

LEGAL AID SA AND LEGAL AID BOTSWANA UNDERTAKE INFORMATIVE SYSTEMS WORKSHOP

On 6 February 2018, Legal Aid South Africa had an opportunity to engage with their counterpart from the national and regional management structures of Legal Aid Botswana. The main discussions in this information-sharing workshop was how both entities could improve and get feedback on existing and new systems of managing the workload of practitioners in both countries.

Mr Peter Brits and 10 regional systems managers from across Botswana all had an opportunity to ask questions of the new systems they are implementing. Mr Patrick Hundermark gave them an in-depth perspective of the systems employed by Legal Aid SA nationwide.

This workshop is one way that Legal Aid SA ensures it participates in the improvement of legal aid service delivery internally and amongst other foreign and neighbouring counterparts.



Legal Aid officials from both Botswana and South Africa during the morning session of the workshop

Legal Aid SA also participates in international forums and partnerships, such as the International Legal Aid Group (ILAG), the platform where legal

aid bodies from around the world engage in discussions to improve the service internationally.

LEGAL AID SA VEREENIGING OFFICE VISITS SHARPEVILLE RESIDENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

21 March 2018 – Through its Vereeniging Office, Legal Aid South Africa joined thousands of South African citizens and non-citizens in commemoration of the official Human Rights Day rally, held at the George Thabe Stadium, Sharpeville.

As an active partner in building justice systems and safer communities nationally, regionally and internationally, thus supporting access to justice for all, Legal Aid SA took part in the proceedings to provide legal information and education to communities on their rights and responsibilities.

Vereeniging Head of Office Mr Thami Manaba represented Legal Aid SA as a guest of the Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Nathi Mthethwa. The exhibition stand was manned by Vereeniging Office's Supervisory Legal Practitioner Ms Lorraine Masuku; Candidate Attorneys Ms Chwayita Dywili and Ms Tholwana Khakhathiba, and Legal Practitioner Ms Nontombi Ngcana. They were joined by Mr Boitumelo Boshupeng and Ms Kabelo Dolo from the National Office Communication Department.



Nontombi Ngcana and Lorraine Masuku giving legal advice to exhibition visitors



HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

LEGAL AID SA IS COMMITTED TO INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND CREATING A HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE ACROSS SOCIETY #BETHELEGACY



OUR VISION

A South Africa in which the rights and responsibilities enshrined in the Constitution are realised to ensure equality, justice and a better life for all.

RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE MENTAL HEALTH CARE USERS UPHELD

In a timely announcement just two days before Human Rights Day, retired Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke announced the award of the Life Esidimeni Alternative Dispute Resolution process. Open to the affected families, the public and all media, the arbitration proceedings started on 9 October 2017 and ended on 9 February 2018.

Legal Aid South Africa represented the survivors of the Gauteng Marathon Project, as well as their families, referred to in the Arbitrator's Award as mental care users who were inter alia "caused trauma and morbidity" but survived the Marathon Project. This is in line with the organisation's mandate to champion the rights of all persons to access justice through the provision of independent, accessible and quality legal aid services in criminal and civil legal matters.

The Legal Aid SA team, consisting of Advocate Lilla Crouse, Advocate Nzame Skibi and attorney Siyabonga Keka, argued that survivors receive R750 000 compensation for general damages; R1 million for constitutional damages and R20 000 per family for private counselling. Such an award would allow for equitable redress for the suffering that the vulnerable mental health care users and their families experienced.

Legal Aid SA welcomes the award as announced by retired Deputy Chief Justice Moseneke. Affirming our position that the mental health care users are "utterly vulnerable", he confirmed that the award for survivors and their families would be:

- R180 000 per claimant for general damages;
- R1 million per claimant for constitutional damages; with
- Government to make available the services of qualified mental health care professionals to provide counselling and support services for claimants and up to three members of claimants' families.

Furthermore, a memorial will be erected to remember all those affected by the Gauteng Marathon Project.

The organisation is very proud to have played a part in this dispute resolution process and is pleased that the rights of the vulnerable have been recognised and upheld – as emphasised throughout this process, the dignity of the survivors was grossly violated, with Justice Moseneke stating that "every element of the Gauteng Marathon Project trampled on human dignity".

