



The Legal Aid Forum
Working Together For Equitable Access to Justice



Promoting and Supporting Access to Justice for All in Rwanda

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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**Promoting and Supporting
Access to Justice for All in
Rwanda**

2018

Highlights

Commencement of
LAF's new 5-year
strategic plan

Legal Aid Week took
place in all districts of
the country

Launch of Legal Aid
Forum's ICT platform,
providing free legal
information and advice
using mobile technology

Advocacy led to
inclusion of provision
for class action
litigation in new law
on court jurisdiction

Submission of a mid-term
assessment report to the UN
Human Rights Council on
Rwanda's implementation of
recommendations made during
the Universal Periodic Review.

LAF's expertise was
sought at national,
regional and
international meetings
and conferences

Publication of a
research report and
recommendations on
the effectiveness of
administrative justice

LAF ensured the legal
protection of refugees

Launch of
assessment of birth
registration practices
in three districts

Ongoing provision
of legal advice,
representation,
information,
education and
training





I am very proud to present this report of the activities and achievements of The Legal Aid Forum (LAF) for 2018. LAF continues to be one of the most active civil society organizations in the Rwandan justice sector. Since 2006, we have made a real difference to the lives of thousands of Rwandans through our direct legal aid services, capacity building, education and awareness raising. The evidence base and understanding gained from these activities, along with specialised primary research and our legal knowledge, also underpins our advocacy and engagement work. By understanding first-hand the challenges faced by those engaging with the justice system, we can engage with the Government, justice institutions and stakeholders at all levels to improve the justice system and help ensure that individuals in Rwanda, in particular those who are indigent and vulnerable, are able to access justice.

During 2018 we continued our pioneering work, guided by an ambitious new five-year strategy which implements LAF's mission to promote and support the provision of accessible and quality legal aid services. Our priorities and activities over this period seek to deepen and broaden access to quality justice and continue to strengthen respect for human rights.

I am particularly proud of the unique reach of LAF's work. During 2018, LAF reached nearly half a million people through its awareness raising activities. LAF lawyers provided legal advice and representation in courts of law to over 13,000 individuals across the country and we launched an exciting new service which uses mobile technology to provide legal information and advice, harnessing the wide use of mobile phones across the country to extend the reach of our services.

We continued to build the capacities of justice actors and legal services providers and built links with regional and international organizations. Our

research and advocacy efforts led to changes in law and policy, including on administrative justice and class action litigation. We also continue to grow as an organization, building our own skills and professionalism.

Legal aid is an essential element of a fair, humane and efficient justice system that is based on the rule of law and our work to enhance the respect and protection of human rights is at the heart of ensuring sustainable change. Because of this we engaged with the international human rights system through the Universal Periodic Review Process and by training civil society to use these mechanisms to support the government to improve the protection of rights in the justice sphere.

LAF is thankful to all partners who are supporting its mission. Our appreciation goes to The Kingdom of the Netherlands in Rwanda, USAID, Plan International, UNHCR and The German Cooperation; -GIZ. We look forward to your continued support and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Mr. Busingye Louis

Chairperson

Contents

- Highlights – 2018.....4
- Foreword from the President of AC.....6
- The Legal Aid Forum’s Aims and Strategic Objectives.....9
- Activities and Achievements.....10
- 1. KNOWLEDGE BUILDING.....10**
 - Strengthening administrative justice.....10
 - Birth registration assessment.....10
 - Public advocacy: radio shows.....11
 - Capacity development for legal aid service providers.....11
- 2. LEGAL EMPOWERMENT.....13**
 - Direct Legal Assistance.....15
 - Legal Advice.....15
 - Legal Representation Before Courts.....15
 - Impact litigation through public interest litigation and class actions.....16
 - Gender justice.....17
 - Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
to provide legal services to the Rwandan Population.....19
 - Legal Education.....21
 - Legal Aid Week.....21
- 3. HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND PROTECTION.....22**
 - Universal Periodic Review.....22
 - Regional Engagement.....24
- 4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....26**
 - Human Resources.....26
 - Governance and organizational sustainability.....26
 - Strategic communications and public relations.....28
 - Media Interactions.....29
 - Social media.....29
 - Strategic Meetings.....29
 - Legal Aid Civil Society fund (LACSF).....31
 - Financial report.....31

The Legal Aid Forum's Aims and Strategic Objectives

The work and priorities of The Legal Aid Forum (LAF) during 2018 were guided by its 2018-2022 strategic plan which establishes four strategic areas. Together these aim towards the realisation of a Rwanda where there is access to justice for all, through the facilitation of affordable and accessible legal aid services. In order to achieve this objective, LAF provides direct legal services to poor and vulnerable populations with a focus on prevention and early resolution of legal problems. It also influences the justice sector through evidence-based advocacy and the legal empowerment of citizens.

Vision:

A Rwanda with equal justice for all

Mission:

To promote and support access to justice for all vulnerable groups in Rwanda

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

LAF becomes a knowledge hub on access to justice and legal aid in Rwanda

LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

Individuals and groups are empowered to use the law to advance their rights and interests

HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND PROTECTION

State mechanisms and actions protect and promote human rights

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Legal Aid Forum is an effective and sustainable membership-based network.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

Based on its legal expertise, casework and engagement with beneficiaries, and through the wide reach and experience of its member organizations, LAF has become a national knowledge hub for information on access to justice and legal aid. To further strengthen this role, LAF has undertaken new research and used it to pursue evidence-based advocacy for legal, policy and administrative change. LAF has also built public knowledge and the expertise of its member organizations through public information and awareness activities and training and empowering its members to be effective providers of legal information and legal aid services.

