I am a Community Paralegal

A Magazine for Community Paralegals Working with Marginalised Communities in Uganda

THE PIONEER EDITION

First Issue | June 2017
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT TEAM</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDITORIAL</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ACRONYMS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART I:</strong> THE PIONEER HRAPF COMMUNITY PARALEGAL TRAINING</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART II:</strong> MEET THE PIONEERS OF HRAPF’S COMMUNITY PARALEGAL PROGRAMME</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART III:</strong> OF PICTURES PAINTING A THOUSAND WORDS: HRAPF-TRAINED COMMUNITY PARALEGALS IN PHOTOS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART IV:</strong> THE PIONEERS SPEAK OUT</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Community Paralegal experience</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex work, human rights and the law in Uganda: Experiences, challenges and solutions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART V:</strong> FEATURED COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY PARALEGALS ABOUT THE HRAPF PARALEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The HRAPF Paralegal Training Program the security of the LGBTI community</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Paralegal Training Programs and Intersex Persons</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers and the Paralegal Training Program</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question and Answer: An interview with Williams Apako</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART VI:</strong> HRAPF BASED COMMUNITY PARALEGALS SPEAK OUT ON THEIR WORK</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacting lives of sex workers</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART VII:</strong> THE FACILITATORS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRAPF-Trained Community Paralegals: A True Inspiration and a Force to Reckon with</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART VIII:</strong> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOUT HRAPF</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRAPF’S PROGRAMMES</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRAPF’S GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROJECT TEAM

Writing and Research team

Justine Balya  Elizabeth Kemigisha  Ramadhan Babu  Ronald Wonder

Reviewers

Joaninne Nanyange  Patricia Kimera  Edward Mwebaza

Editor

Adrian Jjuuko
Introduction

Welcome to this pioneer issue of the ‘I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL’ magazine, a magazine for Community Paralegals working with marginalised communities in Uganda. The magazine is a platform for the Community Paralegals to share their experiences and tell their stories about this often-challenging task of bringing justice closer to the most marginalised persons.

The Community Paralegals covered in this magazine are those trained by HRAPF under its Community Paralegal Training Program. The HRAPF Paralegal Training Program focuses on LGBTI persons, sex workers, and women and girls living with HIV/AIDS. Since 2010, HRAPF has trained 106 Community Paralegals: 47 LGBTI, 11 sex workers; 21 women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, 20 paralegals on land justice and 7 HRAPF staff. This issue is the Pioneer Issue and it therefore focuses on the first batch of Community Paralegals that were trained by HRAPF. It documents their work so far and their stories. It also discusses HRAPF’s engagements with them, and also features the Community Paralegals that work at HRAPF.

The Community Paralegals are expected to help their communities to access justice directly and indirectly through legal aid service provision, awareness creation, community mobilisation, identifying cases, referring and following up on them with HRAPF lawyers.

HRAPF follows up the Community Paralegals and brings them together every quarter in order for them to share their experiences and report on their cases, through quarterly sharing sessions. HRAPF also now gives them facilitation in forms of transport and telephone costs reimbursement in order to ease their work.

The HRAPF Community Paralegal Training Program was informed by the huge need for legal interventions during the time the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2009 was tabled in Parliament. HRAPF had just opened a legal aid clinic but could not adequately serve all the members of the LGBTI community. Therefore, the solution lay in training community members themselves as paralegals. The fact that the law only recognises persons with a qualification in law, which may be a certificate or diploma in law from a recognised institution further made the need for Community Paralegals immense as very few members of the LGBTI community would be expected to have such formal qualifications. It is for this reason that HRAPF designed its own Community Paralegal Training Program to cover the needs of the LGBTI community.

HRAPF defines Community Paralegals as 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 handing legal disputes, and linking them to lawyers when the need
arises. These Community Paralegals are not the paralegals currently envisioned under the law, and for this reason they are referred to as ‘Community Paralegals.’

Although Community Paralegals are not legally recognised as legal practitioners in our laws, efforts are under way to draft regulations to govern the work of Paralegals. It is our hope that these regulations will also recognise the pivotal role played by Community Paralegals in ensuring access to justice especially for the poor and marginalised communities in Uganda.

This is the Pioneer Edition of this magazine. It is the pioneer edition both in terms of being the first edition but also being an edition that documents and covers stories of some of the first Community Paralegals that HRAPF trained.

This magazine contains articles written by both the trained Community Paralegals and their trainers. These articles and stories are told in their own voices, in their own words and tell of their own experiences.

We aim for this to be a platform where the Community Paralegals share their experiences and stories of the incredible dedication, passion and sacrifice that Community Paralegals bring to their work, and the stories that make this work noble and worthwhile. HRAPF intends to publish it every year.

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine, and hopefully get inspired by the work of our Community Paralegals, as much as we do.

Adrian Jjuuko

Executive Director, HRAPF
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HRAPF acknowledges and appreciates the financial support and technical assistance given by the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) for the Community Paralegal Training Program generally, and specifically, for the publication of this magazine.

HRAPF also thanks other donors that have supported the HRAPF Paralegal Training Program over the years. These are: Hivos and Positive Action for Children Fund.

HRAPF also thanks the Community Paralegals, community members, lawyers and everyone that contributed to this magazine by sharing their stories, giving feedback and providing interviews. We are grateful.

HRAPF also thanks the Project Team, which put in a lot of effort to research, write, review and edit this magazine to its completion. Your contribution is much appreciated.

Finally, HRAPF is grateful to all its staff for the dedication and determination to have this magazine finalised, in their different capacities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYM</th>
<th>FULL NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWAC</td>
<td>Alliance of Women Advocating for Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCHRCL</td>
<td>Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARUG</td>
<td>Freedom And Roam Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRAPF</td>
<td>Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBU</td>
<td>Ice Breakers Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersex persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMB</td>
<td>Lady Mermaid’s Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGERA</td>
<td>Organisation for Gender Empowerment and Rights Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIPD</td>
<td>Support Initiative for People with Congenital Disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMUG</td>
<td>Sexual Minorities Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITS</td>
<td>Transgender, Intersex and Transsexual Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WONETHA</td>
<td>Women’s Organisation Network for Human Rights Advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The very first community paralegal training was conducted in 2011, with eight trainees. 5 of these were LGBTI persons, 1 was a sex worker and two were HRAPF staff. The paralegals were Tom Makumbi from Support Initiative for People with Congenital Disorders (SIPD), Gerald Ssentongo from Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), Diane Bakuraira from Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), Timothy Muhumuza from Queer Youth Uganda (QYU), Arthur Mubiru from Transgender, Intersex and Transsexual Uganda (TITS) and Jennifer Tushabe from Women’s Organisation Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA). The HRAPF staff who were also trained were Flavia Zalwango and Julius Ssentamu.

The very first module was on Introduction to the Legal System in Uganda. It was a four days session. The participants were introduced to different concepts including the concept of a paralegal, communication skills required by paralegals in doing their work, the law in Uganda, the Uganda Police Force and law enforcement in Uganda, the judiciary and the courts of law, state and non-state actors in the legal system among others. The sessions were intended to enable the participants understand the concept of a paralegal and their role and to also appreciate different legal principles both in the civil and criminal law dimensions. The sessions were facilitated both by internal and external facilitators. The HRAPF Executive Director Adrian Jjuuko facilitated on the concept of a paralegal and on writing and drafting skills, Fridah Mutesi, the then Legal Officer at HRAPF facilitated on communication skills, Francis Tumwesige Ateenyi another legal officer facilitated on the law in Uganda and state and non-state actors in the legal system and another legal officer Noah Sajabi facilitated on the judiciary and courts of law. The external facilitators were John Francis Onyango Owor, a practicing lawyer who was at the time working on the LGBTI cases in court, Ssaka Wamala, a paralegal with Kawempe Legal Initiative who shared his paralegal experience, and Henry Tugume, the then Officer in Charge of Mukono Police Station, who facilitated the pre-trial process at police.

