Building new relationships and alliances for future learning and solidarity in socio-economic advocacy and legal aid 4) Improved collaboration between the Government and Civil Society Organizations and Mutual learning of explicit ideas and tacit knowledge embedded in practice.

The benchmarking visit to Kenya presents an opportunity for Rwanda to learn from the legal aid and access to justice practices in Kenya. By sharing experiences and engaging with

relevant institutions, the delegation gathered valuable insights and best practices to enhance the implementation of a progressive legal aid system in Rwanda. The visit fostered collaboration, mutual learning, and the development of innovative and sustainable approaches to improve access to justice for all Rwandans.

1.4.8. Training of professional court bailiffs on use of IECMS

In 2022, The Legal Aid Forum, conducted a training on the use of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) for 70 professional court bailiffs in Rwanda. The training aimed to enhance the participants' capacity to effectively utilize IECMS in executing court judgments and improve access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Through this training, the Legal Aid Forum and the Professional Bailiffs Association aimed to improve access to justice for vulnerable communities and promote the rule of law. The training outcomes will contribute to the overall objectives of the Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera (DKU) Activity, supported by USAID/Rwanda, in enhancing the rule of law and increasing access to justice for marginalized groups in Rwanda.

The training focused on achieving the following objectives:

1. Increase participants' familiarity with IECMS features and functionalities.
2. Enhance participants' efficiency in executing court decisions using IECMS.
3. Reduce errors made while utilizing IECMS and mitigate related consequences.
4. Training Structure and Participants:

The training was conducted in Kigali for bailiffs working from Kigali city and the eastern province and in the North for those working in Northern Province districts. Each training session spanned three days and covered various aspects of IECMS relevant to the work of court bailiffs. The content included:

1. Overview of IECMS: Participants were introduced to the purpose, features, and functionalities of IECMS, emphasizing its significance in executing court judgments effectively.
2. Navigation and Use of IECMS: Participants received hands-on training on how to navigate the IECMS interface, access case files, update case statuses, and record execution details.
3. Execution of Court Judgments: The training focused on the specific module related to the execution of court judgments, which was deemed important by the participants. They were guided on how to use IECMS to initiate and manage the execution process, ensuring compliance with the recently amended laws.
4. Troubleshooting and Error Prevention: Participants were equipped with troubleshooting techniques to address common issues encountered while using IECMS. Emphasis was placed on error prevention to reduce mistakes and the resulting consequences.

5. Practical Exercises: The training included practical exercises to reinforce the participants' understanding of the training content and provide an opportunity for hands-on practice.

1.4.9. Provision of investigative training program for journalists in Rwanda

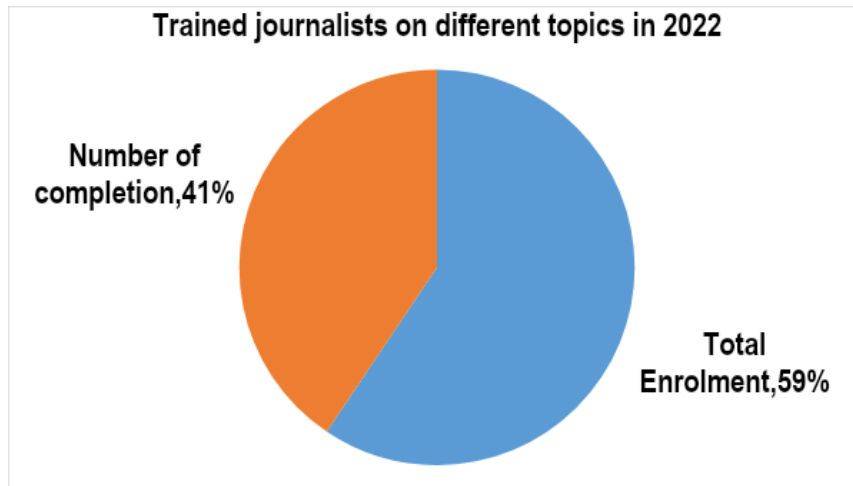
Since September 2022, the Legal Aid Forum and the U.S. Embassy in Rwanda embarked on a journey to implement a program aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Rwandan media to deliver high quality investigative journalism. This program is jointly implemented with Thomson Foundation, with the objectives to: (i) Train journalists to harness data and use innovative, cost-effective storytelling techniques to reach new and engage existing audiences, (ii) Build the capacity of journalists to deliver high quality investigative journalism, (iii) Develop journalists' understanding of media laws and offer legal support to investigative journalists and (iv) Nurture collaborations among investigative journalists in Rwanda.

This program was designed to create a blended learning experience for selected journalists in Rwanda, teaching investigative journalism skills and providing practical and collaborative opportunities for them to put their newly acquired skills into practice.

To achieve this, the program has five self-paced e-courses for interested Rwandan journalists, on various topics including; effective Exercise of Freedom of Information, guide to Media Laws in Rwanda, Journalist's Toolkit, etc. The courses were developed by Thomson Foundation and translated to Kinyarwanda to promote smooth learning.

These courses increased awareness about key journalism principles to promote ethical and independent journalism in Rwanda.

Throughout the courses, in each section, learners were presented with a practical exercise based on the concepts discussed in the course. They were evaluated and graded after responding to the questions within the sections. Only those with a minimum 60% score were issued certificates of completion.



In total 445 journalists enrolled to the e-courses and 304 completed them and were presented with Certificates of completion.

1.4.10. Training on human trafficking and modern slavery

In November 2022, The Legal Aid Forum in partnership with Free the Slaves, an international organisation working in the field of combatting human trafficking worldwide, organised a three day training to 40 participants on human trafficking and modern slavery themed "Building sustained community resistance and resilience to human trafficking and modern slavery" with the aim to enhance the capacity of legal aid providers to address modern slavery and human trafficking in Rwanda. The training was delivered using the Community Liberation toolkit.



Group photo taken at the beginning of the training, on November 16, 2022.

2. COMMUNITY LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

Since its establishment, LAF works to empower vulnerable and indigent individuals to use both formal and informal justice mechanisms to claim and assert their rights. Our legal empowerment efforts focus on equipping people with the knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary to access the benefits and rights they are entitled to under the law. We also strive to improve access to justice in communities by providing high-quality legal aid for vulnerable groups.

Our legal empowerment approaches include a range of strategies, such as community-based paralegals, Legal Aid Week, ICT, Mobile Legal Aid Clinics, Media, Université Legal Aid Clinics, Posters, and more. By implementing these approaches, we are working to strengthen the capacity of the people of Rwanda to use legal mechanisms to pursue transformative improvements to laws and systems.

The Legal Aid Forum is proud to play a role in promoting legal empowerment in Rwanda and working towards a more just society for all.

2.1. Legal education/ awareness

LAF is dedicated to enhancing legal awareness through impactful programs aimed at educating individuals about their legal rights, responsibilities, and the array of available legal services. By empowering people to make informed decisions regarding legal matters, we strive to foster a society where the rule of law and equal access to justice prevail.

