



Umlungisi

Stakeholder Newsletter
March 2016



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Legal Aid SA TV advert now showing on SABC



LEGAL AID SA ACTING JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Once again, a number of Legal Aid SA practitioners made themselves available for appointments as acting judicial officers, both in the lower and higher courts. Apart from this being an honour to the practitioners concerned, these appointments are an important contribution by Legal Aid SA to the efficient operation of the courts, and to the proper administration of justice in our country.

The efficient operation of our courts, and in particular, the reduction of case backlogs, requires that the different arms of the profession and the different institutions, including practitioners in private practice, adopt a common approach to resolving the issues that dog the justice system. We encourage our judicare practitioners to take the initiative and to make themselves available to fill the gaps that arise from time to time on the bench.



Lilla Crouse, Senior Litigator in the Eastern Cape Region, is currently acting as a Judge in the Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg.



Patrick Hundermark, Chief Legal Executive in the National Office of Legal Aid SA, acted as a Judge in the Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg, from November to December 2015.



William Karam, Senior Litigator in the Gauteng Region, acted as a Judge in the Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg, from October to December 2015.



Maanda Madima, High Court Legal Practitioner at Thohoyandou Justice Centre, acted as a Judge in the Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg, from August to September 2015.



Bongani Mngadi, High Court Unit Manager at Durban Justice Centre, acted as a Judge in the Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg, from May to June 2015.



Tanya Rule, Regional Court Legal Practitioner in the Port Elizabeth Justice Centre, acted as a Magistrate in the New Brighton Magistrate's court from August to October 2015.



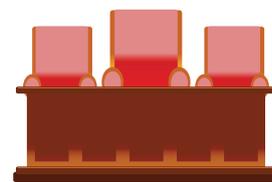
Bismarck Boqwana, Supervisory Legal Practitioner in the Queenstown Justice Centre, acted as a Magistrate in the Queenstown Magistrate's court from July to September 2015.



Nicolette Moeng, Supervisory Legal Practitioner in the Potchefstroom Justice Centre, acted as a Magistrate in the Oberholzer Magistrate's court from June to August 2015.



Mathews Tseladimitloa, Regional Court Legal Practitioner in the Krugersdorp Justice Centre, acted as a Magistrate in the Roodepoort Magistrate's court from January to April.



947 CYCLE CHALLENGE: REACH FOR A DREAM TO INSPIRE HOPE

The Ride for a Purpose Campaign has proven an incomparable platform for cyclists to create awareness about personal causes that are close to their hearts. Over R14.3 million was raised for charity last year and this year the Momentum 947 Cycle Challenge is encouraging riders and charities to get more involved. Legal Aid SA's Chief Legal Executive, Mr Patrick Hundermark took part in the initiative last year and managed to complete the 95KM race in 04:39:51.

"On behalf of my fellow Dream Riders I would like to send my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed towards the initiative of 947 Cycle Challenge, raising funds to bring smiles to sick children around South Africa. As Legal Aid SA we managed to raise funds amounting to R2 487," said Mr Hundermark.



"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Eleanor Roosevelt

Mr Hundermark encourages everyone to continue supporting Dream Riders and help contribute to a dream of a child fighting a life threatening illness. "Your contribution enables these children to fulfil dreams and to experience the reality of a life for which they often desire and will help them see life in a different perspective, for that I truly appreciate your support and please continue to support such initiatives. The positive effect of the "dream come true" lingers, and children often respond better to their medication," he concluded.

LEGAL AID SA COMMITS TO ASSISTING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Legal Aid SA attended a Refugee Stakeholder Forum held at the El Shaddai Conference Centre in King Williams Town on 23 February 2016. The session, which was organised by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Refugee Rights Centre (NMMU - RRC), aimed at providing various refugee community representatives around King Williams Town with assistance in accessing the various services and rights pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa. The event was also honoured by the SAPS, Department of Education, Health and SASSA as well as ABSA bank. Legal Aid SA was ably represented by Mr Fezile Ndamase.

The Civil PA from King Williams Town JC explained that the refugees and asylum seekers like the citizens of South Africa should enjoy full legal protection including the rights set out in the Bill of Rights. He also debunked certain myths regarding Legal Aid SA, highlighting the fact that it is fully independent and does not protect government as it is believed in some spheres. He further expounded that Legal Aid SA is committed to assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

Pamphlets with Legal Aid SA office's (Eastern Cape) details were handed out and Regional Communications Practitioner, Ms Abongile Tyopo stated that Legal Aid SA is within reach to all those who need its services. In addition she asserted that our services are free and the stakeholders should make use of the advice line 0800 110 110, and Ethics hotline 0800 153 728 to report fraud.



