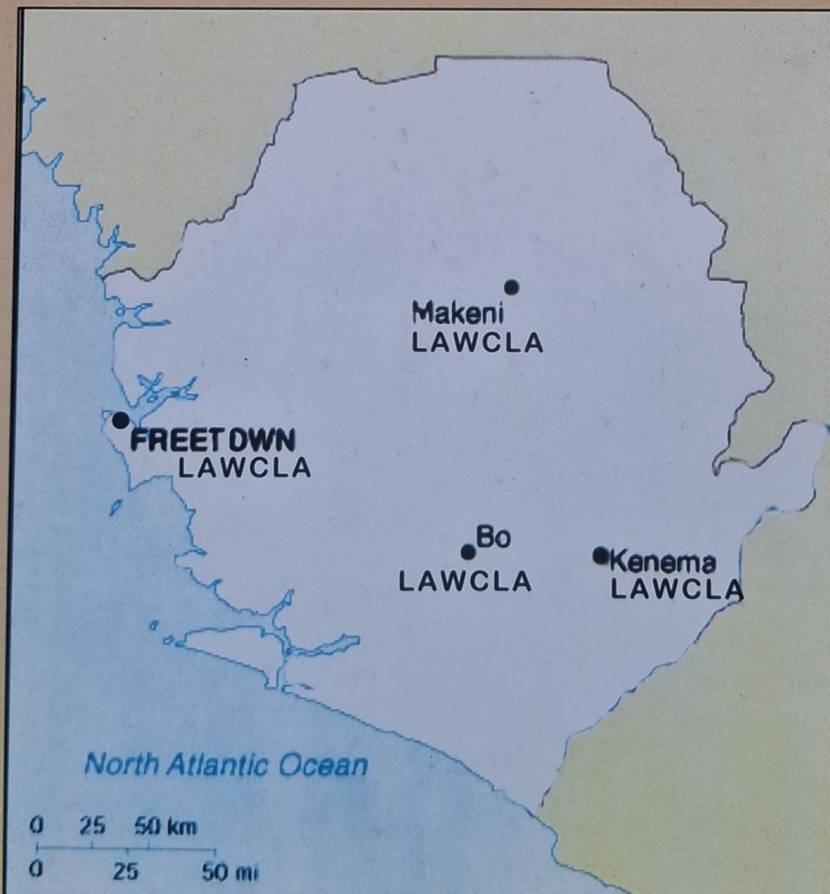


THE LAWYERS CENTRE FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE (LAWCLA)



Year Report



2001-2006

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Foreword

LAWCLA has been a trailblazer in Sierra Leone in the five years of its existence, in the fields of legal assistance, advice and representation. During this period, the Centre has carved a niche for itself in the hearts and minds of Sierra Leoneans within the country and in the Diaspora.

In the absence of any similar organizations operating within Sierra Leone, average citizens have come to look upon LAWCLA as the primary body promoting and protecting their rights nationwide. In particular LAWCLA has worked and continues to work to protect the weak, disabled and poor within our society.

As Chairman of the Advisory Board of LAWCLA, I congratulate the Director, Mr Melron Nicol-Wilson, and his team of dedicated and committed human rights activists for five years of success and I wish them continuing success in the years to come.



*Mr. Francis Gabbidon
Chairman, Advisory Board
Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance*

Introduction and overview of Report

Five Years ago the Lawyers centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA) was established with a mission to make the Law and Justice more accessible to indigent members of the public through Legal Advice, Impact Litigation and Research. This Report highlights the work of the Centre in fulfilling its mandate.

The Centre started its operations at a room provided to it by Mr Franklyn Kargbo at his Law Firm at 65 Siaka Stevens Street in Freetown. With a grant from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) in August 2002 the Centre was able to rent the premises it presently occupy at Old Railway Line, Brookfields. In November 2002 with funding from the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) the Centre was able to establish its Northern Province Regional Office in Makeni. Additional support from OSIWA led to the establishment of the Centre's Eastern and Southern Province Regional Offices in Kenema and Bo in 2003.

The Four units of the centre (Litigation, Gender Research & Advocacy, Juvenile Justice and Transitional Justice Units) successfully undertook a number of activities geared towards the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Sierra Leone in the last five years.

During the period under review, the Centre published a number of the research documents including a handbook on Discriminatory Laws against Women, A Handbook on Children in the Criminal Justice System, A Handbook for Paralegals in Sierra Leone, The Death Penalty in Sierra Leone-Time for Change, and the Need for the Establishment of a Legal Aid Board in Sierra Leone.

The Centre also regularly published its Annual Reports and half yearly Newsletters-LAWCLA NEWS as well as Newsletters on specific project such as BEHIND BARS (for the Prisoners Rights Project) and JUVENILE VOICE (for the Juvenile Justice Project).

The successful implementation of the Centre's programmes has in a large part been due to the continued dedication and hard work of most of our staff members, fellows and interns. I wish to thank them for their commitment and support during the period under review.

The Centre remained dependent upon donor funding for its activities due to the nature of its clients base and the public interests service it provides. I want to thank all our donors for their financial support and cooperation in all areas of our work without which we would not have been able to achieve so much within such a short period of time.

I also want to thank the Media for the crucial role played in publicizing the work of the Centre, thereby sensitizing members of the public about human rights issues in Sierra Leone and interventions by our institution.

Finally to God be the Glory, Great Things he has done.

I wish you all an enjoyable reading.



*Melron Nicol-Wilson
Director*

The History of the Formation of LAWCLA

The idea of the formation of a centre providing free legal services for poor people in Sierra Leone was conceived in 1997 by Melron C. Nicol-Wilson. In that year shortly after the Military Intervention by Major Johny Paul Koroma and other coupists, Melron Nicol-Wilson left Sierra Leone to seek refuge in Namibia, South West Africa. He arrived in Namibia on a one-month visitor's visa. Before the expiration of the visa he heard about a center providing free legal services for refugees and asylum seekers, called the Legal Assistance Centre. He then approached the center, which wrote several letters on his behalf to the Ministry of Home Affairs and succeeded in obtaining temporary asylum for him.

Impressed by the work of the Legal Assistance center not only in his case but also with several other cases, Melron nurtured an intention to form a similar center on his return to Sierra Leone after the Civil and Political Impasse.

On the 16th of December 1998, shortly after completing a Masters Degree in Human Rights Law at the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa, Melron returned home to consult with some of his colleagues on the need for the establishment of a free Legal Services Center. However before he could accomplish this aim an Armed invasion of Freetown on the 6th of January 1999 forced him to flee the country for a second time.

He traveled back to Namibia and South Africa and got involved in the refugee rights project of the Lawyers For Human Rights (Another Public Interest Human Rights Law Center) in South Africa. During this period he also taught human rights law and facilitated a training program on Human Rights for Law Enforcement Officials in Namibia.

Still determined to form a free Legal Services Centre in Sierra Leone he started communicating from Namibia with some of his colleagues in Freetown such as Ms. Hanatu Kabbah and Mr. Yada Williams. They supported the idea.

In February 2001 Melron returned to Sierra Leone in a desperate bid to establish what he then referred to as the "Legal Aid Centre". This name was later changed to the Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance after several meetings on the formation of the Centre at the

office of Mr. Yada Williams.

Based on the demands of his private Legal Practice and lectureship at the University of Sierra Leone Mr. Williams was unable to continue with discussions on the formation of the Centre.

The two remaining Lawyers, Melron Nicol-Wilson and Hanatu Kabbah then solicited the support of Mohamed P. Fofanah (then a counselor for Juvenile Justice with the Child's Rights Organization Defence for Children International Sierra Leone Chapter and Mr. Abdulai Charm (then an Intern at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania) in the formation of the centre. The two lawyers supported the idea and took part in further discussions and planning on the formation of the centre.

Melron C. Nicol-Wilson, Hanatu Kabbah, and Mohamed P Fofanah (as Abdulai Charm was still in Tanzania) then founded the centre informally in March 2001, by the provision of free Legal Advice and representation to poor people in Freetown.

After this informal start of the centre, the founders contacted the Human Rights Section of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone through the Rule of Law Specialist Mr. Raphael Abiem, about the formation of the centre and requested their support.

The Rule of Law Specialist then invited the founders to a meeting in which further modalities for the formal launching of the centre were discussed. Also present at that meeting was Mr. Ian Lax, a South African Human Rights Lawyer and member of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – NADEL in South Africa.

Sierra Leone's first Public Interest Human Rights Legal Aid Centre was then formally launched on the 27th of July 2001.

Melron Nicol-Wilson was appointed the Founding Director and Mr Francis Gabbidon as Chairman of the Advisory Board.

The Establishment of the Centre was welcomed by the Sierra Leonean populace especially the poor and marginalized. The Centre was referred to by many as the Voice of the Voiceless in Sierra Leone.

PROFILE OF LAWCLA AT ITS EARLY STAGE



OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE FOR WEST AFRICA
Helping West Africans to Build Open Societies

En Français (decembre 2002)



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From the field

Melron Nicol-Wilson, Sierra Leone

Fighting for Rights in Sierra Leone

Melron Nicol-Wilson's long workdays begin at 8am. As many as 40 people are often waiting outside small office of the Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA) in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. They are refugees and war-displaced Sierra Leoneans, young victims of child abuse and the elderly disabled and the unemployed. Word of mouth brought them to Sierra Leone's first legal aid center dedicated to protecting the rights of the poor. LAWCLA finds many more clients in the holding cells of Freetown's overcrowded Central Prison.

Demand for legal representation among a poor and largely illiterate population is enormous. But needs are virtually everywhere in a country emerging from a brutal 10-year civil war and decades of misrule. Donor nations, international organizations, and the country's civil society groups have focused legal efforts—and funding—on the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which are key to providing accountability for past abuses and respect for the rule of law during Sierra Leone's transition from war to peace. LAWCLA is deeply concerned with transitional justice, but remains best known as one of the few places where the poor can turn for tangible legal help. "One cannot talk about human rights without the legal means to protect them," said Nicol-Wilson.

The situation is so bad that remand prisoners...frequently change their pleas from 'not guilty' to 'guilty' to be removed from the remand home to the better areas of the prison.

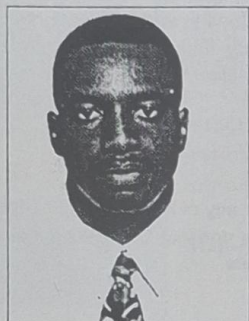
A lifelong resident of Freetown, Nicol-Wilson committed himself to human rights issues during the junta that ruled from 1992 to 1996 as the war raged. At Fourah Bay College in Freetown, he researched his senior thesis in 1995 on how detainees were largely denied their constitutional rights.

