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Reports About Wollega University School of Law and Its Success Story

Compiled by the School of Law, Dean's Office

Abstract

This is a report on Wollega University School of Law. It assessed the school's establishment, progress, programs, community services (Free Legal Aid Services), research activities (its Journal of Law), partnership with National and International levels since the school's establishment as a department of law till this date (June 20225).

Keywords: *Wollega University, School of Law, Its Success Story*

About

Wollega University School of Law (the School) is one of the law schools engaging in teaching, researching, and serving the community in Ethiopia. The Law Department was officially established following the inauguration of Wollega University back in 2007. Through subsequent developments, the department was restructured into the Law School.

The Law School aims at producing adequately trained legal professionals who can serve their community and beyond with legal skills, ethical and intellectual guidance, and to strengthen the qualification and man power of the personnel in the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, counseling and advisory departments, and other institutions engaged in law related activities at various levels.

Concerning the teaching-learning, the School runs both undergraduate and graduate

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studies. At the undergraduate level, the School teaches LL.B. degree programs in regular, evening, and summer modalities. The School launched its first graduate program named LL.M in Criminology and Criminal Justice, in 2014, and its second program, LL.M in International Business and Economic Law, in 2016. While the former focuses on reforming the country's criminal justice system, the latter aims at strengthening and modernizing the economic and business laws and policies of Ethiopia in the context of the current global order. The LL.M. programs, which are available in regular, weekend, and summer modalities, are open to any person having a Law Degree from recognized higher education institutions, who has passed the national exit examination and who is able to pass the entrance examination to be administered by the School. So far, the LL.M. programs have been attracting and bringing together professionals from different walks of life, members of academia, and practitioners, from within the country and abroad. Further, the School has launched a new graduate program named LL.M. in Constitutional and Human Rights Law in 2021.

Human Resource

Currently, the School has 59 (fifty-nine) staff, of which 16 (sixteen) are academic and 40 (forty) are legal aid workers, and three are technical supportive staff. The School has established cooperation with renowned legal professors from both domestic and foreign universities.

Material Resource

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The School possesses a G+2 building, which it utilizes for offices, classrooms, and a library. Most of the rooms are furnished with relatively better facilities, including access to the internet. The building owns a Video Conference room, which supports the teaching-learning and research activities of the School. Nearly all of the classrooms are smart, and this has created a conducive environment for teaching activities. Further, the Law Library, which is accessed by the staff and students of the School, is enriched with books, laws, and court decisions.

Administrative structure

The School is chiefly administered by the Dean, along with one Vice Dean, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and continuing education Head, Research, Community Engagement, and Industry Linkage Vice Head. In addition, there exists a Free Legal Aid Services Coordinator and a Journal of Law Editor.

Wollega University Law Journal (WULJ)

The School of Law launched the WULJ in 2018 and, currently publishing impactful academic works. WULJ is an official open-access print and online international journal of Wollega University School of Law, which publishes the finest peer-reviewed research biannually in all fields of law.

Wollega University Free Legal Aid Service

It is a clear fact that Wollega University, since its very inception, has been serving the surrounding community in various aspects of their life where they seek support. One of the community services the university is

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providing to the community is free legal aid. The legal aid is aimed at giving persons of limited means a free legal service(s) which includes legal advice, client representation in courts, and legal empowerment. Its primary objective is to make it impossible for any man, woman, or child to be denied equal protection under the law simply because he or she is poor. It works towards ensuring access to justice. Legal aid has, therefore, both remedial and preventive potential.

Wollega University Legal Aid Center was started in the year 2010 with one centre in Nekemte. In 2011, the university increased the number of Free Legal Aid Centers to **three**, which are found in Nekemte, Shambu, and Gimbi. Currently, twenty-three (23) centres have been functioning.

Activities/service

Free legal Aid centers are rendering various types of activities. They are, *inter alia*, providing legal Advice/counseling, preparing pleadings for clients, representing clients in the courtroom, creating awareness creation and participating in ADR by representing the interests of our clients.

Beneficiaries from the center

Beneficiaries from the center are those who are incapable of hiring lawyers (poor), Women, Children, HIV/AIDS infected, Elders, Disabled persons, prisoners, and internally displaced persons/Returnees.

Partners working with Wollega University Free Legal Aid Service

- Oromia Supreme Court (providing Office, before 2011 E.C. fund)

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- Oromia Justice Bureau (Issued for the center's special license for representation)
- EHRs Commission (funded through it lacks continuity, as a top-up before the middle of 2012 EC)
- Kebele administration, women's and children's affairs offices
- UNHCR, an international humanitarian agency currently an active partner of the Center.
- UNODC and the Center for Justice (Through the grant from the European Union).

Centers

Legal Aid centers are established in the three Wollega Zones (East Wollega, West Wollega, and Horo Guduru Wollega) and in West Shoa. They are: Nekemte, East Wollega Correction Center, Sasiga, Haro Limu, Gidda Ayana, Jimma Arjo, Sibu Sire, Anno, Nekemte High Court, Shambu, Horro Guduru Wollega Correction Center, Harato, Guduru, Amuru, Kiramu, Gedo, Bako Tibe, Gimbi, West Wollega Correction Center, Nejo, Kiltu Kara, Mendi, and Boji Dirmaji centers.

Membership and Collaboration

- Member of the Ethiopian Law Schools Association (ELSA).
- Member of the Ethiopian Law Schools Consortium.
- Working in collaboration with Caffee Oromiyaa.

