

UMLUNGISI

STAKEHOLDER NEWSLETTER

LEGAL AID SA JOINS VOICES FOR CHANGE AT NATIONAL GBV SUMMIT

People from different walks of society, international bodies and government, including Legal Aid SA officials, came together to discuss the continuous scourge of gender-based violence in the country and develop a way forward to tackle this. The National Gender-Based Violence Summit saw President Cyril Ramaphosa address attendees by stipulating that a multi-sectoral approach needs to be established to deal with both the causes and effects of gender-based violence, noting that government needs to restructure budgets to assist any structure which fights this cause.

Survivors and activists took the opportunity to make their voices and intentions heard. Discussions centred around the action needed to be taken against the perpetrators of gender-based violence, and the need for better support for survivors. Legal Aid SA was represented by National Legal Manager – Civil Ms Hanoneshea Hendricks and Gauteng Provincial Executive Advocate Wilna Lambley.



Left: Attendees at the National GBV Summit. Right: President Cyril Ramaphosa addressing the audience

LEGAL AID SA WELCOMES THE OPENING OF THE BOTSHABELO SEXUAL OFFENCES COURT

Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Advocate Michael Masutha, along with other major justice cluster stakeholders, officially launched the Botshabelo Sexual Offences Court in Free State. The court was launched with a specialised capacity of trained officials, and equipment that will assist in reducing secondary trauma for victims of sexual violence. The purpose of the court is

also to respond to the significant backlog of sexual offences reported.

Along with the launch of the court, Minister Masutha encouraged all government and non-government role players to contribute to the elimination of social ills in vulnerable communities. He added that the court will assist as a necessary intervention

in dealing with the increase in reported sexual offences.

Messages of support were delivered by key stakeholders in the justice value chain. Legal Aid SA's Free State/North West Provincial Executive, Mr Tshotlego Makamedi said: "We believe that the opening of this court fits into our organisation's strategic plan of client-focused legal aid delivery that proactively makes the justice system function more effectively."

Minister Masutha also had an Imbizo with the Botshabelo community, providing an opportunity for locals to interact with the Minister and various state departments.



Minister Michael Masutha (far right) officially launching the Botshabelo Sexual Offences Court

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.

Community members in the Nkomazi area (Langeloop) were invited by the Department of Social Development to participate in dialogues on the definition and effects of human trafficking in both their immediate area and greater society. The community dialogues were undertaken as a build-up programme to the official activities the Department will undertake in the province.

The dialogues gauged the view ordinary community members have of human trafficking, particularly the trafficking of children. The Nkomazi area in Mpumalanga was identified as it is close to the borders of Mozambique and Swaziland; two neighbouring countries linked to cases of human trafficking and related illegal activities.



Facilitators address community members

MALE ROSEBANK COLLEGE STUDENTS INSPIRED TO THINK AHEAD

The Braamfontein Rosebank College campus organised a seminar for male students at the institution to expose them to information which will improve their young lives and future career goals. An invitation was forwarded to experts in the financial, healthcare and legal industries in order to give the students expert perspectives of what they should look out for.

A Nedbank Branch Manager advised the students to use innovative ways to save money and share with those who are headed into an entrepreneurial direction the benefits of starting businesses. Supervisory Legal Practitioner from the Legal Aid SA Alexandra Local Office, Mr Fhimani Tshivhase, advised students not to engage in any criminal activity, in order to avoid criminal records and enter the real world as law-abiding citizens. Leadership SA motivational speaker, Mr Sibusiso Molimi, gave students a lesson in preparing for their opportunities.



Legal Aid SA's Fhimani Tshivhase engaging the students

WOMEN OF ORANGE FARM RECEIVE EMPOWERING LEGAL ADVICE



Legal Aid SA's Monica Muller (right) addressing the crowd.

Women in Orange Farm and the surrounding areas participated in a fruitful information session organised by ProBono.Org and the Orange Farm Human Rights Advice Office. The event saw leading stakeholders in the land and property rights and administration sector answer questions from community members and provide useful legal advice.