The sessions were kept as practical as possible, with participants engaging in role-plays on skills like interviewing and counselling. For the session on pre-trial processes at police, the paralegals made a physical visit to Mukono Police station and interacted with the Officer in Charge of the Station, who guided them through the practicalities of handling cases at police stations. The paralegals also made a physical visit to Mukono Chief Magistrates Court, where they attended a court session. All these were intended to prepare the trainees for the actual work in the field, and to also familiarise them with the two major institutions that they would deal with in their work. These engagements helped the trainees to appreciate the theories more and to calm their fears and stereotypes about such institutions working with sexual minorities.
The testimony of Mr. Ssaka Wamala, an already trained paralegal about the work paralegals do was well received. Although this paralegal was not trained by HRAPF and did not belong to sexual minorities communities, his experience was very relevant for the trainees and for HRAPF.

The trainees were later taken through the other two modules of the training as well as placements and were passed out as fully trained paralegals in a colourful ceremony at the HRAPF offices on 23rd November 2012. This first training remains important and ground-breaking for the trainees, the LGBTI and sex workers communities and HRAPF. It provided very valuable lessons and inspired future sessions. We remain thankful to the pioneer organisers, facilitators and trainees for being the trailblazers for what has turned out to be a very successful and useful programme in increasing access to justice for sexual minorities in Uganda.
The pioneer Community Paralegals engage with a state prosecutor at Mukono Chief Magistrates Court during their training module on criminal law and procedure.

Community Paralegals get their certificates at the very first pass out ceremony.
MEET THE PIONEERS OF HRAPF’S COMMUNITY PARALEGALE PROGRAMME

Arthur Mubiru

Arthur is a transgender man and a health service provider, proud Community Paralegal and human rights activist. He joined the Community Paralegal programme in 2011 when he was working as a volunteer with Transgender Intersex Transsexual (TITS) Uganda, an organisation that was addressing issues affecting transgender persons and advocating for their rights. He says that the Community Paralegal programme not only equipped him with knowledge and information about laws, but that it has also enabled him to transform into a skilled and knowledgeable individual who is willingly serving the community regardless of the harsh and cruel environment he lives in. He currently works with Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) as the Administration Officer, as well as the supervisor of the health desk and mini clinic at the organisation. He says he is a proud beneficiary of this programme.
Diane Bakuraire

Diane is one of the founding members of the LGBTI movement in Uganda. She is a peer counsellor, educator, co-parent, a sports personality with a particular focus on aquatics related sports, a feminist, and a human rights activist with vast experience working with corporate companies, who is now focused on advocating for the human rights of marginalised groups. She joined the program in 2011 when it was being launched by HRAPF. At the time, she was a member of Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG). She currently works with Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) as the Administrative Officer. She is also the Team Leader of the Uganda Kuchu Aquatics Team (UKAT) and she is part of the religious network called Coalition of Affirming Africans Uganda.
Timothy is a 32-year-old human rights activist who joined the Community Paralegal programme in 2011 after being recommended for the training by his Executive Director. He currently works with Queer Youth Uganda, an organisation focusing on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of LGBTI persons in Uganda. As a result of the paralegal training programme, he is also currently pursuing a Diploma in Law at the Law Development Centre, after which he hopes to pursue a degree in law.

Jennifer was trained as a Community Paralegal working with the sex workers’ community in 2011. At that time, she was working with WONETHA, another sex worker-led human rights advocacy organisation. She is currently working as a Community Enforcement Officer with Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC). She is passionate about human rights work and the welfare of sex workers in Uganda.
Some of the pioneer Community Paralegals joined other Community Paralegals for the first refresher course in 2015.

The pioneer Community Paralegals always join newer Community Paralegals at the quarterly sharing sessions and they share experiences, challenges and achievements.
One of the pioneer Community Paralegals, Arthur Mubiru (in striped T-shirt) joins other Community Paralegals for the second refresher course in 2017.

Timothy Muhumusa, a pioneer Community Paralegal addressing other Community Paralegals at a sharing session in March 2017.

Arthur Mubiru addresses a group of attendees at the launch of a handbook on HIV/AIDS, TB and Human Rights.
“I am a Community Paralegal” caught up with some of the pioneer Community Paralegals, who were gracious enough to write about their experiences so far, what motivates them, their challenges, their expectations and their opinions about the communities they serve. We also heard from some of the community leaders (both LGBTI and sex workers) and representatives from the different acronyms under the LGBTI umbrella. We hope you find this informative and enriching.

By Diane Bakuraira

From reclusion to empowerment: A tale of growth

I am a member of FARUG. When HRAPF was launching the programme, they sent out an email to partner organisations and allies seeking for people that are interested in the programme. As a person who has always enjoyed legal arguments and trying to understand the law better; I found it like a good strategy to participate and understand how the police work and how the law works. As an activist, I needed to understand how I could use the law to enhance the interests and security of the LGBTI community in Uganda. I wrote an application and submitted it to HRAPF expressing my interest and also informed my organisation about my interest. My main motivation came from past experience both professionally and academically. I have been expelled from school and have been fired from work because of my orientation. I have also been engaged in situations with my family where I have been taken to police. I could however not defend or express myself because I was very intimidated as I did not know the law. I was also going to different levels of activism that required me to understand the laws.

The training was a bit challenging. The facilitators tried to take us step by step to ensure that we understood, but learning legal things when one is not a lawyer is not easy as the terms used are very unfamiliar. Understanding all those concepts is a gradual process and requires time. When the training ended, we were taken to the field and placed in different organisations that dealt with the law and had lawyers to guide Community Paralegals on how they were supposed to work. This was very good as it gave me the distinction between a lawyer and a Community Paralegal.
The information I acquired from the training was vast and I have used it to enlighten my community. The community members needed to know that in the absence of the few lawyers that are available to work with the community, Community Paralegals are also there to represent them. The information has also guided my interaction especially regarding cases. I now know that when I receive a case, I do not have to rush to the lawyers as I have been equipped with enough knowledge and skills to mitigate different situations. However in case of a more difficult case, I can always refer it to the lawyers. My mode of handling cases is mediation. I always try to mediate between conflicting parties to avoid situations getting to their worst like people getting arrested or going to court. The case I am most proud of involved a rape that happened at a club because of the victim’s perceived sexual orientation. I have a challenge with approaching police but in this case I managed to approach them and get them involved, and we brought the club to book. The fact I could engage police and get them on my side without intimidation was a victory for me.

The Community Paralegal Program has been very essential for the LGBTI community in Uganda as it has created a platform for Community Paralegals to sensitise different stakeholders especially the police on LGBTI persons and who they are, and somehow managed to change the way the Police handle LGBTI persons. The programme has also created availability and better access to justice for the LGBTI community.

Before it was introduced, all cases had to be reported to HRAPF, even small cases that could be solved by mediation. This was problematic because the lawyers are few and could not serve all community needs. Community Paralegals are more easily accessible. The training has also empowered people to do things they never thought they could do or pursue. For example, some Community Paralegals including myself have been inspired to pursue professional legal careers.

