Community Paralegals
Providing Legal Aid to Marginalised Persons in Rural Areas

MEET SOME OF THE PARALEGALS WHO ARE TAKING LEGAL AID TO ALL CORNERS OF UGANDA

Community Paralegals
Providing Legal Aid to Marginalised Persons in Rural Areas

MEET SOME OF THE PARALEGALS WHO ARE TAKING LEGAL AID TO ALL CORNERS OF UGANDA

A Magazine for Community Paralegals Working with Marginalised Communities in Uganda

www.hrapf.org
I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL

3rd Issue
May 2019

I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL

A Magazine for Community Paralegals Working with Marginalised Communities in Uganda

Community Paralegals
Providing Legal Aid to Marginalised Persons in Rural Areas

MEET SOME OF THE PARALEGALS WHO ARE TAKING LEGAL AID TO ALL CORNERS OF UGANDA

A publication of Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

Plot 390 Professor Apollo Nsibambi Road
P.O. Box 25603 Kampala
Tel: +256 414 530 683 and +256 312 530 683
Toll free line: 0800 130 683
Email: info@hrapf.org
Website: www.hrapf.org
Facebook: Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum - HRAPF - Uganda
Twitter: @hrapf_uganda

With the support of American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

MAY 2019

© Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (2019)
I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL

Grace Kabayaga                          13
Sandra Ntebi                                13

OP-ED  8
By Benard Wasike
in the Eastern Region                                 19
Reaching LGBT persons and sex workers

16
ALL CORNERS OF UGANDA
WHO ARE TAKING LEGAL AID TO
TRAINING: THE THIRD INTAKE                                         11

Emmalia Atwiine
Lillian Namiro
Peter Yiga
Sandrine Ntebi
Benard Wasike
Grace Kabayaga
Topista Nakiwu

PART II
THE REGIONAL REACH OF THE
COMMUNITY PARALEGAL PROGRAMME:
MEET SOME OF THE PARALEGALS
WHO ARE TAKING LEGAL AID TO
ALL CORNERS OF UGANDA

Reaching the Northern Region
of Uganda with legal aid services
By Jay Abang
I am a Community Paralegal
By Alex Human
Reaching LGBT persons and sex workers
in the Eastern Region
By Benard Wasike
Strengthening access to justice in the North
By Farridah Hassan Namu

Establishing a stronger base for legal
aid service provision in the Western Region 20
By Salama Kabasomi

Moving beyond the challenges to
provide legal aid to LGBT persons in Mukono
By Phillip Mutebi

A fresh burst of energy fighting for
justice in the Eastern Region
By Petua Wegosasa

PART III
A WORD FROM THE TRAINERS 24

A WORD FROM THE TRAINERS
Training Community Paralegals: a journey worth taking
By Justine Balya
Paralegal training is my passion
By Eriya Nawenuwe

PART IV
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 27

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ABOUT HRAPF 28

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HRAPF is grateful to the team effort that made the publication of this third issue of the Community Paralegal magazine possible. We have had energetic input from community members, our partners and staff members.

HRAPF also acknowledges the generous financial and technical support provided by the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), AIDS Fonds, ViiV HealthCare and the Open Society for Eastern Africa (OSIEA). These partners make it possible to run the Community Paralegal Training Programme, and to keep training community members to pursue justice and the observance of human rights. We thank AJWS for supporting this publication.

Special thanks goes to Ms. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director of the Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET), who has penned an op-ed for this issue of the magazine, and has also been at the forefront of ensuring that community paralegals get the recognition deserved in Uganda, as they are not recognised under the laws. We appreciate our partnership with LASPNET and the continued support rendered in being part of a greater network of legal aid service providers within the country.

Finally, HRAPF is grateful to each of the selected Community Paralegals who have allowed a window into their work and lives through this magazine.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRU</td>
<td>Blessed Rwenzori Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-Based Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADWA</td>
<td>Empowered At Dusk Women’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRAPF</td>
<td>Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRI</td>
<td>Health and Rights Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASPs</td>
<td>Legal Aid Service Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASPSNET</td>
<td>Legal Aid Service Providers Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARPI</td>
<td>Most At Risk Populations Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEU</td>
<td>Trans Equality Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WONETHA</td>
<td>Women’s Organisation Network for Human Rights Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOPEIN</td>
<td>Women Positive Empowerment Initiative Uganda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is a pleasure to introduce the third issue of HRAPF’s annual ‘I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL’ magazine. This magazine provides a platform to showcase the work and achievements of Community Paralegals that have been trained under HRAPF’s Community Paralegal Training Programme. We hope to reach minority rights lawyers and activists within the country, as well as potential future Community Paralegals with this publication.

The paralegals featured in this magazine have all been trained under HRAPF’s Community Paralegal Training Programme which has been running since 2010. A total of 149 Community Paralegals have been trained under this programme. Of these trained Paralegals, 45 focus on the protection of rights of sex workers; 56 on protection of the human rights of LGBTI persons, 21 handle cases of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS and 20 work on land justice issues. Seven HRAPF staff members have also completed the Training Programme as a way of capacity building for them to be able to provide back-up in providing legal aid at HRAPF. In 2018, HRAPF enrolled the first ever group of Community Paralegal trainees who will focus on providing access to justice to People Who Use and Inject Drugs. This group of 15 trainees has attended training on the first module of the Programme and will complete the second and third modules during the course of 2019.

This magazine was first published in 2017 with the ‘Pioneer Edition’ featuring articles written by the very first batch of paralegals to be trained by HRAPF. In addition, the first issue of the magazine also featured articles and interviews with a number of the HRAPF-trained Paralegals who are considered to be pioneers in the field of improving access to justice to sexual minorities in Uganda. The second issue of the magazine, published in 2018, focused on the work and achievements of community paralegals who completed their training in 2012. It also had a section in which focus was placed on HRAPF-trained Paralegals who had been involved in starting their own organisations. These articles considered the value of the Paralegal project in equipping minority rights activists to pursue the establishment of autonomous and specialised organisations.

This third issue of the magazine features articles of the Community Paralegals who completed their training with HRAPF in 2013. Members of the ‘Class of 2013’ who were already featured in the first or second issue of this magazine are nevertheless recognised through the publication of short profiles on their work and accomplishments. This issue of the magazine, in its second section, also provides a perspective on the impact that the Community Paralegal Training Programme has had in enhancing access to justice in rural areas with specific emphasis on the legal aid centers and the Community Paralegals running the centers.

While the laws of Uganda have a specific definition and envisioned role for ‘paralegals’, the term ‘Community Paralegals’ has its own specific meaning and definition that differentiates it from paralegals recognised by the law. ‘Community Paralegals’ as understood by HRAPF, refers to ‘persons belonging to a specific community that have received basic training in law and procedure and therefore possess the basic skills and motivation required to aid their fellow community members in handling legal disputes, and linking them to lawyers when the need arises’. Community Paralegals do not engage in legal work in a general sense, but are rather trained to respond to a particular need within a particular community.

The genesis of the Community Paralegal Training Programme was the need among members of the LGBTI community for legal aid services following the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Parliament in 2009. The tabling of this hateful Bill was a catalyst for a stark increase in the number of human rights violations suffered by LGBTI persons in the country. HRAPF’s legal aid clinic, operational from 2010, could not extend its services to all who were in need of access to justice. The solution adopted to address this overwhelming need was to train members of the LGBTI community to provide legal first aid to their communities. The HRAPF Community Paralegal Training Programme was originally designed to specifically cater for the legal aid service needs of the LGBTI community. Over the nine-year course of the Training Programme’s existence, it has been further adapted and specialised to also train Community Paralegals to serve the communities of sex workers, women and girls living with HIV and People Who Use and Inject Drugs.

HRAPF adds new trainees to its Community Paralegal Training Programme through a stringent recruitment process. HRAPF considers recommendations from partner organisations and the communities we work with and admits a selected number of participants.
to the programme. Community Paralegals are trained with the understanding that they will serve the communities from where they had been recommended by providing legal aid, mobilising the community and creating human rights awareness. Community Paralegals receive support from HRAPF on an ongoing basis through quarterly sharing sessions and by reimbursing their transport and telephone costs for cases handled.

