

JUSTICE CENTRES UGANDA – EVIDENCE BASED ADVOCACY

JCU advocates for reform of policies, laws and practices to facilitate access to justice for the indigent, vulnerable and marginalised. One of the foundations of JCU's advocacy work, lies in a dense and extensive Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy. By using a Results Based Monitoring and Management approach not only is the performance of JCU and its staff assessed, evaluated and improved, but equally important is that the outcomes do serve as a direct indicator of which legal challenges are the most prevalent and relevant to the indigent, vulnerable and marginalised people in Uganda. The results highlight the fields where a change in legislation would be favourable and where advocacy is needed to push for the reform of laws, policies and practices to facilitate access to justice for the indigent.

JCU together with other organisations like LASPNET, and the Legal Aid Project of the Uganda Law Society, has on various opportunities met with Members of Parliament and made presentations to parliamentary committees on the status of legal aid in Uganda and the need for the passing of the National Legal Aid Bill. Drawing from its experience, JCU evaluates various provisions of Bills and forwards its opinion to the Sectoral Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs for consideration. Some of the Bills JCU has contributed towards include:

- Sexual Offences Amendment Bill 2019,
- Succession Amendment Bill 2018,
- Administration of Judiciary Bill 2018 (which has since been passed into law),
- Constitution Amendment Bill 2019.

Furthermore, joint public education and sensitisation campaigns about access to justice for the indigent, vulnerable and marginalized are launched. Various media platforms like radio or TV, to lobby and advocate for policy changes and to influence and push the discourse for passing the National Legal Aid Bill are being utilised.

Key to note is that community empowerment comprises more than the provision of knowledge on legal rights and procedures. JCU in close cooperation with community leaders and communities strives to remove barriers to access to justice and build communities' confidence in the justice system by:

- providing knowledge on legal rights and the procedures;
- fostering communities' confidence in the justice system and in JCU;
- building capacities of duty bearers to understand the law, legal issues and JCU's role;
- ensuring that gender specific needs are met and considered in all JCU services;
- strengthening cooperation with local organisations and institutions
- enabling communities to resolve conflicts on their own.

Apart from that, JCU interacts with key ministries to update them on the arising access to justice issues and social issues identified during the reach outs and barazas. The establishment of long-

lasting solutions through changing policies, structures, systems and practices are seen as the major target of these endeavours. Some examples are:

- **Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development:** Landlord-tenant issues, rights of kibanja holders, spousal consent in the sale of land, forged land titles, rampant mass land evictions by individuals and corporations especially in mineral-rich areas, corrupt land officials.
- **Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs:** Collaboration for the initiation of relevant laws and policies aimed at provision of State-funded legal aid services to indigent and vulnerable persons (e.g.: passing of the National Legal Aid Bill).
- **Ministry of Education and Sports:** Some of the access to justice issues encountered and identified during school outreaches are brought to the attention of the Ministry for their intervention.
- **Ministry of Health:** When the right to health has been infringed, systemic and structural challenges are brought to the attention of the Ministry as a way to advocate for change.
- **Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development:** While conducting legal awareness sessions in communities, schools, women groups, remand homes, police stations, a number of issues arise that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is best placed to address. The Ministry also has key statistics of indigent, vulnerable and marginalised persons in Uganda that are relevant to JCU's work and research studies. JCU regularly engages with probation and welfare officers through cross-referrals.

PRESS CONTACT:

Angela N. Mwanje
Advocacy and Communications Officer
Justice Centres Uganda

2nd Floor, Chief Magistrate's Court Mmengo
Kabaka Anjagala Road
TEL: 0772556206 / 0755979454
Email: aco@justicecentres.go.ug / angela.mwanje@gmail.com