This award goes some way to correcting



Legal Aid SA's Advocate Nzame Skibi with Section27's Advocate Adila Hassim

this terrible chapter in our country's history. Legal Aid SA shall continue to monitor the state's compliance with the award, and work towards ensuring that such a tragedy does not happen again.

Additionally, Legal Aid SA funds precedent-setting matters that promote the rights of vulnerable communities in impact litigation matters. The organisation funded Section27 and their representation of the deceased and their families at the Alternative Dispute Resolution; a key part of the delivery of Legal Aid SA's mandate to ensure access to justice for all.

BASIC LEGAL RIGHTS, OBLIGATIONS AND GENERAL SERVICES FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

During February 2018, Legal Aid South Africa took the opportunity to meet students from Rosebank College; University of Johannesburg; University of Pretoria and Avuxemi Computer Academy campuses to inform them about basic legal rights, obligations and general services they can utilise during their first year in the real world.

This period can be confusing for students, which has drawn many organisations to avail various support structures to first year students. The students took the opportunity to engage Legal Aid SA legal practitioners on a variety of issues such as sexual abuse and unlawful arrest. They were also advised to approach any office or call the toll-free Advice Line when faced with any legal query.

Many law students took the opportunity to ask Legal Aid SA Legal Adviser, Mr Kgabo Madiga, about the Candidate Attorney online application process. The Candidate Attorney

Recruitment Programme affords law graduates an opportunity to serve their articles and gain valuable experience.

Avuxeni Computer Academy students in Bochum, Limpopo, were given clear instructions on how to identify bogus colleges as this is also a serious issue that disadvantages prospective students. Students took the opportunity to further ask questions on their right to education and the rights that apply to them when registering at tertiary institutions.

Legal Aid SA Legal Advisor, Ms Althia Lewis, took the opportunity to present the services and mandate of the organisation to the students who gathered at the Rosebank College campus. At the University of Johannesburg, students engaged Legal Advisor Ms Thandiswa Maholwana about drafting wills for their family members at home.



Students engaging with Legal Aid SA

LEGAL AID SA PARTNERS WITH CITY OF EKURHULENI FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT

16 March 2018 – Legal Aid South Africa took the opportunity to join the City of Ekurhuleni at a Human Rights event targeting Tembisa and surrounding areas. The target audience, which received a range of legal advice and education, were the senior citizens of the community who often face issues relating to evictions, title deeds, estates and gender-based violence.

Stakeholders from the Gauteng Department of Human Settlements; The Master of the High Court; Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr; ProBono.Org and the Deeds Office of Johannesburg also briefed the elderly on their rights and responsibilities in terms of protection

of human rights and dignity. The audience was given an opportunity to ask questions and receive expert advice from lawyers and government officials. The elders expressed their thanks for the informative event by performing some choral music.

Legal Aid SA's guest speaker, Ms Belinda Maroga, gave the elderly detailed information on the role the organisation plays in courtrooms, especially relating to the criminal work Legal Aid SA does. She encouraged them to inform their children and other family members to contact Legal Aid SA legal practitioners in court and at their nearest office, when they require legal assistance.



A community member asks for information

LEGAL AID SA RESTORES RIGHTS OF MOTHER AGAINST UNFAIR EVICTION

On 12 January 2018, a mother of two minors approached Legal Aid South Africa to seek assistance when she was unfairly and forcefully restricted from entering her apartment and accessing the belongings inside. The client had an agreement with the landlord and was paying her lease after her estranged husband stopped paying the rent on the previous agreement related to the same apartment.



Legal Aid SA Civil Legal Practitioner Ramona Reddy, who represented the mother

Civil Legal Practitioner Ms Ramona Reddy made an urgent application to the Krugersdorp Court to stop the landlord from going through with unfairly evicting the woman and her children. The application was successful, with dignity and rights restored to the lives of the family, as the landlord afforded them one extra month to find a suitable place to stay and also offered to transport their belongings to their new home.

The urgency with which this matter was handled brought a positive end to this potentially troubling time for the mother and her two minor children who were preparing to start the new school year. "This matter is another sterling example of the work that Legal Aid SA performs. It encapsulates the caliber of the organisation's employees and the passion and pride with which we serve our clients to ensure that justice is carried out," says Ms Ramona Reddy.