HRAPF’s Community Paralegal Training Programme consists of three modules, each of which is covered during a separate, intensive three-day residential training. The three trainings are scheduled over a period of nine months, in order to provide time for the trainees to gradually put their new skills into practice. The first module of the training serves as an overall introduction to the legal system in Uganda. The second module focuses on criminal law and procedure while the third module is dedicated to human rights and civil law processes in Uganda. The training also has a large practical component which involves a week-long placement at HRAPF’s offices. Trainees are taken on field visits to Magistrates courts, Police Stations, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Uganda Human Rights Commission and the Uganda Registration Services Bureau, among other bodies which they will engage in carrying out their work. Trainees who successfully complete the training are recognised and awarded certificates at a ceremony that is usually held at the HRAPF offices. They are then released into their respective fields and areas to carry out the work of qualified, HRAPF-trained Community Paralegals.

HRAPF honours the Community Paralegals featured in this magazine for their passion for justice and equality, selfless efforts and sacrifice, hard work and resilience.

Dr. Adrian Jjuuko
Executive Director, HRAPF
Introduction

Navigating the justice system remains a complex experience for the ordinary citizens in contact or in conflict with the law. Paralegals commonly known as legal volunteers or human rights champions have become the bridge between the ordinary citizen and the law. These ordinary men and women equipped with basic legal information and procedural skills have helped to resolve countless disputes in the communities through acting as ears and eyes within the community. In addition, paralegals detect crime, rights abuses and infringement, provide quick follow-up, advise on the best course of action, support alternative dispute resolution and make referrals. They hence bring justice closer to the people particularly in communities where this would not have been possible, thereby contributing immensely to the safeguarding and protecting of human rights.

Why it is important to train Community Paralegals

LASPNET’s Cost Benefit Analysis Report, 2016 acknowledges that there is overwhelming demand for legal services especially in the rural areas yet there is no national legal aid scheme in place. At the same time, the Legal Aid Service Providers (LASPs) cover a fraction of our country since out of 120 districts in Uganda, their presence is only felt in 70 districts. Moreover, these LASPs are mainly situated in urban areas especially at the district level hence leaving out the rural areas where the majority of the poor and marginalised reside. The existing government models also remain limited to a state brief scheme whereas projects such as Justice Centres Uganda and the Legal Aid Project by the Uganda Law Society are donor funded which render them unsustainable in the longrun.

Over time, paralegals have filled the gap in the delivery of legal aid and access to justice at the community level. However, these need skills-development and training in order to keep them abreast of the law and emerging trends in access to justice. It is therefore important to enhance the knowledge of paralegals through trainings. Paralegal training programs aim at improving rights consciousness within the community by educating individuals in basic laws and rights; conveying complex legal-judicial processes in a language that the community can understand; and disseminating educational materials and content such as handbooks and brochures to the general public. This includes efforts targeting specific populations or clients including explaining civil procedure to litigants who are unrepresented.

Facilitating Community Paralegals as a Tool Towards Legal Empowerment: The Case of HRAPF

Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa
Executive Director,
Legal Aid Service Providers Network
and criminal procedure in police cells or prisons.

Paralegal training programmes are vital in the community’s access to justice in such a way that it assists individuals by referring clients to other legal service providers including pro bono lawyers, police, local administrative agencies and other authorities, depending on the nature of the case. They equip individuals to investigate the facts of a case as necessary and use the facts to know how and where to seek remedy.

According to LASPNET’s 2015 report ‘Poverty, Vulnerability and Marginalization’, the formal justice system can be daunting not only to those seeking justice but also to legal practitioners. The system is plagued with technicalities including language barriers, a tendency toward corruption and attitudinal issues which all together hamper access to justice especially for the poor and vulnerable. Paralegal training programs therefore involve equipping trainees with knowledge on how persons can be supported to navigate the justice system. Sometimes they offer to accompany the clients to formal justice institutions such as courts of law, administrative offices and LASPs.

Furthermore, during paralegal trainings, individuals are taught skills like drafting simple legal documents, which include among others how to file a small claim, apply for bail and what to say when in courts of law. Paralegals can also support in monitoring service delivery and justice system performance in the management of public affairs and resources especially in the communities where they work. This helps with documentation of cases regarding abuses and human rights violations; reporting to civil society organisations who in turn publicise or act on the data and ensure redress for the violations committed.

Due to the complexities of the formal justice system, dispute resolution or reconciliation is largely promoted through paralegal training programmes. Mediating conflicts, usually with regard to land boundary matters, contract and labour relations, or family disputes ensure that a conflict is resolved within a favorable period of time compared to the backlog of cases in courts that paralyses the justice system. Prior to doing so, investigations as to the facts of a case are conducted which help parties reach a satisfactory outcome.

It is on this basis that we commend the work of non-state actors in the promotion and protection of rights of the marginalised persons such as Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) that has taken the initiative to empower community-based paralegals to respond to the high demand for legal aid services, significantly contributing to enhancement of access to justice.

The capacity-building programme for paralegals by HRAPF is unique in such a way that it focuses on specific populations at risk of marginalisation and vulnerability. These include the sexual minorities i.e. sex workers and LGBTI persons. Ordinarily, and because these groups are often not recognised by law, they find themselves in contact and/or in conflict with the law. It is therefore imperative to train them as paralegals so that they are acquainted with knowledge on the existing laws and procedures on how to seek redress for infringed rights especially in absence of a good number of lawyers ready to defend rights of sexual minorities.

The fact that HRAPF has on its part trained over 100 community paralegals since 2011, many of whom have gone on to play incredible roles in their communities including starting up their own organisations to provide free basic legal aid services to those in need, is a step in the right direction. I take cognisance of the fact that the trained paralegals who include sex workers, transgender persons and LGBTI persons are considered as part of the marginalised minority groups. Based on their testimonies, these paralegals have been instrumental in improving themselves in terms of knowing their rights and ensuring there is minimal abuses in overcoming stigma and rebuke in their communities. Furthermore, they have been pivotal in supporting their fellow minority group members to pursue justice.

The testimonies as documented are very inspirational with voices of paralegals testifying that they no longer fear the police and can now freely confront them whenever they have a legal need. On the other hand, some paralegals have formed Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to continue empowering and supporting marginalised groups such as sexual minorities. The CBOs in addition to being used as spaces for promotion and protection of rights for sexual minorities, are a source
of skills-development and employment hence improving livelihoods.

HRAPF’s Paralegal Training Programme translates into an empowered community aimed at reducing victimisation in a country like Uganda where the environment is tense and repressive for sexual minorities. In my view, this training is a unique and rewarding experience which contributes to the fulfillment of Article 21 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda that protects equality and freedom from discrimination. This has hence helped to break the barriers, defeating stereotypes and homophobic tendencies within our communities.

It is therefore important that paralegal training programmes take into account the local context, power dynamics and customs as well as the internationally acceptable human rights standards and changing jurisprudence. Such trainings should come along with availability of tools and/or manuals to translate complex legal concepts into more accessible local languages which makes the training programmes particularly effective in raising awareness of rights and laws. Community Paralegal training programmes need to focus on specific thematic areas or marginalised groups. For example, training on security issues, land issues, aspects of criminal justice, human rights, and access to HIV/AIDS treatment, help minority communities overcome discriminatory practices and obtain legal identity documents or proof of citizenship, aid remandees and accused persons who encounter problems with the criminal justice system, restore women’s right to inheritance and to fight female genital mutilation, help patients with terminal illnesses to make end-of-life legal arrangements such as the drafting of wills and the assignment of power of attorney, support communities in leveraging national land laws to protect customary land claims.

In this respect, LASPNET has begun the process of putting in place standard training manuals and paralegal handbooks which can be customised according to the specific needs of a training organisation or institution. There is need to have consistency in references especially for universally acceptable legal standards and concepts. This should thus be followed up with continuous capacity building and facilitation as many paralegals outgrow the initial training and people identify them and consider them as a point of legal reference in their communities.