King Williams Town Justice Centre Civil PA, Mr Fezile Ndamase presenting to the forum

LEGAL EMPOWERMENT LECTURE BY NAMATI CEO, VIVEK MARU

Legal Aid SA was fortunate to be visited by Vivek Maru, the CEO of NAMATI, an organisation which he founded in 2011 aimed at building legal empowerment around the world. Their global movement of grassroots legal advocates and community paralegals work with communities to advance justice and put the power of law into the hands of people.

The purpose of Vivek's visit was to discuss legal empowerment and to share experiences and information about the work his organisation has done in various countries. The discussion was attended by Legal Aid SA executives, ROEs, SPAs, PAs and paralegals. Vivek shared his vision of putting the power of law into the hands of people in communities, thereby exposing people to the law and encouraging them to take charge of their legal rights and responsibilities.



NAMATI CEO Vivek Maru during his lecture at the Legal Aid SA National Office in Johannesburg



Legal Aid SA is nominated for an Employment Equity Award 2015

LEGAL AID SA NOMINATED IN THE INAUGURAL EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AWARDS

Legal Aid SA was nominated as one of the six finalists in the Public Sector category of the inaugural Employment Equity Awards 2015 held on 15 October 2015. The awards were commissioned by the Department of Labour and the Keynote Speaker was His Excellency, the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa.

A total of 131 organisations participated in the 2015 Employment Equity Awards nomination process. "I am pleased to say that being recognised as a finalist of the 1st EE Awards 2015 is another milestone taken by our organisation in demonstrating excellence. A huge thanks to Legal Aid SA's Managers and their Teams for ensuring that the EE targets, related policies and standards in our workplace are realised. Furthermore, I wish to thank the HRE and her HR team for managing our HR programmes effectively. This is another demonstration of good management by our HR Business Unit," said Legal Aid SA CEO Vidhu Vedalankar.

REGIONAL NEWS

LAUNCH OF THE SEXUAL OFFENCES COURT IN DURBAN



Durban Justice Centre Management attended the launch of the sexual offences court from left Gerhard Volschenk, Jenny Govindsamy and Nomsa Nkosi

Legal Aid SA partnered with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ & CD) at the official launch of the sexual offences court. DOJ and CD Director General, Ms Nonkululeko Sindane said that the opening of the court is part of the commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism of No Violence against Women and Children Abuse campaign. Legal Aid SA officials, including Regional Office Executive Mr Vela Mdaka, attended a briefing session with the DG for DOJ and CD which was immediately followed by the walkabout to the court. The proceedings culminated in an Imbizo, where various stakeholders engaged with community members.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS IN THOHOYANDOU



Margaret Mahango (Civil SPA) and Siphwe Matenzhe (CA) waiting to address community members in Masisi

Thohoyandou Justice Centre teamed up with the Department of Social Development in a human trafficking awareness event held in the community of Masisi. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about the reality of human trafficking especially as communities that are situated close to the South African border gates are more vulnerable to human trafficking crimes. "Legal Aid SA also had the opportunity to give a talk about the legal aspect of trafficking as a majority of those involved are small children who normally don't know how to defend themselves", said Thohoyandou JC Practitioner, Ms Mahango, the Civil SPA at Thohoyandou JC.

LEGAL AID SA SOWETO JUSTICE CENTRE PARTNERS WITH ELDOS FM AS PART OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN



Soweto JC legal practitioners (pictured), Matome Rasodi, Mpho Mathonsi, Patrick Setlhodi, Michael Motaung and Daisy Swele.

As part of its preparations for Human Rights month contributions, Soweto Justice Centre embarked on a community radio campaign that included in-studio interviews at Eldos FM. Soweto Justice Centre Executive Mmeli Motsepe is a firm believer in community broadcasting. "It is definitely vital playing a crucial role of providing a voice for communities that aren't adequately serviced by other broadcasting sectors. It is a voice for those who are vision impaired, young people, seniors and emerging local musicians across all genres" said Mmeli. Mmeli describes community media in general to be making a significant contribution to media diversity, generating high levels of local content and providing a unique range of services. Such partnerships will benefit the community of Eldos and the surrounding areas.

LEGAL AID SA'S NEWCASTLE JUSTICE CENTRE PARTICIPATION IN THE CANCER RELAY FOR LIFE

Not even bad weather could deter Legal Aid SA citizens from Newcastle Justice Centre from participating in the Cancer Relay for Life event held in Newcastle recently.

The Cancer Relay for Life is the biggest fundraiser and cancer awareness event that brings communities and businesses together. The teams that participated in the relay walked from six at night until six in the morning, walking for 12 hours. According to CANSA, walking the relay during the night symbolises the dark hours patients of any type of cancer face while dawn represents hope.