Strengthening administrative justice

In 2018 LAF undertook a research project on the effectiveness of administrative justice which examined problems faced by individuals when challenging administrative decision-making. It focused on four areas: expropriation for public interest, labour law (public and private employment) and public procurement. The research used a consultative methodology and applied expert legal analysis to information obtained from round-table discussions with government, civil society organizations, legal practitioners and academics; targeted interviews; case studies and quantitative data.

The research revealed gaps in the legal framework and practical barriers to achieving administrative justice, including institutional and managerial deficiencies, lack of awareness of rights and responsibilities by both citizens and officials and cases of disrespect of the law by officials. Following this research project, recommendations made by LAF have led to changes in labour law including an increase in benefits and salary allocated to workers following termination of

contracts and amendments to the powers of labour inspectors. They also led to a new law on public procurement which harmonises the legislation with e-procurement as well as action to improve the effectiveness of Independent Review Panels which consider appeals of procurement decisions at district level. The research findings have been disseminated through meetings with stakeholders involved in the research process including state and non-state institutions and development partners.

What is administrative justice?

Administrative justice is the area of law that relates to decisions made by the state which affect individuals or their rights. It provides protection for individuals from arbitrary or unfair decision making by government officials and provides recourse and remedies where unfair decisions or actions have occurred.

Given the wide range of areas where administrative action impacts the lives of ordinary people and businesses, effective administrative justice processes also improves fair decision-making, the relationship between citizen and state and perceptions of government effectiveness and fairness.

Birth registration assessment

The registration of a child's birth is a fundamental right of the child. It is necessary for protecting children against abuse and exploitation and allowing them to realize their full range of rights and legal protections including education, health and family rights. Birth registration is also a socio-economic development tool allowing the state to understand the population and to monitor and provide social protections and benefits.

For many years, LAF has undertaken activities to promote and protect the rights of children including through activities in direct support of district-level authorities. In 2018, LAF started a project which will assess the status of birth registration in Bugesera, Gatsibo and Nyaruguru Districts.

During 2018, planning and preparation was completed for the assessment which will measure the level of progress in birth registration in the three districts and analyse data gathered since the start of LAF's project on *"rights to protection and participation"*. The project will assess the role of different stakeholders in the birth registration process and identify challenges, lessons learnt and good practices. It will use qualitative and quantitative methodology and engage with state and non-state stakeholders through focus group discussions and interviews. Workshops will be organized to disseminate the research findings.

Public advocacy: radio shows

Throughout 2018, LAF conducted public advocacy activities through radio talk-shows on *Isango Star* radio station during which listeners were given information on a particular theme and were able to ask LAF officials questions. Issues covered related to the rights of individuals and included pre- and post-trial procedures and the rights and obligations of refugees hosted in Rwanda, aiming to educate Rwandans on how to respect refugees' rights. Based on the listenership of *Isango Star* radio, the shows reached an estimated one million people across the country.

Listener:

Hello, my name is Mbonigaba, I am calling from Muhanga district. My question is about a family legally married and they have been living together for more than 13 years but have not have any child. The husband was with another woman trying to get a child from her. The wife inspected her husband and had him arrested by the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) and he is now in jail. Is that man detained legally and what does law provide with regard to this issue?

Response:

According to laws in force, that man committed a crime; that is adultery as he is married. The wife has full right to accuse her husband of that crime.

Listener:

thank you very much for clarification, as neighbors we thought he was innocent. I will be able to explain this to my fellow neighbors who do not have this information'

Capacity development for legal aid service providers

Since its establishment in 2006, one of LAF's greatest achievements has been the training and capacity building of legal aid providers and justice sector institutions, focusing on improving skills, professionalism and respect for human rights. This work continued during 2018, during which LAF trained 903 justice sector actors including Rwanda Investigation Bureau staff, advocates, local leaders, district officials, paralegals, refugee representatives, LAF staff and staff from member organizations.

Training and capacity building projects in 2018 were funded by:

- The Embassy of the Netherlands,
- The Association for the Prevention of Torture,
- UNDP Rwanda
- USAID (through *Duteze imbere ubutabera*),
- PLAN International
- UNHCR Rwanda,

The content of different training events was tailored to the expertise and experience of the targeted groups and included international human rights instruments and relevant domestic legal provisions such as family law, succession and protection of refugees. For refugees and host communities, training included conflict management in order to improve pacific cohabitation. In order to help legal aid providers to be more effective and efficient in following up the cases of their beneficiaries, training was provided on the use of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS): a new system used by all justice institutions in Rwanda. Due to capacity needs identified by LAF and other justice actors, the number of trained justice actors has increased by 29% since 2017.

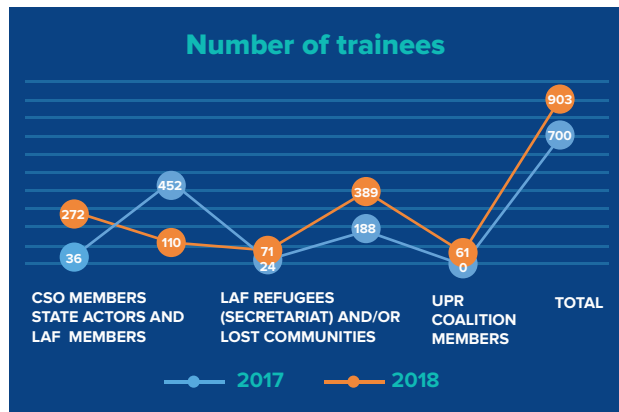
BREAKDOWN OF TRAINEES 2018

Categories of trainees	Number of trainees		
	Male	Female	Total
CSOs members and LAF members	174	98	272
State actors	72	38	110
LAF staff (secretariat)	50	21	71
Refugees and/or host communities	281	108	389
UPR Coalition members	42	19	61
TOTAL	619	284	903



Participants following a presentation on the use of IECMS Participants receive their certificates