Legal awareness plays a pivotal role in promoting the rule of law and ensuring equitable access to justice. When individuals possess a comprehensive understanding of their legal rights and know how to avail themselves of legal services, they are more likely to seek justice when the need arises. This crucial aspect is fundamental to building a society that is fair and just for all.

Moreover, legal awareness initiatives contribute to the prevention of legal issues from arising in the first place. By promoting compliance with the law, individuals are equipped with the knowledge necessary to navigate their legal obligations successfully. Understanding the laws governing their actions reduces the likelihood of legal disputes and conflicts, ultimately leading to a more harmonious society.

Our commitment to spreading legal awareness has made a significant impact, reaching over 2,741,004 individuals thus far. This achievement includes successfully conducting awareness sessions with the help of our community paralegals, through which we reached and educated 16,063 people.



2.1.1. LAF community-based paralegal conducting awareness session in Gatsibo District

In 2022, LAF conducted a number of legal education/awareness activities in communities, including refugee camps, educating 73,000 people on various rights, legal provisions, procedures and key laws.



In addition to people reached through community awareness campaigns, LAF also reached over a million Rwandan through its ICT platform (845). The platform hosts pre-recorded legal content in the local language, easily accessible through simple mobile phone technology.

The content was accessed in audio format (IVR¹) by 2,579,958 people and 71,983 people accessed it via text format (USSD²).

¹ IVR is an Interactive Voice Response mostly used for Call Centers. It is a technology that allows humans to interact with a computer-operated phone system through the use of voice and DTMF tones input via a keypad

² USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) is a Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication technology that is used to send text between a mobile phone and an application program in the network. Applications may include prepaid roaming or mobile chatting.



Accessibility of Legal content on ICT Platform in 2022

IVR both on 1022 and 845

USSD on 845



2.2. Legal assistance and representation

2.2.1. Legal assistance at the pre-trial phase

The Pre-Trial phase of a criminal case commences when an individual is under investigation by law enforcement or prosecutors. It is a critical stage where legal assistance is necessary to ensure that the suspect's rights are not infringed upon and to bolster their defense. The

provision of legal aid at this stage by organizations such as LAF is essential to guarantee access to fair justice. LAF provides legal aid to individuals from the moment they are suspected, arrested, or detained and throughout the period leading up to their first appearance before a judge to determine whether they will be held in detention or released pending trial.

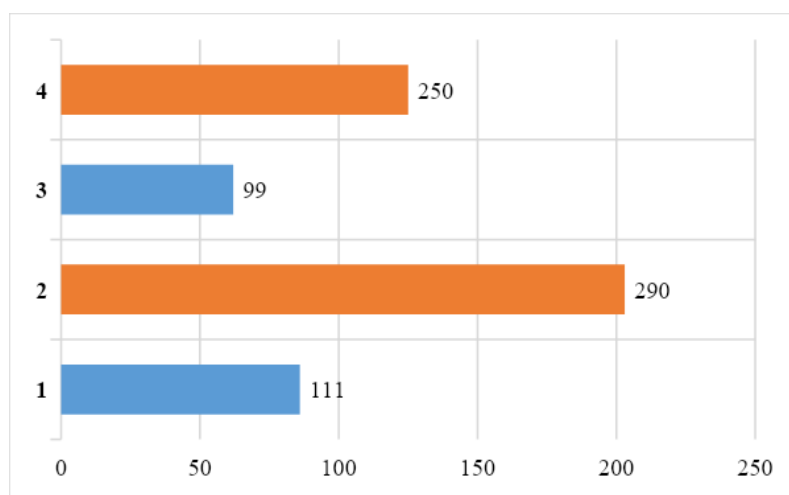
In 2022, LAF supported the release of 121 people individuals during the Pre-Trial phase from various institutions, including the Rwanda Investigation Bureau, Rwanda National Police, rehabilitation centers, prosecution, and different courts. This achievement underscores the importance of legal aid in the criminal justice system and the need to ensure that every individual's rights are protected, irrespective of their circumstances.

Number of released beneficiaries after legal assistance at pre-trial phase		
121	RIB	54
	Police	13
	Rehabilitation center	16
	Prosecution	37
	Immigration	1

2.2.2. Legal representation in courts

The right to legal representation is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003, as revised in 2015. The constitution provides that everyone has the right to due process of law, including the right to be informed of the nature and cause of the charges, as well as the right to defense and legal representation.

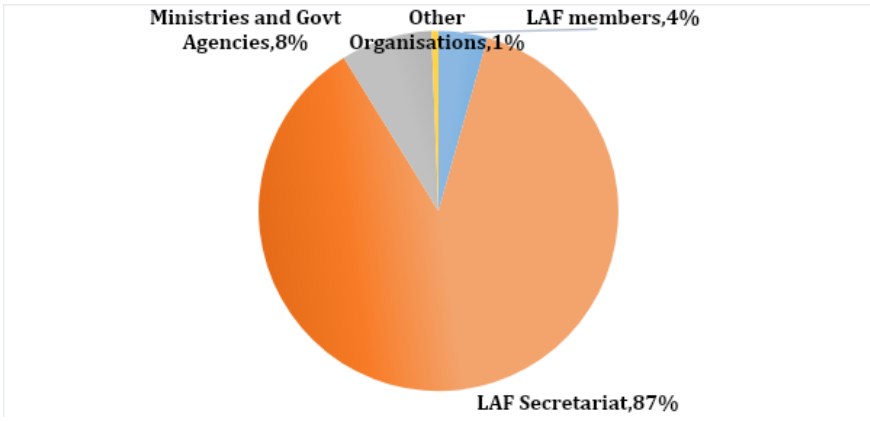
In 2022, LAF provided legal representation to a total of **745** individuals in courts of law. Out of this total, **426** cases were received in 2022 while **319** cases were carried over from previous years but completed in 2022. Among the beneficiaries, **509** were male and **161** were female.



LAF has adopted various approaches to receive requests for legal aid. The majority, 87%, were received directly by LAF's secretariat through walk-ins at their offices, toll-free legal aid helpline (1022), paralegal services, and Legal Aid Week.

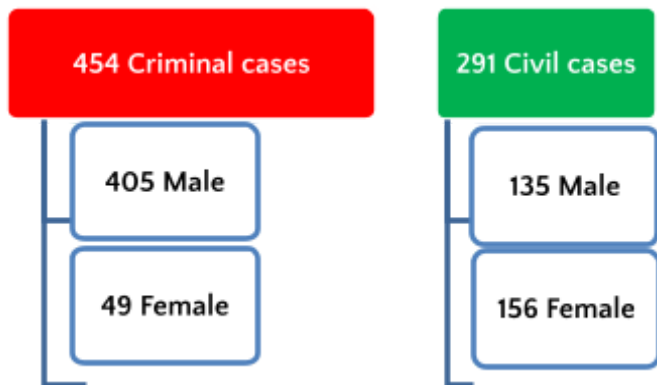
Additionally, 8% of cases were referred to LAF by different government entities and institutions, while 4% were referred by LAF members. The remaining 1% of cases were referred to LAF by other organizations.