The other critical aspect of developing skills and equipping paralegals which I already take note HRAPF is doing, is the supervision and monitoring of paralegals’ work in addition to facilitating them with coordination and other related disbursements. This promotes sustainable interventions and minimises instances where paralegals become indisciplined and begin to exploit the public. In the current circumstances, we have no formal regulations of paralegals, although the Law Council is in the final stages of providing for the regulation. However, as far as I am aware these regulations are likely not to cater for community-based paralegals. On that note therefore, it is important that organisations doing paralegal trainings put in place mechanisms for monitoring and regulation of community-based paralegals.

Through exploring and strengthening initiatives like putting paralegals on internship programmes under fully-fledged NGOs such as HRAPF, the training provides a learning opportunity towards supporting paralegals to start their own CBOs and NGOs. Organisations with community paralegals should also ensure that they are provided with identification tags or jackets and equipment like computers, bicycles, manuals and stationery to ease their work. It is further necessary to ensure refresher courses for paralegals to keep them abreast with current legal developments as well as undertake periodic reviews of their work and document paralegal success stories. This in the long run will help to inform the good practices that we can leverage to make a case for formal regulation and inclusion of community-based paralegals into the national legal and policy framework. In the end we will create a robust paralegal movement complementing work of lawyers and ensuring that the right to access justice is enabled to all people irrespective of their social, economic and political background.

Conclusion

Evidently, community-based paralegals play a critical role in advancing access to justice for minority groups. However, it is important to continue empowering them in order to deliver quality standardised legal aid services as well as to ensure that the pool does not run dry. Therefore, HRAPF’s efforts towards empowerment of paralegals are a commendable step in the right direction to facilitating access to justice in the broader realm for the vulnerable and marginalised persons in our society. I congratulate HRAPF and its paralegal community upon the tremendous work and preparing the third issue of “I am a Community Paralegal” We therefore call upon all stakeholders and actors in the justice system to read it and pick lessons.
HRAPF rolled out its Community Paralegal Training Programme in 2011. Five persons representing LGBTI organisations, one person representing a sex worker organisation, and two HRAPF staff members were the first eight Community Paralegals to complete the training. In 2012, two persons from sex workers’ organisations and five from LGBTI organisations also completed the training. The third batch of Community Paralegals, who completed their training in 2013, included four representatives of sex worker organisations namely Topista Nakiwu from Women’s Organisation Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA); Lillian Namiro from Crested Crane Lighters; Kabayaga Grace from Empowered at Dusk and Rose Kahunde from WONETHA-Kasese. A further seven paralegals representing LGBTI organisations also completed their training in 2013 and these are: Jay Mulucha from FEM Alliance Uganda; Benard Wasike from Hope Mbale; Ronnie Kayigoma from Kampus Liberty Uganda; Peter Yiga from Gala Initiative Uganda; Paul Wasswa from Perfect Initiative Jinja; Sandra Ntebi from the LGBTI National Security Committee and Emmalia Atwiine from Trans Equality Uganda.

The HRAPF Paralegal Training Programme is made up of three modules. The purpose of the first module is to acquaint the trainees with the legal system in Uganda and ensure that they have a good grasp of fundamental legal concepts and terminology, the court system and the different levels of the judiciary. The first module also provides an oversight of the law enforcement system and the Uganda Police Force. It is also designed to help trainees appreciate the concept of ‘Community Paralegal’ and teaches them what this role entails and the basic skills that they should possess to enable them to perform their roles effectively. The second and third modules of the training builds on this foundation. Trainees are gradually introduced to more complex legal concepts and in each module systems are explained in greater depth. In particular, the second module focuses on Criminal Law and Procedure while the third module is dedicated to Human Rights and Other Civil Processes in Uganda. The trainings also cover practical skills such as communication, writing, leadership and presentation skills. While the training does cover a large theoretical basis, it is nevertheless intended to be practical and relevant. It is the aim of the trainers to truly prepare the trainees to enter the field and carry out the work of a Community Paralegal upon completion of their Training Programme. The group’s training involves visiting police stations and magistrates courts in order to familiarise the trainees with these typically intimidating institutions. These field trips are an essential part of equipping the trainees to gain confidence to traverse the criminal justice institutions in serving their communities and protecting their rights.

The three modules were presented in three separate week-long sessions, over the course of 2013. The training was facilitated by a number of internal and external facilitators including lawyers Fridah Mutesi, Patricia Kimera, Faridah Ikyimaana and Francis Tumwesige, as well as HRAPF’s Executive Director, Adrian Jjuuko. After the completion of the training, a pass-out ceremony was held where each of the newly-trained Community Paralegals received a certificate.

HRAPF reflects back on the training with the class of 2013 with a sense of nostalgia. The organisation is proud of the dedication witnessed in the work of the Community Paralegals over the past five plus years. We look forward to continue walking a road with this group and partnering with them in bringing justice to all.

The trainings also cover practical skills such as communication, writing, leadership and presentation skills.
Emmalia Atwiine

Emmalia is a Ugandan transgender woman who was raised in Uganda. She is a human rights defender who advocates for the rights of transgender women in Uganda. She is also a single parent. She describes herself as caring, loving and down to earth.

Emmalia plays an important role in the transgender movement through advocacy for equal rights and recognition in the mainstream agenda. She was working with Transgender Equality Uganda (TEU) at the time when she joined the Training Programme and has since carried out her advocacy by supporting and contributing to various different organisations. She currently holds the position of Advocacy, Networking and Members coordinator at TEU.

For Emmalia, the most valuable part of being trained as a Community Paralegal has been the confidence that she has gained in dealing with the police. While before, she had a fear of the police and could not even come close to a police station, she is now able to professionally mitigate cases, negotiate for securing bond and bail through the knowledge of the law that she has acquired.

Emmalia is committed to impacting her community by sharing and teaching the knowledge and information that she has gained during the Community Paralegal Training Course with transgender community members through awareness and outreach sessions.

Lillian Namiro

Lillian is a co-founder and Executive Director of Women Positive Empowerment Initiative (WOPEIN), an organisation which advocates for the rights of transgender women and female sex workers, especially those living and affected by HIV and AIDS. She is a feminist, sex worker activist and a human rights defender working to end HIV-related stigma and for the decriminalisation of sex work.

Through her training as a Community Paralegal, Lillian gained capacity and knowledge about human rights, laws and their enforcement procedures, which gives her a strong foundation for defending the human rights of sex workers, especially female sex workers who fight for the custody of their children. It also equips her to advocate for a favorable and fair working environment that is free of stigma and discrimination.

Since gaining competence as a Community Paralegal, Lillian can now ably facilitate human rights awareness sessions on the laws and policies that oppress transgender women and female sex workers. She is also able to provide paralegal assistance to those arrested and she can help them to access police bond and court bail. She can document, monitor and report human rights violations and abuses of sex workers. Lillian is grateful to HRAPF for earmarking her for the training, she was able to establish and register WOPEIN as an organisation. She has also benefited from the continuous capacity building from HRAPF, which was able to fiscally host its ever first grant from UHAI to further enhance and advocate for the rights of sex workers, a cause that she takes pride in.
Peter Yiga

Peter is a proud bisexual male who works as the director of Gala Initiative Uganda. As a HRAPF-trained Community Paralegal, he trains and sensitizes bisexual community members and also offers legal advice. Peter has been involved in human rights activism for minorities in Uganda since 2001. Peter considers himself to be an adult educator and trains sexual minorities to read and write and to find various ways of earning a living. He also uses his background in IT engineering in his work with sexual minorities by facilitating trainings on IT-related issues and the use of technology. Peter is also a Christian activist and engages and educates church leaders to discourage them from preaching homophobia. He is also a health activist, advocating for good health services for minorities in Uganda. Peter’s sensitization work has decreased the rate of crime and human rights violations in his community.

Peter acquired confidence in the law and learned how to confront the police in order to assist community members with their legal issues through his training as a Community Paralegal. He has mastered the art of conducting mediations, which is one of the main Alternative Dispute Resolutions Mechanisms for resolving conflicts among the bisexual community in particular, many of whom are still in the closet. Through his work, community members are also being equipped and acquiring skills to enable them to live richer lives.