Reach of capacity building activities in 2017 and 2018



TRAINEES BY GENDER

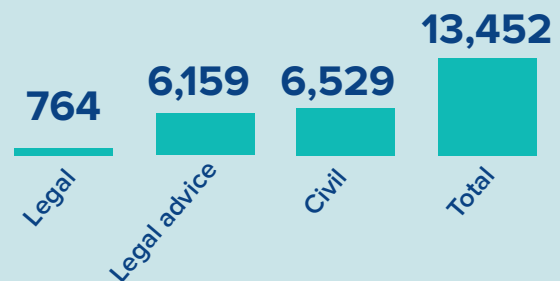
■ Women trained ■ Men trained



2. LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

LAF provides direct legal assistance and empowers individuals to understand and use the law. This empowerment is done through a range of tools such as the annual legal aid week where legal education and advice is provided directly in all districts or via ground-breaking class action and strategic litigation. During 2018 LAF expanded its approach to legal empowerment by conducting mass mobilization campaigns in refugee camps and establishing a unique ICT platform to inform and educate the public on legal issues. Through the ICT platform and eight sub-offices, LAF provided 13,452 people with direct legal aid services in 2018. This included representation in and out of court, legal advice and civil registration of births and marriages.

Types of legal assistance



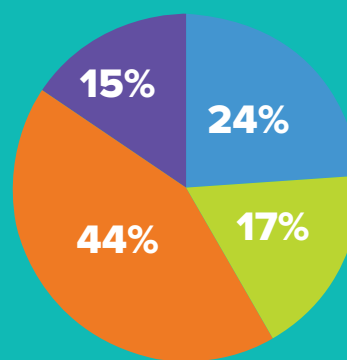
One of LAF lawyers (first on right) assisting beneficiaries before Kiyumba Primary Court, Muhanga district



The 6,159 people who received legal advice were assisted through a variety of channels, including through assistance given via the call centre (845 short code and 1022 short code), directly by head and field offices and during Legal Aid Week. Beneficiaries were either given direct legal advice or referred to other institutions for assistance.

LEGAL ADVICE BY THE TOOL

■ LAF Call - center ICT4J ■ Field and head officers
■ Legal Aid Week 2018 ■ Call-in via 1022

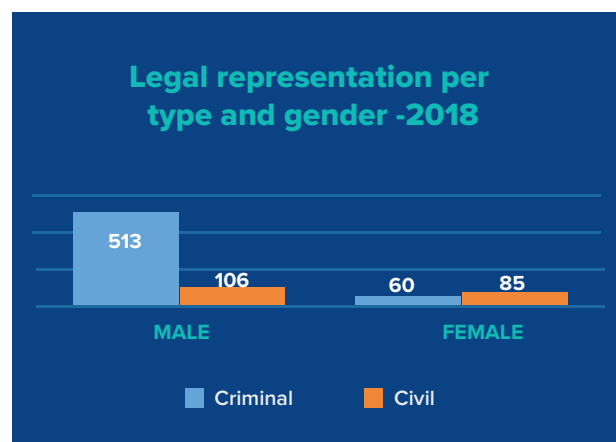


Direct legal assistance

Legal advice

Legal representation before courts

During 2018, early interventions by LAF lawyers at the Rwanda Investigation Bureau resulted in the release of 144 people (mostly refugees) before cases were filed in court. For cases that went to court, 764 beneficiaries were assisted by 16 LAF lawyers (an average of 47.7 cases by each lawyer). LAF lawyers were able to secure acquittals or releases in 53.8% of cases.



LAF's greater involvement in criminal than civil cases in 2018 is a result of the focus on refugee camps where assistance was provided in cases of refugees accused of petty offenses. This included a large number of people arrested during demonstrations in Kiziba camp.

Outcome of cases – Criminal matters

	Male	Female	Total	%
Sentenced	164	15	179	35.3
Acquittals	116	13	129	25.4
Released at Rehabilitation center level	5	1	6	28.4
Released at RIB level	34	10	44	
Released at prosecution level	88	6	94	
N/A	47	8	55	10.8
Total	454	53	507	100

Outcome of cases – civil matters

	Male	Female	Total	%
Won	34	41	75	54.3
Lost	8	5	13	9.4
Asylum granted	4	0	4	2.9
Ongoing or dropped cases	34	12	46	33.3
Total	80	58	138	100

SPOTLIGHT: Legal Assistance in Refugee Camps

The Legal Aid Forum has been providing legal advice and assistance for refugees in Rwanda since 2015. Through an annual Partner Partnership Agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), LAF provides a range of services including legal education and information, legal advice (including orientation and referral), and assistance by a legal aid attorney at all levels and in all matters.

In total, LAF has eight sub-offices. Two offices in urban settings: Gikondo in Kigali and Huye in the

Southern province. The others are located in each of the six refugee camps in Rwanda: Mahama, Gihembe, Kigeme, Kiziba, Nyabiheke and Mugombwa. Mahama camp accommodates refugees from Burundi and refugees from Democratic Republic of the Congo live in the other five camps. LAF has 25 staff deployed in these locations including advocates (retainer lawyers) and permanent legal officers. Beneficiaries for litigation include both victims and suspect in criminal matter as well as defendants and plaintiffs in civil matter.

Legal services provided to refugees in 2018

Type of Service	Number of beneficiaries ¹
Facilitation of civil registration (birth, wedding) and issuance of certificates to refugee children	6,529
Legal advice (referrals, orientation, legal information, etc):	1,069
Legal assistance before courts of law:	533
SGBV/GBV	181 incidents referred to LAF: 67 suspects were prosecuted and 16 of them convicted.
Awareness raising on civil registration (purpose and process)	26,929
Trainings of refugee and host community members on relevant legal topics	389
Awareness raising on crime prevention	48,032

Impact litigation through public interest litigation and class actions

LAF has been involved in several test cases that have achieved results for indigent claimants or led in changes to the law, including laws relating to civil commercial labor and administrative procedure, family law and labor law. LAF had two significant successes during 2018.