I am now pursuing my degree in Information Technology, and when I complete it, I plan to enrol for a law degree. This inspiration came from my training as a Community Paralegal. The programme has also affected the way I operate because the more knowledge I got, the more I changed strategies on how to deal with the different cases that I got. As a Community Paralegal, I have been able to interact more with the community, which has taught me a lot about the community I serve. I have also made friends in police and I have been added to a group of people that handle security in some residential areas. This was all a result of the training, which made me understand how police work and how to engage them.

The training should continue. HRAPF has trained just about 50 Community Paralegals but this is not enough because the community is large. My other recommendation is that HRAPF should try and identify furtherance programmes for trained Community Paralegals. Being a Community Paralegal is not enough.

It would be very helpful if HRAPF identified funding opportunities and scholarships for LGBTI persons to pursue actual careers in law. We need more lawyers and more diversity in the legal system.
My Community Paralegal experience

An interview with Timothy Muhumuza

I am a Community Paralegal Magazine (IACPM):

IACPM: How are you?

Timothy: I am alright. I am really happy you guys are here.

IACPM: Thank you. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Timothy: I am 32 years old. I am a passionate human rights activist and I am a very liberal person. I currently work with Queer Youth Uganda, an LGBTI organisation that focuses on SRHR among LGBTI persons in Uganda. I am very passionate about dancing, but I also like swimming.

IACPM: How did you first learn about HRAPF’s Community Paralegal program?

Timothy: Well, in 2011 I attended a meeting of the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law (CSCHRCL) and I met Mr. Adrian Jjuuko [HRAPF Executive Director] there. All the partner organisations there presented about their work and I was fascinated by Mr. Jjuuko’s presentation. After that meeting, I started to take a keen interest in HRAPF’s work and it was through the coalition that I started to hear more about HRAPF’s work. Then I received a call telling me my Executive Director had nominated me for the Community Paralegal training by HRAPF because I am passionate and outspoken.

IACPM: Did the training match up to your expectations? Were you impressed, disappointed?

Timothy: At first I was afraid I would not survive it. I had been told about the legal jargon that they use and everything, and I had a bias against lawyers because I had been told that they show off a lot and they are proud. Then every facilitator kept introducing himself or herself and saying they are lawyers. I was worried that I would be unable to keep up.

But then I found that the lawyers were actually friendly and they understood the community very well. None of them used those hard words I was scared of. It was more of a discussion with the facilitators than a lecture. It was very engaging and they kept using different languages to cater to all our needs. I was able to engage with them and learn a lot.

IACPM: Would you say this training impacted your life in any way?

Timothy: I was so happy with this training. I developed skills I had never even thought were important. Originally, I was just a community member and I did not know how to engage with the police. I thought everything at the police stations was to be paid for. I remember I used to be so afraid of police stations. I had never been inside one before. But after the training I gained the courage...
to confront the police and fight for the rights of the community members. I have been able to take part in so many activities such as the Copenhagen Gay Pride event where I was able to share my work and experiences as a Community Paralegal. I have actually enrolled at the Law Development Centre for a Diploma in Law. This training gave me a real taste for legal practice. What I hope for is that when I pass this course, I will go to university and study law.

**IACPM:** *Have you handled any cases since your training that have stood out for you as particularly significant?*

**Timothy:** I have handled many cases but there was this one case of a gay pastor that really bothered me. He was blackmailed by someone they had had consensual relations with. At first he asked for UGX 500,000 and the pastor paid. Then he asked for one million, then two million and finally three million. It just kept going on and on, and he kept saying that he had videos of the two of them being intimate and that he would take them to the police and also expose him in the church if he did not pay up.

What I did is that I contacted the blackmailer and told him what the law says about same-sex sexual relations and asked him to meet me and we talk. At first I thought our talk had been sufficient and that the ordeal was over, but he instead went to the police and reported and the client was arrested. I went to the police station and called the HRAPF lawyer. We stayed there together until he was released on police bond and I stood surety for him. The charges were later dropped.

**IACPM:** *Any concluding remarks, may be something else you would like HRAPF to know?*

**Timothy:** My advice to HRAPF is that this training program should be continued and even made bigger. It was a very innovative idea. I had no idea we could serve our own communities until HRAPF trained me. It is an experience every community member should get if possible.

---

**Sex work, human rights and the law in Uganda: Experiences, challenges and solutions**

*By Jennifer Tushabe*

Due to the fact that sex work is illegal in Uganda, sex workers face numerous challenges, including lack of access to HIV/TB prevention and care services and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) challenges. To compound matters, the national sex worker movement in Uganda is mainly concentrated in the Kampala metropolitan area and as such, sex workers based upcountry are under-served and not effectively mobilised for collective action, access to services and financial sustainability. The meaningful participation of upcountry based sex workers...
in programming is a crucial step to achieving the 90-90-90 target in Uganda. A unified, vibrant, national and sustainable sex worker movement is required to organise a solid, participatory, inclusive and flexible network of smaller sex worker-led community based organisations to advocate for an enabling environment for sex work countrywide.

Since 2012, sex workers have endured multiple cases of violence and stigmatisation. As a Community Paralegal, I handled a case in 2012 that has stood out for me. In that case, a sex worker drop-in center based in Gulu that provided sex workers with better access to medical care, legal and social services, job training and freedom from violence and arbitrary arrests was raided by authorities without a warrant. Police confiscated documents, computers and other material from the center. They also read personal emails and correspondence. Sex worker leaders were harassed, arrested and paraded before the media. The resulting publicity affected their image and reputation, leading to condemnation in the court of public opinion and thus denying them their right to the presumption of innocence. The sex worker leaders were accused of recruiting women and girls into prostitution and the drop-in center was falsely identified as a brothel. Two sex worker leaders were arrested at the scene and three sex workers were later detained at Gulu District Police Headquarters when they had gone to visit their colleagues. They were not told why they were arrested, nor were they officially charged. It was only later that they were charged with prostitution and living off the earnings of prostitution. HRAPF helped with documentation of the violations occasioned and defended the arrested sex workers in court. The five sex workers were exonerated due to lack of evidence.

From 2015 to date, 23 cases of violence and stigmatisation against sex workers based upcountry have been reported to me by various Community Paralegals and community members. The perpetrators included the general population, police, families, clients, intimate partners and controllers. Even where human rights of upcountry based sex workers are routinely violated, in an enabling environment sex workers can still organise to challenge punitive laws if they are empowered to claim their human and health rights. As rights violations impede sex workers’ access to services, ensuring the rights of upcountry based sex workers is critical for HIV/TB and SRHR programming.

The government and CSOs should scale up availability and accessibility of comprehensive HIV/TB and SRHR services to target upcountry based sex workers. Their efforts to enjoy their basic human rights, including freedom from extra-legal arrests and harassment by authorities should be supported by the state and by legal aid service providers in order to create an enabling environment for HIV/TB and SRHR programs. It is urgent and necessary that we all support the sex workers who live and work in this country to realize their constitutional human rights guarantees, SRHR and comprehensive HIV and TB care services in order to achieve the overall 90-90-90 target.
FEATURED COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY PARALEGALS ABOUT THE HRAPF PARALEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM

In every issue, HRAPF will endeavor to feature comments from different community paralegals beyond those featured on their work. This section will be thematic and focus on particular issues. This issue focuses on: Experiences of Lesbian Community Paralegals; challenges of Bisexual Paralegals; security concerns about the paralegal training program and HRAPF’s activities; and the benefits to the sex worker community:

Creating a voice for Bisexual people

By Yiga Peter

I am a human rights defender fighting for the rights of bisexual persons and sex workers. I have been the Executive Director of Scarlet Uganda since its inception, and currently work in the areas of Makindye, Kawempe and Wakiso district. I was nominated to join the programme by HRAPF and was contacted by Ms Patricia Kimera, a lawyer at HRAPF. What motivated me to join the programme was because I realised that bisexual persons were neglected a lot. I was always in constant communication with many of them and they had many issues that went unsolved. This drove me to join the Community Paralegal training, in order to address these issues. Because of the training, I have acquired confidence, especially being able to deal with the police. I also got legal and human rights knowledge, which have made me a source of legal advice in my community, as I speak from an informed point of view. I have been able to get fellow community members out on police bond and also to intervene in family disputes.