Soon after he graduated from Sierra Leone Law School in 1997, however, disgruntled soldiers seized power from the democratically elected government and brought in rebels to share power. As an ex-Sierra Leonean with a reputation for investigating human rights abuses, Nicol-Wilson was a potent target of the new regime and fled to neighboring Guinea along with tens of thousands of other Sierra Leoneans. As a refugee, he pursued a master's degree in human rights law in South Africa.

A month after Nicol-Wilson returned home in December 1998 came the war's worst attack on Freetown, what residents call "January 6," shorthand for the day when the siege began. Houses were burned down. Rapes were common. Rebels hacked off the limbs of over 100 civilians. Government troops and West African peacekeepers carried out summary executions of suspected rebels.

After that, my colleagues and I were interested in creating a center to protect human rights through the law, Nicol-Wilson said. In 2001, he quit his job as a lawyer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and established the nonprofit LAWCLA along with three other lawyers. With only a vague promise of funding from the United Nations, they set up a cramped office in a room lent to them by a firm in Freetown's downtown, which was busy rebuilding even as charred and bullet-pocked facades were a reminder of "January 6."

"Each lawyer heads one of the four units, which broadly set out LAWCLA's priorities for research and advocacy—litigation, transitional justice, juvenile justice and advocacy, and gender research and advocacy. All of the lawyers provide legal aid.



Meron Nicol-Wilson

One of their first clients was a security guard of the parastatal Sierra Leone Ports Authority who had been fired after refusing to take part in a theft orchestrated by his superiors in 1991. The client, who was unable to work as a result of the dismissal, received \$6,000 in compensation in an out-of-court settlement. "Since that victory in April [2002] and the publicity it received in the media, we are now dealing with 25 unlawful dismissal cases," said Nicol-Wilson.

Less sensational cases are nonetheless vital in indigent clients' lives. LAWCLA protected the rights of a 16-year-old petty trader whose estranged mother threatened to force her to undergo a female secret society initiation involving genital mutilation, street children who were arrested for breaking curfew, and other youth who were sent to the Central Prison at Pader Road instead of a juvenile detention center. LAWCLA's paralegals regularly visit overcrowded holding cells like those in Kissy Mess Police Station on Freetown's east side to find poor people who have been denied a fair trial. "During the state of emergency [which ended in March 2002], people were detained 15 months without trial," said Nicol-Wilson.

"The public and other lawyers criticized LAWCLA for representing clients pro bono, charging it with 'encouraging crime,' said Nicol-Wilson. But as LAWCLA successfully defended the rights of poor Sierra Leoneans, it gained recognition in the streets and local press. So many clients were coming to the office, which a colleague's law firm had provided free of charge, that LAWCLA was forced to move. "We thought we were undercutting their practice because we were providing services for free," he said.

In February 2002, LAWCLA moved to the office on Old Railway Line, appropriately wedged between the justice ministry and Brookfield, which is one of Freetown's many destitute neighborhoods. The law firm's four paralegals, and four interns share two long desks and—in between Freetown's frequent power shortages—a single computer. Initially, the lawyers themselves covered expenses.

"In 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was finalizing funding for 18 months, which will enable LAWCLA to establish posts outside of Freetown. In many towns, such as the former rebel stronghold Makeni, the courts have not functioned for years—and running water and electricity had halted even before the war. LAWCLA plans to hire paralegals to work in Bo, Kenema and Makeni, three of the four principal towns after Freetown.

The prison was built during colonial days to accommodate 220 inmates and now houses about 1,000 inmates

LAWCLA was able to cover expenses—including back rent—at the Freetown office thanks to an emergency grant from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). Separately, OSIWA is funding a study of all detainees and the conditions of all of Sierra Leone's prisons and police stations. "The conditions in the prisons in this country are appalling," Nicol-Wilson said. "We make frequent visits to Central Prison where prisoners die every day from malnutrition and lack of medical facilities. The prison was built during colonial days to accommodate 220 inmates and now houses about 1,000 inmates. The most congested part of the prison is the remand home, where the population of persons on trial and those awaiting trial should be presumed innocent. Yet they suffer more than those who have been found guilty. The situation is so bad that prisoners that we represent in court frequently change their pleas from 'not guilty' to 'guilty' to be released from the remand home to the better areas of the prison." LAWCLA planned to produce a 30-minute

documentary of prison conditions to accompany its final report on prison conditions.

Because of its work on the front lines in the struggle for rights, LAWCLA has a unique perspective on Sierra Leone's efforts to prevent future conflict by bringing to justice those responsible for the war, reconciling, and reforming the justice system and security forces. As head of the center's Transitional Justice Unit, Nicol-Wilson researches and writes on the Special Court and TRC. In September, LAWCLA was preparing recommendations on reparations for war victims. LAWCLA's greatest contribution to peace in Sierra Leone will be its continued efforts to ensure that rights are afforded to all members of society. Indeed, for all the claims that diamonds fueled Sierra Leone's war, it was decades of misrule and injustice that made the country ripe for insurrection. ■

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LAWCLA'S 5TH ANNIVERSARY

The work of the Four Units of the Centre

THE LITIGATION UNIT



This unit is mainly responsible for litigating on cases dealing with human rights abuses and violations of male adults whose cases do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Transitional and Economic Justice Unit, Juvenile Unit or the Gender Unit. The Unit is also responsible for pursuing strategic constitutional test cases in the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone and other similar institutions for the protection of Human Rights and the undertaking of impact litigation on behalf of indigent individuals and groups.

Major activities undertaken by the Unit



- The Centre has commenced work on three major constitutional test cases. The most important of these is to challenge the Seditious Libel Provision of the Public Order Act of 1965, which is in contravention of Section 25 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone safeguarding Freedom of Expression. The Centre views the application of this provision of the Public Order Act of 1965 as an outright violation of the 1991 Constitution.

- The Centre in conjunction with the Centre for Capital Punishment Studies based at Westminster University, UK, is putting together an argument to challenge the mandatory aspect of the death penalty in the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone.

- The Centre under its impact litigation project also intervened in the case of the Westside Boys and former members of the Revolutionary United Front who hitherto had been incarcerated for five years without Trial. As a result of our intervention the cases were expedited and over ninety percent of those standing trial were acquitted for lack of evidence on the part of the prosecution.



Major cases dealt with by the Unit

- The Centre intervened in the case of **Inspector General of Police v Brima Sesay and others** where the defendants were charged with loitering; an offence, which upon conviction under Sierra Leonean Law is punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding one month. The defendants were arrested on the 8th of September and held in detention until October 2nd 2001. Upon their second appearance in Court circumstances forced a change to their initial not guilty plea, as further prolonged adjournments were feared as well as the harsh conditions at the Remand Home. Following their guilty pleas they were fined Ten Thousand Leones each (Le 10,000).



- The Centre intervened at its formative stage in the matter involving **Mr Alusine Sillah**, a Guinean, who only spoke French and Madingo. Mr Sillah was incarcerated for seven months and accused of the illegal possession of diamonds but was acquitted after LAWCLA's intervention.

Cont. on pg. 12

- The Centre also intervened in the case of **Sheikh Abass Turay**, a motor mechanic charged with larceny. He was detained for three months unable to obtain a surety for bail and the complainant in the case failed to turn up on eleven occasions to pursue the matter. With the Centre's intervention Sheikh Abass Turay was released on bail.

- **Abubakar Kamrbai Samura vs. the Sierra Leone Ports Authority.**

The Sierra Leone Ports Authority in this case employed the complainant as security personnel on 12th January 1991. The complainant alleged unfair dismissal after being dismissed by the company on a one-day notice on the 17th August 1991. LAWCLA sent a formal letter to the Legal Retainer of the Company requesting that Mr Samura be compensated, a copy of the letter was also sent to the Port's Management. In acknowledging receipt of LAWCLA's letter, the company admitted that: "we have no legs to stand on in this matter". Mr Samura was paid the sum of Thirteen Million Leones (Le13, 000,000) equivalent to \$6000 as compensation for unlawful dismissal.

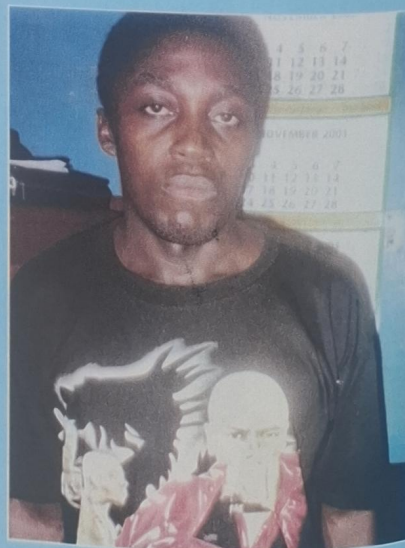
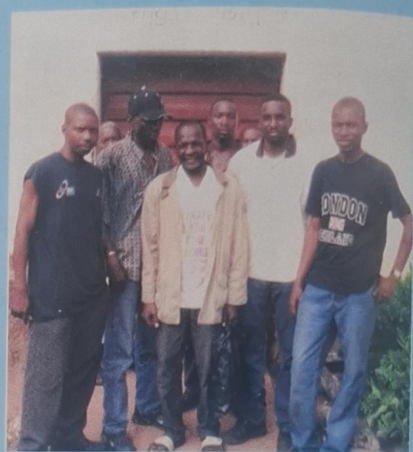
- **Inspector-General of Police vs. Sewa Bockarie Marrah.** In this case the Centre represented a Police Officer who was allegedly assaulted by then majority leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party in Parliament

- **The Inspector General of Police vs. Sheik Umaru Bah.** LAWCLA intervened in this case through a writ of Habeas Corpus and secured the release of the accused after 27 months in detention at the Kenema Prison.

- **The State vs. Tamba Jimmy Kay.** LAWCLA intervened in the murder trial of the accused who was detained for over 80 days at the Congo Cross Police Station. The trial process was expedited and Tamba Jimmy Kay was subsequently acquitted and discharged.

- **Inspector General of Police vs. Alimamy Sesay.** The accused was charged with wounding under the Offences Against the Person's Act of 1861 and freed after three years in prison following LAWCLA's intervention. The Director of the Centre, Mr Melron Nicol-Wilson, represented the accused, discovering that Alimamy Sesay had made over fifteen appearances without the Prosecution turning up for the trial. He successfully argued that the fundamental rights of the defendant had been trampled upon as result and that the prosecution had failed to prove a case against his client.

- **Inspector General of Police vs. Dusu Bah.** LAWCLA's intervention in this case came about during a periodic routine visit to Police Stations and Police Posts countrywide. The accused, a 22-year-old mother with a sixteen-month-old baby, was arrested whilst visiting a friend around Percival Street and taken to the Central Police Station where she was detained for street trading. After LAWCLA's intervention, the accused was cautioned and subsequently released.



