

Wallaga University School of Law Legal Aid Center 2023 Report: The Success Stories and Challenges

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1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes “the need to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies which provide equal access to justice and are based on respect for human rights.” Goal 16 and its target 3 in particular, highlight the importance of ensuring “access to justice for all” in achieving sustainable development goals. Free Legal Service (Legal Aid) means giving legal services free of charge to those who cannot afford regular legal services for different reasons. This service may be provided by government organs, non-governmental organs, and by higher education institutions. Therefore, access to legal aid is central to ensuring access to justice, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable people. As emphasized by the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, legal aid is an essential aspect of a fair, humane, and efficient criminal justice system based on the rule of law. Without access to legal aid, millions of people around the world are at high risk of having their rights ignored or violated because of lack of legal knowledge or lack of financial capacity. FDRE constitution and other domestic laws also grant the right to access to justice for all. Even though this right is provided under the

constitution, there are certain groups of individuals who may face difficulties in enjoying this right because of their vulnerability, lack of legal knowledge, and because of their low economic status. These groups need legal aid services from concerned organs such as public universities. These categories are Women, children, victims of HIV/AIDS, disabled persons, poor people in the community as well as internally displaced persons/returnees.

Wallaga University Free legal aid was established to ensure access to justice for indigent societies. Apart from helping the society, the centers are meant to help students know how law is being practiced and implemented in real-life of society. Generally, the center is designed to address societal needs and to enable students to acquire practical knowledge by being actively involved in the real life of law in context.

2. Background

Wallaga University is a Public University located in the western part of Ethiopia and was established in 2006. As a public university, it has the mandate to teach, conduct problem-solving research, and provide various community service activities. The School of Law is a specific unit of the

university that renders free legal aid services for the surrounding community in addition to other community service activities/engagements. Besides producing legal professionals, the School of Law is also engaged in delivering free legal aid services to the indigent sector of the community since 2011, by establishing one legal aid center in Nekemte town. Currently, the school has 23 active and functional legal aid centers in which seven centers were located in the conflict zones to assist IDPs/Returnees and host communities. The centers are located in Sasiga, Gimbi, Shambu, Harato, Guduru, Bako, Gedo, Haro Limu, Jimma Arjo, Aanno, Gimbi, Mandi/Mana Sib, Giday Ayana, Kiltu Kara, Boji Birmaji, Kiramu, Amuru, Nekemte Prison center, Nejo and Nekemte towns.

Wallaga University legal aid centres play a pivotal role in making justice accessible to those who are in need; particularly the poor and vulnerable groups in the society that will be adequately protected. By implication, members of the public in need of help in terms of full or partial (as the case may be) legal and judicial assistance will have recourse to the legal aid centers.

However, the success of the Wallaga University legal aid centers technically depends on its collaborations with various stakeholders – Local civil society organizations (CSOs), UN agencies, International non-government organizations (NGOs), and the general public and other relevant bodies - within the ambit of the legal establishment. This is essential for a proper feedback and referral/networking system. Since its inception, Wallaga University has

recorded appreciable successes in defending the masses, especially the vulnerable. In expounding access to justice, it has intervened and undertaken litigation in many such matters of human rights abuses on behalf of many defenseless citizens resident in Wollega zones.

3. Partners of Wallaga University Free Legal Aid

Wallaga University's free legal aid centers work in collaboration with stakeholders like Civil Society Organizations the general public and other relevant bodies within the ambit of legal jurisprudence. Because rendering free legal aid to ensure access to justice is the promotion and protection of human rights which in turn requires collaboration of different institutions for effective and quality service.

Currently, Wallaga University has a memorandum of understanding with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Oromia Justice Bureau, and the Oromia Supreme Court. Furthermore, UNHCR has been supporting legal aid centers since the middle of 2020 to intervene with persons of concern in the areas of housing, land, and property for IDPs, Returnees, and Host Communities. UNHCR has been supporting the centers through different mechanisms such as donating vehicles, motorcycles, computers, generators, and finance to effectively implement the service.

4. Linkages with the Stakeholders

To be effective, rendering legal aid services requires the cooperation and coordination of various stakeholders. Wallaga University's free legal aid has many stakeholders with

which its cooperation is vital in the accomplishment of the center's objectives. Accordingly, the Zonal high court, woreda courts, and prison administrations provide offices for the center, the East Wallaga zone Justice office issues special license for the center, women and children affairs offices, and kebele administrations issue support letter that requests service from the centers are among the main stakeholders with which Wallaga University has a linkage.

5. Services that centers provide:

- ✓ Legal Advice(Legal counseling)
- ✓ Drafting legal documents such as statements of claims, defense, and appeal
- ✓ Advocacy (Representation Service)
- ✓ Participating in Alternative dispute Resolution representing clients.
- ✓ Awareness Creation through different platform
- ✓ Facilitating the issuance of civil documentation such as ID cards, Birth certificates

6. Beneficiaries are:

- Women
- Children
- Vulnerable and poor people
- IDPs
- Refugees
- Elders
- People who live with HIV Virus
- People with disability

7. Strategies/Methodology for Implementation

Recruiting legal aid experts and social workers at each center on a contractual basis which is renewable twice annually. Creating

awareness about legal aid services and rights of Vulnerable groups including IDPs/Returnees within the affected communities by using different media such as FM radio, TV, Internet (social media), Flyers, and courtrooms during court sessions) to create a conscious community to prevent and pro-act on the problem. Besides, the center also uses volunteer law school staff and licensed lawyers. The center doesn't compromise the service quality and employs different service quality controlling mechanisms to these ends. To this end, Feedback and complaint mechanisms such as suggestion boxes were included in the legal centers (report gaps in service provision and access constraints). Organizing capacity development training for project staff (legal experts and social workers from the University) by law school staff and other experts from other concerns on identified gaps while delivering services. This capacity building also included local government officials and traditional as well as religious leaders and community representations.