This diverse range of referral sources highlights the vital role that LAF plays in providing legal aid to individuals in need.

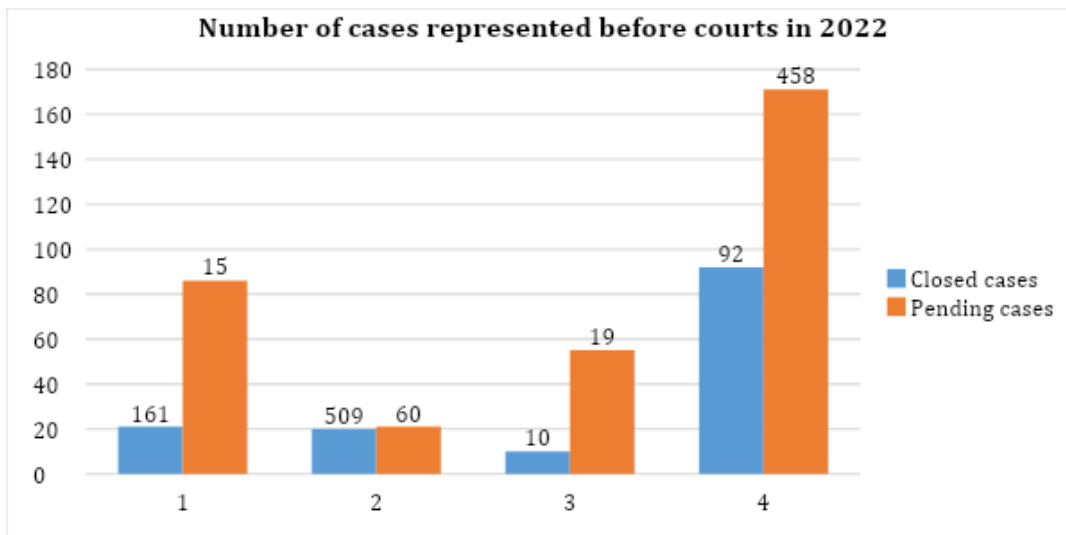


It also demonstrates the trust and confidence that government institutions and other organizations have in LAF's ability to deliver effective legal assistance.

During 2022, among 745 cases represented before courts 454 were criminal cases while 291 were civil cases.



In 2022, LAF Lawyers successfully closed 499 cases. The following chart provides a breakdown of this data:



Impact beyond numbers

Mediation: A restorative justice- Nsengiyumva Benoit



Much like any other service provider uses different strategies to achieve their desired goals, so does the justice sector in Rwanda. Historically, Rwandan communities resolved their matters through mediation, one of the strategies being used to reach justice for all by the justice sector. Thanks to the collaborative efforts from LAF lawyers to mediate both sides, Benoit’s case was not taken to court

Residing in Musambira Sector, Kamonyi District; Benoit NSENGIYUMVA was born in 1971 in the Southern Province and is married to Uwizeyimana Marie Rose. On April 29th, 2021; Benoit and his wife sold Valens BUNYONI their land with UPI number 1/03/02/01/1315 located in Gakoki Village, Gatenga Cell, Gatenga Sector, Kicukiro District, Kigali City. Valens BUNYONI agreed to pay 7,000,000 Rwandan Francs with an advance payment of 3,000,000 Rwandan Francs. The

advance payment was transferred to Benoit NSENGIYUMVA and his wife through a cheque in KCB Bank. The agreements stated that the remaining payment will be paid in installments: 2,000,000 after one week, 1,000,000 after one month, and the final 1,000,000 at the time of transferring the land. Unfortunately, Valens BUNYONI broke the agreement and filed a lawsuit against Benoit

Benoit NSENGIYUMVA sought help from LAF and was given a lawyer to assist him. In a conversation with his lawyers, Benoit said: “*When I heard that BUNYONI has filed a case*

against me and my wife I was shocked. I had been waiting for his payments so that we can transfer the land titles because I needed the money to sustain my family. Man to man, I trusted him that he will be a man of honor and pay as the agreement stated. Filing a case against us that we refused to transfer the land titles is a lie because he never finished paying. There is nowhere written that he has finished paying for the land.”

Benoit NSENGIYUMVA’s lawyer advised him to solve his issues with his buyer amicably without involving court processes given that there are laws governing land processes. At first instance, Benoit NSENGIYUMVA doubted the power of mediation and wanted the case to go to court. His lawyer persisted in explaining to him that mediation can also solve his case as the court would. After much convincing, Benoit NSENGIYUMVA and Valens BUNYONI started conversations with help from the lawyer and they came to an understanding. Valens BUNYONI promised to pay Benoit the outstanding balance of 4 million + 1 million for the delay in payment of the aforementioned amount, and Benoit would subsequently help him transfer land.

A key feature of the justice sector of the Rwandan government, mediation helped Benoit NSENGIYUMVA and Valens BUNYONI solve their matter amicably. With locally elected mediators presiding over the forum of original jurisdiction for the majority of all civil matters, court-based mediation is thought to be the next key step as results from local mediation processes are positive and promising.

DNA testing

Over the course its work, LAF has realized that several vulnerable women and girls are unable to afford to pay for scientific evidence such as DNA services that are key to access to justice, especially in search for paternity cases. In order to bridge this gap, LAF entered into partnership with the Rwanda Forensic Laboratory (RFL) to provide DNA services to LAF beneficiaries in need.

In total, **26 cases** benefited from DNA testing services this year. However, sometimes, beneficiaries, particularly men, have been unwilling to collect DNA test results. To address this, LAF tries to collect the results on behalf of the client and takes them to respective courts that ordered the tests so that justice is not delayed.

When Community Role Models Turn into Predators: The Story of Josepha

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed women and girls to many forms of abuse and exacerbated gender-based violence, particularly in rural areas, largely because children were out of school during lockdowns.

During one of the lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19, Bahati, a high school student, was out of school in 2021. Her parents asked her teacher to tutor their daughter from home so that she stays on top of her schoolwork. Unfortunately, during the sessions the

teacher defiled Bahati. The defilement resulted in a pregnancy. When Bahati informed the teacher, he denied having ever slept with her and her parents insisted that she had brought shame to their family. The community shunned Bahati because they considered the teacher to be a community role model who couldn't possibly do the things Bahati was accusing him of.

Even after Bahati had given birth, the teacher denied responsibility of any kind, and she was forced to raise the child on her own. One day, Bahati approached a LAF community-based paralegal in her sector and reported the misfortune and injustice that had befallen her. Upon hearing her story, the paralegal referred the case to LAF for intervention. LAF assigned a lawyer to file a case on Bahati's half. During the hearing, the court ruled that a DNA test should be conducted to determine the father of Bahati's child. However, Bahati could not afford to pay for a DNA test. With DKU's support, LAF paid for the test on her behalf.

On 30/9/2022 the court made the decision in the case after the DNA results revealed that Bahati's child was indeed her teacher's and the court ordered him to register their daughter in the civil registrar and to help Bahati raise the child by paying alimony.