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- **The State vs. the Marah's.** Three accused persons standing trial for murder were acquitted and discharged after spending 3 years in prison. LAWCLA intervened in the matter and pursued it to its logical end.
- **Sandor Chieftaincy Dispute.** LAWCLA intervened in this dispute as part of its "impact litigation" initiative. The case centered around an allegation made by certain individuals claiming rights to the throne in question, accusing the Provincial Secretary North, Mr. A.B.S. Samura, of disenfranchising them after he prevented the claimants from contesting the Chieftaincy Election.
- **LAWCLA accepted the case of a group of over two hundred Nigerians** belonging to the "Biafrans Rising Sun" who sought assistance from the Centre in liaising with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees so that they could be granted refugee status in Sierra Leone.
- **The Grafton Community People** benefited from the services of LAWCLA after the Centre responded on their behalf to a writ seeking possession of their communal land.
- **The State vs. Edna Marsh:** In this case, the 22-year-old defendant was charged with child stealing and committed to the High Court on the 18th November 1999. Before she was remanded she had a perfect vision but lost her sight while in detention. After several appearances without the presence of the State Prosecutor, the defendant appeared once again on the 4th March 2004 before Justice Ademusu at the Freetown High Court No.2, this time represented by the Director of the Centre. Bail was sought on the grounds that the State Prosecutor had made an error of law in charging the defendant with child stealing at the initial stage, and further, even after the charge was subsequently changed to false imprisonment, the defendant had already spent more time incarcerated than the period required if convicted. The defendant was eventually admitted to bail after spending five years in jail.
- **The State vs. Salamatu Kamara.** This case involved a female who had inadvertently, caused the death of her boyfriend. The defendant benefited from the services of the Centre and was eventually acquitted.



THE GENDER RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY UNIT

This Unit is primarily responsible for dealing with cases relating to Gender issues and advocating for the promotion of Women's Rights and the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. The most prominent cases referred and dealt with by the Unit are Rape and other forms of sexual abuse especially for victims below the age of 18 years. Other issues such as maintenance and child support, divorce and child abuse are also dealt with. Apart from giving legal advice and representation, the Unit is also responsible for Research on Gender issues.

Major activities undertaken by the Unit

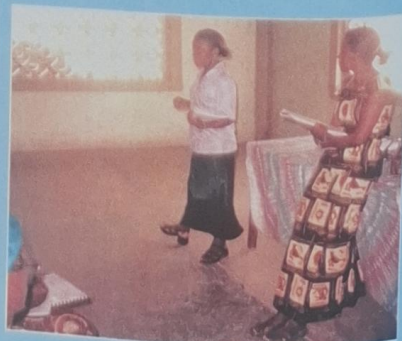
- In October 2004 the Centre also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE). The rationale for this MOU is the provision of reciprocal referrals between LAWCLA and FAWE. LAWCLA is able to provide the necessary legal advice to rape victims while FAWE can provide services for the psychosocial repercussions suffered by victims.
- Between November and December 2005, the Centre was contracted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to train Police Prosecutors on the prosecution of sexual offences. Sixty Police Prosecutors from the Western Area, Northern Province, Southern Province and Eastern Province were trained during this exercise.
- The Unit also benefited tremendously during the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Project, allowing greater assistance to be offered to female juveniles, those in conflict with the law and those needing its care and protection.
- The Centre in collaboration with 50/50 Group and The Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE) with financial support from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in the United Kingdom during the period under review implemented a project on Advocacy for the reform of discriminatory laws against women in Sierra Leone.

The project specifically aims at the following:

- Production of an abridged and simplified Handbook on Discriminatory Laws against Women.
- Sensitization of the Sierra Leonean populace through the Media about the existence of Discriminatory Laws against Women.
- Consultations with the Law Reform Commission and Parliament in order to lobby for a reform of such Discriminatory Laws against Women and the Domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Advocacy for review of constitutional provisions sanctioning discrimination against Women in Sierra Leone.

In implementing the project, the consortium produced a Handbook and held consultations with the Law Reform Commission, the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs.

A weekly Saturday radio discussion program on specific themes were also aired at the Radio Democracy F.M. 98.1.



The Centre's Offices

THE HEAD OFFICE

After the establishment of the Centre in March 2001, it began operations from a single room, provided by Mr Frank Kargbo at Siaka Stevens Street in Down Town Freetown. The primary objective of the founding members was address the deplorable human rights situation in the country and the limited access to Justice and the Law by the majority of victims of Human Rights Abuses and violations especially indigent members of the society.

The establishment of the Centre was welcomed within a system where legal aid was an alien concept and indigent individuals started to benefit from its pro-bono services. In the maiden edition of LAWCLA's Half Yearly Newsletter- LAWCLA NEWS Volume 1, scathing revelations were made relating to human rights abuses in the country confirming the need for the Centre's existence. From its small office space at Kargbo & Co. much was achieved.

With the Centre's popularity soaring at every tick of the clock, LAWCLA started to receive more clients than its single office space could accommodate. This precipitated the search for a more spacious office, which was eventually discovered at 15D Old Railway Line, Brookfields in February 2002.

Major activities undertaken by the Head Office in Freetown

The Prisoners Rights Project

This project was funded by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and was intended to benefit Prisoners and Detainees throughout the country. LAWCLA visited most of the detention centres countrywide, interviewing those imprisoned and providing legal advice and representation.

Legal Awareness Program

This Program which was Launched in July 2002, was a collaborative work between LAWCLA and the University of British Columbia branch of the Canadian Lawyers Association for Human Rights. The aim of the Project was to educate litigants especially accused persons about their rights in Court especially the right to Bail. Specifically, posters were displayed in conspicuous sites within Police Stations and Courtrooms throughout the Country educating accused persons about their rights .

The Paralegal Training

In February 2004 the Centre implemented a joint project with Global Rights (formerly the International Human Rights Law Group) for the training of paralegals countrywide. Forty paralegals were trained in each of the three pilot towns of Kabala, Kono and Kailahun. As a means of enhancing the capacity of the Centre's Staff, its own paralegals were also trained as part of this program in addition to other key office staff

The Juvenile Justice Project

The Juvenile Justice Project commenced in August 2004, and LAWCLA's Head Office coordinated the implementation of the project countrywide. Probation Officers, Police Officers, Prison Officers, Local Court Clerks and Justices of the Peace were trained in the domestic and international laws in place to protect juveniles in conflict with the law. Juveniles in conflict with the Law benefited from free legal advice and representation from the Centre as part of this project.



The Northern Province Regional Office

The Centre established its Northern Province Regional Office based in Makeni in November 2002. This office was established due to a grant from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. Its establishment was lauded by the Paramount Chief of Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, Bai Shebora Kasanga II and his subjects as a blessing to the Chiefdom.

The opening ceremony attracted a large number of people who were keen to witness the birth of a Legal Aid Centre in their township shortly after a long occupation by armed insurgents. Addressing guests and subjects at 7 Lady's Mile Makeni, the Paramount Chief encouraged his people to do everything humanly possible to support LAWCLA.

In his address the Chairman of the Occasion, Mr. Abdulai Charm, stressed the need to protect and promote the interests of the inhabitants of the township through law. Also at the ceremony it was revealed that LAWCLA was determined to establish offices all over the country irrespective of region or tribe. Various speakers, including Raphael Abiem, the Human Rights & Rule of Law specialist for the then UNAMSIL, made statements on the significance of the establishment of the office.

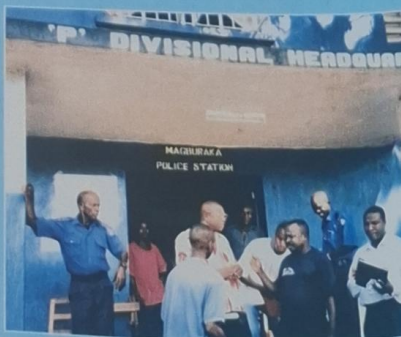
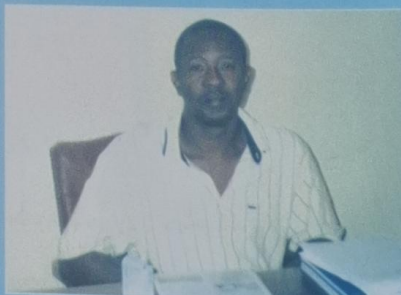
Major activities undertaken by the Northern Province Regional Office

Since the establishment of the Northern Provincial Regional Office in Makeni, the services of the Centre have been sought on an almost daily basis. The Prisoners' Rights Project, funded by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), benefited Prisoners and Detainees in the region as LAWCLA worked to decongest detention centres within the township and its environs.

In July 2002 LAWCLA launched the Legal Awareness Project, which also benefited the Northern Province especially Makeni. Posters were displayed in conspicuous sites within police stations and Courtrooms educating people about their rights to bail.

In February 2004 the Centre implemented a joint project with Global Rights (formerly the International Human Rights Law Group) for the training of paralegals countrywide; paralegals within the regional office were trained in building their capacity in the execution of their official functions. Two paralegals in the Makeni office received training and awarded certificates accordingly.

In August 2004 the Centre initiated a Juvenile Justice Project countrywide. Child friendly institutions, probation officers, police officers, prison officers, local court clerks and Justices of the Peace received training on the treatment of juveniles within the formal justice system. Juveniles in the Makeni region who had been victims of human rights abuses also benefited from the Centre's services under this Project, which ran for over twelve months.



The Southern Province Regional Office



LAWCLA commenced operations in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone shortly after the formal launching of its office in Bo on the 28th August 2003. The establishment of this office was financially supported by OSIWA under its Prisoners Rights Project. The Paramount Chief of Kakua Chiefdom, Bo District, P.C. Rashid Kamanda Bongay IV who was a special guest at the opening ceremony stated that the ceremony was a special event and an opportunity for the people of Bo to host an institution that was ready to defend the rights of those unable to afford to solicit the services of lawyers.

The establishment of the Southern Province Regional Office was attended by number of important personalities including the Chairman of the Occasion and LAWCLA Board Member Mr. David Tam Baryoh who commended LAWCLA for initiating the provision of legal services to the indigent members of the Bo community. In his statement, the Chairman opined that access to justice is an essential ingredient for the proper functioning of the judicial system in the Country. He noted that the majority of those whose rights are infringed upon are prevented from seeking justice because they lack the financial means to pursue such matters in Court.

Speaking on behalf of the judiciary, the resident Magistrate in Bo, Mr. Manga-Fannah Deen Tarawallie, commended LAWCLA for providing such an opportunity to the people of the district. He observed that most cases were delayed in Court due to the fact that the accused person were not represented by Lawyers

Mr. Henry Sandy, who until his recent appointment as a Magistrate was the Regional Co-ordinator of the LAWCLA Office in Bo, made clear that the Centre was not formed to separate families or to support criminals or people who violate the law, but to interpret and seek to give effect to the laws that govern every citizen of the country.