Sandra Ntebi

Sandra is a human rights defender and activist as well as the chairperson of the National LGBT Security Committee. She describes herself as very passionate about LGBT rights. Sandra works as a security management trainer with Defend Defenders. Sandra’s Community Paralegal training has helped her in carrying out her work in the field of security of human rights defenders and she uses the skills she acquired to empower the sexual minorities societies.

Benard Wasike

Benard Wasike is the Executive Director of Hope Mbale. He is also a member of the 2013 class of Community Paralegals. Read more about him in PART II of this magazine, which considers the regional reach of the Paralegal Training Programme.

Grace Kabayaga

Grace is the founder and Executive Director of Empowered at Dusk Women’s Association. Her organisation engages in legal advocacy, provides legal aid to sex workers who are arrested and imprisoned and carries out awareness sessions on legal issues. At the time when she became acquainted with HRAPF, sex workers were facing serious security issues, which the organisation was trying to address. Through the paralegal training, her organisation and the sex workers it engages know their rights and stand up against violations and abuse. Grace describes her passion as ensuring that people are at peace and that their rights are not violated.
Topista Nakiwu

Topista Nakiwu is currently working with WONETHA. She is a HRAPF-trained Paralegal and she has been doing sex work since 2008. She was engaged in other work before she started sex work but the profits from the business were too little to sustain her, so she opted for sex work. The decision to choose sex work over her other small business was not an easy one to make since she was aware of the stigma that comes with doing that work.

In 2013, while she was preparing to go to work, she received a call from Patricia Kimera whom she later found out was a lawyer working with HRAPF. Topista was not familiar with HRAPF’s work then so she was not certain about what the training was about. She was excited and curious because she did not ever expect that anyone of a stature of a lawyer would want anything to do with a sex worker. Since that was the first time to hear about the training, it was curiosity that drove her. She wanted to know what these lawyers wanted to say. But after the first module of the training, it was the knowledge that she could in fact do something about the way the Police treated sex workers that motivated her.

In Topista’s own words, she would need a whole day to narrate all the experiences she had at the training. She found it so unusual for herself, a sex worker who had not made it any further than basic education, to be seated among people who looked educated and had ‘decent jobs’. She explained that she spent most of the time on the first day wondering why she was chosen and why ‘these important people’ really had to teach her. She was not very familiar with speaking the English language at the time, but she would understand when someone spoke the basics.

On the second day, she explains that she loosened up, made more friends, asked more questions and also learnt that she was being trained with LGBTI persons. By the second day, the facilitators were also well aware that she was not very familiar with the English language but that she was interested in learning, so they made extra effort to explain things in simpler English and Luganda, which she could speak and write very eloquently. For Topista, the most memorable part of the training was rubbing shoulders with lawyers. It was of great significance to her that someone expressed interest in her welfare as a sex worker and went as far as injecting a lot of money to ensure that she learned about these laws that affect sex workers and how she can help her other friends.

Topista explains that this training has made her self-aware: it made her see how much she could do. It made her notice all the violations that she and her friends had been subjected to on the street. She explains that, as a sex worker, the Police is one institution you do not want to cross paths with because of how they usually treat sex workers while arresting them and holding them in detention. After the training, she became aware of the other civil ways of communicating with the Police and also started demanding to be treated better. She remembers telling her friends about the training and assuring them about how the Police shall no longer treat sex workers like common thieves. She explained that while none of them believed her then, five years later they all know it was not an idle boast!

Topista has been able to do a lot of work intervening for and on behalf of sex workers with the police, to ensure they are treated well in custody and to secure their release whenever possible without charge. She has
been able to secure bond and bail for arrested sex workers on many occasions. She engages the officials of various Police Stations and Posts by herself and without the support of a lawyer. She also interacts with the Community Liaison Officers who often know the sex workers well and can offer assistance when they intervene at police. They often train police officers to teach them how to treat sex workers and, in her view, this training needs to be ongoing as police officers are often transferred from one station to another.

Topista has also assisted sex workers appearing in court. She has interacted with the State Attorneys who often advise her to ask her fellow sex workers to apologise when they appear before the Magistrates as this often help them get a lesser sentence, usually community service.

One challenge which she faces in carrying out her work as a paralegal is that the police will ask her for money to release her clients. Both WONETHA and HRAPF do not pay or encourage the payment of bribes so Community Paralegals have to negotiate and talk to the police officers to release the clients or apply for police bond which is a constitutional guarantee.

In Topista’s own words, she loves being a paralegal. Her fellow sex workers sometimes call her ‘lawyer’ which she likes as well, though she is mindful of the implications of holding out. She says that her experience at the training also helped her to realise that she needed to study more, so she enrolled in the adult education classes at WONETHA and can now speak, write and understand English a lot better.

She is appreciative of the opportunity that she had to be trained as a Community Paralegal and looks forward to doing more work with the sex workers’ movement. She is also grateful to HRAPF for being willing to work with sex workers. When the HRAPF lawyers come out to help sex workers the police will often ask them if they are ‘the lawyers of the prostitutes’ – in Topista’s view, it takes a good heart to do that. She is particularly grateful to Patricia Kimera who encouraged her to be confident and strong in taking on cases and defending other sex workers; and to overcome her fear of the police.

“...she loves being a paralegal. Her fellow sex workers sometimes call her ‘lawyer’ which she likes as well, though she is mindful of the implications of holding out.

The ‘Class of 2013’ received their certificates at a ceremony held on 18th December 2013 at the HRAPF Secretariat.
PART II

THE REGIONAL REACH OF THE COMMUNITY PARALEGAL PROGRAMME: MEET SOME OF THE PARALEGALS WHO ARE TAKING LEGAL AID TO ALL CORNERS OF UGANDA

HRAPF is aware of the limitations of providing legal aid services to the whole country while based in Kampala. This is because we have been doing exactly this since inception, and yet minorities from all over the country, in rural areas, and the various towns and districts all need access to legal aid services. It is simply not possible for the team based in Kampala to respond to the many legal aid needs, often arising out of arbitrary arrest or some other human rights violation. It is for this very reason that the Community Paralegal Training Programme was initiated in the first place. Over the years, HRAPF has been deliberate about involving paralegals from areas beyond Kampala in the programme in order to ensure that locally based community members are available to take on cases in the various regions of the country. The HRAPF team is also aware of the fact that levels of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia as well as prejudice against sex workers are higher in rural areas than in the capital city of the country where the most sensitisation and awareness raising has taken place. Law enforcers as well as the general public have less exposure to opportunities to step into the shoes of LGBT persons or sex workers and view members of these groups as threats to the moral fibre and order of society. It is a matter of urgency to have able paralegals at work in all regions and districts of the country in order to provide much needed legal aid and to sensitisate the community and law enforcers about the rights of LGBT persons and sex workers.

From the beginning of 2018, HRAPF has taken a step to formalise its support of legal aid service provision in areas beyond Kampala, with the collaboration of HRAPF-trained Community Paralegals. HRAPF established three regional legal aid centers, hosted by existing organisations which are partners to HRAPF. These regional centers are hosted by Hope Mbale in Mbale, serving the Eastern Region; Health and Rights Initiative in Lira serving the Northern Region and Blessed Rwenzori Uganda in Kasese, serving the Western Region. The directors of these centers are all HRAPF-trained Community Paralegals. Since their inception, the three centres have handled a total of 35 cases as at 31st March 2019. This section of the magazine features articles by the three hosts/paralegals of the first regional legal aid centres namely: Jay Abang, Alexa Human, and Benard Wasike. Interviews with the current paralegals at the regional centres, who are HRAPF staff are also included. These are: Petua Wegosasa, Farida Namu, and Salama Kabasomi. Also included is an interview with the coordinator of the newly established Central region legal aid centre, Phillip Mutebi. Each of them shares their experiences in providing legal aid services to the sexual minorities in their regions.