"I am now back in school, isn't that amazing? When the court ordered the father of my child to help me raise her, I felt like a load of worries was lifted from my shoulders. I always wondered how I would raise a child alone considering our family's financial struggles. But now, with financial support from the father, I leave my baby with my mother during the day while I'm at school. She is a healthy baby and growing so fast thanks to the support LAF offered me" Said Bahati

2.2.3. Legal advice

Legal advice is guidance or oral counsel offered by a professional lawyer regarding the substance or procedure of the law in relation to a particular factual situation. The provision of legal advice often involves analyzing a set of facts and advising a person to take a specific course of action based on the applicable law. Legal advice involves negotiations or the settlement of disputes amicably. LAF has set up various mechanisms through which it provides legal advice to beneficiaries, mainly the following.

2.2.3.1. Legal aid through call center and legal aid line

Legal advice is a vital service that provides individuals with professional guidance and counsel from a lawyer to help individuals navigate the complex legal system and protect their rights. Legal advice typically involves mediation, orientation, and referral.

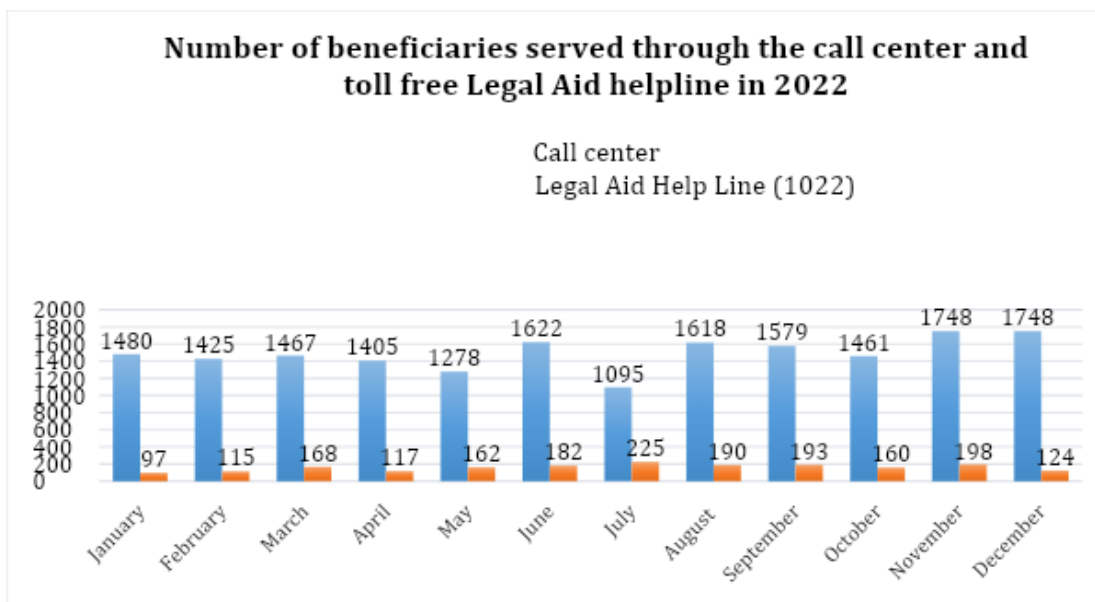
LAF has established various mechanisms to provide legal advice to its beneficiaries. One of the most effective methods is through its call center, which has been in operation since 2018. LAF also a toll-free legal aid helpline (1022) that allows beneficiaries to contact lawyers directly for assistance and to follow up on their cases.



LAF Legal Officers in the Call Center assisting legal aid seekers

In 2022, LAF provided legal advice to 19,857 people. The call center assisted 90.28% of these individuals, while 9.72% were helped through the toll-free legal aid helpline.

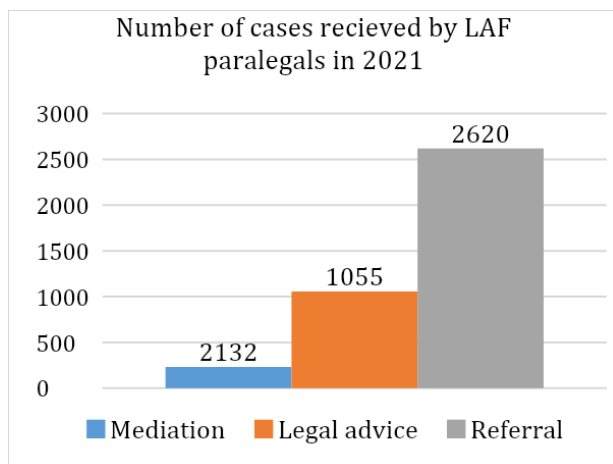
The following chart disaggregates figures by month:



2.2.3.2. Legal advice by community-based paralegals

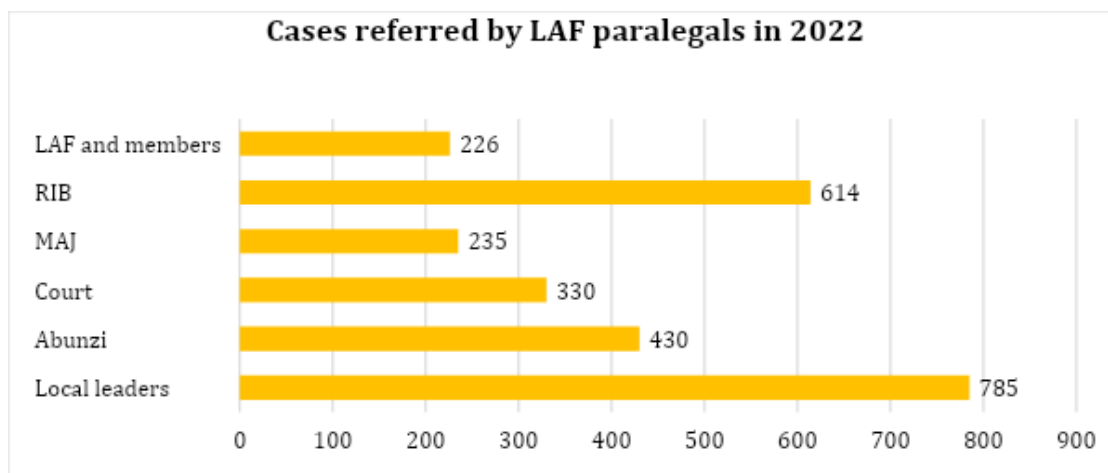
LAF recognizes the importance of providing accessible and effective legal services to communities in need. To bridge the gap between the formal justice system and the communities it serves, LAF works with community-based paralegals who are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be grassroots advocates.

LAF invests in building the capacities of paralegals and empowering them to seek practical solutions to legal issues in their communities. As community members, paralegals receive various inquiries from their neighbors, and they provide legal advice, mediation, and orientation to those in need.