Major activities undertaken by the Southern Province Regional Office

Since the establishment of the Southern Regional Office in Bo, inhabitants within the township have benefited tremendously from the services that are being rendered. The Legal Education Project, a joint venture by LAWCLA and the Canadian Lawyers Association for International Human Rights to educate litigants, accused persons and the general public about their rights in Court, was extended to the district and the Bo community benefited tremendously from the venture.

The Prisoners' Rights Project was also extended to Bo and key police stations; posts and the main Prison itself were targeted by the Centre to ensure that mechanisms were in place to decongest these detention centres. The Centre, through the efforts of its Regional Co-ordinator Henry Sandy, and paralegal Hannah Lavahun, achieved a lot under the Project, providing legal advice and representation to hundreds of accused persons and detainees within the township.

In February 2004 the Centre trained paralegals in the Bo Office to enable them to give basic legal advice or legal first aid to clients. Those trained are now passing on knowledge to their townsmen who are not well grounded in the law.

In August 2004, the Juvenile Justice Project commenced and Justices of the Peace, court clerks, local court officials, prison wardens, police officers and child friendly institutions were trained on the treatment that should be accorded to juveniles suspected or convicted of being in conflict with the law.

The Eastern Province Regional Office

The centre established its Eastern Provincial Regional Office in Kenema few weeks after the establishment of its Southern Province Regional Office in Bo. The Kenema Office, situated conspicuously in the township at No. 25 Combema Road has been co-ordinated since its inception by Ansumana I. Sesay Esq. Upon his appointment as Regional Coordinator, Mr Sesay gave assurances to LAWCLA's Director that he would decongest Kenema Prison and all police posts and stations that were at the time unlawfully remanding and detaining suspects beyond the entrenched constitutional time-limits.

At the Kenema Office, the Regional Coordinator was assisted by a vibrant paralegal, John B. Sevallie, who has been successful in settling several matters out of Court.

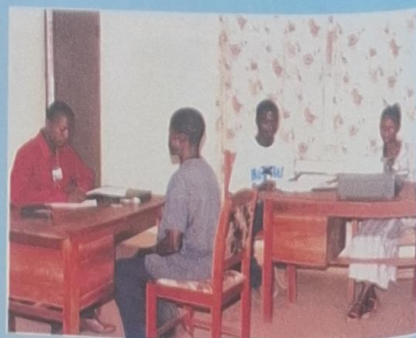
Major activities undertaken by the Office

LAWCLA's Legal Education Project was launched in Kenema with Posters posted in all Police Stations within the township on the rights of the Accused Persons in Court and Nine questions about bail. The main purpose of this project was to inform litigants and the general public that bail is free and that no money should be paid for one to enjoy this right.

In 2002 the centre completed a data collection exercise for the implementation of the Prisoners' Rights Project. All Police Stations and posts throughout the country including the Prison itself were targeted to ensure that they were decongested. The Centre through the efforts of its Regional Co-ordinator Ansumana I. Sesay and Paralegal John B. Sevallie were instrumental in their strides to provide legal advice and representation to hundreds of Accused persons and detainees within the township.

In February 2004 the Centre collaborated with Global Rights (formerly International Human Rights Law Group) to train Paralegals, Community Based Organisation (CBO's), Paramount Chiefs, Courts Clerks and Human Rights Monitors. During this process, inhabitant within the township received training to give basic legal advice in areas where lawyers are not available.

In August 2004 the Centre started a twelve months project on the LEGAL protection and promotion of Juvenile Justice in Sierra Leone and the Kenema office played a vital role in its implementation as the Paralegal John B. Sevallie intervened, monitored and even sensitized school children about their rights and responsibilities.



THE JUVENILE JUSTICE UNIT



The Juvenile Justice Unit of the Centre focused essentially on "Protecting and Promoting Child Rights through Law" a variation of the Centre's motto designed to adapt to the felt needs of the Unit. Its foremost objective is to assist juvenile offenders below 18 years of age whose parents/guardians could either not afford the services of lawyers or have abandoned them, and secondly to prosecute or assist in the prosecution of offences perpetrated against children including reported cases of carnal abuse of children, child torture and other forms of cruelty to children, and reported cases of child neglect and/or abandonment. In a non-litigious way too, the Juvenile Justice Unit has, through legal correspondence, addressed issues of maintenance for neglected and/or abandoned children and their mothers and issues of child custody pursued by single parents or guardians seeking the best interest of their children/ward.

Also, the Unit has, through various interchanges and discussions at seminars, conferences and public debates, advocated for the promotion of child rights at all levels of society, Constitutional and Customary Law responsibilities by adults (especially parents/guardians) to children as a basis of national development, have been emphasized.

Major activities undertaken by the Unit

- Between August 2004 and July 2005 the Unit implemented a countrywide Juvenile Justice Project entitled, "*Legal Protection of Juveniles and the Promotion of Juvenile Justice in Sierra Leone*". This Project, kindly funded by an anonymous Foundation, consisted of the following activities:
 - An assessment of the law and practice relating to the treatment of juvenile offenders in Sierra Leone through research, data collection and on the spot checks.
 - A consultative workshop with local experts and groups dealing with juveniles in Sierra Leone in order to ascertain the nature of the problems at hand and the needs of juveniles in the country.
 - Legal advice and representation of juvenile offenders throughout Sierra Leone through the Centre's Head Office and the three Regional Offices in Makeni, Bo and Kenema.
 - Workshops and consultations with law enforcement officials and social workers dealing with juvenile offenders, with the aim of ensuring that the law (and in particular the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)) is applied sensitively in relation to the treatment of juvenile suspects.
 - Advocacy for reform of the laws relating to the treatment of juveniles in Sierra Leone through quarterly publications and the lobbying of Parliamentarians.

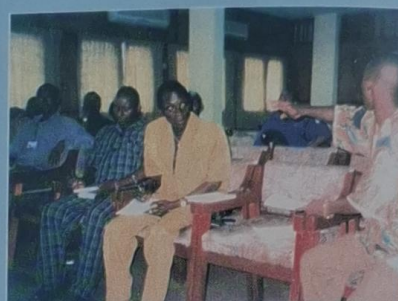
At the completion of the Project, a total of four hundred and ninety-nine Juveniles had been interviewed and two hundred and sixty-nine provided with legal representation and psychosocial services. Forty-five cases were amicably settled out of Court.

- The Juvenile Justice Unit has close working relationships with a host of child friendly institutions such as UNICEF, Faith Consortium, NACWAC as well as The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and many more. The Unit is committed to working concertedly in ensuring that the welfare and interests of children are treated with the seriousness they deserve.



Major cases dealt with by the Unit

- The case of **K. Kargbo** who spent eleven months in prison for a wounding charge. In fact, a soldier opened fire at him after an argument ensued over an unpaid debt and it was this, which resulted in the wounding of a passer by. At the initial stage of proceedings, both Kabba and a soldier were arrested but the latter was released whilst the juvenile languished for eleven months until LAWCLA intervened and secured his release.
- **The State vs. M. Koroma.** In this case, LAWCLA represented 16-year-old from Yadia Village, Sengbeh Chiefdom, Koinadugu District in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone, who was arrested on the 24th of April 2001, for allegedly murdering one Sammeh Sesay. The Centre represented him and several interventions were made including an important request by LAWCLA for his transfer from the Pademba Road Prison to the Juvenile Remand Home.
- The Centre intervened in the matter of **K.T.** a 13-year-old Sierra Leonean residing in the Provincial Town of Kenema, who was sexually assaulted by a man in his mid- 40s.
- LAWCLA importantly took up a case involving a juvenile offender detained with 13 adults. The Centre intervened in this matter in order to represent the juvenile offender and also to point out to the Juvenile Court about the danger of detaining adults with juveniles. Such practice is contrary to both local and international legal standards.
- **D.K.** In this case, LAWCLA represented a 15-year-old boy who was allegedly arrested for conspiring with 2 other boys to steal a cell phone.
- **V.K.** Here, LAWCLA represented a 16-year-old juvenile who was a Cart Pusher in Bo. He was charged with loitering and detained. Following the Centre's intervention the offender was cautioned and released.
- **S.K.** LAWCLA intervened in this case on behalf of a juvenile offender standing trial for murder. The 16-year-old Offender, hailing from the Eastern Provincial Town of Kenema was alleged to have killed Rahim Koroma. The offender however maintained that the alleged victim fell down whilst they were playing together.



This Unit is mainly responsible for undertaking and publishing research on a range of issues pertaining to Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone such as the Special Court, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Reparation for Human Rights Abuses, the Relationship between the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the impact of the Special Court on the National Courts. The unit is also responsible for providing legal advice and representation to victims of unfair Labour practices.

Major activities undertaken by the Unit

- In December 2001 the Director of the Centre attended a meeting on the relationship between the United Nations Special Court and the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission organized by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
- The Director of the Centre also presented a paper on Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Boston, United States of America in October 2001
- In October 2002 in collaboration with the Centre for Media Education and Technology (C-MET) the **Special Court Watch** was published with the aim of informing the general public from a neutral perspective about the work of the Special Court and the impact it would have in developing our domestic legal system. The publication also aimed at educating members of the international community about the expectations that Sierra Leonean attach to the work of the Court as well as the participation of Sierra Leonean in its functioning.

Major case dealt with by the Unit

Presently, the Director of the Centre is representing an indigent Indictree at the Special Court for Sierra Leone by the name of Morris Kallon formerly of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Mr Kallon has been indicted on seventeen Counts including allegations of gross violations of International Humanitarian Law and Sierra Leonean Law. A total of nine indictees are before the court on similar charges.



Other Human Rights Promotional Activities

Between 2001-2006 the Centre agitated for the promotion of Human Rights in Sierra Leone through captivating and contemporary articles published in its various Newsletters and Annual Reports. These articles proved so relevant and up-to-date that the print media culled them for their respective newspapers to ensure wider coverage and encourage public debate.

Particularly important amongst the Articles published by the Centre was one concerning the unconstitutionality of the Amnesty and Pardon Provision in the Lome Peace (Ratification) Act (1999). The Article criticized the discriminatory nature of the Pardon Provision, which gives preferential treatment to a certain class of individuals.

The Juvenile Justice Unit contributed to the Centre's Bi-Annual Newsletter with an article entitled: "Committal Proceedings and Child Offenders". The article examined the juvenile justice situation in the country and addressed the way in which juveniles should be treated when in conflict or contact with the law.

LAWCLA, as a public interest law group, has since its inception been tirelessly fighting for access to justice for all. Several articles have been published by LAWCLA on the subject of access to justice, highlighting the problems normally faced by the masses upon coming into contact with the law.

In the Centre's quest for the application of international human rights standards within Sierra Leone, LAWCLA published several articles on the need for the domestic abolition of the Death Penalty. One article in particular, addressed the Right to Life and the Right Not to be Subjected to Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment as protected by the 1991 Constitution and found that the retention of the Death Penalty directly violated the Sierra Leonean Constitution. The article condemned the practice of execution, describing the Death Penalty as state sanctioned killing.