We commend the Community Paralegals appearing in this section of the magazine for their tenacity and innovation in carrying the torch of justice into areas in dire need of sensitisation. It is a top priority for HRAPF to concentrate our efforts in training Community Paralegals on those serving in rural areas and are able to reach the grassroot communities. We also intend on strengthening our partnership and collaboration with Community Paralegals actively working in rural areas at present and will expand our legal aid service provision project in the near future.
My name is Jay Abang. I am the co-founder and Programme Director of Health and Rights Initiative (HRI), Lira. Our organisation works on the rights and wellbeing of marginalised groups, particularly rural LBQ women and female sex workers. Our specific focus is on basic human rights, HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support, drug adherence, access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services and information, Gender Based Violence, capacity building, research and documentation. Our vision is a society with equal opportunities and justice for all. Our main thematic areas are advocacy, research and socio-economic empowerment.

HRI was the very first LGBTI and sex worker organisation to start operation in Northern Uganda. There are three such organisations now, but we were the very first. We were the ones to bridge the gap and we are proud of that. We were the ones to speak up about the need for recognising the rights of LBQ women and female sex workers in our area.

Under HRI’s Gender-Based Violence programme we sensitise communities on violence, but while we are in the process of sensitisation, the violence still continues. For that reason, we decided to also help our target communities to institute cases against abusers and we also assist those who are arrested.

I came to be part of the Paralegal Training Programme in quite an interesting way. For a long time, it seemed that the lawyers providing legal aid at HRAPF simply assumed that I had been trained as a Community Paralegal because of the work I have already been doing. I would interact with HRAPF on many occasions and it came up that in fact, I had not yet been trained. I eventually formally joined the programme in 2018 and have completed two of the three training modules. Two other staff members of HRI, as well as two other beneficiaries have also completed the Paralegal Training Programme. HRI provided the funds for training these four candidates because we only had one trained paralegal in the entire region and needed to take action. We will be sending four more candidates to work on LBQ and sex worker cases in the next intake of the Programme.

The Paralegals working from HRI have their hands full with sex worker cases. Sex workers in our area are arrested on an almost weekly basis and we have to do all we can to protect their rights. We have built rapport with the police which is helpful. We do not have as many cases of LBQ women at this stage but we are equipped to handle them.

Towards the end of 2017, Adrian Jjuuko [HRAPF Executive Director] had conversations with HRI since there were complaints that HRAPF was not responsive enough to the cases in regions beyond the Central region. The idea was to bring the legal aid centres closer to the beneficiaries. HRI would be one of those centres where people in the Northern Region could receive legal aid. We agreed and HRI has been a regional legal aid service provider associated with HRAPF since the beginning of 2018 until March 2019, I have been the coordinator of this Centre.

The partnership with HRAPF has been good for HRI’s work. It has increased our visibility. We have had awareness sessions in many different parts of the region and people have come to know about
HRI. Through the awareness sessions, many cases have been reported to us and we are contacted by people from districts far from us. We also get tip-offs from strangers who hear about cases on the radio and inform us to intervene.

We face enormous challenges as legal aid service providers to LBQ women and sex workers. On a personal level, it almost feels like my challenges keep 'upgrading.' Last year, one of our staff members was raped while carrying out an activity. The police were pressuring us to drop the case. The file disappeared and there is no sign that justice will be done. The rapist said that they were targeting me. There is also a police officer who raped and robbed sex workers at a particular hotspot and also threatened them with a gun. He has done the same thing at another hotspot as well. This police officer has also threatened to shoot me. There is immense stress in this work, but if you think about the people you serve you do get courage to go on. Other challenges that we face is that sometimes we receive cases but the clients are not willing to follow up and continue the matter until it is resolved. It leaves you hanging as you cannot pursue justice without the cooperation of the complainant.

Paralegal trainings are important: it helps the trainees to understand the legal context of the country. It is important to help people understand things they may otherwise take for granted. More trainings and more conversations are needed. We need it for a space where people can share what is going on in their corner. By meeting together and sharing we identify need for greater support and solidarity.

In terms of collaboration with HRAPF, it will be good if the organisation could do more to follow up with the cases that we forward to them. Justice has to be seen to be done. It encourages the people at the centre to keep doing the work and it also discourages perpetrators from committing violations.

I have found that in doing paralegal work, I am knocking on doors I would not have imagined I could knock on. If it was not for my training as a Community Paralegal, I would not have had the confidence to approach key people in the district. I am now able to go up to leaders in the district and have conversations with them about the law and the rights of LBQ women and sex workers.

I am grateful to HRAPF for the opportunity to be trained as a Community Paralegal and I hope that HRAPF will continue to do this work. To train sex workers and LGBT persons recognises our shared humanity and the urgency of addressing the violation of the rights of these groups.
My name is Bernard Wasike. I am passionate about advocating for the rights of the marginalised persons and equal opportunities for all. I am the Executive Director of HOPE Mbale, an organisation which engages in advocacy for quality health care, human rights and capacity building of staff and other marginalised groups. I mostly work with LGBT persons, sex workers and IDUs (people who inject or use drugs).

Before 2013, I did not know much about paralegal work. I was just contacted by Fridah Mutesi from HRAPF and she told me that Frank Mugisha [the Executive Director of SMUG] had recommended me for the Community Paralegal Training. She asked me if I was willing to be trained. I agreed after she explained what ‘paralegal’ means and the work of a paralegal. That’s how I joined the paralegal world.

I gained a lot from the Paralegal Programme - both professionally and personally. As an activist, I have been able to add on my advocacy skills, communication skills and legal aid skills which has helped me to fulfil the legal requirements of registering HOPE Mbale. It has helped me to effectively execute my duties as Executive Director of HOPE Mbale and as a Community Paralegal. I have learnt much about laws and human rights. To me this is the most valuable thing I have gained from the training because in Uganda most people are ignorant of the law and their own rights which makes them vulnerable, yet if we all had knowledge we would fight against human rights violations and advocate for justice especially for marginalised groups. The training has endowed me with leadership skills which I have been able to exercise. Because of this I freely mix and relate well with other community members and paralegals I work with closely in Mbale and other Districts.

Since I was trained as a Community Paralegal, I have handled cases of unnatural offenses, promotion of homosexuality, blackmail, theft, rogue and vagabond, possession of opium and then mediation of family conflicts. I do face many challenges in providing legal aid. Some clients expect paralegals to pay bribes to police so that they can come out of cells quickly which makes it difficult to intervene. Since paralegal work is voluntary, there is no salary and the facilitation given to a Community Paralegal by HRAPF is only meant to facilitate medical check-ups, photocopying, police bond, bail, or court bail. Therefore, you end up not motivated to do community paralegal work. Clients also expect a paralegal to facilitate their needs in terms of money while in police custody and even after being granted police bond, they expect you to transport them back, which money is usually not readily available. Hard to reach areas are also challenging. In some places roads are impassable and this affects the timely intervention in the cases. However, I have the love and passion for the work I do as a paralegal which gives me the energy and motivation to work amidst challenges without regretting.

I have learnt a lot from HRAPF as a paralegal but also as Executive Director of HOPE Mbale. As an organisation, HRAPF has provided capacity building in terms of registration, legal compliance, legal aid provision to our target groups and support in administrative costs. I have been empowered with legal knowledge, human rights knowledge, advocacy skills and leadership skills among others. The refresher courses HRAPF conducts have kept me abreast of new laws and policies that affect me both positively and negatively. Overall, it’s very good to work closely in partnership with HRAPF.

I believe that the work of Community Paralegals and the quality of legal aid and other support services offered in my region can be improved through more awareness sessions which are needed for the community members to know about paralegal work and legal aid service provision. There is need for monthly stipends to be availed to Community Paralegals so we can be motivated to do the work effectively. There is also need for motorcycles to help Community Paralegals reach those hard to reach areas and also for timely interventions. More Community Paralegals should be trained in the Eastern Uganda for effective interventions and wider coverage of legal aid service provision.
As a member of Health and Rights Initiative, based in Lira, I am passionate about serving the community and seeing that they get justice. I work with LGBTI persons and sex workers in eight districts of northern Uganda namely Lira, Gulu, Arua, Alebtong, Amolator, Apac, Kitgum and Nwoya. The programmes I am involved with train women and health workers to work with female sex workers and LGBTI persons.