» Case of citizens from Ngoma district vs ECOCAS

LAF's impact on the law on public interest litigation

In June 2018 Rwanda introduced a new law on the jurisdiction of courts. Relying on evidence from its research reports, LAF successfully advocated for the law to include provision for public interest litigation. This will make it easier and more efficient for the rights of individuals and groups to be enforced and can be used to effect broader changes in law and society.

LAF has also written position papers on civil procedure, family law and land law which have been relied on in amending relevant laws and facilitate group and class action claims. For example, Article 50-52 of the 2018 law on civil, commercial, labor and administrative procedure provides that people who have the same claim and interest can pay one court fee if they have one joint claim, making it more efficient for poorer claimants to access justice.

In 2018, LAF represented 249 claimants in a dispute with the company ECOCAS, which had failed to fully pay local residents it had hired to build terraces under a contract with Ngoma District. Because of the small amounts owed to each claimant (between RWF2000 and RWF25,000), LAF filed a class action case on their behalf so that only one court fee was required, although this approach was rejected by the intermediate court of Ngoma. LAF lawyers then filed individual claims and won the full amount and indemnities for all 249 claimants. While ECOCAS initially appealed the judgment, it later agreed to pay the claimants in full and close the case before the final appeal hearing.

» Case of citizens from Gakenke district vs. OPEDESA

Organization pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Developement des Systemes Agricoles (OPEDESA) was solicited by the Government to plant trees in different sectors of Gakenke district in 2013. In order to execute its work, OPEDESA hired citizens to plant the trees. Upon completion of this work, these 113 employees of OPEDESA requested the company to pay them for the work done, to which the company paid them some of the money and the remainder was not paid. The employees claim the company owes them Frw **16,588,100** (around \$ 16,000). From time to time they requested that the company resolves this issue and nothing was done about it to the extent they decided seek support from LAF and the case was lodged with the intermediate court of Musanze on 12/07/2018 as **one single class action case of 113 persons**. The defendant represented by its Managing Director claims that it paid all the money it was required to pay. Two (2) LAF lawyers attended eight hearing sessions and six of them were adjourned.

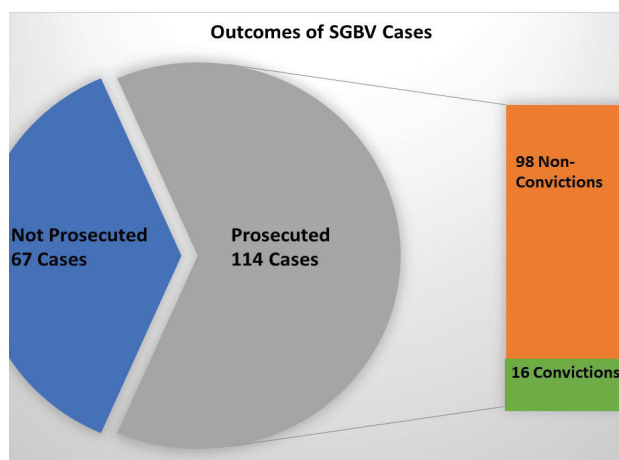
The reason for the adjournment was to allow the parties to settle the matter amicably. While this process has been started, due to the complexity of this case the session of amicable settlement is still pending until today. It is hoped that parties will settle the matter amicably soon.

Promoting gender justice

LAF regularly assists in gender-related cases referred by partners who are unable to provide direct legal services such as representation in courts. Referrals come from organizations and institutions working on women's empowerment such as the Gender Monitoring Office Rwanda Women's Network, Transparency Rwanda and the Office of the Ombudsman.

In 2018, LAF intervened in cases related to succession, land, sexual and gender based-violence, paternity search, alimony and divorce.

LAF has also trained and carried out awareness campaigns on preservation of evidence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) related cases among refugee communities. Refugees in Rwanda have been given information on their rights, how to report any misconduct and the legal avenues available for them. Detained suspects accused of SGBV related crimes are given legal counsel and victims are helped to seek compensation in the courts. LAF thus both assists victims and ensures the integrity of the judicial process.



LAF's involvement in SGBV cases has identified several problems in their prosecution, mostly with regard to lack of evidence but also weaknesses in reporting SGBV cases to Rwanda Investigation Bureau and with cases of alleged perpetrators who have fled justice. Victims often fail to report cases due to fear of reprisals, amicable settlements and fear of stigmatization or they do not report cases in

Gender equality is achieved when both sexes enjoy the same rights and opportunities across society, including access to justice. Gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence are major barriers to achieving justice and lack of justice perpetuates gender-based violence and discrimination. These can be manifested through sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence and discrimination.

For example, denying women the right to acquire, manage and dispose of assets in their own name limits their economic opportunities, productivity and bargaining power in the household (as well as more broadly). The inability to use land as collateral limits women's access to credit, which limits their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities, such as setting up micro enterprises or investing in the land to make it more productive. Land titling designed to facilitate women landowners to register land in their own names has been found to increase access to land for women and improve land productivity.

time. Many reports are missing evidence. While LAF has carried out awareness activities on gender-based violence there is still a need for in-depth analysis to identify the specific gaps within the criminal justice chain which need to be addressed, a project which LAF hopes to undertake in future.



Group photo at the official launch of the "Using ICT to Provide Legal Services to the Rwandan Population"

Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to provide legal services to the Rwandan Population

This project seeks to harness the wide use of mobile technology in Rwanda to facilitate the provision of legal information and advice for free to vulnerable populations and raise citizen awareness of their rights and the law. It provides both general legal advice on rights and legal procedure such as how to access courts, enforce judgments, or file documents as well as direct assistance and referrals to legal aid providers.