The stakeholders in attendance were the Deeds Registry in the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform; the Johannesburg Masters of the High Court and the Legal Aid SA Vereeniging Local Office. Legal Aid SA Civil Legal Practitioner, Ms Monica Muller, gave the audience the advice to not buy property using an affidavit or a direct money transfer with the home owner. She stressed that they "rather use a lawyer to make a purchase on the property because that way a contract can be put in place."

VISUALLY IMPAIRED CITIZENS ADVISED OF THEIR RIGHTS

Legal Aid SA honoured an invitation to speak and provide legal advice at the National Consumer Conference organised by the SA National Council for the Blind in Pretoria. More than 50 visually impaired and sighted delegates attended the conference, where stakeholders had a platform to address issues of unfair discrimination on the basis of visual disability.

Corporate Legal Manager at Legal Aid SA's National Office, Mr Solly Sekgota, presented on the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 (PEPUDA), Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) and Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 (PAJA) as instruments to claim one's rights. He emphasised the universal nature of human rights, noting that "no person may unfairly discriminate against any person on the ground of disability, including failing to eliminate obstacles that unfairly limit or restrict persons with disabilities."



Legal Aid SA's Solly Sekgota speaking at the National Consumer Conference

KP REACH DIALOGUE BUILDS RELATIONS AMONGST HIV/AIDS STAKEHOLDERS

The KP Reach Dialogue, supported by SAFAIDS leaders in the Health and HIV services sector, came together to assess progress and develop strategies of how to continue improving various elements in dealing with HIV/AIDS and the stigma surrounding it. Stakeholders present included provincial Departments of Health; HIV/AIDS NGOs and Legal Aid SA. Call Centre Manager, Mr Dennis Masango, from the Legal Aid SA National Office used the opportunity to brief attendees on the services the organisation offers those affected by HIV/AIDS.



Legal Aid SA's Dennis Masango addressing the stakeholders at the dialogue

The event served well to build relations and establish new contacts, which may assist in treating and servicing those affected by HIV/AIDS better and offer holistic solutions. The event also brought up the issue of how traditional and community leaders must play an important role in reducing stigma and educating people about HIV/AIDS.

SOUL CITY INSTITUTE PROVINCIAL TEAM INTRODUCED TO LEGAL AID SA

Legal Aid SA's Gauteng Provincial Communication Practitioner, Ms Lerato Phume, was invited to give an introduction of the services rendered by the organisation to the provincial administrators, coordinators and managers of the Soul City Institute at their Johannesburg National Office. This was as a result of the recent partnership undertaken by Legal Aid SA and the Soul City Institute to bring information on rights to communities across the country.

The two entities hope to use the partnership to combine their services and offer holistic solutions to the underprivileged communities, especially women and children, that the Soul City Institute aims to assist through their community initiatives.



Legal Aid SA's Lerato Phume addressing Soul City Institute staff

LEGAL AID SA'S LEGAL SUPERWOMAN

Legal Aid SA can boast of having a real-life heroine in its employ. Civil Legal Practitioner, Ms Thumeka Dwanya, from the Legal Aid SA Mthatha Local Office was praised for her steadfastness and boldness by a client, in a heartfelt letter. Thumeka assisted the client in a matter where she faced being dismissed from her job.

Ms Nomfundo Makhwenkwe, employed by the CPW programme as a cleaner, and another fellow cleaner at the same workplace had an argument which led to the other cleaner seeking a protection order against Ms Makhwenkwe. This order barred her from coming within close proximity to the other cleaner.

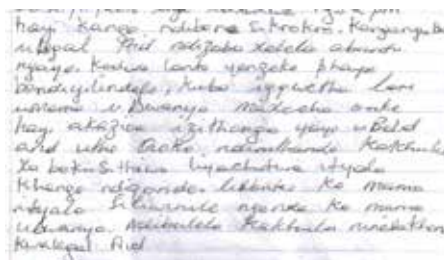
This meant that she could not come to work and this would lead to her dismissal for abscondment. Ms Makhwenkwe sought the assistance of Legal Aid SA and Thumeka took the case and applied for Absolution from the Instance.