In 2021, LAF's paralegals received a total of 5,807 cases. By the end of the year 34% of them already closed and 66% are ongoing. Out of these cases, 2,132 were successfully mediated, 1,055 received legal advice, and 2,620 beneficiaries were referred to different services

LAF's community-based paralegal program has proven to be an effective way of providing legal services to communities in need. By empowering the grassroots justice defenders with legal knowledge and skills, LAF is promoting access to justice and ensuring that vulnerable populations have the support they need to protect their rights.

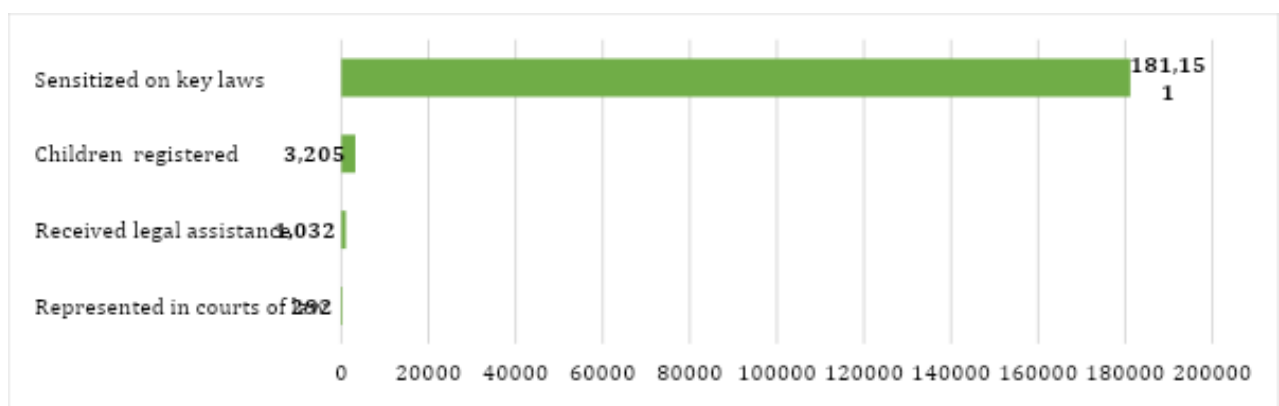


2.2.3.3. Legal Assistance to refugees and Asylum Seekers in Rwanda

Since 2016, the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) has been a leading provider of legal aid services for refugees and asylum seekers in Rwanda. In addition to facilitating civil documentation (birth registration and marriages), vital statistics, and identity management as part of a durable solution, LAF offers a range of free legal services, including legal advice, representation

before courts and administrative authorities, detention monitoring, mediation, legal education, and awareness.

LAF was able to continue this work in 2022 and provided legal aid services to 890 refugees and asylum seekers including 292 individuals who were represented in courts of law. LAF also sensitized 73,000 people from refugee camps and host communities on key laws, including laws related to gender-based violence, and the importance of birth registration. Additionally, 3,214 refugee children were registered, and 300 people facilitated provision of other civil status documents (death certificates, marriage certificates, Child Recognition Record, etc...) and 310 couples from the refugee camps and host communities were facilitated in civil marriage after being sensitized on the importance of legal marriage as shown in the chart below



These achievements reflect LAF's commitment to ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers have access to legal services and protection.

Human Rights Promotion and protection

The Legal Aid Forum places a strong emphasis on human rights protection, actively working to ensure the respect and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms.

LAF's approach is to ensure that the rights-holders are empowered to claim their rights and the same time supporting duty-bearers to meet their responsibilities of respecting, protecting and observing fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Since 2014, LAF has played a proactive role in mobilizing and organizing civil society to engage with the UPR by leading a coalition of organizations under the theme of "catalyzing civil society participation in the UPR process for improved human rights situation in Rwanda".

The coalition's primary objective is to facilitate coordination among interested civil society organizations and enhance their proactive role in strengthening capacities within the UPR framework. The coalition members produce comprehensive monitoring reports that cover both accepted and non-accepted UPR recommendations, along with any new developments on the ground.

3. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Business development and grants

Business development at LAF involves strategies and activities aimed mainly at fundraising, expanding LAF's total reach and impact as well as enhancing its overall sustainability. It also targets to develop and implement effective strategies to secure funding, attract donors, and achieve LAF's mission.

Key considerations for business development in nonprofit organizations include:

1. Fundraising and Donor Cultivation: LAF mainly uses on fundraising efforts to secure financial resources. This involves identifying potential donors, cultivating relationships with them, and developing compelling cases for support. LAF nowadays uses mainly grant applications as fundraising strategies but in the future other strategies such as corporate partnerships, special events, and crowdfunding will be used. This goes hand in hand with project development and proposal writing and submission. In the course of 2022 LAF has developed and submit 4 project proposals as the following table details:

Project Name	Donor	Amount in Frws	Status
Contributing to the Changing the media, legal, Regulatory and policy environment in Rwanda	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	78,270,575	Granted
Galvanizing CSOs participation in UPR processes for improved Human Rights in Rwanda	Embassy of the Netherlands in Rwanda	153,786,000	Granted
Supporting Investigative Journalism in Rwanda	US Embassy in Rwanda	193,555,380	Granted

Project Name	Donor	Amount in Frws	Status
Creating Awareness for Responsible Freedom of Expression in Rwanda (CARFE) DUSHISHOZE MU BWISANZURE BWO GUTANGA IBITEKEREZO	European Union	637,777,140	Granted
TOTAL	637,777,140		

- Grant granting management refers to the process of managing and overseeing sub-grants within a larger grant program main LEGAL AID CIVIL SOCIETY FUND. In this context, a sub-grant a way in which LAF awards to third-party organizations mainly members that have the capacity and expertise to carry out the intended work.

The management of sub-grants involves several key components, including:

- **Sub-grant solicitation:** LAF has established criteria and guidelines for potential sub-grantees to apply for funding. This involves issuing a request for proposals (RFP) or inviting specific organizations to submit applications.
- **Application and selection process:** Sub-grantees submit applications detailing their proposed activities, budgets, and expected outcomes. The LAF selection committee then evaluates these applications based on predetermined criteria.
- **Awarding sub-grants:** Once the evaluation process is complete, LAF selects the most suitable organizations to receive sub-grants. This includes negotiating the terms and conditions of the sub-grant agreements, such as the scope of work, budget, reporting requirements, indicators, targets and timelines.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** LAF monitors the activities of the sub-grantees to ensure they adhere to the agreed-upon terms and achieve the desired outcomes. This may involve regular progress reports, site visits, financial audits, or other monitoring mechanisms to track the effective use of funds and the project's overall progress.
- **Technical assistance and capacity building:** LAF regularly provides technical support and capacity-building opportunities to sub-grantees to strengthen their implementation capabilities.
- **Financial management:** LAF oversees the financial aspects of the sub-grants, including reviewing budget proposals, approving expenditures, ensuring compliance

with financial regulations, and processing payments as well as conducting audit sessions to sub grantees.

- **Evaluation and impact assessment:** Once the sub-granting process is completed, LAF evaluates the effectiveness and impact of the projects undertaken by the sub-grantees. This assessment helps inform future grant-making decisions and program improvements.