The Centre also published an article on the Role of the Ombudsman in the Protection of Human Rights. The article went to the root of the Office itself and its importance for the lifeblood of a democratic society.

A provision in the Public Order Act (1965), which requires the issuing of permits by Inspector General of Police before the holding of demonstrations or public meetings, prompted the publication of a LAWCLA article on the protection of Freedom of Assembly in Sierra Leone. After analysis, The Public Order Act of 1965 was found to be inconsistent with the universal right to freely assemble which is protected internationally as well as domestically by Section 26 of the 1991 Constitution.

The Litigation Unit at the Centre published articles on the protection of Freedom of Religion in Sierra Leone. Freedom of Religion is entrenched by Section 24 of the 1991 Constitution and the article clearly defined the purpose and content of the Freedom, which includes the right to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, teaching practice and observance.

The Centre's concern with the slow pace of the trial process in the country led to an article which was published in Behind Bars 2004: "Revisiting Section 120 (6) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone". The article examined the identified Section, which is aimed at avoiding delays during the trial process.

PARLIAMENT AS A 'COURT OF LAW' - FROM A LEGAL STAND POINT

By: Yip K. Hui

The role of Parliament being indisputably the highest authority in the country, it is not surprising that it has been called a 'court of law' in the past. This article examines the role of Parliament as a 'court of law' in the context of the current constitutional framework.

Parliament may regulate its own proceedings, and may in particular, make, amend and repeal its own rules of procedure.

It is a well-known principle that Parliament is the highest authority in the country. It is the only body that can make, amend and repeal laws. It is also the only body that can control the executive and the judiciary.

Parliament is the highest authority in the country. It is the only body that can make, amend and repeal laws. It is also the only body that can control the executive and the judiciary.

The Role Of The Ombudsman In The Protection Of Human Rights

The Ombudsman is an independent institution that is responsible for investigating and reporting on the activities of the public administration. The Ombudsman's role is to ensure that the public administration is accountable to the people and that its actions are in accordance with the law.

A VEHICLE WITHOUT AN ENGINE: CAN THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION BE EFFECTIVE IN THE ABSENCE OF PROSECUTORIAL POWERS?

By: Yip K. Hui

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is a body established to investigate and report on the activities of the public administration. The ACC's role is to ensure that the public administration is accountable to the people and that its actions are in accordance with the law.

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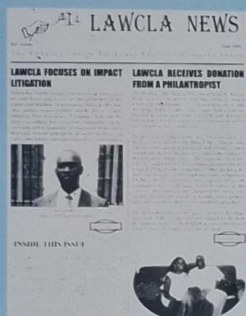
The ACC is a body established to investigate and report on the activities of the public administration. The ACC's role is to ensure that the public administration is accountable to the people and that its actions are in accordance with the law.

Annual Reports And Newsletters

With a keen interest in research and publication the Centre during the reporting period published a number of Handbooks, Reports and Newsletters.

ANNUAL REPORTS

At the end of every year the Centre publishes an Annual Report containing a narrative of its activities for the year. The first of such report produced was an Eighteen Month Report, due to an early funding shortfall and since then the report has been published on a yearly basis.



LAWCLA NEWS

This is the Centre's bi-annual newsletter first published in December 2001. The purpose of this Newsletter is to inform the general public and in particular human rights groups and activists about the work of the centre in protecting and promoting human rights through law. The Newsletter contains news about the Centre and short Academic Articles

BEHIND BARS

"Behind Bars" was a bi-monthly Newsletter of the Centre's Prisoners Rights Project which deals with Legal Advice and Representation of Indigent Suspects and Accused Persons Detained in Police Stations and Prisons Throughout Sierra Leone. This Project commenced in 2002 and ended in 2005. The purpose of the Newsletter was to report to the general public and in particular law enforcement officials about the work of the centre on behalf of indigent detainees and accused persons. Through the publication of 'Behind Bars' LAWCLA also sought to bring to light the plight of those incarcerated in Sierra Leone and to advocate for their humane treatment, the provision of legal aid and the reform of the criminal justice system.

JUVENILE VOICE

"Juvenile Voice" was a quarterly Newsletter of the Centre's Juvenile Justice project- The Legal Protection of Juveniles and the Promotion of Juvenile Justice in Sierra Leone. The purpose of the Newsletter was to inform the general public and especially human rights activists and child rights advocates, about the work of the Centre for and on behalf of juveniles.

SPECIAL COURT WATCH

Prior to the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone the Director of the Centre took part in the consultative U.N. Meeting held in Freetown, in January 2002. Subsequently, the Centre together with C-MET published a magazine entitled " Special Court Watch.

The Purpose of the publication was to examine the role and functions of the Special Court in developing the Rule of Law in Sierra Leone, and also to inform Sierra Leoneans who were apprehensive about the establishment of this Court. The publication also served as a barometer to point out some of the frailties within the initial administrative make-up of the Court. The Centre's criticism of certain aspects of the Court's Operation at its inception was fiercely resisted by some of the Court's associates.

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

A HAND BOOK FOR PARALEGALS IN SIERRA LEONE

The vast majority of Sierra Leoneans lack knowledge about both the substance of their constitutional rights and the available means by which they can seek redress. In response to this, the Centre, in collaboration with a partner Global Rights (formerly International Human Rights Law Group) developed a Handbook for Paralegals in Sierra Leone. The purpose of the handbook was to empower communities about their basic rights in areas where there are no lawyers.

JUVENILE ANNUAL REPORT

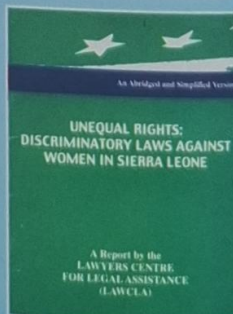
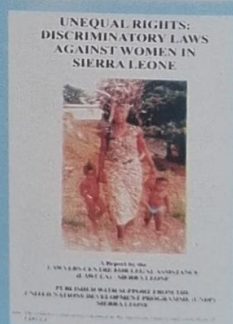
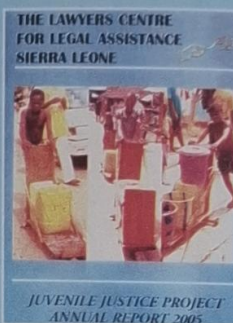
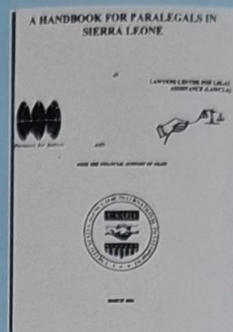
Following the completion of the 2004-2005 Juvenile Justice Project, "The Legal Protection of Juveniles and the Promotion of Juvenile Justice in Sierra Leone" the Centre published an Annual Report to inform the general public about the key activities and work undertaken by the Centre during the implementation period.

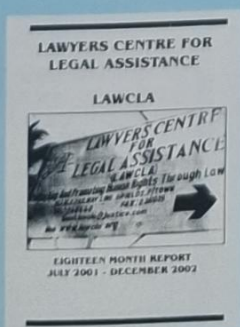
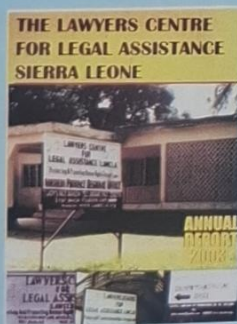
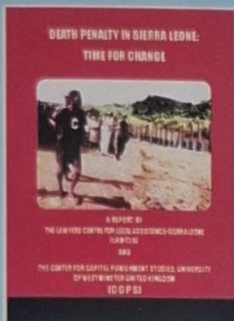
A MANUAL ON CHILDREN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN SIERRA LEONE

LAWCLA's Juvenile Justice Unit consulted with UNICEF to develop a manual entitled: "Children in the Criminal Justice System in Sierra Leone". The purpose of the manual was to widen the understanding of law enforcement and other officials working in the criminal justice system about national laws relating to the treatment of juvenile offenders. The manual also sought to raise the profile of the diversionary alternatives to the criminal justice system in the rehabilitation of juveniles in conflict with the law. This manual is now available in both abridged and unabridged versions.

UNEQUAL RIGHTS: DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AGAINST WOMEN IN SIERRA LEONE

With gender discrimination still pervasive in Sierra Leonean society despite significant advances in recent years, the Centre developed a handbook entitled: Unequal Rights: Discriminatory Laws Against Women in Sierra Leone. The handbook encompasses a comprehensive collection of all discriminatory laws against women in Sierra Leone and makes recommendations for law reform. This publication is available in both the abridged and unabridged versions.





TIME FOR CHANGE: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

This publication examines the current application of the death penalty in Sierra Leone and offers compelling reasons for abolition. More specifically, it highlights various laws that need to be reformed in order for Sierra Leone to comply with international human rights laws and indicates areas of much needed reform in the wider criminal justice system and in the prisons system specifically. The publication also delves into the disparity between the domestic courts and the Special Court for Sierra Leone where unlike domestic defendants, accused persons standing trial for serious crimes including crimes against humanity and war crimes, will not suffer by death if found guilty.

THE NEED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LEGAL AID BOARD IN SIERRA LEONE

In a bid to address the government's failure to provide free legal services and representation, LAWCLA published a research document: "The Need for the Establishment of a Legal Aid Board in Sierra Leone". This publication re-echoes the government's binding responsibilities under Section 28(5) of the 1991 Constitution which require the government to establish a Legal Aid Board to provide free legal representation for those in need of such services.

THE LAW AND PRACTICE RELATING TO TREATMENT OF JUVENILES

The training project for juvenile justice actors and child friendly institutions concluded with the publication of LAWCLA's research findings- "The Law and Practice Relating to the Treatment of Juvenile Offenders and Juvenile Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Sierra Leone". This document examines domestic legislation, international law relating to the treatment of juvenile offenders and juvenile victims and Sierra Leonean practice in this area. The report also annexes a simplified version of the seminal international treaty in this area: The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to which Sierra Leone is a signatory. The publication critically contrasts the reality of the juvenile justice situation in present-day Sierra Leone with that which should exist according to international and domestic law.



Press Releases issued by the Centre

As a Public Interest Human Rights Law Centre, whose primary focus is to protect and promote the interests of the poor through law; LAWCLA's activities have not just been restricted to the Courtroom. Since its establishment in 2001, the Centre has issued a number Press Releases:

"LAWCLA CALLS FOR A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY"

In July 2002 the Centre issued a Press Release on behalf of three individuals (including one 11 year old boy) killed during a riot in Freetown. The Release stated emphatically that the Centre would like the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, the UNAMSIL Force Commander and the Chief of Human Rights Section, UNAMSIL, to immediately establish a Commission of Inquiry with a mandate to investigate the killings perpetrated by deployed Nigerian Peacekeepers. LAWCLA's argument was that the incident, which precipitated the riot, was an internal matter, which should have been handled by the Sierra Leone Police rather than UNAMSIL.

