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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEGAL AID FORUM

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Conference to Present the Findings of ICT4 project

On March 2, 2017, the Legal Aid Forum organised a conference during which a Presentation of the research findings on “Citizen feedback on Justice services in Rwanda through ICT platforms” was made at Kigali Marriot Hotel.



Participants to the Conference

The Conference was attended by 110 including Government Institutions representatives including the ministry of justice, the judiciary, National Public Prosecution Authority, Rwanda National Police, Rwanda Correctional Services, the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), National Children’s Commission, Rwanda Bar Association and representatives of Civil Society Organisations.

This conference was opened by H.E. Frédérique de Man, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Rwanda.

In her remarks, the Ambassador highlighted that the findings go beyond figures. “This inspires us all with regard to improving the justice service. Such research reports are helpful for all of us”. She said.



H.E. Frédérique de Man opening the conference

The research is related to the project “Citizen Monitoring of the Justice Sector in Rwanda” that aimed to demonstrate that by empowering citizens to provide real-time feedback on the quality of justice services through an innovative ICT platform; civil society will be more effective in holding justice sector duty bearers accountable. (... see p2)

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It aimed also to build the capacity of civil society to shape the justice sector policy and will facilitate increased citizen voice in the development and reform of justice sector policies and practices.

The research aimed to assess the current framework of interaction between justice institutions and citizens, and suggest possible actions for improvement.

After thorough analysis of the gathered information, a set of interesting findings has now been identified and relevant useful recommendations formulated to improve access to justice for indigent and vulnerable people in Rwanda.



Participants to the Conference following a presentation

In his remarks, the representative of MINIJUST, Mr. Anastase Nabahire, said that “Whatever we do is geared to develop the country. I had a chance to look at the findings of this research before today and I know that this work is going to be of important use with regard to improving justice service delivery. I call upon the development partners to held LAF and other civil society organizations in doing such research to learn about what citizens think and how they appreciate our work” he said. After, the presentation of the findings, Participants to the Conference gave their inputs, comments and recommendations

Roundtable to validate the recommendations on ICT4 project

On 17 March 2017, the Legal Aid Forum organised a Round-table discussion to review recommendations formulated in “Citizen Feedback on Legal and justice Services in Rwanda through ICT Platforms” report at Marriot Hotel Kigali. The roundtable was attended by 34 participants.



The President and the Executive Director of LAF opening the roundtable

In his remarks, the president of the LAF thanked all the participant to have attended the roundtable, he reminded participants that they met several times discussing about the ICT4J Survey and thanked them for their support and contribution. He specifically thanked the 10 implementing LAF members of the project such as ADEPE, ARDHO, AJIPRODHO, COPORWA, HAGURUKA, HRFRA, LOH, LIPRODHOR, MPEDH and UR-CLAM.



Participants giving their recommendations

Then, the executive director of LAF presented the findings of the research in Kinyarwanda as well as the recommendations given, he then asked participants to discuss on the recommendations.

The recommendations given include the continuous advocacy for MAJ Officers so that they can get means of transport in order to conduct field visits and sensitization; Abunzi committee should be trained regularly, to sensitize the general population about laws through especially new laws and others.

LAF organised the celebration of International Women’s Day for Urban Refugees

On 8 March is an international women’s day celebrated worldwide every year. LAF in collaboration with UNHCR organised the celebration of women’s day for urban refugees respectively on 8 March 2017 in Kigali and on 11 March 2017 in Huye to combine it with the cultural day.

In our Country Rwanda, the International women’s day has over the years become one of the most important days for celebrating the Rwandan woman, as a hero but also her participation in Nation building. It is in this regard that UNHCR and the Legal Aid Forum would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the plight of the refugee woman.



Women dancing celebrating the Women’s Day in Huye

The celebration of international Women’s day was an opportunity to explain to participants how in Rwanda the women are given value in various domain since the ratification of international conventions, regional and national laws which promote and protect women’s rights. They were explained how the matrimonial, liberality and succession organic law, family law and GBV law give the same opportunities to both men and women in decision making but women should take that opportunity to work hard for exercising those rights.



Mr Gerald Niambara, LAF Staff Member speaks on the background of international women’s day in Kigali



Participants to the roundtable n international women’s day ceremony

The refugees were recommended to report on time the SGBV cases and keep the necessary evidences if possible because when it comes to provide legal assistance to SGBV survivor this becomes the big challenge when the evidences are not sufficient.