Overall, insub-granting management LAF has set process that involves the selection, monitoring, support, and evaluation of sub-grantees to ensure the successful implementation of projects. The following table details sub granted projects in 2022.

Institution	Name of project	Total amount sub- granted in 2022 in Frws	Status
HAGURUKA NGO	USAID Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera	133,428,213	Ongoing
	Legal Pro Bono Rwanda	30,674,315	Ongoing
LOH	USAID Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera	34,808,906	Ongoing
	Prison Legal Education and Aid	29,690,000	Completed in 2022
RBA	USAID Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera	44,051,799	Ongoing
DiDe	USAID Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera	38,388,813	Ongoing
ARDHO	Legal Pro Bono Rwanda	30,674,315	Ongoing

Institution	Name of project	Total amount sub- granted in 2022 in Frws	Status
Human Rights First Rwanda	Legal Pro Bono Rwanda	30,674,315	Ongoing
GLIDH	Galvanizing CSOs participation in UPR processes for improved Human Rights in Rwanda	454,022,500	Ongoing
Thomson Foundation	Supporting Investigative Journalism in Rwanda	61,979,995	Ongoing
AJEPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA	Promoting Access to Legal Aid for Youth Project	32,447,875	Completed in 2022
TRANSPARENCE INTERNATIONAL RWANDA	Policy Research on the implementation of alternatives to imprisonment in Rwanda.	39,848,340	Completed in 2022
TOTAL	960,689,386		

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Effective communication is crucial for the successful management of any organization. In 2022, LAF continued its strategic and proactive approach to media engagement in order to promote its activities and share information. This included the preparation of events, media coverage in local newspapers, engagements on radio and TV talk shows, speaking

engagements and participation in national, regional, and international conferences, and the use of social media platforms. Through this engagement, LAF was able to do advocacy on several legal issues as well as make its pro bono legal services known to the Rwandan population.

4.1. Events

In 2022 LAF approached strategic communications and public relations using events as a tool to engage our partners from the justice sector, local government, media, law students, and the public at large. Organizing events on diverse topics enabled us to invite stakeholders into our work and allow them to actively contribute their ideas. Due to our success in organizing insightful events that provoke meaningful conversations, we were approached by organizations from abroad to co-host events on justice issues.

Such events include;

4.1.1. The Freedom from Slavery Africa Regional Forum

The Freedom from Slavery Africa Forum which is Africa’s annual anti-slavery thought leadership event. Alongside a US-based organization Free The Slaves, we hosted the Forum which brings together thought leaders in the anti-trafficking movement from across the world to discuss external factors that allow and exacerbate modern slavery and how they can be combatted.



LAF ED and Mary the senior Legal Empowerment Officer on a panel

4.1.2. Preparatory meeting of the 2023 Regional Forum of the East Africa Legal Aid Network

In October 2022 we also hosted a preparatory meeting of the 2023 Regional Forum of the East Africa Legal Aid Network



LAF ED giving a speech during the preparatory meeting of the 2023 Regional Forum of the East Africa Legal Aid Network

4.2. Local Media

At most events, LAF invites popular local media houses to cover the events and inform the public about what we are achieving. Partnership with media houses has increased LAF's visibility among our beneficiaries allowing us to expand our services country-wide. Besides making our work popular with the Rwandan audience, our established rapport with local media has made LAF the go-to organization for legal aid information by local and international journalists. Allowing us to advocate for vulnerable people in Rwanda.

Our partner media houses include; Rwanda Broadcasting Agency, The NewTimes Rwanda, IGIHE, Isango Star, Flash Radio, and TV.

On various occasions, LAF was requested by media houses to shed light on several key laws, and citizens' rights, and to discuss different aspects of the status of legal aid in Rwanda. [Read media coverage of LAF in 2022 here](#)

4.2.1. Understanding Plea Bargaining- Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA)



Jean Paul Ibambe our senior Capacity Building manager explained to the public about the Pleabargaining procedure after it was rolled out by the Judiciary of Rwanda in October 2022.

4.2.2. Establishing Human Right Defenders Law - Flash FM Radio

Our Senior Capacity Building Manager Jean-Paul Ibambe was invited to Flash FM Radio to talk about the need for Rwanda to establish a Human Rights Defenders law.



4.2.3. Symposium on SDG16



On a live talk show that was aired on Radio Isano, Radio Ishingiro, BTN TV, and Insango Star, LAF engaged stakeholders and the public in a symposium to discuss how to promote effective implementation of access to information laws and freedom of speech amidst social media trends.

4.2.4. Broadening access to justice for all - Isango star TV



Louise Mukeshimana a senior legal attorney at LAF speaking on broadening access to justice for all through the USAID Dufatanye Kubaka Ubutabera project.

4.3. Social media

Social media has played a pivotal role in advancing our efforts in the field of legal aid. Throughout 2022, we harnessed the power of social media platforms to not only educate and inform but also to engage with our valued donors and the general public. This multifaceted approach allowed us to effectively promote our programs and initiatives, while actively involving the community in our events. By leveraging the reach and accessibility of social media, we successfully disseminated crucial information, provided timely updates, and created a sense of inclusivity, fostering a strong connection with our audience.

4.3.1. Education campaign

Throughout the 16 days of activism, we undertook a focused campaign aimed at raising awareness about the Gender-Based Violence law and breaking it down into easily understandable terms. Our belief is that by making the law accessible to individuals, they are empowered with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively advocate for their rights.

[The campaign analytics are here.](#)

KNOW GBV RELATED OFFENCES NOV 25 - DEC 10
16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

RAPE

Any person who is convicted of rape shall be liable to imprisonment of 10 to 15 years and a fine of RWF 1-2 Million

The penalty is life imprisonment when 1. The rape was committed by more than one person, 2. has resulted in the death of the victim, 3. was committed on a relative up to the second level, and 4. was committed with the intention to infect the victim with an incurable illness

CHILD DEFILEMENT

Any person who commits any of the sex-related acts on a child shall be liable to imprisonment of 20-25 years

If child defilement is committed on a child under fourteen (14) years, the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances

If child defilement is followed by cohabitation as husband and wife, the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances

KNOW GBV RELATED OFFENCES NOV 25 - DEC 10
16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is repeated remarks or behavior of sexual overtones towards a person that either undermines or violates his/her dignity because of their degrading or humiliating character which creates against him/her an intimidating, hostile or unpleasant situation. The penalty is imprisonment for 6 months -1 year and a fine of RFW 100-200 thousand

In case the offender is an employer or any other person who uses his/her responsibility to practice acts of sexual harassment on a subordinate through instructions, threats, or intimidation with the intention to achieve sexual pleasure, he/she is liable to imprisonment for 1-2 years and a fine of RWF 200-300 thousand

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST A SPOUSE

Any person who commits physical and sexual violence against his/ her spouse commits an offense. The penalty is imprisonment for 3- 5 years

4.3.2. Promote our programs

Social media platforms have played a crucial role in promoting our programs. An example of this impact can be seen through our Investigative Journalism Program. By leveraging the power of social media, we successfully advertised the program, generating significant attention and fostering active engagement from the audience. As a result, we received an overwhelming response of 445 applicants.