The Centre also expressed great concern and opposed the violent conduct of a few Sierra Leonean youths following the alleged murder of a Sierra Leonean businessman by a Nigerian national. LAWCLA again called on the Inspector General to handle such a situation in future instead of calling in UNAMSIL personnel.

Though the Centre was critical of UNAMSIL's action in the above cases, LAWCLA made a point of joining with the U.N. and many around the world to mourn the death of Mr Sergio De Mello who died during a bombing raid in Baghdad, Iraq.

LAWCLA described the UN Human Rights Chief as a true patriot and an actor in the fight for human rights.

"LAWYERS DISAPPOINTED WITH KABBAH AND GOVERNMENT"

Government inaction in responding to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in particular the Report's recommendation for the abolition of the Death Penalty, led the Centre to issue a Press Release on the subject. The centre viewed with grave concern the delay of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and his government in implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which amongst other things called clearly for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Sierra Leone. This call was justified by the TRC with reference to Section 20 of the 1991 Constitution, which states that "no one shall be subjected to any treatment which is inhuman or degrading". The TRC also backed up their call for abolition with the fact that the Death Penalty has never been shown to have a greater deterrent effect than other forms of punishment. The press release makes clear the Centre's support for the justifications and conclusions found in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report.

"Constitutional Review Committee"

The government of Sierra Leone attempted to evade the recommendations made for abolition of the Death Penalty by the TRC by claiming that the Death Penalty could be constitutionally justified. LAWCLA issued another Press Release in response to the government's line of argument citing the Lome Peace Agreement signed between the government

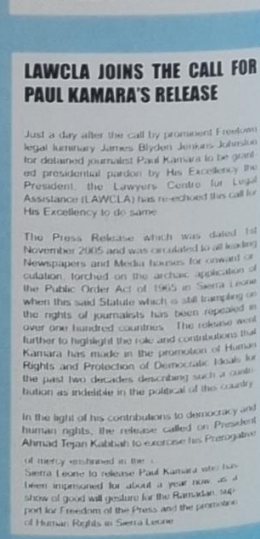
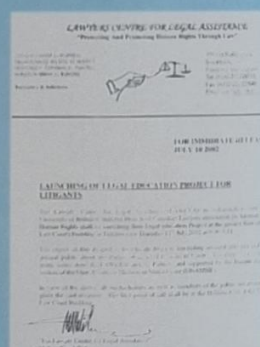
of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front, which was later enacted into law c(1999).

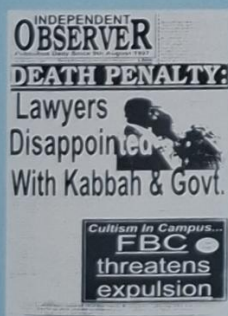
(The Lome Peace Ratification Act (1999)). The release went on to state that there is a provision within the Act which holds that "in order to ensure that the Constitution of Sierra Leone represents the needs and aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone, the Government of Sierra Leone shall take the necessary steps to establish a Constitution and where it deemed appropriate, recommend revisions and amendments in accordance with the entrenched provisions in Section 108 of the 1991 Constitution."

"LAWCLA CALLS FOR THE RELEASE OF PAUL KAMARA"

LAWCLA also added its voice, through a Press Release, to the calls for the release of the jailed journalist Paul Kamara. The release stated that Kamara had been imprisoned under the Seditious Libel Law, a law that was no longer operational in over one hundred and sixty countries in the world and a law that Sierra Leone shamelessly continued to maintain on its statute books.

The release went further to state that Kamara has contributed immensely to the promotion of human rights and democracy in the country for over twenty years and that this should be of paramount concern. The Centre concluded in calling on President Kabbah to use his prerogative of mercy to give Paul Kamara a Presidential Pardon as a show of good will during Ramadan.





The Centre's activities were not only restricted to the township but also to the outlying areas and LAWCLA represented clients as far as Bonthe. LAWCLA's intervention in Bonthe once again made headlines, this time in the 18th December 2003 edition of the **Independent Observer**: "**LAWYER FIGHTS FOR BAIL IN BONTHE**".

The Centre's presence was eventually felt in all four corners of the Country. Alpha Umaru Bah who had been detained for 27 months was released from Kenema Prison, after LAWCLA's Eastern Regional Coordinator, Ivan Sesay Esq, filed a Writ of Habeas Corpus, (literally interpreted as a Writ to "Produce the Body"). The release of this unfortunate young man who spent over two years in detention was covered by the **Awoko Newspaper** in its December 24th edition: "**ACCUSED FREED AFTER 27 MONTHS IN PRISON**".

Following this success in the East, in December 2003 LAWCLA actively began fighting for those who were being detained beyond the constitutional time limit. Under the 1991 Constitution a suspect can be detained for seventy-two hours for a suspected minor offence and up to ten days for serious and capital offences. In keeping with these provisions, LAWCLA Director, Mr Melron Nicol-Wilson, was able to successfully secure the release of a 70-year-old man who had been detained since 2000 at the Pademba Road Prison. On discharge, the elderly man, Pa. Alimamy Sesay, leapt for joy. The case was covered in a major story in a January 2004 edition of the **Awoko Newspaper**: "**70 YEAR-OLD FREED AFTER 4 YEARS**".

"DEATH PENALTY: LAWYERS DISAPPOINTED WITH KABBAH AND GOVERNMENT".

This was the front-page headline that ran in The **Independent Observer** on 28th January 2005 concerning "**The Abolition of the Death Penalty in Sierra Leone**". This LAWCLA press release called on the government to pay heed to recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report as well as the international treaties admonishing the abolition of the death penalty, which have been signed and ratified by Sierra Leone.

The training of paralegals in Kenema, Kono and Kabala attracted the attention of The **Concord Times Newspaper** who published a front page story with caption: "**TRAINING OF PARALEGALS BEGINS.**"

"SUSPECT HELD FOR 80 DAYS IN CELL"

The Centre intervened in the matter of SLA 1817667 private Max Jimmy (also known as Tamba Jimmy Kay) after he had been detained for eighty days at the Congo Cross Police Station, attracting another headline, this time in the February 20th edition of **The Independent Observer**.

The case of 22-year-old Edna Marsh who was charged with child stealing and became blind after being remanded at the Pademba Road Prison also made the news. Her case was first committed to the High Court on the 18th of November 1999 and after LAWCLA's Director's intervention she was finally granted bail after five years. The **Independent Observer** covered the story in the 8th March 2004 edition with the caption: **"BLIND PRISONS GRANTED BAIL AFTER 5 YEARS IN JAIL"**

The Centre's popularity made the news in 2004 as a result of the flurry of complaints that the Centre was receiving daily. The story ran in the Salone Times on 19th May 2004 story: **"LAWCLA NOW OVERBUNDENED WITH CLIENTS: 2000 HUMAN RIGHTS CASES TO BE HEARD"**.

From this point, the Centre shifted its modus operandi from everyday individual cases to impact litigation matters that would benefit groups and communities. The first major fight taken up by the Centre involved pursuing a Constitutional Test Case in the Supreme Court against the unconstitutionality of the Public Order Act (1965). The **Independent Observer** covered this initiative in a front-page story: **"LAWYERS TO CHALLENGE CRIMINAL LIBEL LAW"**.

With this shift to impact litigation, the Westside Boys who have been detained at Pademba Road Prison since 2000, were also to benefit from LAWCLA services. The Centre's then Head of Litigation, Alex M. Musa Esq, together with LAWCLA Director, Melron Nicol-Wilson, began an intervention on behalf of the Westside Boys which made the front page of the **Concord Times Newspaper** on 15th April 2005: **"LAWCLA TO REPRESENT WESTSIDE BOYS"**.

The Centre also extended the same services to the former fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). This again made the front page of the **Concord Times** on 2nd of June 2005: **"LAWCLA VOWS TO DEFEND RUF"**.



Collaboration and Partnership

The Centre collaborated with a number of institutions during the period under review in order to fulfill its mandate and effectively implement its Projects. The Centre's collaboration was not only limited to the Non-Governmental sector but also Government's Departments and International Institutions.

National Accountability Group (NAG)

The Centre received correspondence from NAG, a civil society institution that works exclusively on corruption, accountability and transparency issues, requesting collaboration with LAWCLA on work surrounding the Anti-corruption Act (2000) of Sierra Leone. A letter of acknowledgement was sent to the Executive Director of the NAG noting the Centre's willingness to work closely with that institution. Since then the Centre has worked with NAG on a number of issues especially on corruption.

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)

During the reporting period, the Centre hosted Personnel from the UNAMSIL who called in regularly for updates about two key cases that the Centre was pursuing under its impact litigation mandate, namely the case of Westside Boys and the case of the former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fighters, both groups standing trial for various charges ranging from murder to other statutory offences. At the early stages of the formation of the Centre the Human Rights Section of UNAMSIL recommended the Centre for a grant from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This grant was what the centre used to properly establish its office in Freetown and Makeni.

The Sierra Leone Police Force

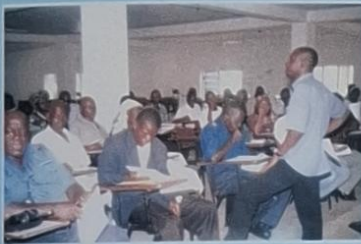
The Centre also worked very closely with the Sierra Leone Police Force during the period under review. Specifically, the Centre worked in conjunction with the Family Support Unit within the Force, on issues pertaining to gender-based violence and the effective prosecution of sexual offenders. The Centre also worked closely with the Police on juvenile justice matters with LAWCLA's Juvenile Justice Unit benefiting from the expertise of Superintendent Fenella Kellah and Mohamed Konneh during the review of the "Children in the Criminal Justice System" Manual.

Centre for Capital Punishment Studies (CCPS), University of Westminster, United Kingdom

The Centre for Capital Punishment Studies started collaborating with the Centre in 2005 with the assignment of Two interns to LAWCLA. These interns during the period of their assignment undertook a research on the Death Penalty in Sierra Leone. In 2006 the CCPS also assigned two interns to LAWCLA to assist the Centre with its Advocacy program for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Sierra Leone.

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone

The Centre has supported the University of Sierra Leone through lectureship at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies Department. Since the inception of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, LAWCLA's Director has been extending pro-bono services to students of that Department by lecturing in international law and peace, free of cost. Early this year the Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies hosted Masters and Doctoral candidates from Bradford in England who were in Sierra Leone on a field visit and they visited LAWCLA and had very useful exchanges.