The project uses the MTN "845" service which allows people to access information on different laws by texting or dialing a toll-free number to access pre-recorded voice or text messages. In consultation with stakeholders LAF developed the content based on different key laws that promote access to legal aid.

The 845 service is linked to a legal aid call center located at LAF offices, through which live operators provide more detailed and individual assistance. Through the call center, beneficiaries can receive initial advice on their legal issue, be advised of documentation and information required before meeting with an attorney, and act as a referral service to connect clients with other legal aid providers.



Call Center Legal Officers providing legal assistance via phone calls

Step1: Dial 845
 "Would you like to speak
 to a legal aid expert?"
 Press 1 for yes, press 2 to exit

Step3:
 Requester is called back
 by operator who fills out
 an intake form and refers
 the case to the right legal
 aid providers



Step2:
 Request for a call is registered
 and entered into a call list for
 Legal Aid Forum

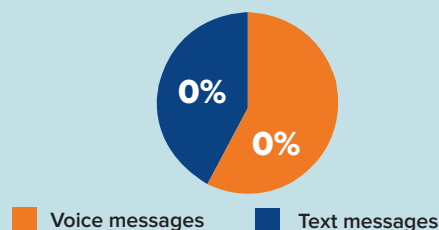
Step4:
 If deemed necessary, callers are
 referred for legal assistance by
 Legal Aid Forum Lawyes



Her Excellency Frédérique de Man, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Rwanda and Me Andrews Kananga, Executive Director of LAF signing funding agreement on 1 March 2018. Credit: NL Ambassador Rwanda/Twitter

The ICT platform has been operational since August 22nd 2018 for voice messages and September 17th for text messages. From the start of its operation until the end of 2018, the service was used nearly 250,000 times

Usage of ITC platform

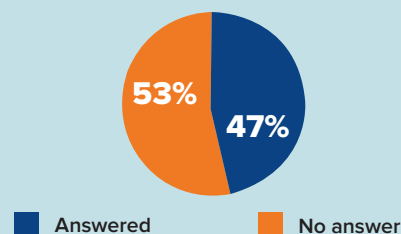


LAF has promoted awareness of the 845 service by:

- Promotion during Legal Aid Week
- Awareness campaigns
- Participating in Umuganda with promotional materials
- Design and distribution of project brochures
- Media interactions
- Radio/TV talk shows
- Articles in newspapers, magazines and newsletters
- Bulk SMSs and MTN promotion

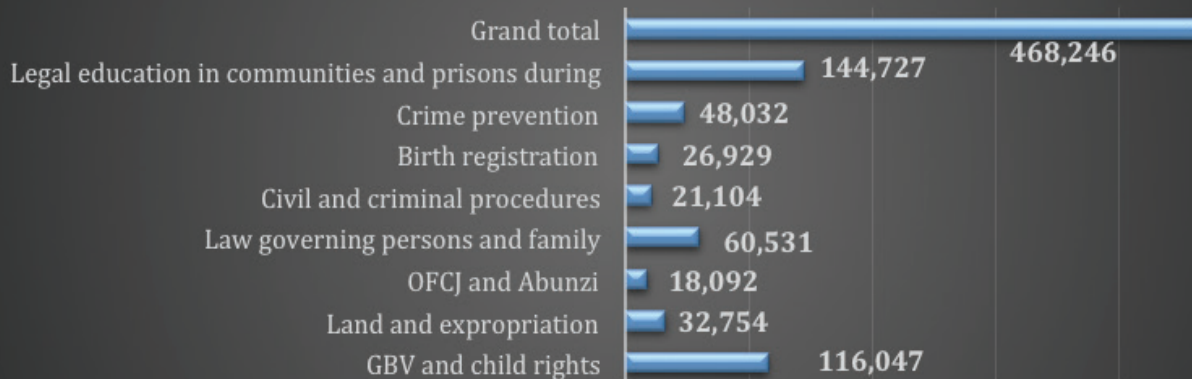
LAF also has a direct free phone number for legal advice (short code 1022). Out of a total of 2000 calls made to the service in 2018, 934 were answered and 1,066 were not answered. Calls were not answered because they were made outside of office hours or when legal aid attorneys/officers were engaged with other clients or out of the office on other duties.

1022 Performance 2018



Legal education

Number of people reached by legal education 2018



During 2018, LAF reached nearly half a million people through its legal education activities, the majority of which were reached through the ICT platform and during legal aid week.

Legal Aid week



Legal Aid Week opening event by Hon. Minister of Justice on 23 January 2018 in Gihango Sector, Rutsiro District,

Since 2009, LAF has been at the heart of Legal Aid Week (LAW), an annual event involving Justice Sector institutions and stakeholders led by the Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST) which provides legal aid services to detainees and in communities, delivers legal

education and follows up the execution of gacaca judgments. In 2018 beneficiaries included children in conflict with the law, pregnant and lactating mothers, people and detainees with chronic diseases and elderly women and men in all 30 districts across the country.

LAW requires significant organization and preparation between Rwanda Correctional Services, the judiciary, LAF and MINIJUST in order to identify detainees, schedule hearings and deploy lawyers and legal officers from member organizations to prisons and districts. To ensure effective representation, lawyers started preparing the hearings one week before by meeting beneficiaries and checking on court files.

In 2018 Legal Aid Week reached 144,727 people. Legal education topics covered included gender-based violence, ISANGE One Stop services, the law governing persons and family, rights to civil damages and procedures of public auction. There was a particular focus on 1) enforcement of judgments and guidelines for public auctions 2) GBV law and civil damages and 3) matrimonial regime.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND PROTECTION



Workshop on the role of civil society in monitoring implementation of UPR recommendations

Universal Periodic Review

Since 2014, LAF has played a pro-active role in mobilizing and organizing civil society to engage with the Universal Periodic Review (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*”.

During 2018, this engagement involved submitting a shadow mid-term report to the Human Rights Council and organizing a workshop on the role of civil society organization in monitoring the implementation of UPR recommendations.