Being a Community Paralegal, like anything else, has its challenges. Some of the challenges I have faced include fear by fellow community members to join activism, the bureaucracy in the enforcement of human rights, the fact that most clients are impatient and easily convinced to give bribes, and lack of sufficient facilitation for community paralegal work. However, I try to deal with these challenges the best way I can. If I think I cannot handle a case because of any of the
above challenges, I always make it a point to refer the case to HRAPF lawyers for further handling. It is however very empowering to know that even Bisexual persons have been included in LGBTI programming by organisations like HRAPF, and that some of us have been empowered by the training to start up organisations that specifically speak to their issues. It is good for bisexual persons to know that there is help when they need it.

I commend HRAPF for bringing this programme and making it possible for all of us to access it. I wish that more bisexual Community Paralegals are trained as we still remain a minority within the LGBTI community and our issues are ignored. It would be good to have more of us trained. Otherwise it is a very good programme as it is empowering and informative.

As a final word, I would like to point out to HRAPF that sometimes there is a problem with contacts and response from the responsible officers at HRAPF, and this affects the quality of the services offered. This should be improved. However, we thank them for the work.

Peter facilitating an outreach session with Bisexual persons in Kyengera. The session was about the legal and human rights framework affecting bisexual persons in Uganda.

The HRAPF Paralegal Training Program and the security of the LGBTI community

By Sandra Ntebi

Sandra is the Chairperson of the National LGBTI Security Committee.

I am a transgender man who takes great pride in the achievements made thus far in the LGBTI movement. I am proud of the increase in rights awareness among community members and the increased visibility of LGBTI activities, which have resulted into increased linkages and networking within the community. I am probably one of the most known names in Uganda’s LGBTI community. I am the Chairperson of the National LGBTI Security

I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL | A Magazine for Community Paralegals Working with Marginalised Communities in Uganda
Committee, a committee tasked with providing solutions to community members if and when they find themselves in security conundrums. I identify as a transgender man and unlike many trans-identifying persons, I have not felt the need to change my name and I comfortably use the one assigned to me by my parents. I have recommended individuals from a number of organisations to train as Community Paralegals and referred organisations seeking legal guidance to HRAPF.

From the look of things, these trainings have brought the community together through networking. Community members have a united voice and are more passionate about their work. I feel that this has worked out so well as a system of community engagement. I think HRAPF has contributed a great deal to the movement and to LGBTI persons. HRAPF has built the capacity of LGBTI organisations, has interpreted the laws for LGBTI people, sensitised and represented the community, and built harmony and unity among members. I can now see continuity of LGBTI organisations. Of course there is need to streamline management structures in a number of them, but I do not think I am worried about the sustainability of networking among the LGBTI community.

However as is with any undertaking, there are issues that I am not happy about. I think that HRAPF has introduced technicalities and bureaucracies in the community. The LGBTI community was a social movement that has now become political and engulfed in legalese unlike before. There are classifications within the community where some of those who have been trained as paralegals view themselves as being better than the rest. The structures at HRAPF are also frustrating service delivery to community members, and layers of bureaucracy hamper communication between HRAPF lawyers and Community Paralegals in the field. The never-ending staff meetings frustrate communication between HRAPF staff and Community Paralegals since I have heard a number of such complaints.

As a way forward, I think there is need to identify and train more Community Paralegals that add value to the community. I would also be grateful for another organisation doing the same work. Division of labour should be encouraged. I know HRAPF cannot avail lawyers to represent both the accused and complainant where both are LGBTI persons, so HRAPF should empower other organisations to mediate in some cases. As last advice, transgender people who want to change their names should involve their families. There has to be more of an effort made to help your family reconcile with this new reality. HRAPF should also always inform community members in time when they organise events. All these impromptu meetings where people get only a few days’ notice are just badly planned. HRAPF must also try to engage organisations on an individual basis.

The Executive Director could spare sometime for instance and visit each organisation’s secretariat, share their challenges and just engage with the community.

Sandra joined the HRAPF Executive Director in 2016 to give certificates to newly passed out Community Paralegals.
Ibrahim works with the Support Initiative for People with Congenital Disorders (SIPD) as the documentation officer and a Community Paralegal passed out in 2014 by HRAPF.

B eing a Community Paralegal is one of the most challenging but amazing jobs I have ever had, and that is the reason I am so proud to be one. Whereas the law defines a Community Paralegal as a person who holds a qualification in law, other than a degree, that is recognised by the law council, by virtue of my different Community Paralegal engagements, and experience, I choose to define a Community Paralegal as a “diligent and selfless person who is willing to tirelessly offer services to the less privileged groups of people to ensure that they access justice and enjoy their rights.”

Inspite of the many challenges encountered such as the unrealistic expectations from clients beyond what is available for offer, a Community Paralegal should be in position to professionally resolve all client’s situations or do referrals where need be. A good Community Paralegal should also have good communication and counselling skills, as well as comprehend the different sources of the law and its procedure in Uganda so as to professionally deal with different situations such as advising in scenarios where clients may ignorantly conflict with the law.

Most of my Community Paralegal work is done with the intersex community. Not every mother would wish death for her own child no matter the predicament. However, Alice (not real names) fell victim to a psychological discomfort arising from the lack of child support from her ex-husband, and at some point wished her child death. Having an intersex child exposed her to harassment and discrimination from both her husband and the general community. Her child was not spared the indignities either. In fact, she reports that one time, out of sheer frustration, she retorted to her erstwhile husband in a phone conversation: “If your own child is a burden to you, poison and kill him rather than denying us care and support, and leaving us to suffer.”

Contrary to what the statement might suggest, Alice is a sane person who passionately loves her child. However like most parents of intersex children - and other children with unpopular sexual and gender identities, desperation and frustration forced her to make such an utterance.

Mothers of these children face different human rights violations from not only their husbands but also their relatives and societies in general. Although such violations directly affect the child on a much vaster scale than the parents, experience has taught me that mothers suffer just as much from the discrimination and violations that flow from having an intersex child. Alice admitted to me during our interview: “I later regretted having uttered such a statement and up to now it is still haunting me. I only said it because I was fed-up of seeing my own child suffer in my hands as the whole world looks on in ridicule.” It is clear that she suffers on behalf of her child, and yet neither of them was at fault for the natural order of things. There is still a huge gap with regards to rights of intersex persons amongst key stakeholders that needs to be bridged. If only Community Paralegals and all other key stakeholders such as lawyers, human rights activists and members of parliament to mention but a few could diligently work together, such regrettable and tormenting utterances could be unheard of. All that intersex people and all sexual minorities need is the love and care, which could be availed through the protection and observance of their rights.