I was motivated to join the Community Paralegal Training Programme because it truly speaks to my area of interest and passion – it was an opportunity to learn to better serve my community and so I grabbed it with both hands. I started the first module in September 2018 and finished the third module in March 2019. It was very memorable for me to go and visit the court during the second training module. Up to that time, the courts have been a ‘no go’ zone for me.

I have gained confidence from the Paralegal Training. I have also learned to carefully scrutinise documents before I sign them. I have also learned mediation, negotiation and communication skills which are valuable to me. Being trained as a Paralegal has enabled me to make a difference in the community where I am working as I have now become an active participant who addresses human rights violations. I no longer simply look on as rights in my community are violated.

I do face challenges as a Community Paralegal. Sometimes the police do not want to cooperate and they sometimes have an arrogant attitude toward us paralegals and our clients. For instance, sometime back when we went to Jinja Central Police Station, the policeman stopped our client from signing our instruction form and threw it away instead. How I deal with the challenges in such situations is to simply calm down and to find an appropriate forum to approach the person. ‘Tova kumulamwa’.

Working with HRAPF has so far been a very good experience as they are committed. Even when some case here in Lira needs the attention of a lawyer immediately, HRAPF will provide one. They always keep the main purpose of their work in view. They are always present. I do feel that more sensitisation and awareness sessions should be conducted in order to improve the work of paralegals in our region. It is much easier to support clients who have been arrested if they know their rights and why you are there to help them.

Establishing a stronger base for legal aid service provision in the Western Region

My greatest passion is helping people in need. At the time that I was trained as a Community Paralegal, I was working as a programs manager of Blessed Rwenzori Uganda in Kasese in the Western Region of Uganda. I work with LGBTI communities in Rwenzori region comprising of Kasese, Kaborole, Bushenyi, Kyenjojo, Bundibugyo, Bunyangabo and Mbarara districts. Our organisation is engaged in advocacy in favour of LGBTI persons in the Western Region. We do referrals of LGBTI persons who come
to us to various service providers and we also do community sensitisation and awareness meetings on the rights of LGBTI persons.

I started the Community Paralegal Training Programme in October 2018 and just finished very recently in March 2019. My major motivation for joining the training was that I want to help people in my community. I believed that the training would help me to work better with the people I am serving and to help me solve their problems. It was also an opportunity for me to build my CV.

There is much that I had gained, both professionally and personally, by undertaking the training. Before this training, I have never had anything to do with the courts and found it to be quite an intimidating place. The training has really helped me to move beyond the phobia that I had for the courts. It has built my confidence and I can now boldly approach the courts as a paralegal. I have gained confidence and courage to help people in need and to face the perpetrators of human rights violations. Professionally, I secured a job with HRAPF and now provide legal aid in the Western Region in the capacity of a staff member. My CV has been expanded, along with my experience and abilities. By putting my knowledge into action, I am making a difference in my community and my community now knows that activism pays. I have gained valuable knowledge about how the law works. I have learned about my personal rights and how I can enforce these rights. I have also learnt about the various forms of human rights violations.

A challenge that I face as a Community Paralegal is that when you are working with and for LGBTIQ persons, the community will label you as one even when sometimes you’re not and consider you immoral in the same way that they view the lifestyle of the LGBTIQ and sex worker clients.

It will be good if HRAPF holds regional refresher courses and trainings to help the regional paralegals to keep their skills and knowledge sharp. In my view, this will improve the quality of legal aid and other support services offered by paralegals in my region.
here in Africa. This incident illustrates the challenges that I face in carrying out my work as a Community Paralegal. Another challenge that I face is when I am at the police to get a police bond for a client, they may not have a surety and that means that the person cannot be released. Police accuse you of being deployed by whites to promote homosexuality. Every police officer knows me and they call me ‘homosexuality promoter’; they hate me. I am very, very common at the police station. Someone recently told me that I need to be burnt because I am saving these people who are spoiling our culture. We battle with those police officers handling our community members’ cases, asking us for bribes all the time. As a trained Community Paralegal I do pro bono work and I do not encourage people to be released by paying money. Another challenge that we have is that some members are very far in the islands and it is difficult to reach out to them. We do not have the funds to travel far distances and are hampered in trying to help. Most people fear to go to islands, I can go to any place but funds are a problem. Also, some community members blackmail each other. This is a challenge specifically on the islands. Our challenges really boil down to a lack of funds. If we work with HRAPF we can apply and we go there.

The way that I deal with the challenges I face at police is that I report the names of police officers who have asked for a bribe to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) of the police. There is no solution for being hated by the police and community members. All I can do is to make sure that I am indoors early. One day at Ndeeba Police Station they told me that they are fighting LGBT rights but that one day they will shoot me. They hate me because I report bribery at the PSU. They hate me. My name really is spoiled in those circles.

Through the Community Paralegal Training programme, I have gained the ability to go and help my members if they had been arrested by the police. I can go and talk to the police so that they release them. Now I know about what the law means, by that time I knew nothing about the law. In our area right now someone cannot suffer when they are arrested. They just call me and I go there and help them to be released. I have learned new things such as office management, reporting and documentation of cases and making use of networks and membership organisations for the referral of clients.

I think the work of Community Paralegals can be improved by giving more opportunities for training of organisations, more and more people are coming out and more trainings should be offered to more staff members.

I have been working so hard and according to the database of the cases handled every month, you will see that I have very many cases. I think I am the best paralegal that has handled cases. To make services easier for those who are very far, these regional centres can make it easier to respond. HRAPF would first have to travel for a day, but we can respond immediately. There are serious cases which don’t wait. You need to go as soon as you are called by your client. The services are now more accessible to LGBTI people in the rural areas. Another thing, there are many people who don’t know about HRAPF. They don’t know that there is an organisation fighting for LGBT rights. When HRAPF gave us a legal aid centre at Lugazi those people can know about HRAPF and its services. We are going to start awareness sessions as well as we start the work. When we do awareness sessions the community will know that there are organisations which are helping us. Some people need the services but they don’t know who they can get or who they can see, because there is stigma and discrimination. Those members in the closet, they really have no idea what is going on in the community and what is available to them. Some of them fear coming to Kampala.

I would like to thank HRAPF for the services and support they have given us, mostly me so that I can help other community members through giving them services in time. I thank all HRAPF staff who have worked together with my organisation and also providing me with increased capacity and more knowledge. I am grateful that they have selected me as a leader. HRAPF appreciates the work I am doing and selected me to be a leader in the Central region. I gladly continue our collaboration with HRAPF.
I am passionate mostly is about fighting for the equal rights of LGBTI persons and sex workers because the general public thinks we are not normal and we do not deserve the rights and freedom as the rest of the population. At the time that I was trained, I was working as a Peer Educator at Hope Mbale in the Eastern Region of Uganda. Presently, I work in Mbale, Busia, Tororo, Soronko, Serere, Bulambuli, Bukada, Bududa and Manafwa districts and deal with LGBTI persons and sex workers. At Hope Mbale, we run programmes for advocacy for human rights and quality health services for LGBTI persons and sex workers; research and documentation and capacity building.

I started the Paralegal Training Programme on 22nd August 2018 and completed the last module on 7th March 2019. I was motivated to join this training because even before training as a Community Paralegal I used to engage myself in mediations within my community (LGBTI) when misunderstandings arose and indeed I settled these mediations. Also I could advocate for human rights due to the violations committed to my fellow community members and I kept on telling them that ‘security begins with you’, therefore when the idea of training paralegals came up I truly took it in and I wanted to be part of the work and contribute meaningful services to the LGBTI and sex workers' community.

My best experience as a trainee was the Court visit to Mukono Chief Magistrate’s court, where I met lawyers and court clerks with whom I interacted mostly in regards to how court proceedings should be and how one can defend her/himself when he or she has been produced in court. Also, the two moments when Dr. Adrian Jjuuko was the facilitator were the best because there were more discussions, interactions and then presentation of every trainee to the rest of the participants. All in all the training has even enabled me to secure a position with HRAPF as a Community Paralegal for Eastern Region.