The Universal Period Review (UPR) is a process through which the human rights record of every country is examined under the auspices of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

As part of the UPR process, civil society organizations are able submit information on the country’s human rights record, including in the form of “shadow reports”. One way that civil society can engage constructively with the Government to improve the respect and protection of the rights of Rwandans is done by monitoring the implementation of recommendations made during the review process. Submitting a shadow mid-term report accelerates the implementation of the commitments made by the Government to Rwandans and to the Human Rights Council.

Shadow mid-term report to the Human Rights Council



REPORT SUBMITTED BY RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION ON UPR¹

TO THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

JANUARY 2018

¹Rwanda Civil Society Coalition on UPR is made up of: IDRCenter for Human Rights and Development; GUTU (Gutu Lukosa Initiative for Human Rights and Development); Governance for Africa (GfA); ICD (Inclusive Development Initiative); CERJ/LAP (Center for Rule of Law Rwanda); FYO (Fight Illegality Youth Organisation); Newscenter Publications and Associations namely: GUTUJUMUBAKU; INYAMA; RUCAC; AMAHORO; YAK PRISON; LAF (Legal Aid Forum); Secretariat and some members of LAF namely: AJIA (Association des Juristes Avocats ou Rwandais); AJJHL (Action pour le Développement du Peuple); ADU (Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Individuelles); AUTROCH-ULUKIWA (Association de la Jeunesse pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et du Développement); ARDHO (Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme); COPORWA (Communauté des Rotari du Rwanda); HAGURUKA NGO; HRHA (Human Rights for Rwanda Association); NALAS (Network of Legal Services); NALU-LAS (Independent Institute of Law Advocates of Rwanda - Legal Aid Clinic); IPHODIOP (Institute Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme); LCH (The Network of Lawyers of Hope Rwanda); MDD (Ministry of Justice); MPR (Ministry of Planning); and some other members of the Civil Society Coalition on UPR. Photo: Rwanda Civil Society Coalition on UPR.

In January 2018, the Rwanda civil society coalition on the UPR convened by LAF submitted a mid-term report to the Human Rights Council which assessed the implementation of the recommendations made to Rwanda during the second UPR review on 4 November 2015.

The report was based on reports, analysis and information gathered by coalition members between June and December 2017.

Workshop on “the role of CSOs in monitoring the implementation of UPR recommendations”

The purpose of the civil society coalition on the UPR is to actively engage with relevant government institutions and citizens around the UPR process. One of the strengths of the coalition is its broad base and LAF has been working to build the capacity of members on how to engage the government in the framework of UPR and monitor the implementation of UPR recommendations.

With the financial support from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in the context of the One UN Office in Rwanda, LAF organized a workshop held from 26th to 28th September 2018 which trained 33 participants (10 females and 23 males) from UPR coalition members on the UN human rights system and the UPR with a focus on the role of civil society in the UPR process including advocacy and follow up during and after the review. Participants found the workshop very useful in preparing them to engage in the UPR process.

“Effective civil society engagement is vital to ensuring that human rights are respected and protected. Civil society organizations act as both the eyes and the voice of citizens in monitoring respect for human rights and they should be well trained and prepared to fulfil this role”

Fodé Ndiaye One UN resident coordinator.



Participants in training sessions

Regional engagement

- **Establishment of the East African Legal Aid Network**

The 1st East African Regional Legal Aid Conference on Access to Justice through Legal Aid was held in Nairobi 5th-8th 2018. The Conference brought together more than 50 delegates including policy makers, legal aid practitioners, representatives of Ministries of Justice, judicial training institutes, the secretariat of the EAC, regional bar associations, Offices of Public Prosecution, pro bono lawyers, the East Africa Law Society, UN agencies and other development partners, paralegal support networks, members of civil society, university law clinics, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The main objective was to create a regional platform for the engagement of state and non-state agencies involved in legal aid, and to encourage them to build formal linkages between civil society legal aid providers and state agencies in the justice sector in the East Africa Region with the aim of enhancing access to justice through legal aid.

The conference provided an invaluable opportunity for state and non-state agencies to take stock of efforts made to strengthen the rule of law, guarantee fair trials and facilitate the realization of the right of access to justice by all, and on an equal basis.



The delegates discussed subjects, including (a) the need to establish appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks for the administration of state-funded legal aid schemes; (b) the critical role played by non-state agencies in legal aid service delivery; (c) the need to build effective linkages between judicial institutions, legal aid providers, and informal justice systems; (d) the modalities to enhance the much

needed human capital in legal aid service delivery; (e) the need to create a regional network of legal aid providers to facilitate knowledge transfer and information sharing in the region; (f) the need for effective monitoring and periodic reporting within the network to motivate and inform policy and law reforms towards a robust network of legal aid schemes in the region.

The conference served as a regional platform to exchange experience, best practices, challenges and innovations related to legal aid service delivery. Delegates shared various models through which legal aid is provided as well as regulatory frameworks through which legal aid is administered and accredited.

At the closure of the conference, delegates passed a resolution to form the East African Legal Aid Network of both state and non-state legal aid service providers from Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Somalia and South Sudan to strengthen the rule of law and guarantee equal access to justice through legal aid towards the realization of SDG 16.

The East African Legal Aid Network was later endorsed through signing an MoU in Dar-es-Salaam and is currently chaired by National Legal Aid Service, Kenya. Rwanda is represented by the Ministry of Justice and the Legal Aid Forum.

The African Center for Excellence on Access to Justice

The Legal Aid Forum is a founding member of the African Center for Excellence on Access to Justice, which was established in 2017. It was established to provide the African continent with a significant and relevant footprint within the global landscape of legal empowerment and access to justice.