Most parents in the intersex constituency come from financially humble backgrounds and are thus in need of both psychosocial and financial support. The
women generally have to deal with, amongst other violations, child neglect and family abandonment most especially by the fathers of the children. Sometimes, the isolation is actually self-imposed because of the social stigma surrounding the phenomenon of having an intersex child. Also, cases of mob justice against intersex persons are not that uncommon so sometimes mothers choose to isolate their children for their own protection. The high intersexphobia rates in Uganda are mainly attributed to ignorance and lack of information. It is unfair and inhumane to deny intersex people their fundamental human rights. Laws such as Section 38 of the Registration of Persons Act 2015 that denies adults the right to change their registered sex status, even when medically proven, is an example of the unfairness of the socio-legal environment in which intersex persons are forced to exist.

There is urgent need for their legal recognition, protection from discrimination, and most importantly the appreciation of who they are given the fact that some intersex people are comfortable staying and identifying as intersex rather than endure a forced confinement in the binary of either male or female. Being intersex is not harmful as many think. It is just a condition of sex development, which is correctable as any other. However, the law in Uganda makes it a great risk to correct this one way or the other during infancy because it is rare that scientific proof is required before a gender is assigned. Sometimes the parents choose the sex they wanted for their child and sometimes the doctors choose based on convenience, and never mind the child’s actual gender. A mother of an intersex child once said in one of the community outreaches that, but for the grace and the support she attains from Community Paralegals and SIPD at large, she would have abandoned her child long time ago. Her child is both an intersex and a cripple.

I would therefore like to thank HRAPF for the Community Paralegal programme, and hope that it continues.
During that time, sex workers were facing a lot of human rights violations, including being raped by police officers, clients and other men. They did not have any one to help them, so when this opportunity came up, I saw it as a golden chance to help the members of the community I belong to. I knew that if I got the legal knowledge, then there was nothing to stop me from helping and advocating for the rights of sex workers. The decision of LMB to select me was purely based on my willingness and commitment to advocate for the rights of the sex workers. Being a member of the sex worker community, they had confidence that I would serve. I knew that if I got the training, then I would get an upper hand to support my colleagues.

The Community Paralegal training program of HRAPF greatly changed my life. Before the training, I used to advocate for the rights of sex workers and advocate for a peaceful working environment. However, with no legal knowledge and with little confidence we could never get the things I was advocating and fighting for. When I enrolled for this program, it gave me knowledge of the law. It enabled me to see how the current legal framework protects the rights of the sex workers and to know the rights of the sex workers as any other human beings. It helped me develop my communication skills and my confidence, and this has enabled me to become a good facilitator at sessions organised by other sex worker and LGBTI organisations. I also have the skills and knowledge of persuading police officers to release sex workers and other community members who have been arrested.

Since my training, I have handled a good number of cases but the most outstanding one that touched my heart was a case of a sex worker who was HIV positive and had a child. She was arrested and forced to leave her young child alone. When court heard her bail application, I stood surety for her and persuaded the court that there were very strong reasons for releasing this sex worker or giving her a non-custodial sentence. I explained that she did not have anyone to look after her child or anywhere to go. The court listened to my explanations and court sentenced her to only community service.

My message to whoever is reading this magazine is that wherever they have a chance of being trained as a Community Paralegal, they should take up that opportunity unreservedly because knowing the law is like knowing yourself and the community surrounding you. Law is part of daily life and makes life complete. It does not help you as an individual alone but it also helps the community you serve, the family members, the whole country. Being a Community Paralegal does not necessarily mean working only with the organisation to which you are attached but it means knowing your rights and knowing the law to help the community as a whole. The fact that you know about human rights, the procedures of enforcement and where to go when faced with a challenge is more powerful than being given money. I can pass this knowledge to as many people as I like in my family, community and audiences to whom I facilitate, but all this happens because I acquired that knowledge through the Community Paralegal training.

I really thank HRAPF for this opportunity to be trained.
I am a Community Paralegal Magazine (IACPM):

**IACPM:** Tell us about yourself. Who is Williams?

**Apako:** I am a trans-man who is passionate about social justice. I am also a consultant on gender and sexual diversity issues. I am an alumnus of Young African Leaders Initiative. I was trained as a Community Paralegal in 2015.

**IACPM:** Do you care to share with us what Young African Leaders Initiative does?

**Apako:** It is an association of youth from all over the continent that aims at improving the capacity of African youth both to employ and be employable. It is about social development and economic empowerment. They usually offer training opportunities for the youth in business and entrepreneurship. I chose to do civic training instead because as a social justice activist, this is what interested me.

**IACPM:** You appear very interested in learning a lot of things especially about rights advocacy and social justice. So how did you learn about the HRAPF Community Paralegal program?

**Apako:** I had heard about the Community Paralegals being trained through a friend and I really wanted to join but I did not know how. Then in 2015 my friend Shawn Mugisha contacted me and told me I had
been nominated to take part in the training. You can imagine my excitement.

**IACPM: So, what motivated you to take up this opportunity?**

**Apako:** It was really prestigious back then. The Community Paralegals were very few and so they belonged to this exclusive club I really wanted to be part of. Also, you have to realise that I am naturally a very curious person and I have always wanted to be a lawyer but never got the opportunity to study law. I was therefore really excited to take part in this course. It was like studying law for me, and I could not miss the opportunity to learn about legal matters.

**IACPM: Can you tell us what your experience was? Do you think the training lived up to your expectations?**

**Apako:** At first I was really confused by the training. It was so technical and the pace was slow. The topics were not interesting like I had expected. Then this facilitator came and explained the concept of the Community Paralegal and what our expected jobs would be, and the difference between Community Paralegals and lawyers. This rekindled my interest in the subject and from then on I really enjoyed the training. I particularly liked learning about the justice system and the difference between criminal and civil law. I had always seen cases going to court and police but I had never been able to tell what the difference was between any of the cases. When I learnt this at the training, it was a real eye-opener.

**IACPM: Having joined that exclusive group of Community Paralegals, what do you think about the entire program and particularly the training itself?**

**Apako:** I think you need to train many more Community Paralegals especially outside Kampala. If it is very exclusive, the community members will have limited access to the Community Paralegals. I think that at least we have enough Community Paralegals around Kampala but the rural districts are badly off. The Community Paralegal training was also a very grand experience that I would recommend to every LGBTI person so I think HRAPF should definitely offer more people the chance to do this training.

I also think HRAPF should put applicants through some kind of interview because I feel like sometimes the identification process is not very transparent. They select only people who are influential in LGBTI organisations that HRAPF contacts, yet those people have their own responsibilities. For instance the Executive Director of an LGBTI organisation will have responsibilities in their own organisations and yet the responsibilities of a Community Paralegal are also demanding. It is also necessary to select people who have proved through interviews that they will have the time and passion to dedicate themselves to the work of Community Paralegals, otherwise the information imparted to them benefits them individually and not the community.

**IACPM: Any final remarks, maybe advice to other Community Paralegals?**

**Apako:** All I want to say really is that HRAPF has done a good job with this Community Paralegal project. It is the first time ever that LGBTI people are being so empowered in Uganda. This is a wonderful thing that HRAPF is doing and I think you should keep it up. The best part is that it is absolutely free. I am also extremely grateful to the lawyers for registering my organisation, which has helped us serve the community legally.
My name is Ramadhan Babu, a member of Frank & Candy Uganda and currently employed by HRAPF as a Community Paralegal. I got to know about the Community Paralegal training programme through Ronnie Kayigoma, who was then the Executive Director of Kampus Liberty Uganda. I was however recommended by Moses Twinomujuni from Frank & Candy. At that time, I had earned a lot of experience in dealing with the community and handling cases at THE police, although I was not as effective back then because I still had some fear of the police. Moses felt the Community Paralegal training would be beneficial as it would enable me to do my work better.