The Law Officers Department

The Centre has cultivated a close working relationship with the Law Officers Department particularly in relation to sexual offence cases. The rationale behind this working relationship is to ensure the punishment of those perpetuating acts of indecent assault and unlawful carnal knowledge.

The Prison Service

A close working relationship has also been developed between the Centre and the Prison Services. During the period under review, the Centre trained Prison Officers on Juvenile Justice in Bo, Kenema and Makeni). The Centre's paralegals in particular have been instrumental in visiting prisons, finding out about the status of prisoners and evaluating what can be done in addressing their plight.

Prison Watch

LAWCLA has collaborated closely with this monitoring group. On the 21st of January, 2005 the Centre participated in a one day workshop organized by Prison Watch. The workshop was attended by Prison officers and members of the Sierra Leone Police force and provided an opportunity for these law enforcers to learn more about the treatment required in dealing with prisoners and detainees. As part of this workshop, LAWCLA presented a paper on the laws relating to the treatment of detained persons with reference to the Criminal Procedure Act (1965) and the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs

The Centre's vibrant Juvenile Justice Unit collaborated strongly with this government Ministry. The Centre attended series of meetings organized by the ministry to discuss the proposed Child Rights Bill and other child related matters. With reference to women's legal issues, LAWCLA was commissioned by the Ministry to participate in a Ministerial Task Force mandated to write a report on the Convention to eliminate all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Sierra Leone has signed and ratified.

Defence for Children International

During the reporting period, the Centre worked with this child friendly institution on issues pertaining to the welfare of children.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

The Centre also worked with UNICEF in promoting the welfare of children within the criminal justice system during the period under review. UNICEF have been undertaking a sensitization drive to find means to solve the many problems which children encounter in the formal justice system and LAWCLA has been working closely with them in that regard. This partnership spans back 2004 when the Centre received a grant from UNICEF, through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, for the training of police officers, prison wardens, court clerks, Justices of the Peace, probation officers and other key child actors. In January 2006 the Centre also received a grant from UNICEF for the production of a Manual on Children in the Criminal Justice System and for the Training of Law Enforcement and other Public Officials on Juvenile Justice in Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Freetown as well as the production of posters on Pre-Trial, Trial and Post-Trial Rights of Juveniles



Training Programs

TRAINING FOR PARALEGALS IN KONO, KAILAHUN AND KABALA

Since its formation, the Centre has conducted a series of training within the Human Rights realm.

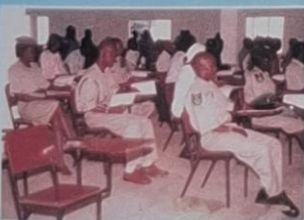
In February 2004 the Centre entered into an agreement with Global Rights (formerly International Human Rights Law Group) for the training of Paralegals throughout the Country. Specifically, this training was conducted in Kabala, Kono and Kailahun to prepare local and traditional leaders to give legal "First Aid" in areas where lawyers are not available. With funding from U.S.A.I.D, the Centre developed a training manual for Paralegals on a wide range of legal issues. A total One Hundred and Twenty Paralegals were trained countrywide.

TRAINING FOR POLICE PROSECUTORS ON JUVENILES WITHIN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

In 2004 the Centre, through its Juvenile Justice Unit, conducted training for law enforcement officials and child friendly institutions on "Children in the Criminal Justice System". This training was made possible through a consultancy with a UNICEF whereby a training manual was developed and training facilitated in Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Freetown.

The Centre also organised and facilitated the training of sixty police prosecutors in Makeni, Bo and Kenema with funding obtained from the International Rescue Committee. It was intended that the police prosecutors selected countrywide would become more effective in prosecuting sexual offences and to this purpose the trainees were instructed in key skills required for the prosecution of such offences.

Along a similar vein, the Centre also conducted training around the "Treatment of Juvenile Offenders and Juvenile Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Sierra Leone" with funding from an anonymous private foundation in the United States of America. The training process importantly examined the pre-trial, trial, post trial stages as well as the use of diversionary schemes.



Internships

Shortly after the establishment of the Centre in March 2001, the Centre attracted interns from across the Diaspora. Amongst the first interns that the Centre received were: Robyn Trask and Jayant Dahr from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada; George Bush, a graduate in Development Studies from Leeds University in the U.K. and Sophie Rodella from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Turfs University, Boston, U.S.A.

These interns arrived in 2002 and set their hands to work on various projects within the Centre. The interns contributed significantly to LAWCLA's legal education project, which was aimed at informing accused persons and the general public about their rights in Court. The interns also contributed a great deal to the Gender Research and Advocacy Unit, helping to develop a concept paper by the Centre on "Discriminatory Laws Against Women in Sierra Leone: An Urgent Need for Reform".

In 2004 the Centre hosted Jennifer Brea, an intern from Princeton University in the U.S.A. who spent six weeks at LAWCLA working specifically within the Juvenile Justice Unit and travelling extensively throughout the country.

During this period also, the Centre hosted an Italian Lawyer, Ms. Michella Tallarico, who spent three months working directly with the Research Unit assisting the Centre with its numerous Tasks. Tilde Bergren, from the Raoul Wallenburg Institute in Sweden also worked with the Centre in 2004, undertaking research on female genital mutilation in partial fulfilment of her Masters Degree.

In the summer of 2005, the Centre hosted five interns: Ms Julia Cole and Ms Olabisi Coker from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone; Mr Nicholas Mitchell from the USA and Ms Sabrina Mahtani and Mr Robert Philip Elliot from the Centre for Capital Punishment Studies (CCPS), Westminster, U.K. who conducted extensive research for LAWCLA's Death Penalty project.

During the pilot survey for the commencement of the Prisoners Rights Project, the Centre hosted interns from the Fourah Bay College Human Rights Clinic to conduct interviews amongst detainees and prisoners in all functional police stations, posts and prisons throughout the country. The interns concerned were: Manella Harding, Kallila Kamara, Mohamed Stevens, Lornard Taylor, Ibrahim Koroma Jeneba Kamara, Komba Kamanda, Junia Spencer, Nenneh Jalloh and Nancy Sesay.



Media Recognition



LAW REVIEW AND BUSINESS progressive young lawyers give free legal aid to the poor



Illustration picture
of Western Union

"PROGRESSIVE YOUNG LAWYERS GIVE FREE LEGAL AID TO THE POOR"

This was the headline of the story that ran in the **Peep Magazine** upon the launching of the first edition of LAWCLA News in January 2002.

"ABU SAMURA WINS PORTS".

Kombrabai Abu Bakarr Samura, who was employed by the Sierra Leone Ports Authority and unlawfully dismissed, was one of LAWCLA's first clients seeking legal assistance from the Centre in order to recover damages for unlawful dismissal. Abu Samura was successful after the Centre's intervention and he received the sum of Thirteen Million Leones, equivalent to \$6000 (Six Thousand United States Dollars) as damages from his employers in 2002. **For Di People** Newspaper published that success story in their September 19, 2002 edition with the caption: "**Abu Samura Wins Ports**".

A few months after the success of Abu Samura came the landmark case of the late Hon. Sewa Bockarie Marrah who allegedly assaulted a traffic police officer by the name of Santigie Kanu. Following LAWCLA's intervention, the **Standard Times** published the story on 7th January 2002 under the heading: "**HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS TO NAIL S.B. MARRAH**".

On 12th of July 2002, **The News** reported on LAWCLA's efforts to provide the populace with information and understanding about their rights. The headline on this matter read: "**LAWCLA LAUNCHES LEGAL EDUCATION PROJECT**".

Just Some Care From Referees

LAWCLA NEWS

Abu Samura Wins Ports

FDP SAYS FIGHT
FOR HUMAN
RIGHTS NOW!

STANDARD TIMES

Why APC
wants Civic
Funeral for
Nancy Steele

Human Rights lawyers to nail S.B. Marrah



City under seige

Armed robbers threaten police 2 gunned down



As the protection of the poor is *primus inter pares* in LAWCLA's agenda, the Centre's personnel do not rest when the rights of indigents have been trampled upon. In that regard, LAWCLA responded when three innocent Sierra Leoneans (including an eleven year old boy) were killed by UNAMSIL peacekeepers. LAWCLA argued that internal disturbances, such as the riot in question, should be handled by the police and not UNAMSIL forces who are deployed with a more robust mandate. **Sierra News** was very interested in the Centre's fight for the three killed and LAWCLA's efforts were reported in their July 22, 2002 edition: **"LAWCLA CALLS FOR A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY"**.

"LAWCLA ON SERGIO DE MELLO'S DEATH".

LAWCLA mourned the untimely death of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergio de Mello, who was killed by terrorists in Iraq. The Centre's tribute to the human rights defender was published in the **Independent Observer** on 25th August 2002,

With the war declared at an end by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in January 2001, LAWCLA was made well aware of the need for a Human Rights Legal Aid Centre in Makeni, an area that suffered immensely at the tail end of the rebel war. The Centre thus opened its first regional office in Makeni in 2002 with the full support of Paramount Chief, P.C. Kasanga, who commented that **'LAWCLA IS A BLESSING to Makeni'**. The statement by the Paramount Chief was published unedited in **The News Magazine** on November 13th 2002.

LAWCLA's presence in the North has also benefited the inhabitants of Kabala. Fatmata Kamara of 12 Freetown Road, Kabala, was represented by the Centre in 2003 which led to the publication of the story **"LAWYERS INTERVENE IN KABALA"** in the **Independent Observer** on 16th October, 2003. Once the Prisoners Rights Project was in full operation it served as a beacon of hope for many prisoners countrywide. Former murder suspect, 16 year old M. Koroma, wrote to LAWCLA concerning his plight and the following excerpt was published in the 3rd October 2003 edition of the **Independent Observer**: "it is me your son writing to inform you that I am suffering. Since I was taken away from the Remand Home, Kingtom on 8th November 2002, (about nine months now) things are extremely difficult and agonizing for me". M. Koroma is now enjoying his freedom.





The manual, "Children in the Criminal Justice System", examines the pre-trial, trial and post trial safeguards in place for juveniles and also explores diversionary mechanisms. The manual was highly commended by those who received the training.

Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE)

The Centre signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FAWE, which outlines the reciprocal duties and commitments that now exist for both organizations in the performance of their functions. FAWE specializes in psychosocial counseling for victims of sexual offences and the MOU provides for FAWE to refer to LAWCLA victims seeking legal services, and vice-versa. The MOU was brought about in part by concern about the recent increase in the number of sexual offences currently taking place in Sierra Leone. LAWCLA and FAWE are also jointly implementing a Women's Rights Project funded by the Westminster Foundation in the U.K

50/50 Group

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed with the 50/50 Group during the reporting period. The signing of the MOU set the pace for the two institutions to work closely together. With support from the Westminster Foundation U.K., LAWCLA set up a consortium along with the 50/50 Group and FAWE to implement a Women's Rights Project.