Thumeka argued that there was no prima facie evidence to necessitate a protection order. She added that "the complainant also contradicted herself in court and brought new evidence which was proven to be untrue."

The Legal Aid SA client was absolved from the protection order in a trial held on 21 November 2018, and has now returned to work which led her to pen the heartfelt thank you letter.

In the letter she mentions that she never took Legal Aid SA lawyers seriously but she will now tell everyone who needs to know that Legal Aid SA has the best lawyers with unmatched litigation skills.

It was the urgency and respect of the law that compelled Thumeka to act in the best interest of the client who would have been disadvantaged by the actions of her fellow colleague. It is this care for the next person and desire to see all treated fairly under the law which helped Thumeka receive the Runner-up Civil Legal Practitioner of the Year Award in the Eastern Cape province.



*Left: Snapshot of the letter written by the client
Right: Legal Aid SA's Thumeka Dwanya*



Legal Aid SA's Gerenean Willard presenting to stakeholders

LEGAL EXPERT DISSECTS THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT AT FAMSA AGM

The East London branch of the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA) invited legal stakeholders, NGOs, government and business people to its Annual General Meeting (AGM), held under the theme, 'centred on violence towards women and violence within families'. Stakeholders had the opportunity to look at the organisation's Annual Report, its future plans and the relevance of the services it offers to the community.

Regional Court Legal Practitioner, Gerenean Willard, from Legal Aid SA's East London Local Office presented on the Domestic Violence Act, which was particularly pertinent to the AGM's theme. She mentioned types of domestic abuse and detailed the processes to be followed to obtain a protection order. Gerenean noted that "it is disconcerting that South Africa still records as a country with the highest incidents of domestic violence in the world."

GOEDEMOED PRISON LAW CLINIC ENCOURAGES INFORMATION SHARING

The Department of Correctional Services hosted a Law Clinic at Goedemoed Prison in Aliwal North in order to build capacity and awareness amongst all stakeholders in the justice cluster. The event is one way to encourage information sharing within state service networks, so as to debunk the notion of working in silos.

Stakeholders present included the SAPS, Department of Justice Maintenance Officers and Legal Aid SA. Civil Legal Practitioner, Ms Rentia Muller, from the Legal Aid SA Aliwal North Local Office presented and gave more information on maintenance and related matters.



Legal Aid SA practitioners Rentia Muller and Itumeleng Phalali at the prison Law Clinic

SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH EDUCATES COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON LEGAL SERVICES



Stakeholders and community members during the outreach event

Community members of Carletonville present at the Oberholzer Magistrate's Court had a brief introduction to state services, particularly SAPS and Legal Aid SA services, which help improve their everyday lives. Legal practitioners from the Legal Aid SA Potchefstroom Local Office were at the court to brief members of the public about how the organisation can help with maintenance matters, specifically spousal maintenance.

Civil Legal Practitioner, Ms Mariska van Wyk, spoke to the community members about the Legal Aid SA Advice Line and Please Call Me numbers, as well as the physical address of the nearest office to enable them to obtain legal advice at no cost. Community members were also given an opportunity to ask the stakeholders pertinent questions.

STAKEHOLDERS CONVERGE FOR THABA CHWEU MUNICIPALITY OUTREACH



The Legal Aid SA Bushbuckridge Satellite Office assisting the public

Various stakeholders in and around the Thaba Chweu Municipality gathered together to conduct community information sessions in areas they serve in the municipality. Stakeholders such as the NPA; the Departments of Justice, Correctional Services, Transport and Home Affairs; local NGOs and Legal Aid SA joined hands to educate the public and bring services together in one location for the public.

In addition to bringing government services to communities' doorsteps, the stakeholders also wanted to highlight the initiatives put in place by law enforcement authorities to fight crime in the area. The communities of Graskop and Sabie were amongst the first towns to benefit from this initiative. Community members, including traditional leaders, were encouraged to speak out against acts of violence.