When the opportunity came along for me to undergo the Community Paralegal Training, I was very excited at the prospect of learning more about the law. I had a passionate interest in the law. At the training, I was very inquisitive and wanted to know more about the laws, especially those affecting the LGBTI community. A lot changed in my life when I realised how stressful the legal process can be. I saw how much people yearned for assistance, seeking release from police cells and help with court processes. At the Community Paralegal training, I was able to hone my communication skills and have since employed the same in dealing with police officers and court officials.

For me, becoming a Community Paralegal was about righting wrongs. I was myself outed against my will and I suffered a lot of discrimination and harassment both from family and the community where I lived. If I had known about HRAPF services during those days, I would have had multiple files opened here already. Sadly, I did not and in fact the only case file I have ever had with HRAPF was opened by me long after my employment at HRAPF started.

My involvement with LGBTI persons has never been easy. Even when I was more involved in health and HIV, I still had challenges but they became worse in the legal field. Sometimes I have to deal with issues like paying transport for clients I have helped out of police custody because they were arrested without any money, or because the arresting officers took...
it, and this is of course hard on me. It used to be even worse when I was just volunteering with the community because I had no way of meeting those bills, yet I could hardly ask them to walk to their homes.

Currently, my biggest challenge is that I can sometimes get emotionally attached to my clients’ problems. I do not like to leave a matter hanging. I want to complete the entire case. I feel that I have developed bonds of trust with most of my clients so when they call, no matter how late it is, I just want to be there for them. I try so hard to help them access the services they need because in my opinion this is really important. I know how hard it is for the community to trust someone, so I try to honour that trust. I do not like giving up on any case, because then the person who trusted you to handle it will be disappointed.

What frustrates me the most is when I fail to help a person. Sometimes they will call in the middle of the night and I honestly cannot go to them, yet I understand so well the terror that a gay person or trans-person will feel when they are thrown into a police cell and the police officer reveals their identity to their cellmates. I know the humiliation and abuse they have to suffer through the night. When I hear of these cases I just want to fly there immediately and it frustrates me that I cannot always do that.

I always wanted to be a lawyer since my high school days. However, when I confided this wish to my mother, she discouraged me greatly, saying I would go to hell because lawyers were unscrupulous and untrustworthy individuals. I slowly lost interest in the profession because I did not want to end up being dishonest too. However, it seems to me that the profession is following me up, and of course after having interacted with so many lawyers, I am convinced once again that this is good. I plan to enrol for a diploma in law at the Law Development Centre (LDC) and see how that goes.

I have handled a number of cases since I became a Community Paralegal. My engagement with the police is more confident and more effective because now I know how much I can demand by right and expect to receive from police officers. I do this very fearlessly now. Since I took part in this Community Paralegal programme, I have felt empowered and strengthened. I have met various people who have been trained under this programme and they have all moved on to become vision bearers in human rights advocacy organisations.

I once handled a blackmail case where the client was being blackmailed by someone they had had consensual relations with. It was a bad case because the client himself was difficult and uncooperative, yet the blackmailer demanded a lot of money that he did not have. He actually ended up in Luzira prison for a while before we managed to secure court bail for him. I had to leave the Community Paralegal training (third module) to go and attend court that day so that I could stand surety for him. He was later released and then I embarked on the long and arduous process of helping him raise the money needed because the magistrate had allowed him to pay the complainant and then let the case drop. This case really took a lot of effort, time and even money but I was just so glad that his future was salvaged.

My advice to the other Community Paralegals is that we must be prepared to do this work as social volunteers. Most of us are not paid for this work. The expectation of a reward will just frustrate you so much. That stipend that HRAPF gives you is really not payment. It is just reimbursement for the costs that you incur in following up the case. I think this work must be done for personal satisfaction and with a view to advancing the cause of all LGBTI persons in Uganda. I know that we all meet the challenge that sometimes the expectations and demands of the community especially in terms of time, money, effort and expertise are unrealistic, but we have a good support network of lawyers and NGOs that we can work with to ensure that the cases we handle go well.

Sometimes, our clients also exhibit a sense of entitlement and lack of appreciation and respect. When they call at 1.00am and you do not show up within the hour, they will actually complain when you do turn up at 9.00am because they feel entitled to your time, which is not true. We donate our time. That is all. Sometimes the police can be bullies, but even more frustrating is the fact that sometimes clients lie to us and we mount aggressive campaigns to have them released, only for the police to show you that they were lying. This is really upsetting but as Community Paralegals it is part of the risks and frustrations we have to deal with.

The Community Paralegal programme’s strongest
point in my opinion is the fact that we try to get people from the community who will sympathise and understand better than the lawyers, and their advice is also usually more related to the community’s specific needs. The number of people belonging to marginalised communities who are able to access justice has risen exponentially due to the fact that they now have some of their own fighting for them. The program is a good opportunity and I hope it will continue.

Harriet Hope Waseni (Cindy) is a 35-year old sex worker, a member of WONETHA and a Community Paralegal working with the Sex Workers’ Unit at HRAPF.

Prior to training as a Community Paralegal, I worked as a Peer Educator for WONETHA, a coordination office for sex workers. I was later identified as a trainee and attended the Community Paralegal training at the invitation of Patricia Kimera, the Head of the LGBTI Unit at HRAPF. The opportunity came in handy because I wanted to learn more about the law and thus help my fellow sex workers encountering problems with the law through interventions at police, Courts and the communities where they reside. During the training, the facilitators engaged us in practical aspects of the law. The learning process was participatory and encouraged individual contribution. At the end of the training we were awarded certificates and I was attached to Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) where we engaged in field activities under the guidance of senior lawyers to gain more practical expertise.

The Community Paralegal training has helped me obtain practical skills to follow up sex workers’ cases at police, courts and prisons like interviewing clients, conducting mediations and handling child neglect and maintenance issues. Most importantly, the training enabled me obtain a job at HRAPF as a Community Paralegal in charge of sex workers and other minorities, charged with the responsibility to handle cases of violations against sex workers. I have visited and interviewed clients at prisons and also conducted several mediations successfully.
The case that has stood out most significantly for me in my time at HRAPF is the case of a sex worker who bought land and the land-lord resold the land—a *kibanja* interest— to someone else. After HRAPF’s intervention, our client (the sex worker) was able to obtain compensation over and above the payment she had made to the purchaser way back in 2012. Personally, I was happy our client had received worthwhile compensation. She later gave the HRAPF team a turkey as a sign of appreciation for our intervention. HRAPF has done commendable work in enabling sex workers and other marginalised groups access justice. Specifically, I feel empowered by the HRAPF Community Paralegal training to meaningfully intervene on behalf of sex workers.

I have been able to intervene successfully at police countless times where sex workers have been released without charge. I have also intervened in court cases where they have received non-custodial sentences on plea bargains, which they prefer as it enables them look after their children and continue to work as they serve their sentence, and some of their children are getting support where previously child support was denied.