Community members of Jouberton participated in the dialogues

LEGAL AID SA PARTICIPATES IN NW PROVINCIAL DIALOGUES

26 February 2018 – In support of the 365 days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign, Legal Aid South Africa honoured an invitation by the Department of Women to join discussions on how broader policies can stem the violence affecting the vulnerable in communities. The event was hosted in Jouberton, Klerksdorp.

The community members were addressed by the MEC of Social Development in the North West, Mr Hoffman Galeng, who said that dialogues were an important way to gauge progress made and, importantly, identify the challenges still faced in society. He further added that "dialogues are an opportunity for victims and perpetrators of this violence to interact to find solutions to root causes of the scourge".

In support of the provincial dialogues, Legal Aid SA legal and communication practitioners also engaged with the public, who inquired about the mandates of the organisation and how the service offering can improve their lives. Legal Aid SA further brought their service to the people by providing legal advice and consultations at the event, at no cost.



Stakeholders and officials at the Gauteng Provincial Stakeholder Forum

GAUTENG STAKEHOLDERS ASSIST IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LEGAL AID SA

01 March 2018 – Legal Aid South Africa's Gauteng Provincial Office held its annual Stakeholder Forum at the Law Reform Commission of South Africa. This Forum focused on informing stakeholders about Legal Aid SA's achievements for the 2016/2017 financial year, under the theme "Continued service excellence in a time of financial constraints". It was also aimed at engaging with various external stakeholders.

The event saw many Legal Aid SA officials present organisational information to the stakeholders in order to express how the organisation remains relevant and effective, despite the ever-declining budget which public entities receive. Gauteng Provincial Executive Advocate Wilna Lambley delivered the performance report for 2016/2017, with other officials briefing attendees on the organisation's brand strategy, as well as the Legal Aid SA Regulations and Manual.

As part of the engagement, stakeholders broke into groups and discussed how Legal Aid SA can improve its strategic plan and which innovative strategies can be used to improve on legal service delivery. Participants in the breakaway groups were glad to be part of the process of shaping the future of such a socioeconomically-focused organisation.

PRIMARY SCHOOL SCHOLARS RECEIVE ADVICE ON THEIR RIGHTS

Magatle Primary School learners in Lebowakgomo were visited by officials from Legal Aid South Africa and the Departments of Justice and Constitutional Development, and Social Development. The outreach event was meant to give information to pupils in order to empower them on the various rights they are entitled to as scholars and as citizens.

Paralegal Mr Bafana Gumede gave a detailed description of the work that Legal Aid SA does as a public entity. He also took the opportunity to further empower the pupils by speaking on matters relevant to them such as their right to education, maintenance and rights and obligations against sexual abuse.



Mr Bafana Gumede ready to address the scholars of Magatle Primary School

These partnerships with social and justice stakeholders at schools seek to provide helpful information to scholars as the year begins so that they can be aware of the services at their disposal, and seek assistance from the relevant authorities.

LEGAL AID SA ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN IN PICTURES



Directional and service-oriented billboard in Alexandra, Gauteng



Legal Aid SA's current TV commercial flying at taxi ranks



Call-to-action large static billboard in Namagale, Limpopo



Call-to-action walkway billboard in Kwa-Mhlanga, Mpumalanga



Legal Aid Advice Line news clocks on national TV



Introducing the new Please Call Me service in print media

LEGAL AID SA TZANEEN OFFICE HOSTS NON-LEGAL STAKEHOLDERS

Legal Aid South Africa continues to inform and engage communities and social stakeholders of the services of the organisation. An entire organisational and service background was recently presented by the staff of the Tzaneen Office. This type of engagement seeks to use relevant platforms to create more advocates to promote the services of Legal Aid SA.

An interactive dialogue took place, which advised those in attendance about their constitutional rights and how Legal Aid SA

plays a role in protecting those rights. The attendees confirmed that they utilise the services of the organisation when legal advice and representation is required, and that they are aware of the many services Legal Aid SA offers.

The stakeholders were encouraged to keep in touch with the Tzaneen Office to enable other community members to gain access to legal advice and representation. To grow the support for community-based organisations, the office staff offered to attend community meetings and



Tzaneen Office staff pictured with non-legal stakeholders

gatherings in order to build a more familiar relationship between the organisation and the community.