Picture

School of Law Building



When UNHCR is donating office furniture and Motorcycles for the center



Project launching with UNHCR



Legal Aid Project Partnership Signing b/n Wollega University and UNODC



When the Center is serving clients



When there is giving cash assistance for persons with specific needs in collaboration with UNHCR



While giving training for Woreda and City Counsellors



Training for Customary Court Elders



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Wollega University Centre for Moot Court and Legal Profession Development short narration on the Moot Court Participation of the School of Law



Wollega University School of Law Moot Court Room

Prologue

The consortium of Ethiopian Law Schools is functioning towards the betterment of quality legal educations. Notwithstanding to limitations on its part, the consortium has so far been engaged in the reform of legal education and tasks associated with it. It is the body which has a say on the legal educations delivered in higher educations.

With the view to produce competent and responsible legal professionals who contribute towards democracy, human rights, good governance, social justice and development, the old and heterogeneous

Legal Education Curriculum was supplanted by a new and uniform national curriculum.



Deborah Bultuma and Girma Moges at ICRC IHL moot court competition at Addis Ababa

The revised National Modularized Curriculum of the LL. B Program in Laws began to be applied in all Law Schools of the

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Country since 2013. This curriculum reiterates the importance of supporting law students' theoretical knowledge with practice. Hence, the curriculum has incorporated a number of practiced based courses and methods. And one of the methods of enhancing the practical knowledge of law students is moot court competition.



Godana Muzeyin, Tedi Bekele, and Mihret Girmay at the 4th Ethiopian national moot court competition Bahir Dar

A moot court is an [extracurricular activity](#) at many [law schools](#) in which participants take

Moreover, writing appeal either for the applicant or the respondent requires an intensive research. Thus, the engagement in

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part in simulated court proceedings, which usually involves drafting briefs (or memorials) and participating in [oral argument](#). The basic structure of a moot court competition roughly parallels what would happen in actual appellate practice. Participants will typically receive a problem ahead of time, which includes the facts of the underlying case, and often an [opinion](#) from a lower court that is being challenged in the problem. Students must then research and prepare for that case as if they were lawyers or advocates for one or sometimes both of the parties.

Thus, by participating in moot court competitions, law students would be able to enhance their advocacy skills by building upon the class room education they have garnered. Moot court specifically enables the students to engage in real life court adventure by writing memorials, arguing both as an applicant and defendant and presenting their case to a panel of judges thereby experiencing the court room drama.

moot court activities, will also enhance students' research skills.

Drawing from the past (Previous Moot Court Related Activities WU)

Wollega University's Law Department was established in 2007 within Social Science Faculty. Later in 2010, the Ethiopian Law Schools' Consortium was established under the auspice of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Justice and

Legal System Research Institute. The Consortium decided that all Law Departments existing in various higher education institutions of the country had to be named as "Law Schools" and become autonomous. Thus, the then Law Department of the University became School of Law.

Wollega University
School of Law



Since its establishment, Law Department (herein after WUSL) of has been participating in different moot court related activities and competitions both at national and international levels. For instance, in 2009, Wollega University was the only “new generation” university that was able to participate and win a trophy for preparing best a memorial, at the National Moot Court Competition organized by Bahir Dar University. Moreover, WUSL was also the only “new generation” university that was able to participate in national moot court competitions held at Jimma University and University of Gonder in 2010 and 2011, respectively.



Girma Moges and Deborah Bultuma representing WUSL at the IHL National Moot Court

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Competition organized by ICRC (these students are now Lecturers at the School

WUSL has also been participating in various international moot court competitions.



Figure 1 Obse Basha, Robera Girma and Tedi Bekele at the National FDI moot court competition organized by Haramay University (our team was runner up in the competition)

al. For instance, in 2009, WUSL was the only university among the “new generation”

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universities that was able to represent Ethiopia, in the 19th African Human Rights Moot Court



Competition held in Nigeria, Legos. Moreover, in 2010, WUSL was also the only new “generation university” to be able to represent Ethiopia in the

In 2019, the Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition is an annual premium event where more than 700 Law Schools from around 110 countries compete in Washington, DC, USA.

In 2019, WUSL was the only Law School in the country that was able to qualify and represent Ethiopia in the 2019 Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition, where more than 700 Law Schools from around 110 countries were qualified to compete in Washington, DC, USA. However, while the WUSL team was processing visas to travel to Washington, DC, organizers of the event announced that the competition was cancelled due to CORONA coronavirus.

Before 2018, the moot court activities of the School were conducted by volunteer Lecturers of the School who had a great desire to share their moot experience with their students. And there was no separate structure within the School that operated independently of moot court-related tasks.

In January 2018, however, Centre for Moot Court and Legal Profession Development (herein after the Center) structure was established within the School with the view to

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national rounds at the 50th Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition held in Saint Mary University.



from left to right Godana Muzeyin, Tedi Bekele, Wagari Kebeta (coach), and Mihret Girmay at the 4th Ethiopian national moot court competition, Bahir Dar

independently carryout moot court and other legal profession development tasks.

Since its establishment, the centre has been organising different moot court activities and legal profession development activities, such as

debate between students and instructors. Besides enhancing the advocacy



Figure 2A letter issued to our school by ILSA(International Law Students' Association congratulates us for qualifying to represent Ethiopia in the international rounds.

The major activities undertaken by the Center are the following.

The Center organized the 3rd National Moot Court Competition in collaboration with the Higher Education Strategy Centre on internally displaced persons, which is still one of the bold human rights concerns in Ethiopia. Though hosting a National Moot Court Competition is an arduous task that requires detailed planning, organization, and follow-up, thanks to the School's staff who have enormous experience in moot court activities, the Center was able to host one of the most successful national moot court competitions in the Country. The major tasks of the Center were: preparation and approval of rules of procedure that regulate the competition; recruitment of professional judges who judge the skills of students through moot courts. the Center has also enhanced the University's reputation through participation in different national and international moot court competitions.