I am very grateful to HRAPF not only for the opportunity to train me as a Community Paralegal, but also for the employment opportunity they gave me, which gives me a greater platform to create impact in the sex workers’ community.
THE FACILITATORS

The work of HRAPF trained paralegals: A chronicle of the power of knowledge and the empowerment of the minorities

By Patricia Kimera

When the paralegal programme was first considered in 2011, the first task was to develop a reference handbook for community paralegals working with sexual minorities. The process was a long and involved one. We had to choose topics we felt would be relevant to the trainees and that would be useful to them for the work we hoped to prepare them for. In this regard, I will always be grateful for the guidance, support, contributions and the intelligence of all the lawyers and officers who generously developed the handbook we now use to teach and guide paralegals.

However, before the reference handbook was developed, we just had to work with the trainees on the pre-agreed topics with no learning aid, and no reference guide to offer them for keeps after the training. We tried to impart skills and knowledge that would enable the paralegals we trained to effectively interview clients, counsel them whenever necessary, understand the basic concepts of human rights at domestic, regional and international levels as well as civil and criminal law matters in Uganda. These topics were deemed relevant as an empowerment tool for paralegals to serve their communities from an informed point of view. I am glad to say that we were not mistaken. The training has enabled the paralegals we have trained to understand the basics of the legal framework in Uganda.

Our paralegals intervene at police and hence need the skills to communicate with clients and police officials. The training equips them with the practical skills of interacting confidently with people. Knowing the laws that affect their communities also enables paralegals to mitigate conflicts among themselves and to help out members in conflict with law enforcement officers. As a result, the training has enabled the community to build sustainable relationships.

Patricia is an advocate working with HRAPF. She is currently the Head of the Access to Justice-LGBTI Unit and has been at the forefront of the HRAPF paralegal program from its inception.
The paralegals also carry out outreaches and awareness sessions, which have enabled cooperation and experience sharing from which they learn valuable lessons to serve their communities better. I am particularly proud of the fact that so many of the paralegals we have trained have gone on to start their own organisations to advocate for the rights of their communities and otherwise serve the community. Organisations such as Rainbow Mirrors, Scarlet Initiatives Uganda and Kitara Empowerment, to mention but a few, have been registered and aided, not by HRAPF lawyers, but by the community paralegals we have trained and then employed to work with the communities at HRAPF. This is real achievement as far as I am concerned. We have done something to be proud of, something the community can be proud of.

My favourite sessions with the paralegals are the sharing sessions. These are very vital in the programme because they bring together all the paralegals trained so far and they get to share their experiences, triumphs and challenges, the fun, the frustrations and the victories. Whenever I am at office, I try to attend at least a part of the sessions. I love seeing them share their experiences and encouraging one another. My colleagues in the unit call me the headmistress of the paralegals and they think it is a joke. Perhaps even a slightly derogatory one at times. To the contrary, I actually like it. When I meet the trained paralegals, I feel like a proud teacher of A students. They have learnt so much and used it so well that I cannot help but be proud.

Of course I realise that we still have some challenges, but the entire organisation and particularly the unit are working on straightening out these challenges. We value the relationship we have with our paralegals. We value the work they do for the communities, so we shall try harder to be available, to work with them and to support their efforts. I cannot fail to use this opportunity to thank all the paralegals for their bravery and their dedication in serving the communities.

However, I would like to offer, as a teacher, one last piece of advice: as a paralegal, you have the competence to handle most of the cases that you come across in the field. The paralegal training is tailored to prepare you for that. Every paralegal that we have trained should, unless the training went badly wrong, be able to interview clients, intervene at police, talk to court clerks and magistrates, handle simple mediations and advise on simple matters of law. It is therefore not necessary to refer every single case to HRAPF because sometimes the lawyers are spread really thin and will take a while to respond, which is not good for our mutual clients.

I understand that sometimes the community members do not listen too well and insist on having a lawyer, but I would advise every community paralegal to take themselves and their role seriously. Give your advice in a confident manner. Talk to the community, the police and the clients in a self-assured manner and ensure that they take you seriously. I assure you that you can handle this.

Finally, I want to beseech all HRAPF-trained community paralegals: do not hold out. I know that the temptation exists to introduce yourself as a lawyer at police or at court, but this would be a grave mistake. As we have emphasised countless times before during the trainings, it is illegal to hold out as a lawyer when you are not and bad for the work you are expected to do if you ever get caught.

Otherwise, I would just like to express my utmost gratitude to the donors who have made this program possible. You have enabled the empowerment of these communities through your generosity and foresight and we thank you. I would also like to thank the management at HRAPF for the foresight that made this program possible. You dreamed a good dream. Together, we have fought a good fight. We have borne good fruit, and I am so proud to have been a part of this. I hope that I shall continue to be part of it, to watch the program grow more and more. And to the paralegals, thank you so much. Thank you for donating your time, effort, commitment and brilliance to the service of others less fortunate than you. Thank you for accepting the challenge, taking up the mantle and bearing it so well. Thank you for your tireless service to the community and all your efforts to empower the community.
fell to me. I cannot say I was excited at first. I was actually very scared. The first time for me to organise a quarterly sharing session was in June of 2016.

Despite my meeting the community paralegals at an earlier session, I was very challenged by this session. I had little idea of how to handle them. They seemed to have done so much more of this work than I had, and yet they all expected so much from me. There were so many questions, so many challenges and so many difficult experiences to share. I had no idea how to handle some of the questions, whereas I simply had no answer for some of the others. Let us just say it was an interesting experience.

That was a starting point for me. I started to form bonds with them, to review their case reports and talk to them about their cases. I developed real friendships with them and started working seriously on their issues. I started to notice that whereas we had a few community paralegals that did not do much, a lot of them were actually doing an amazing lot of work. They were always calling me for advice on how to proceed at police, updating me on cases they had handled and referring cases for further follow up. It was overwhelming how much each of them was giving up for the greater good, yet at the time the stipend they are entitled to was not being given regularly. Actually, regularising the stipend was a great motivator and I think it is a system that has the potential to make the paralegals’ work less arduous.

I have come over time to realise that paralegals grow out of the system. The first group of community paralegals that I found here is a good example. A large number of them have grown out of the system in the sense that the trainings boosted their capacity to serve the community as leaders. They gracefully take up that mantle and form rights advocacy organisations. At that point their work as paralegals must suffer some damage naturally as it is a demanding but unpaid job, yet being an Executive Director for instance is also a demanding position.

Training of paralegals has been a continuous process that has been kept going since 2011. I have only been part of it for the last one year and I think that the continuous training is a fantastic idea as it covers the gap that inevitably comes when some paralegals
leave the system or become too busy to engage in the work as paralegals.

The community paralegal program is one of the most innovative programs HRAPF has ever devised in my opinion. It has kept us in touch with the communities as we have the opportunity to share with the community leaders on a daily basis. As long as we run the community paralegal program, there will never be a time when the organisation can be accused of losing touch with the communities. We know what is going on in the communities. We are aware of our relevance (or otherwise) to the people we serve. We are constantly reminded of the communities’ needs by the paralegals. The awareness sessions that paralegals organize and facilitate are a real highlight for me. I have been so privileged to work with this group of passionate people who work for the greater good on a daily basis.

My biggest disappointment is the attitude the community has towards the community paralegals. The paralegals do so much work for so many people, and yet the community takes them for granted even when they are doing the best that they can do. Sometimes the community imagines that because they are not lawyers, community paralegals do not know what they are talking about. This could not be further from the truth. I have learnt so much since I started working with paralegals, and yet I am a lawyer. They come across the most complex problems in their day-to-day life that most lawyers would not be able to handle unless they have experience in working with marginalised communities, and our community paralegals usually know the answers.