Anti-Corruption Commission

The Commission was established in 2000 by virtue of the Anti-Corruption Act (2000). Complaints made to the Commission that do not fall within the ambit of the Commission's mandate are now referred to LAWCLA in order for the Centre to evaluate how best these cases can be effectively handled. In August 2005 LAWCLA'S Director, Melron Nicol-Wilson was appointed the first Legal Adviser of the Anti-Corruption Commission

Office of the Ombudsman

The Centre collaborated with the Office of the Ombudsman during the period under review. As with the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Ombudsman referred complaints that do not fall within the scope of his job description for onward redress by LAWCLA. The Ombudsman is also the Chairman of the Centre's Advisory Board and has supported the work of the Centre in Diverse ways.

The Sierra Leone Bar Association

All practitioners at the Centre are members of the Sierra Leone Bar Association and the Centre ensured that Members of the Bar were kept informed about the work of the Centre by regularly distributing copies of its publications to them.

International Rescue Committee

On the 25th of October 2005, the International Rescue Committee invited the Centre to a consultative conference on phase II of the 'Rainbow Initiative', a programme that caters for Gender Based Violence (GBV) Survivors. The Centre entered in to an agreement with the IRC and provided training for Police Prosecutors responsible for prosecuting sexual offences in Court, concerning the rudiments of the law and the requirements that need to be met in order to successfully convict perpetrators. The Training was conducted in Freetown, Bo, Kenema and Makeni.

Talking Drum Studio

During the period under review, the Centre also collaborated with the Talking Drum Studio. Journalists from this media institution interviewed senior officials at the Centre and during the child trafficking campaign, the Centre also took part in radio discussions; educating the masses about the dangers associated with the practice and the penalties stipulated for such activities under the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005), the Children and Young Persons Act (Chapter 44) and the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act (Chapter 31) of the Laws of Sierra Leone 1960. The Talking Drum Studio also recorded all the programmes recorded by the Centre during the Westminster Foundation UK, project on Women's Rights.

Human Rights Groups

LAWCLA has worked closely with the National Forum for Human Rights (NFHR), which is an umbrella organisation consisting of approximately thirty-four human rights and peace groups. Importantly, the Centre has been working with some of those groups in monitoring and documenting human rights abuses in Sierra Leone.

LAWCLA was also part of the Human Rights Committee. This was body of human rights, peace and humanitarian groups that meets fortnightly under the auspices of the HRS-UNAMSIL.

In July 2002 shortly after a riot in Freetown, in which UNAMSIL Peacekeepers were alleged to have shot and killed three civilians, LAWCLA and NFHR jointly called for an investigation into the cause of the deaths and for punitive measures to be initiated against those responsible. A civil society led Investigation Team consisting of representatives from seven human rights groups was mandated by the Human Rights Committee to investigate the deaths. The Director of LAWCLA was appointed Chairman of the Investigation Team.



Donations to the Centre

The nature of LAWCLA's work is valuable and unique in Sierra Leone. Due to this, the Centre has always attracted philanthropic donations from those keen to maintain the smooth running of the Centre and committed to seeing the work of the Centre continue.

With the establishment of the Centre in March 2001, LAWCLA received books donated from the Canadian Lawyers Association for International Human Rights (CLAHR). The books donated were a consignment of Human Rights materials, which have proved valuable in assisting the Centre with its research activities.

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, University of Lund, Sweden, also valuably contributed to the Centre in its early days. Books covering International Humanitarian Law were donated to the Centre and are still considered to be of vital importance in assisting LAWCLA personnel with important research.



In February 2005 the Department for International Development, UK (DFID) donated a used 110 Land Rover Defender, a Photocopier and Computer to the Centre.

In March 2005, Mr. Peter Harrison, a colleague of LAWCLA's Director at the Special Court, made several cash donations to the Centre. This donation was used to purchase standing fans to make the working conditions at the Head Office more conducive.

In May 2005, Ms Menah Pratt and her husband Obadiah Clarke visited LAWCLA and made valuable donations to the Centre. Ms Pratt, a Professor of Law in the U.S.A., had learnt about the work of the Centre from LAWCLA's website and travelled to Sierra Leone to make donations in recognition of the vital work that LAWCLA renders to those in need. Items donated included a Land and House situated at No. 28 Old Railway Line, Tengbeh Town, a Brother Laser Printer worth US\$1000 and on his own behalf, Mr Obediah Clarke, also made a personal cash donation of US\$2000 to the Centre. His donation was precipitated after a trip to the Northern Regional Office in Makeni when he realised that a paralegal was in dire need of a cell phone. The donations were made in recognition of the services, which the Centre has been rendering to the poor since its establishment in March 2001.

The donation of the Land and House to the Centre was a welcomed move by Ms Menah Pratt and Family and greatly appreciated. The Centre will never forget this philanthropic gesture.

Awards

During the reporting period the Centre received a number of awards in recognition of its work in protecting and promoting the interests of the people through law.

In December 2003 the Centre's Director, Melron Nicol-Wilson, was recognised by the National Award Committee of the All Works of Life (AWOL) for the services that the Centre had been rendering to humanity. The Award Committee deliberated long and hard in order to arrive at a consensus at chose in their final judgment to bequeath the coveted award of Lawyer of the Year to LAWCLA's Director, who in turn dedicated the award to the Centre. Guests and well-wishers at the prestigious ceremony were impressed when the Chairman of the occasion, Mr Francis Gabbidon, gave a resume of the activities of the Centre and the academic achievements of the recipient.

The Centre's Director also received two Awards in connection with his work in promoting children's rights in Sierra Leone. In August 2004 the Centre implemented a twelve-month Juvenile Justice Project, which was the brainchild of the Director. The Project was concerned with the plight, not only of children in conflict with the law but all those that come in contact with the law for one reason or another. Hundreds of juveniles benefited from the Project through legal advice, representation and regular monitoring of the Remand Home and Approved School. In the provincial towns of Bo, Kenema and Makeni the Centre extended vital services to vulnerable children.

As a result of such efforts, the organisation "Children of Sierra Leone" recognised LAWCLA's Director, describing him as a "very active and dedicated child friendly lawyer" and commended him in his fight for children's rights.

The Children Forum Network bequeathed the Director with the "Award of Excellence and Meritorious Services in Public Life".

PAUL W. AUREOL TORCH March 2004

Over 1000 students graduate at USL

Over 1000 students graduated from the University of Sierra Leone (USL) on March 20, 2004. The ceremony was held at the USL Main Campus in Freetown. The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Samuel H. Wright, presided over the ceremony. He congratulated the graduates and wished them success in their future endeavors. The graduates included students from various faculties, including the Faculty of Law. The ceremony was attended by family members, friends, and officials of the USL.

Mass Comm. students end Internship with Aureol Torch

Students of the Mass Communication Department at the University of Sierra Leone (USL) have completed their internship with the Aureol Torch. The students were supervised by Prof. Samuel H. Wright. The internship was a practical training exercise designed to give the students hands-on experience in the field of mass communication. The students were assigned to various departments of the Aureol Torch, where they worked on various projects, including writing, editing, and production. The internship was a success, and the students were praised for their hard work and dedication.

FBC Lecturer named Lawyer Of The Year

A young lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Sierra Leone (USL), has been named the FBC Lecturer of the Year. The lecturer is Prof. Samuel H. Wright. He was recognized for his outstanding teaching and research contributions. Prof. Wright has been a dedicated lecturer and has played a significant role in the development of the Faculty of Law at the USL. He has also been involved in various academic and professional activities, including attending conferences and publishing research papers. His nomination as Lecturer of the Year is a testament to his excellence in the field of law.



Conclusion

It is evident that during its five-year operational period, the Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA) made tremendous strides, countrywide, in fulfilling its mandate.

The Centre has successfully raised national awareness surrounding important human rights concerns and continues to fuel national debate and promote access to justice through legal aid and Research.

LAWCLA is now deeply involved in fighting groundbreaking Constitutional Test Cases, initiating Impact Litigation, furthering the juvenile justice agenda and addressing women's legal needs. All of these initiatives are implemented with the primary aim of giving vulnerable indigent members of our society the opportunity to realise their universal rights.

Everybody at the Centre is working hard to accomplish the challenges at hand. It is our fervent desire that the Centre will work assiduously in creating an indelible mark in the minds of Sierra Leoneans that the rights and freedoms owed to all, be accorded to them, irrespective of race, colour and sex.

In the near future the Centre will be restructured to meet the new challenges that lie ahead and to consolidate its gains and address emerging issues more effectively.

This we can only do with your support.

URGENT ALERT

THE LAWYERS CENTRE FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE (LAWCLA), THE FIFTY/FIFTY GROUP AND FAWE - SIERRA LEONE CHAPTER WITH FUNDING FROM THE WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY, UNITED KINGDOM ARE ADVOCATING LAWS AGAINST WOMEN IN SIERRA LEONE.

IN THIS REGARD THE CONSORTIUM IS URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE TO URGENTLY REPEAL AND REVIEW SECTION 27 (4) OF THE 1991 CONSTITUTION OF SIERRA LEONE WHICH ENDORSES DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND TO REPEAL ALL DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AGAINST WOMEN FOUND IN DIFFERENT LEGISLATIONS IN SIERRA LEONE.

THIS URGENT ALERT IS FUNDED BY THE WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY UNDER THE SENSITIZATION ASPECT OF THE PROJECT ON THE REFORM OF DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AGAINST WOMEN IN SIERRA LEONE.

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Mustapha Kargbo
John Harding
Momodu Kargbo
Melvina Thomas



Cross Section of 2001 Staff



Cross Section of 2002 Staff



Cross Section of 2003 Staff



Cross Section of 2004 Staff



Cross Section of 2005 Staff



Cross Section of 2006 Staff

INTERNS 2001-2006

Robyn Trask
Jayout Dahr
Sophie Rodella
Jenifer Brea
Michalla Tallarico
Tilde Bergren
Komba Kamanda
Nicholas Mitchell
Lornard Taylor
Ibrahim Koroma

Sabrina Mahtani
Robert Elliot Philips
Manella Harding
Mohamed Stevens
Nenneh Jalloh
Kallila Kamara

Olabisi Coker
Julia Cole
Emmanuel Toe

George Caulker
Yusufu Kondeh
Alusine Dumbuya
Sylvester Suaray
Isabella Sankey
Jeneba Kamara

SUPPORT

LAWCLA



The Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA)– Sierra Leone is presently one hundred percent dependent on Donors for its operational and staffing costs. We believe that this dependency threatens the existence of the Centre. In order to complement funds received by donors and to ensure the Centre's financial sustainability, LAWCLA undertakes the undermentioned tasks for modest costs:

1. Human Rights Trainings.
2. Human Rights and Legal Research.
3. Commercial adverts in our Newsletters and Reports

Our ability to continue and expand the work of the Centre depends entirely on your kind support.

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