Workshop on Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)



Me Andrews Kananga opening the Workshop

On 27 January 2017, from 9:00 am to 1:15 pm, LAF Secretariat organised a workshop on CEDAW in Ninzi Hotel – Kigali during which participated 23 Civil Society Organisations as follows: The Legal Aid Forum (LAF), Association pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques (ADL), Communauté des potiers du Rwanda (COPORWA), Umusanzu News paper, Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA), Mouvement des Peuples pour l'Education aux Droits Humains au Rwanda (MPDEH), The Network of Lawyers of Hope in Rwanda (LOH), Center for the Rule of Law in Rwanda (CERULAR), Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ARDHO), Impamo News Paper,

Association Maison de Droit (MDD), INARA Legal Aid Service (INALAS), Action pour le Développement du Peuple (ADEPE), Amahoro News Paper, No Crime Rwanda (NCR), Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Fight Illiteracy Youth Organization (FIYO), Great Lakes Initiatives for Human Rights and Development (GLIDH), Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (LIPRODHOR), PAX PRESS, Gouvernance for Africa (GFA), Association de la Jeunesse pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et du Développement (AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA), Ishema News Paper. The objective of the workshop was to present to participants the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports submitted by Rwanda and to comment on the drafted alternative Report on CEDAW.

The workshop was opened by Me Andrews Kananga, the Executive Director of the Legal Aid who congratulated participants to the meeting for the time they took to participate in this important event. In his remarks, he introduced the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as one of the core human rights treaties adopted by The UN General Assembly on 19th December 1979 and came into force as a treaty on 3rd September 1981.



Participants to the Workshop following a presentation

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of discrimination against women is established pursuant to the article 17 of the Convention. It is composed of 23 members from States members; These Members are experts and they serve in their personal capacity; having high moral integrity and being competent in the field of women's rights.

Participants were told that Rwanda has already ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by presidential decree no 431/16 of 10 November 1980.

Me Andrews Kananga also talked about the role that Civil Society organisations play in CEDAW reporting because the Committee on CEDAW greatly relies upon on shadow reports produced by NGO and all participants to workshop agreed to work together on a list of issues and questions that Rwanda replied in December 2016 from the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports submitted by Rwanda in 2015.

Briefly, Participants to the workshop were presented with the process of drafting a report on CEDAW and were presented with the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports submitted by Rwanda. After that, they were presented with the draft alternative Report on CEDAW drafted by LAF staff and were required to provide their comments and input.

After the presentation of the draft alternative report on CEDAW, participants to the workshop agreed to divide themselves into 3 groups to discuss deeply on the list of issues and to provide their input to the draft alternative report.



One of the Group discussing on the list of issues

After the discussions in groups, the representative of each group took time to present the group comments and input. After the Presentation of each group, participants to workshop provided their comments on the 3 presentations and concluded by appointing a team that will include those comments and observations in the draft alternative Report on CEDAW.

The Legal Aid Week 2017 Edition



The Minister of Justice/Attorney General and other Officials during the launch of the Legal Aid Week

The Legal Aid Week is an annual event aimed at increasing the awareness of the available legal aid services amongst the population.

Since 2009, the Ministry of Justice, the Legal Aid Forum, the Supreme Court, the Bar Association in partnership with other Justice Sector Institutions have been organising the Legal Aid Week with a focus on two major areas of intervention: legal representation for people in detention centres (prisons, police stations, transit centres) and providing legal aid services to the general population and prisoners in the form of legal information, education, advice, orientation and written court submissions.

The above areas of intervention were maintained for the 2017 edition organised from 27 to 31 March 2017.

This edition was launched during a community service held in Gatsibo district on 25 March.



The President of LAF addressing participants to the launch

A total of 112 legal Officers Civil Society Organisations members of the Legal Aid Forum and all legal officers of Access to Justice Bureaus (MAJ) from all the 30 Districts were involved in on-spot providing legal advice, legal education and information.



Gatsibo residents doing the community service during the launch event



One of the Legal Officers sensitizing the population on key laws

Refugees in Mahama Camp were sensitized against the use of drugs



Mahama Camp

On 26 April 2017, a session of sensitizing the Burundian Refugees against the use of drugs was organised in Mahama Camp. Since 2015 up to now, in partnership with UNHCR, the Legal Aid Forum has been providing legal assistance and representation to refugees in Mahama camp. In implementing these activities, LAF has realized that the use of drugs and other related crimes are the recurrent crimes committed by refugees. It is in this regard that this sensitization session was organised.



During the hearings in Mahama camp

During the hearing, 3 suspects pleaded guilty and asked the court to reduce the penalties for them. After the Court Hearing, it was an occasion to give a message about the crime prevention to refugees who were present.

Me Mukashema Marie Louise who represented LAF during this event informed refugees about the work of LAF as a network and insisted on why LAF organized the court hearing on spot in the camp. She pointed out that LAF has a responsibility to provide legal assistance to refugees but also has to prevent refugees to be involved in committing crimes;



Me Louise addressing participants

The representative of Police (DPC) made an emphasis on that and told refugees that the court hearing was conducted in camp because they wanted to teach the refugee's community that the use of drugs and other related crimes are seriously punished by law in Rwanda and this can have serious consequences on the person himself, his family and the society. He recommended parents to take care of their children and avoid them to be involved in the use of drugs and other crimes.



Refugees attending the sensitization session