The highlight of my time at HRAPF is actually dealing with community paralegals. I find them so much more effective than most lawyers because they are fearless and they never give up. Paralegals have a real heart for their communities. A trans-woman who is also a paralegal will sacrifice far more to ensure that a fellow trans-woman does not spend the night in the police cell with male suspects because she is aware of the likely trauma to be faced by her colleague in a way that most lawyers would never begin to comprehend.

They have also proven to be very effective ‘first aiders’. Sometimes community members will insist on getting a lawyer and you find that an issue that could have been solved by the paralegal in a thirty-minute chat takes three weeks to be resolved. My advice to the communities the paralegals work with is that you should be responsive. Listen to them, and work with them. Ultimately, it is for the greater good.

When I think of giving advice to my community paralegals, I think of them as my students. I have trained paralegals since 2016. I have loved teaching them, hanging out with them, answering their questions and being their friend in some cases. It is so rewarding to be working with them. I feel like I have a source of courage and inspiration that I can tap into whenever the environment in which we work threatens to become too frustrating.

So how can I advise people I have taught and mentored, when they have also taught and mentored me? How can I advise them as their teacher when I have been a student in our conversations countless times? The first and most important thing in my opinion is to thank them. The work they do is not easy, and they are not even paid for it. We are grateful that you do the work and bridge the gap for the other community members. I know you do not hear this nearly often enough, but thank you. I thank you, HRAPF thanks you, the community thanks you and history will thank you one day.

However, as a friend and the lawyer that you will mostly turn to in times of crisis, my advice to all paralegals is simple: take yourselves and your job seriously. Remember that the most important part of your work is community liaison. Be as friendly as possible, be approachable and be available, otherwise you will be of little use to the community. However, take yourself seriously as a leader, otherwise you will find that people disrespect you and do not take your advice seriously, which will undermine your work and frustrate you.

I also want to speak to the older paralegals, both in terms of age and training: we appreciate the fact that you are busy and are slowly leaving the system, so as a last favour to the system, mentor the young ones. Teach them more. Be friendly with them and share your experiences with them so that they can learn from you and be able to take up the mantle when you leave. This will keep the program constantly supplied with willing and able individuals so that we can support one another in our goal of taking human rights to all. Always remember that knowledge, much like love and smiles, is most valuable when shared.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

Adrian Jjuuko, Executive Director, Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum.

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to this pioneer issue of the ‘I AM A COMMUNITY PARALEGAL’ magazine. I have watched with pride and satisfaction, the growth of the sexual minorities rights movement in Uganda, and the part that HRAPF has played in it. As an organisation, HRAPF has come a long way since 2008 when it was founded and we are proud of the journey so far.

As the first and only specialised legal aid clinic dedicated to the needs of sexual minorities in Uganda, we have had the opportunity to experience the legal challenges of the most marginalised communities in Uganda from a very up-close perspective. It was from this experience that we identified the need to assess further the legal aid needs of LGBTI persons and sex workers. What stood out most from this assessment was the lack of manpower in legal aid service provision to these communities. There was also the problem of community people not feeling comfortable enough to readily approach the lawyers that were not part of their communities.

The solution to this problem presented itself in the form of community paralegals- a network of persons belonging to the communities we were serving that would be able to better identify with and understand the issues of our clients, be easily accessible especially in times of crisis, have the competence to advise correctly on issues of law, human rights and even social disputes.

Over the course of the last eight years, HRAPF has trained a total of 106 community paralegals among marginalised communities in the basics of law and human rights. These paralegals have diligently served their communities in different ways and capacities.

The paralegal programme has been an outstanding success that has inspired and empowered a number of community members and has been very instrumental in bringing justice closer to the communities we serve. Both the trainers and the trainees in this paralegal training program have, in my view, a lot to be proud of.

I am conscious of the fact that there have been challenges, and I thank the paralegals for having stood with us through them, and continue to stand with us and the communities we are all so willing to serve.

On behalf of HRAPF, I pledge to continue doing the best we can to ensure that the incredible work done by paralegals is supported. I hope that, by sharing their stories and their experiences, triumphs and challenges with us through this magazine, this can be the beginning of greater cooperation among us all, as we pursue our mutual goal of taking human rights to all.

Adrian Jjuuko
ABOUT HRAPF

Background

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) is an independent, nonpartisan, Non-Governmental human rights organisation that is duly registered under the laws of Uganda. HRAPF was founded in 2008. HRAPF prides itself in promoting access to justice, raising awareness on human rights among the most marginalised groups in Uganda and advocating for an enabling legal and policy framework for the promotion of rights of marginalised groups.

HRAPF’s Vision
A society where the human rights of all persons including marginalised groups are valued and respected

HRAPF’s Mission
To promote respect and observance of human rights of marginalised groups through legal and legislative advocacy, research and documentation, legal and human rights awareness, capacity building and partnerships.

HRAPF’s Slogan
‘Taking Human Rights to all’

HRAPF’s Objectives
1. To sensitise Ugandans on the international and national human rights regime in order to promote a culture of respect for human rights of marginalised groups.
2. To undertake research and document human rights abuses suffered by marginalised groups for appropriate remedial action.
3. To influence legal and policy developments in Uganda to ensure compliance with human rights principles.
4. To offer legal assistance to marginalised groups in order to enhance access to justice.
5. To share information and best practices on the rights of marginalised groups in order to strengthen the human rights movement in Uganda.
6. To network and collaborate with key strategic partners, government, communities and individuals at a national, regional and international level.
7. To build a strong and vibrant human rights organisation.

HRAPF’s Values
1. Non-discrimination
2. Equal opportunity
3. Justice
4. Practical Approach
5. Team work

HRAPF’S PROGRAMMES
Under the strategic plan 2013-2017, HRAPF has three broad programmes:

ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROGRAMME
This programme aims at promoting sustainable access to justice for marginalised groups in Uganda. The programme mainly focuses on criminal justice, family justice and sexual and gender based violence. It targets sexual minorities, women and children living with HIV/AIDS, indigent men and women and the elderly with land problems.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING PROGRAMME
The objective of this programme is to work with likeminded organisations and institutions to advocate and influence the adoption of policies and legislation that promotes equality and non-discrimination in order to prevent discrimination of marginalised groups.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME
The objective of this programme is to create the appropriate institutional structures and organisational framework for the efficient and effective implementation of the Programme activities and realisation of the Programme Goal.
HRAPF’S GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE
HRAPF’s governance and leadership structure is composed of four organs: The General Assembly, the Trustees, the Board of Directors and the Secretariat.

The General Assembly
This is the supreme policy-making body of the organisation. It is made up of all members. Currently HRAPF has 53 members. Membership is open to all persons interested in promotion, protection and creation of awareness of human rights to the most marginalised Ugandans.

The Trustees
The Trustees are the custodians of the organisation’s Memorandum and Articles of Association. Currently there are three active trustees.

The Board of Directors
The BOD is responsible for guiding the Secretariat to perform day-to-day running of the organisation. The BOD is composed of seven members: the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, the Secretary General, the Treasurer, two other members, and the Executive Director as ex-officio. The BOD meets once every quarter.

The Secretariat
This is the implementing body of the Organisation. It is headed by the Executive Director and is currently made up of 27 staff members. HRAPF regularly hosts interns and volunteers.
Get in Touch

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

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

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

info@hrapf.org

Facebook: Hrapf Uganda, Twitter: @hrapf_uganda, Website: www.hrapf.org