Professionally, I gained knowledge on how to handle cases at different levels, that is to say when to intervene in a case at police, following up cases at courts and mediating with my community to solve issues that end up at police stations. I also learned how to present myself at police, being polite and confidential when it comes to the cases handled, and always inquiring about the type of the cases before intervening.

The training gave birth to a very new vibrant LGBTI person who’s able to deliberate on issues concerning the LGBTI community in a very professional way as compared to earlier. It equipped me with the necessary motivation, attitude and skills to help communities solve basic legal problems by linking them to lawyers, advocating for human rights and creating a network between my community members and security agencies. I work along with other paralegals who help me to identify other cases out of my reach.

I do face the challenge of facilitation not coming in time yet I am to do the paralegal work as required. Also, many people including security agencies do not understand who a Community Paralegal is and what services I offer and when you mention the services are offered freely to the target groups the security agency takes it wrongly that I am recruiting and encouraging such behaviours yet it’s against ‘the order of nature’ here in Uganda. I deal with these challenges in that I use my own funds because all in all it’s for the good of my community members (LGBTI and sex workers). When it comes to security persons, in my free time I do interact with them and create a good rapport in the process give joking examples that relate to LGBTI acts as they assume.

Petua Wegosasa (Patra)

I think the quality of legal aid and other services offered by paralegals will improve if we at least have refresher courses for paralegals because always new legal ideology comes up. For the case of security agencies let there be awareness sessions about LGBTI persons and sex workers and mostly at lower ranks not forgetting Local Councils because they are the ones always taking actions of arrest other than the top most officials.

Since I have just joined HRAPF, I have found the organisation to be welcoming. HRAPF is attentive and respects everyone despite the sexual orientation, age, religion, size and the region one comes from and it partners with different LGBTI and sex worker organisations to offer free legal services to the marginalised persons up to the grassroots by opening up Regional Legal Aid Service Centres countrywide. In a nutshell HRAPF portrays its mission which states ‘To promote respect and protection of human rights of marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations through enhanced access to justice, research and advocacy, legal and human rights awareness, capacity enhancement, and strategic partnerships.’
My experience with training HRAPF Community Paralegals only goes back a bit more than two years, but these have been two years of truly fulfilling endeavors. The Community Paralegal programme at HRAPF usually attracts a large number of applications from both organisations and individuals. The opportunities are sought-after because of how much value they add to each individual trainee: from the self-discipline required of the participants to commit to completing the course, to the knowledge they gain about the practical workings of the Ugandan justice system and human rights protection regime.

The training of Community Paralegals is, in my view, a journey for both the trainers and the trainees; we start with a class of 10 persons on average who often have not even met prior to the training, and who almost always have no idea about the legal and human rights concerns to be discussed in the training. The journey always begins with trepidation and a little excitement on the part of the trainees, who usually seem to worry about the complexity of the course, the language to be used, the terminologies and concepts to be discussed as well as the demeanour of the trainers. On the other hand, as a trainer, I have always found the training programme exciting and refreshing - inviting lawyers to reconsider what they have internalised about the law in light of what actually happens outside of the classroom in the courts and police cells and prisons of the country. This part of the journey also often exposes lawyers (the trainers) to the basic lived realities of the people we work with - through the questions and experiences of the trainees.

Over the last 8 years, much learning and growth has happened through the running of the Programme - the trainers have learnt from the shared knowledge and experience of themselves and previous trainers and have learnt even more from continued exposure to the actual practical issues our communities are faced with. The trainers have grown to appreciate the challenges that a complex and highly technical training such as this one poses for the trainees, and thus developed mechanisms to make it more friendly and more digestible for the trainees.

Personally, I have found the experience enriching as it offers a unique opportunity to share the challenges and experiences of LGBTI persons, sex workers and PWUIDs in a context free of the fear and panic that they usually approach us with when they are in conflict with the law. The paralegal trainings are, beyond an avenue to impart knowledge, an opportunity for the trainers to know and understand the communities we serve. The experiences shared usually provide light moments during an otherwise intense training, and provide wonderful examples and scenarios for role playing, discussion and demonstration, which often speak more clearly to participants.
The Training Programme has beyond a doubt been a truly enriching experience for me, but also for all the paralegals trained. I always view the Paralegal Training Programme as a cornerstone in the building of the LGBTI and sex workers’ social movements in Uganda, because a number of the Community Paralegals we have trained over the years are at the helm of key organisations serving grassroot communities across the country. It is always a pleasure to observe the work that these organisations have done over the years, and even more importantly to hear the paralegals leading these organisations acknowledging the part that the HRAPF training has played in the building of their organisations.

The growth of these organisations is what I would consider the biggest achievement of the Paralegal Training Programme, but one cannot overrate the impact of empowered Community Paralegals providing legal advisory services to members of the community and increasing access to justice, especially for LGBTI persons in the more remote parts of the country. One key example is the new HRAPF Regional Legal Aid Centre model, where we have paralegals trained by HRAPF actively running legal drop-in centres in three different regions in the country. In 2018 alone, these centres independently handled 28 cases in six months of active operation, while other paralegals handled 67 cases involving arrests of LGBTI persons and other disputes within the community.

The programme has been beneficial and has grown quite large, although it has always had a focus on existing organisations, training only those persons referred by registered organisations. In light of the fact that most LGBTI and sex workers’ organising has been localised in Kampala and other large urban centres in Uganda, this has limited the reach of the programme to persons in those areas. LGBTI persons in rural districts who are not affiliated with any organisations have not benefitted much from the training (apart from receiving services from the trained paralegals). Going forward, the initiative to train Community Paralegals in areas where there are no active organisations providing services to the grassroot populations as well as individuals living in rural areas who express interest in the programme, perhaps after having encountered paralegals or having attended any of the various community engagements the paralegals organise, should be grown. The programme ought to cater to the more vulnerable rural-based populations, who are affected the most by limited legal and human rights awareness and lack of effective community organising, in a bid to continue building the capacity of our communities to advocate for their own protection and to contribute to the building of strong and vibrant social movements.

As always, to all our community Paralegals, keep taking human rights to all. Keep striving to bring substantive equality to members of our community. It is our collective duty to fight injustice wherever we find it, and it is also our duty to win. We have been given an opportunity, and as always, to him to whom much has been given, much is expected. We have the opportunity to make the lives of members of our respective communities better, and it is a gift we must use. The task will often appear thankless and arduous; the road will often seem uphill. But, as I always say, the community thanks you. HRAPF thanks you. Uganda, our Country, thanks you. And one day, history will thank you too.

Paralegal training is my passion

Eriya Nawenuwe is a Legal Associate in HRAPF’s Access to Justice, Most at Risk Populations Programme.

I work as a lawyer at Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) providing legal aid services to target communities and in particular persons who use drugs and sex workers. Engaging in the Paralegal Training Programme as a trainer is what I consider one of the most fulfilling yet humbling experiences, so when the opportunity arose I was excited.

The reason for my excitement was that I was doing something I am passionate about as I have always loved teaching and facilitating.
To add to my excitement was the fact that I was also to train Persons Who Use and Inject Drugs (PWUIDs): a target group who I had worked with before and whose daily battles against violations and discrimination I had come to appreciate.

I believe in the concept of paralegals and paralegal training as a link between the lawyers who provide legal aid services and the communities served. Paralegals provide legal ‘first aid’ (they are the first to respond to cases) so their role is key to my success as a lawyer as they lay the groundwork on which we, the lawyers, rely to provide quality and effective legal aid services to the communities we serve. Effective community paralegal training which equip trainees with skills for the tasks ahead of them do serve the interests of human rights lawyers like myself.

As I trained, I grasped the importance of delivering high-quality training to the future Community Paralegals. I was assigned the topic of the legal framework affecting PWUIDs and guided the trainees to appreciate the legal environment they are to work in. Knowledge on such laws is vital in handling cases of arrests of community members. I also discussed the nature of laws, the definition of the law, sources of law and the hierarchy of laws which topics generated much interest and discussion. The other topics I discussed include criminal law and criminal liability and helped trainees to appreciate the entire criminal procedure from the time a person is arrested to conviction.