The Legal Aid Forum
Working Together For Equitable Access to Justice

Thomson Foundation

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM PROGRAM

In September 2022, The Legal Aid Forum and Thomson Foundation supported by the US Embassy in Rwanda Launched a project aimed at providing legal aid to Rwandan journalists and strengthening their capacity to deliver high-quality investigative stories.

445
JOURNALISTS ENROLLED

When we put out a call for applications to a training program on investigative journalism, 445 journalists enrolled to the e-courses developed by Thompson Foundation.

E-courses covered:

- Effective Exercise of Freedom of Information
- Guide to Media Laws in Rwanda
- Are you a Journalist? Building a trusted brand
- The Journalist's Toolkit
- Investigative Journalism in Rwanda

304
JOURNALISTS COMPLETED THE 5 E-COURSES

After completing the 5 E-courses, 61 journalists applied to take part in the in-person capacity-building sessions on investigative journalism.

61
APPLICATIONS FOR IN-PERSON TRAINING

In total, 15 applicants were successfully selected for the in-person training sessions from award-winning investigative journalists and will benefit from legal support from LAF Lawyers. They also stand a chance to win a 5M FRW grant to produce an investigative story.

15
SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES

Lastly, we have utilized social media as a powerful tool to promote our legal aid helpline 1022, with the ultimate goal of ensuring accessibility to legal assistance for all Rwandans, regardless of their location, financial constraints, or physical disabilities that may prevent them from physically visiting our offices.

The Legal Aid Forum
Working Together For Equitable Access to Justice

RECEIVE LEGAL ADVICE

LISTEN TO LEGAL CONTENT

CALL OUR TOLL FREE LEGAL AID HELPLINE
1022

From Monday to Thursday from 8 Am to 5 Pm
On Friday: From 8:00 am to 3pm

4.4. Speaking Engagements

Our work in advancing access to justice and research-based advocacy has made LAF Staff thought leaders in the Justice sector in Rwanda. In 2022 we were invited to speak at various events, a few included below.

On Nov 9th, 2022 our ED moderated a panel discussion on "Cross Border Enforcement of Human Rights" during the 19th Annual East African Judges and Magistrate's Association (EAMJA) conference, hosted by The Judiciary of Rwanda. The discussion was on the protection of Migrants & family members' Rights.



LAF ED moderating a panel during the 19th Annual East African Judges and Magistrate's Association

On September 16th, our ED delivered a keynote address at the HiiL Innovation Hub East Africa's 2022 Justice Innovation Circle event which brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss opportunities in justice innovation.



LAF ED delivering keynote address at HiiL Innovation Hub East Africa's 2022 Justice Innovation Circle event

On August 30th the ED delivered a keynote address during Transparency International's event to present findings of the "Policy Research on the Implementation of Alternatives to

Imprisonment in Rwanda" which aims to promote the effective implementation of alternatives to imprisonment.



ED delivering a keynote address during Transparency International's event

4.5. Knowledge sharing

Each year, organizations across Africa visit our offices to learn from us and Rwanda in terms of access to justice. In 2022 we were happy to host delegations from Malawi, Tanzania, Burundi, and Sao Tomé-et-Principe who came to learn from us.

Tanzania- TANLAP: Executive Director of Tanzania Network of Legal aid Providers (TANLAP) Ms. Christina Ruhinda visited our office to learn how LAF is transforming legal aid provision through ICT.



ED of TANLAP (3rd from the left) visiting LAF offices

Malawi- We received a delegation from the Paralegal Advisory Service Institute of Malawi, led by the National Director Mr. Clifford Msiska to learn about the promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution and leveraging ICT to expand access to justice in rural communities.



The delegation from the Paralegal Advisory Service Institute of Malawi visiting LAF offices

Sao Tomé-et-Príncipe: A delegation from São Tomé-et-Príncipe led by the Hon. Minister of Justice Cílcio Bandeira. The delegation joined us to learn about the digitalization of legal services to strengthen access to justice for marginalized communities.



The delegation from São Tomé-et-Príncipe visiting LAF offices

Burundi: We received a delegation from the Burundian justice sector who were here to learn about the digitalization of legal services and the role of community-based paralegals in advancing access to justice for vulnerable groups.



The delegation from the Burundian justice sector visiting LAF offices

UNHRC : We also received the senior Human Rights Advisor Komi G nondoli from UN Human Rights Commission in Rwanda and his team to discuss human rights promotion and protection in Rwanda, capacity building for CSOs on human rights based-approaches, and UPR.



Mr. Mohy Omer, Africa Senior Advisor, and Localisation Lead at USAID visited us in September 2022 to discuss methods of engaging with, empowering, and promoting the work of local civil society organizations in the Justice sector.



On Nov 2022 our ED and our Senior Legal Counsel were in Vienna attending the high-level conference "Safety of Journalists: Protecting Media to Protect Democracy" on the 10th Anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the safety of journalists.



Our ED was also in Kenya attending a preparatory meeting of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) which will take place in New York City in July 2023. The meeting brought together members of the Africa Centre on Access to Justice to plan an engagement at the 2023 HLPF focusing on Financing Community Justice on the African Continent.



Awards

Our ED was presented an award by KIAC Rwanda Secretary General for LAF's support during the celebration of 10 years anniversary of KIAC Rwanda in hopes to strengthen the collaboration of KIAC and LAF in promoting the use of Alternative Dispute Resolutions in resolving conflicts in light of the ADR policy adopted by the cabinet in 2022.



5. FINANCIAL REPORT

No	Items	Consolidated budget	Consolidated expenses	Balance	% of variance
1	Office costs	81,835,016	81,835,016	-	100%
2	Personnel	748,779,187	748,779,187	-	100%
	Sub-Total running cost	830,614,203	830,614,203	-	100%
3	Activities:			-	
3.1	Research and Advocacy	152,010,078	132,847,018	19,163,060	87%
3.2	Capacity development	180,551,496	180,551,496	-	100%
3.3	Legal assistance costs:				
3.3.1	Legal Officers costs	99,450,100	99,450,087	13	100%
3.3.2	Legal docs and baillif	7,100,000	6,721,392	378,608	95%
3.3.3	Transportation fees for detainees	2,900,000	2,997,500	97,500	103%
3.3.4	Awareness	4,204,000	4,204,000	-	100%
3.3.5	Incentives for casual workers	5,000,000	4,965,000	35,000	99%
3.3.6	Call Center set Up	103,564,020	103,564,020	-	100%
3.3.7	Grants making	313,310,892	313,310,892	-	100%
3.3.8	Human right promotion and protection	19,594,000	19,591,457	2,543	100%
3.3.9	Legal Aid & Legal Aid Empowerment	486,372,915	194,624,482	291,748,433	40%
	Sub-Total activities	1,374,057,501	1,062,827,344	311,230,157	77%
	Total	2,204,671,704	1,893,441,547	311,230,157	86%

PART 2: PERFORMANCE OF LAF MEMBERS

1. The legal aid services provided by LAF members

1.1. Public legal education

Public legal education is the empowerment of individuals in matters of law. Public legal education helps to promote awareness of legal culture, participation in law-making and the rule of law, and to increase public awareness and skills in relation to law and justice.