Vincent Khumalo and Fikile Sibiya holding up the Legal Aid SA banner in support of the fight against cancer.

"It is the time to show support to cancer survivors, to acknowledge their fight against the disease and remember those who lost their lives to cancer. Newcastle Justice Centre Executive has been proudly participating in this fight against cancer for the past three years and we have joined in. We will continue to do so in the years to come," said Civil Lawyer Elisha Maharaj, who coordinated the project.

LEGAL AID SA APPEARANCE IN PARLIAMENT

The Leadership of Legal Aid SA appeared before the Portfolio Committee of Justice and Correctional Services on 14 October 2015 to brief the Members of Parliament about the organisation's annual performance 2014/2015. Reporting to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services in Cape Town, Legal Aid SA CEO Vidhu Vedalankar indicated that the organisation assisted nearly 800 000 poor and vulnerable people with legal aid services in the 2014 - 2015 financial year, and that the organisation remains on track to realise its vision of ensuring equality, justice and quality of life for all.

Legal Aid SA continues to play a leading role in ensuring access to justice for as many poor and vulnerable people - having assisted close to 4 million people in the last 5 years. "Our core purpose is to fulfil our Constitutional mandate and in doing so to have a meaningful impact on the lives of poor and vulnerable persons and ultimately on society, and I am satisfied that we have used our resources efficiently and effectively to achieve this," said Ms Vedalankar.

In a tough economic climate, with financial constraints and budget cuts, Legal Aid SA said its record of high performance within a good governance framework holds it in good stead to ensure that poor and vulnerable South Africans continue to access justice. During the 2014-2015 year, Legal Aid SA provided criminal and civil legal aid services to a total of 769 436 poor and vulnerable persons, 394 172 (88%) of which were criminal matters and 54 023 (12%) civil legal matters. The organisation also provided legal advice in 321 241 matters, with the Legal Aid SA Advice Line 0800 110 110, its Call Centre, providing advice in 42 886 (13 %) matters.

Legal Aid SA is also the legal representative of record in the majority of criminal appeal matters heard in the SCA. During the year under review, the organisation dealt with a total of 30 criminal appeals in the SCA and achieved successful outcomes for its clients in 23 (77%) of these appeals. In delivering on its commitment to protect and defend the rights of children, the organisation assisted children in 16 483 matters, of which 11 651 (71%) were children in conflict with the law and 4 831 matters were assistance to children in civil matters. We provided legal aid to children in 3 336 new preliminary inquiry matters. Through our monitoring and tracking system, we were able to keep track of children awaiting trial in custody to ensure that their matters are prioritised.

Continuing on its quest to give content to the Constitutional rights of all South Africans, the Impact Litigation Unit of Legal Aid SA handled 52 impact matters and recorded a success rate of 89% in 8 of the 9 matters finalised in the year under review. "The nature of the impact matters ensure that despite the low volumes, the outcomes impact more broadly than just on the specific clients assisted. These matters ensure that clients' Constitutional rights are enforced or protected and legal precedents impacting widely on our clients' rights have been achieved," said Ms Vedalankar.

"We are also pleased that we managed to deliver our programmes within our budget" said Ms Vedalankar, adding that the organisation spent 98,1% of its R1,638 billion budget allocated for the past year. Legal Aid SA has continued to work within a framework of rigorous financial management and good governance, resulting in its fourteenth (14th) unqualified audit. "We are very proud of an award from the Office of the Auditor-General of South Africa commending the organisation's clean audit status," said Ms Vedalankar.

This award is one of many that the organisation has under its belt, having received several other honours such as being accredited as one of the Top Employers 2015 by the Top Employer Institute for its sound human resource policies. For the 6th consecutive year, Legal Aid SA has been certified as a Top Employer in recognition of its operating at an international benchmark level on various HR measurement dimensions, equalling private sector companies, as being an industry leader amongst organisation operating within the public sector.

Being voted as the most preferred employer by law students in the 2014 - 2015 Universum Student Survey, conducted at 25 universities across South Africa has also confirmed the organisation's status as an employer of choice for young legal professionals.

Ms Vedalankar concludes that the 2014 - 2015 reporting year was one full of activities of national significance for Legal Aid SA, amongst them being the passage of the new Legal Aid South Africa Act (Act 39 of 2014) replacing the old Legal Aid Act (Act 22 of 1969). The new Legal Aid South Africa Act aligns to the democratic Constitution of RSA and ushers in a new era in the governance of Legal Aid SA.

Our Values

Ubuntu | Integrity
Accountability | People Centred
Service Excellence | Passion for Justice/
Protection of Human Rights

Legal Aid Advice Line:

0800 110 110

www.legal-aid.co.za



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