I was privileged to have interacted with paralegal trainees who were witty, interactive, knowledgeable, quick learners and who were really interested in learning in order to help their community members. They made the training fun and more fulfilling. I was impressed with their quick learning on so-called ‘challenging’ topics.

A memorable part of the training were the sessions on the Uganda Police Force. Trainees were taught how to lodge complaints against police officers who had violated their rights in order to remedy such breaches. Most violations faced by community members are perpetrated by the police and include arbitrary arrests. It is therefore an empowering part of the training to guide the trainees on how they can defend the rights of their community members against the police.

Participating in the paralegal training as a trainer has been important to me in terms of getting an opportunity to have a firsthand interaction with paralegal trainees/members of the community. This has helped me as a lawyer to handle cases of this community as I have bonded with their leaders and have had deep engagements on the real issues affecting them: participating in the training has helped me to understand their plight better which increased my conviction and zeal to serve.

In conclusion, I am grateful to HRAPF for providing me with the opportunity to train and work with paralegals serving the community. I am also grateful to the excellent group of trainees who inspired me with their zeal to learn and serve. I look forward to future trainings and being part of the process of training paralegals to take human rights to all...
HRAPF releases the annual Paralegal Magazine with a strong sense of pride – nostalgia even. We look back on the road which our capable Community Paralegals have walked from the time they were trained, we take pride in it and celebrate their many victories along the way.

Community Paralegals are inseparable from HRAPF’s vision, organisational culture and history. HRAPF has partnered with Community Paralegals in providing legal aid to sexual minorities from very shortly after it first opened its doors in 2008. They play an immensely important role in raising awareness on human rights, defending the rights of sexual minorities in their communities, engaging duty-bearers in their communities and enabling better access to services and resources to some of the most marginalised persons in the country.

Over the years, we have seen trainees enter the Programme, often displaying the insecurities and fear which so easily enter the psyche of a person who faces discrimination and the violation of their fundamental rights at every turn. We have seen the trainees gain confidence in themselves and their identities as LGBTI persons or sex workers as they internalised the training material and broadened their knowledge of the law. Seeing this confidence blossom into courage to take on human rights violators such as the police, court officials and local government authorities is the true success story of the Community Paralegal Training Programme. The Programme proves itself to be truly empowering of the sexual minority communities which it is designed to serve.

As the only organisation in Uganda to run a legal aid clinic offering specialised services to sexual minorities, HRAPF is grateful to be able to extend its reach to the various regions and even rural parts of the country. We are grateful to our partners who coordinate the regional legal aid centre in the Eastern, Western and Northern region respectively and we are currently expanding this model to include a greater number of districts across the country. By March 2019, 35 cases were handled at these respective regional centres. Without the partnership of these Community Paralegals and their respective organisations, members of sexual minority populations would truly struggle to find redress for the rights violations which they may suffer.

The Community Paralegal Training Programme is the much needed linkpin between community members and human rights lawyers: lawyers are oftentimes removed from the immediate realities of the communities they serve while, at the same time, appearing unapproachable to the communities they intend to serve. Community Paralegals ensure camaraderie between the various players on the same team and provide a channel for information to flow between the community and their lawyers.

Last year, the number of HRAPF-trained Community Paralegals reached 149. We commenced the training of our first batch of Community Paralegals from the community of PWUIDs. The force and reach of the Programme is steadily expanding and the achievements of the Paralegals following their training continue to impress and encourage activists, community members and paralegals across the board. The future of the Community Paralegal Programme, and the successes which our Community Paralegals promise to achieve, are a beacon of hope in the fight for equality, justice and dignity for sexual minorities in Uganda.

We are grateful to each of the Community Paralegals who have opened a window into their lives through this magazine. We appreciate your passion, commitment and dedication as partners in taking human rights to all. 

Dr. Adrian Jjuuko
ABOUT HRAPF

Background

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum is a voluntary, not for profit, and non-partisan Non-Governmental Organisation. HRAPF works for the promotion, realisation, protection and enforcement of human rights through human rights awareness, research, advocacy and legal aid service provision, with a particular focus on minorities and disadvantaged groups. It was established in 2008 with a vision of improving the observance of human rights of marginalised persons in Uganda.

Legal Status

HRAPF is incorporated under the laws of Uganda as a company limited by guarantee.

Vision

A society where the human rights of all persons including marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations are valued, respected and protected.

Mission

To promote respect and protection of human rights of marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations through enhanced access to justice, research and advocacy, legal and human rights awareness, capacity enhancement and strategic partnerships.

HRAPF’s Objectives

1. To create awareness on the national, regional and international human rights regime.

2. To promote access to justice for marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations groups.

3. To undertake research and legal advocacy for the rights of marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations groups.

4. To network and collaborate with key strategic partners, government, communities and individuals at national, regional and international level.

5. To enhance the capacity of marginalised groups, Most at Risk Populations and key stakeholders to participate effectively in the promotion and respect of the rights of marginalised persons.

6. To maintain a strong and vibrant human rights organisation.
Our target constituencies

1. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) persons
2. Intersex Persons
3. Sex Workers
4. Women, girls and service providers in conflict with abortion laws
5. People who use drugs
6. People Living with HIV and TB (PLHIV/TB)
7. Poor women, children and the elderly with land justice issues

HRAPF Values

- Equality, Justice and Non-Discrimination
- Transparency, Integrity and Accountability
- Learning and Reflection
- Quality and Excellence
- Teamwork and Oneness
- Passion and Drive
- Networking and Collaboration

Slogan

Taking Human Rights to all

Focus of the HRAPF Strategic Plan 2018-2022

HRAPF's strategic plan 2018-2022 focuses on four programmatic areas. These are:

i) Access to Justice Programme: The program objective is "Increasing sustainable access to justice for marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations in Uganda". Its goal is "Improved legal, political, economic and social wellbeing of marginalized persons and Most at Risk Populations." These are achieved through provision of legal aid services, providing support to community paralegals to handle cases in communities, strategic partnerships and collaboration and engaging with communal justice systems to resolve cases of violations of rights of marginalized groups and most at risk populations.

ii) Research and Advocacy Programme: The programme objective is to "Enhance research, advocacy and networking for a just and fair legal and policy environment that promotes rights, equality and non-discrimination." Its goal is "Systemic changes towards the realisation of the rights of marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations informed by evidence-based advocacy." These are achieved through knowledge generation on laws; policies and practices that affect marginalised persons, documenting violations; conducting national, regional and international advocacy campaigns; strategic litigation; National, regional and international networking; and convening to discuss thematic issues affecting marginalized groups.

iii) Community Capacity Enhancement Programme: The objective of this programme is to "Enhance the capacity of rights holders and duty bearers to effectively advocate for and protect the rights of marginalised persons and Most at Risk Population groups in Uganda." Its goal is "Marginalised Persons, Most at Risk Populations and Duty Bearers participating effectively in respecting and promoting the human rights of marginalised groups." These are achieved through conducting human rights training for duty bearers; Institutional Support for Marginalised persons and Most at Risk Populations Groups' organisations; community paralegal training; and engaging communities on rights and laws.

iv) Institutional Development Programme: The objective of the program is to "Strengthen HRAPF's institutional capacity, financial independence and operational efficiency to deliver on its mandate." Its goal is "An efficient, effective and sustainable organisation." These are achieved through five management priorities. These are: Strengthened resource mobilization; exploring sustainability for the organisation; strengthened human resources and wellness, strengthened governance systems; and Maintaining robust monitoring, evaluation, learning and financial systems."
Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

Plot 390 Professor Apollo Nsibambi Road
P.O. Box 25603 Kampala

Tel: +256 414 530 683 and +256 312 530 683
Toll free line: 0800 130 683

Email: info@hrapf.org

Website: www.hrapf.org

Facebook: Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum - HRAPF - Uganda
Twitter: @hrapf_uganda