This year, LAF members used this measure to educate people about their rights and basic laws and regulations, and carried out various activities to promote legal awareness among the people. This public legal education focused on civil, commercial, labor and administrative procedure law, labor law and its ministerial decrees, personal and family law, land law and its ministerial decrees, marriage law, gift and inheritance law, and legal education of LGBTQI persons about their rights, education of persons with disabilities about their rights, social justice education, women's and children's rights, expropriation laws, laws to prevent and punish gender-based violence, criminal and procedural laws, and human rights legislation and key policies.



Most of these involved rights education through community meetings, assemblies, Umuganda program, ICT platforms, radio and television program, plays, social media, leaflets, posters with pictures and cartoons, public meetings, workshops and conferences, which reached an estimated

1,314,251 people.

1.2. Legal representation

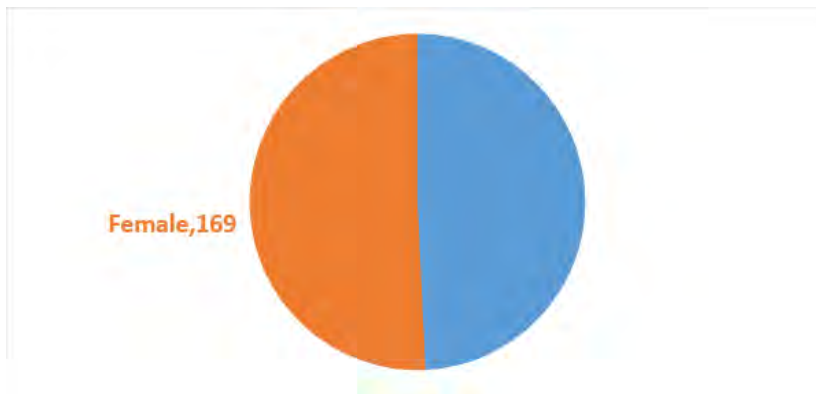
The 2003 Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, revised in 2015, provides that everyone has the right to due process of law, which includes the right to be informed of the nature and cause of the charges and the right to defense and legal assistance. The right to legal assistance is of such fundamental importance that all other rights relevant to the due process of law can be worthless if this right is not respected.

Legal representation is the process by which lawyers represent their clients in court and the work that lawyers do during the process. This lesson is about legal representation and the rights of clients.

LAF members advocate for better access to justice, especially for destitute people, and help vulnerable people exercise this constitutional right by providing them with high-quality, free legal representation and support in court.

As shown in the chart below, LAF members assisted and represented 333 cases in court this year, including 164 Male and 169 Female.

Figure 1: Number of people represented before court of law

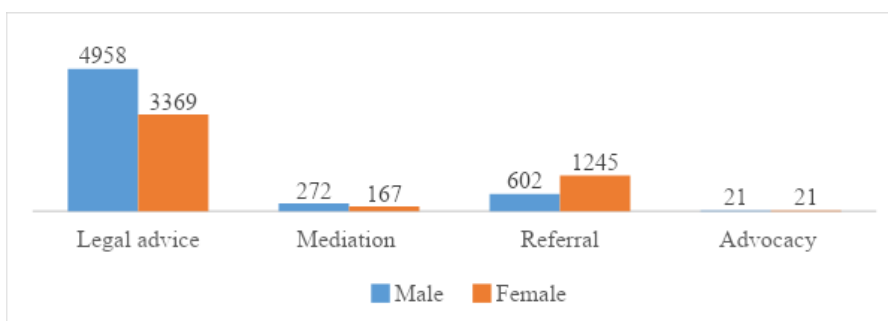


1.3. Legal advice, Mediation and referral

Legal advice is professional legal advice or a formal opinion on the content or procedure of the law in relation to a specific matter. Legal advice frequently entails analyzing a set of facts and advising a client to take a specific course of action based on the applicable law.

LAF members have established a number of mechanisms this year to provide legal advice to beneficiaries. The most important are legal advice, mediation, legal assistance and referral. Legal advice and other legal aid services were provided to 10,660 people, including 5,853 Male and 4,807 Female.

Figure 2: Number of people received Legal advice, Mediation referral and advocacy



1.4. Facilitation of DNA tests

DNA tests are genetic and medical tests used to detect mutations in genes, chromosomes, or proteins. DNA is frequently used in legal proceedings, such as paternity searches, child support payments, birth certificates, parentage clarification, and even as proof of paternity in inheritance cases.

This year, the LAF member has a total of 5 beneficiaries in need of denial of DNA testing costs and 100% of them are related to paternity search.

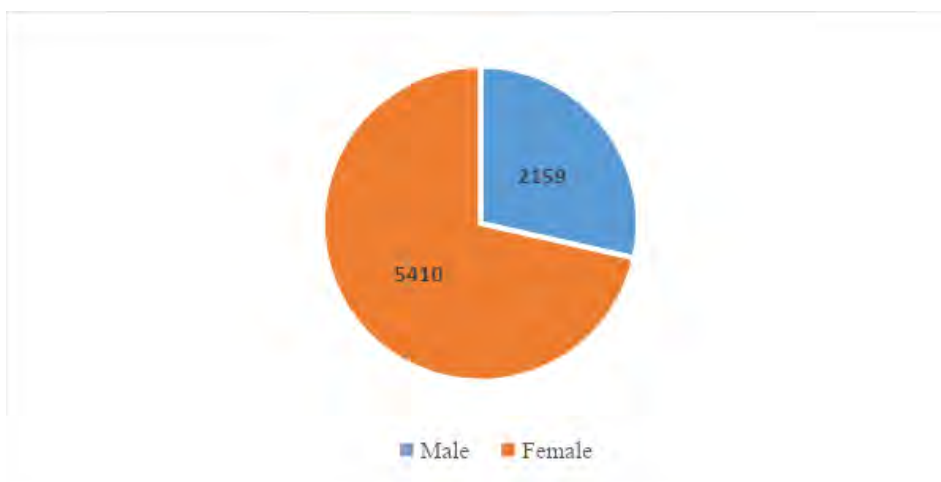
1.5. Capacity building conducted by LAF members

Building capacity is an evidence-based process that aims to increase the capabilities of people, organizations, and systems so they can continue to fulfill their primary missions while also evolving and getting better.

In order to guarantee that providers of legal aid are able to provide high-quality legal assistance, LAF members used capacity development as a routine process to create, build, and strengthen capacity of staff, members, and other justice sector actors over time.

LAF members created manuals and training modules as living knowledge resources this year, as well as capacity-building workshops on key laws for a variety of groups, including justice actors, organization staff, teenage mothers, sexual violence clubs, anti-GBV champions, and other target groups served by the organizations. 7569 people benefited from these trainings, including 2159 men and 5410 women.

Figure 3: Number of people attended Capacity building conducted by LAF members



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