The Center also facilitates comparative learning for African and international programmes on legal empowerment and is growing a community of best practice. It works to institutionalise African indigenous knowledge on dispute resolution, restorative justice and other forms of redress and can develop these into academic excellence programmes.

The main interventions undertaken by the centre are research and advocacy. LAF is leading a two-year research project under the Center which will focus on the work of paralegals in Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Liberia, Zambia and Mozambique. This ultimate aim of the project is to ensure and enable a legal framework for community-based justice initiatives in Africa.



Executive Director of LAF Me. Andrews Kananga Sharing Rwanda's experience on Access to Justice through Legal Aid

4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LAF continues to invest in its own capacity and that of its members in order to improve its organizational performance. In 2018 this has focused on human resources, fundraising and strategic communications, including use of social media.

Human resource management

The human resource of LAF grew during 2018, with staff numbers increasing from 40 to 61 (an increase of 52.5%).

The General Assembly held on 9 March 2018 approved a new structure for the LAF Secretariat which saw more new positions added. These are:

- Business Development Officer,
- Executive Assistant,
- Operations Manager
- Senior Research Officer
- Advocacy and outreach Officer
- Budget Officer
- Legal Aid Attorney
- Administrative Assistant
- Human resource Officer

Governance and organizational sustainability

The General Assembly meeting of 9 March 2018 took the following actions:

- Approved the new Strategic Plan (2018-2022);
- Adopted the new structure of the LAF Secretariat;
- Approved the Activity Report (2011-2017), the Financial Report (2011-2017) and the compiled Audit Reports (2011-2017);
- Approved the revised *Human Resource Management Policies and Procedures* and the *Finance and Administration Policies and Procedures Manuals*;

- elected new members of the Administrative Council, Internal Audit Committee and Conflict Resolution Committee.
- Admitted new members to LAF membership (Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD), KANYARWANDA, and the Legal Clinic of the University of Kigali).



Participants conducting elections during the General Assembly

The General Assembly meeting of 22 May 2018

The General Assembly meeting held on 22 May 2018 had one topic on the agenda: to discuss, adjust and approve the guidelines for the Legal Aid Civil Society Fund.

The first phase of the Legal Aid Civil Society Fund funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Rwanda was conducted from 2007 up to 2014. In March 2018, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Rwanda conducted an assessment of the work of the Legal Aid Forum and concluded that it was necessary to reinforce the fund for four years: from 2018 to 2021. After a detailed presentation, comments, suggestions, participants to the Extra Ordinary General Assembly Meeting approved the guidelines of the Legal Aid Civil Society Fund.

Fundraising efforts in 2018

During 2018, LAF renewed existing agreements with partners/donors and submitted ten project proposals for new funding. Grant agreements with donors cover different implementation periods ranging from 24 to 36 months with the budget covering the whole grant period. The following table illustrates proposals that were submitted, potential donor and funds sought.

Proposal title	Potential donor	New project or Renewal	Requested amount (Frw)
Support Legal Aid Service Providers improve quality and quantity of services	USAID/ Chemonics	New project	229,112,200
Legal Aid to Refugees in Rwanda	UNHCR	New project	560,439,063
Promoting Respect of Human Rights in Rwanda	British High Commission in Rwanda	New project	63,070,000
Enhancing the Provision of Legal Aid Services to Women and Youth through ICT Platform	Enabel	New project	350,022,400
Using research, advocacy, and capacity building to empower CSOs to promote accountable and inclusive governance in Rwanda.	European Commission - Rwanda	New project	1,086,140,942.63
Promoting Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists through Capacity Building of Justice Actors in Rwanda.	IPCD	New project	30,111,313
Supporting the Legal Aid Forum and its member organizations to scale up provision of legal aid services in Rwanda	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kigali	Renewal	1,811,897,321
Using ICT to Provide Legal Aid Services to Rwandans	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kigali	New project	807 203 216
General purpose funding for Scaling up Grassroot Legal Empowerment in Rwanda	Charles Steward Mott Foundation	New project	228,327,972
Rights to Protection and Participation Project	Plan International Rwanda (SIDA)	Renewal	75,530,803
Total			5,241,855,232

In accordance with the 2018-2022 strategic plan, the total funding required for year 2018 was Frw 1,600,294,100. In the same year, LAF fundraised a total grant amount of Frw 2,676,979,387. This funding therefore covers 86% of the planned expenditure for both 2018 and 2019 without taking into account two grant applications that were pending decision at the end of the year.

Strategic communication and public relations



LAF's website

LAF took a strategic and proactive approach to media engagement in order to promote its activities and share information. This included publication of articles in newspapers and newsletters, engagement in radio and TV talk shows, press conferences and participation in national, regional and international

conferences, publication of reports and use of social media. Articles were published in The New Times and Imvaho Nshya. Media coverage included: Rwanda Broadcasting Agency, Radio/TV Isango Star, Flash FM and Fine FM.

Media Interactions

Press conferences and media interactions have raised the profile and promoted the work of LAF.



The Executive Director of LAF, Hon. Minister of Justice, Rwanda Bar Association President conducting a press conference on Legal Aid Week 2018 on January 18, 2018.

Use of Social Media



Legal Aid Forum Rwd

@LegalAid_Rwanda Follows you

#Promoting #Supporting accessible and quality legal aid services to every Rwandan.

legalaidrwanda.org Joined April 2015

425 Following 352 Followers

The Legal Aid Forum also promotes its work and shares information through social media platforms, namely twitter, Facebook and YouTube. While twitter and Facebook are used to share updates on the organization's work and events, the YouTube Channel has videos and webinars which explain legal issues and the findings of LAF reports.

Strategic Meetings

The Legal Aid Forum has a strong presence at a range of local, regional and international meetings where it was able to share learning and experiences, exchange ideas, engage with stakeholders and donors. The meetings were a strategy for LAF to engage stakeholders on issues of interest such as fundraising, discussions on working relationships, experience sharing and learning from others and build strategic partnerships and relationships.

