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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEGAL AID SA TACKLES HIV/AIDS AND TB STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

While South Africa has been relentless in its mission to turn the HIV/AIDS and TB infection rates around, the Human Sciences Research Council Stigma Index released at the SA AIDS 2015 Conference found that one-third of people living with HIV experienced stigma from their communities. An equal proportion of survey participants also reported experiencing tuberculosis-related stigma. Legal Aid South Africa (Legal Aid SA) plays an important role in ensuring protection from discrimination, getting redress for rights violations and supporting access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment services.

The Legal Aid SA Advice Line statistics show that people affected by HIV/AIDS and TB face discrimination related to their socio-economic situations, with the most troubling and prominent discrimination occurring in the workplace. During consultations with clients, Legal Aid SA Paralegals and Legal Practitioners have assisted people who experience isolation or ridicule by management or fellow colleagues. These matters prove that many employers in the country still do not consider stigma and discrimination against people with real or perceived HIV/AIDS and TB as a serious denial of basic human rights.

Access to legal aid services for people living with HIV/AIDS and TB, particularly those among already vulnerable populations, is essential for a more effective response to discrimination and stigma. In a bid to improve access to legal services, Legal Aid SA and the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) entered into a memorandum of understanding to promote access to justice for people living with HIV/AIDS and TB. This has helped to create a linkage between Legal Aid SA and SANAC's collaborating partners and provide quality legal advice and services in matters relating to HIV/AIDS and TB stigma and discrimination or related matters.

The partnership has seen over 500 clients consulted and/or assisted as part of the programme. Legal Aid SA Paralegals and Civil Legal Practitioners have been well-trained through a structured HIV/AIDS and TB Human Rights Education Programme to handle HIV/AIDS and TB discrimination and related matters.

Legal Aid SA offers legal assistance, at no cost, to individuals who have been discriminated against based on their real or perceived HIV or TB status. For advice, Contact the Legal Aid Advice Line on 0800 110 110.

– Ends –

Issued by the Communications Department of Legal Aid South Africa. For more information, please contact Legal Aid South Africa Communications Executive and National Spokesperson Victor Shabangu on 011 877 2056/066 301 6935 or the Media and Marketing Manager Godfrey Matsobe on 011 877 2382/066 481 6792

Visit our website at www.legal-aid.co.za or call the Legal Aid Advice Line on 0800 110 110