Stakeholders' consultative workshop on service delivery for fair justice



In October 2018, LAF and Rwanda Investigation Bureau jointly organized a stakeholders' consultative workshop on service delivery for fair justice. The theme of the workshop was 'Synergy and Professionalism as a Sustainable Path for Fair Justice' and the objectives were 1) to foster coordinated strategic actions and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders; 2) share ideas and knowledge among participants regarding better realisation of the theme and 3) generating

strategies for partnership framework. Speakers at the workshop included the Executive Director of LAF, Secretary General of RIB and Honorable Minister of Justice and Attorney General, the guest of honor

After deliberations, the workshop adopted the following resolutions:

1. Establish framework for good service delivery that is not subject to public scrutiny.
2. Establish programs for the community engagement for timely information sharing for crime prevention, detection and investigation;
3. Establish the framework for partnership with the development partners, civil society and private sector to identify areas of cooperation;
4. Enhance capacity and capability of investigators for professional investigations;
5. Enhance collaboration between security organs and justice sector to foster fair justice;
6. Enhance Inter-regional partnership that incorporates modalities to combat cross border crimes;
7. Establish the synergy among stakeholders where every entity will play its role;
8. Set – up programs to enforce the rights of the accused as soon as they get apprehended;
9. Civil society to work seriously in the areas of crime detection, deterrence and prevention;
10. Enforce the nexus to synergy and professionalism that will be equally relevant to RIB for sustainable fair administration of justice, the promotion of fair justice and observance of human rights;
11. Develop communication strategy with view to change citizen perception for confidence building and trust in investigation agencies and in the decisions of the Justice system especially in case of detention and release.

Other regional meetings



Nigeria: In May 2014, The Executive Director of LAF shared the experience of Rwanda on post-genocide reconstruction of the justice system to Kano State officials & civil society organizations active in the rule of law and human rights



Mar 31, 2018, Experts meeting to develop a coherent strategy of action between traditional justice structures and judiciary to promote the rule of law in Africa - hosted in Benin by the African Union, LAF was represented by its Executive Director, Me Andrews Kananga.

Legal Aid Civil Society fund (LACSF)

In 2018, LAF re-started the Legal Aid Civil Society Fund (LACSF) which funded 27 projects by LAF member organizations between 2008 and 2013, directly benefitting over 60,132 indigent/poor and vulnerable Rwandans through services including legal representation in courts, legal assistance, legal advice, mediation and legal information and education.

A call for proposals was launched on November 15th 2018, open to all members of the Legal Aid Forum to submit individual or joint proposals for projects that provide legal aid to indigent and vulnerable persons.

Eighteen project proposals from nineteen members were submitted to LAF for assessment by the Independent Selection and Monitoring Committee (ISMC). Following the pre-selection process, 14 applications were requested to submit detailed full applications. A capacity assessment was also conducted of those organizations to inform the ISMC on the financial and management capacity of applicants. Upon final selection, five projects were selected and will be implemented from March 2019. This program will continue till 2021 and three rounds of projects will be sub-granted and implemented.

Financial report

Consolidated financial report 2018

Income	Amount
Opening balance	31,234,200
Income from donations	959,855,119
Membership fees and other income	1,475,000
Adjustment in opening balance	2,285,971
Total Income	994,850,290
Expense	
Running costs	86,306,882
Personnel costs	454,380,283
External audit	5,800,000
Support to activities	448,363,127
Total Expense	994,850,291
Balance for the period	-1
Represented by:	
Cash in hand	584,400
Bank balances	671,364,151
Other current assets	13
Less: current liabilities	-79,691,512
Less: Differed	-592,257,053
Net assets as at 31 December	-1









The Executive Director of the Legal Aid Forum, Me Andrews Kananga sharing experiences of Rwanda , Post Genocide reconstruction of the Justice System to Kano State officials and CSOs active in the rule of Law and Human Rights - Nigeria , 24th May 2018.



LAF staff during training on Law related to civil procedures in Rwanda at Marasa Umubano Hotel on 12th June 2018.



During joint awareness and community education on crime prevention at Gihembe camp in Gicumbi District under Legal Aid to Refugees Project, on 26th June 2018.



Workshop on rights of refugees at Nyamagabe District with local Leaders, Security Organs and refugee Representatives on 06th August 2018.





Group photo of The Executive Director of LAF after exchange meeting with AVEGA board members on how best local NGOs can be efficiently managed on 1st September 2018.



LAF staff, members and lawyers benefiting from training of Legal Aid Providers on Integrated Electronic Case Management System – IECMS on 5th September 2018.





Part of continuous capacity building, LAF provides its staff training on different laws. In October 2018 held training on Organization and Jurisdiction of courts.



On 29 October 2018, training of LAF Members on the use of IECMS (Rwanda IECMS (Integrated Electronic Case Management System) is an Electronic case management System used in Courts and other relevant institutions in Rwanda.



The Executive Director of LAF attending conference of Legal Aid experts in Nairobi on 05th November 2018.



As part of Legal Aid civil society fund, LAF members being trained on proposal writing skills, M&E and Financial management . Photo taken on 13th November 2018.



On 23rd November 2019, as per LAF – UNHCR partnership on legal aid to refugees, here LAF staff led by The Executive Director are discussing with UNHCR officer 2019 Refugees protection priorities between UNHCR protection Department and LAF.



On 26 November 2019, during Launch of the 19 days of activism as part of legal aid to refugees activities at UNHCR-LAF community centre that serves refugees in urban area.



During the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the universal declaration of Human Rights, LAF Seniro Capacity Building Officer Clarisse MUNEZERO is conducting awareness of Declaration of Human Rights among students of KIM University on 04th December 2018.



During round three of the training of Legal Aid Providers (LAF Members) on IECMS on 11th December 2018