To ensure that the legal aid centers/clinics are discharging their responsibilities inconsistent with the project, Wallaga University School of Law and the coordinator office assign a monitoring and evaluation staff. Throughout the implementation of the project data management tools and approaches were placed in all the legal aid centers and the coordinators of each center will be responsible for submitting reports on specific tasks performed every week. Internal reporting, monitoring, and evaluation took note of all constraints or impediments to

activities to undertake a regular evaluation of project goals and implementing strategies.

8. Summary of 2023 Performance Report

The **Wallaga University Free Legal Aid Service** shows tremendous progress from time to time in quality and accessibility and during 2023, a number of vulnerable groups are benefiting from the service of the center annually. Resisting all the challenges it faced, the center has managed to reach **15,691**. The service distributions were **1,413 Males** on Counseling, representation, and drafting legal documents and **1403 women** on Counseling, representation, and drafting legal documents. Besides, **7500 Males and 5375 women** have legal awareness's individual reached.

9. Opportunities

Women and children especially Gender Based on Violence (GBV) and child in emergency were reached by social workers of Wallaga University free legal aid. The geographical accessibility of the centers was increased to reach vulnerable groups of societies. The UNHCR project has supported the persons of concern by intervening in their needy, particularly Witness per diem and court fees for persons of concern facilitating the implementation of access to justice. The mechanism and procedure of referral pathway cases of GBV and child protection were developed from the coordination and collaboration of both government organs and NGOs

10. Challenges

- ✓ Security problems to monitor and supervise the activities at lower levels, particularly Woreda and Kebele. Besides, some centers were closed to function due to volatile security situations and the destruction of office equipment.
- ✓ Government policies and regulations to recruit staff timely (time frame for vacancy, screening, examination, approval of employment) and purchase facilities.
- ✓ High employment turnover due to low salary.

11. Summary

Wallaga University's free legal aid center provides legal services such as counseling, drafting legal documents such as claims, defense, and representation on litigations for children, women who are victims of domestic violence, people living with HIV, people living with disabilities, IDPs, etc. In addition, the center admits students for clinical courses and externship programs and they acquire basic knowledge of the practical world. Moreover, the center is providing basic legal education and awareness to hundreds of thousands of residents of East, West, and Horo Guduru Wallaga zones and two west Shoa zonal woredas. Capacity-building training is also one of the functions of the center to enhance the knowledge and skills of the center experts and local government officials.

Sample case and pictures



Mana Murtii Aanaa Horroo

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Fuula 10

Lkk.Gal.24753

Guyyaa 12/08/2015

Sa'a 4:00

Abbaa murtii

Shuggux Tafarraa

Himattuun – **Kennaa Dhinsaa** – dhiyaatteetti

Bakka bu'aan – **Rattaa Olqabaa** – dhiyaateera

Himatamaan – **Misgaanaa Oliiqaa** – dhiyaateera

Galmeen kan beellamameeru qorannoof ta'ee, qorannee murtoo itti aanu kennineerra.

Murtoo

Murtoo kanaaf ka'umsa kan ta'e himannaa himattuun karaa bakka bu'aa ishee kan gaafa 08/06/2015 barreeffamaan mana murtii kanatti dhiyeeffatee jirtu yommuu ta'u, himatamaan kun bara 2014 keessa himattuun umuriin ishee waggaa 14(kudha afur) kan taate otoo isheen mana namaa obbo Dinqaayyoo Aganyoo jedhamu teessee barachaa jirtuu sossobee sin jaalladha, yoo guddatte gaa'elaaf geessu sin fuudha jedhee abdiitti horee ijoollummaa ishee irraa kan ka'e ishee gowwoomsuun wal quunnamtii saalaa ishee waliin raawwachuun daa'ima godhachuuf umuriin ishee ga'aa otoo hin ta'iin ishee ulfeessee mucaa durbaa maqaan ishee Hinseene Misgaanaa kan jedhamtu yeroo ammaa kana umuriin ishee ji'a 2(lama) kan taatee jirtu ji'a Muddee bara 2015 keessa irraa dhalcheera.

Haa ta'u malee himatamaan kun iddoo mucaa kana daa'ima (himattuu) kana irraa godhatee as ishees ta'e daa'ima ishee irraa godhate gargaaruu fi kunuunsuu otoo qabuu lachan isaanii rakkina keessatti gadi gatee baqatee daa'ima isaa kana rakkinaaf saaxilee fi haamilee daa'ima (himattuu) kana illee guddaatti miidhee jira.

Kanaaf himatamaan seeraan mana murtii kanatti dhiyaatee bu'uura himannaa himattuu kanaan yoo ishee amane hanga himannaan kun murtoo ta'e tokko argatutti himattuu kanaa fi daa'ima himattuu kana irraa godhateef gatiin qallabaa isa irratti akka murtaa'u. Darbees abbummaan mucaa kanaa himatamaa kana ta'uu isaa mirkanaa'ee daa'ima kana seeraan kunuunsuu fi guddisuu akka qabu himattuun bakka jireenya isheef tolutti jiraattee dhala ishee fi kan isaa kan taate daa'ima Hinseene Misgaanaa kan jedhamtu kana hanga umuriin ishee gaa'elaaf ga'utti guddisuu akka dandeessu himatamaan kun immoo abbaa daa'ima kanatti jedhamee murtiin isa irratti akka kennamu jechuun himannaa ishee karaa bakka bu'aa ishee dhiyeeffatteetti. Himannaa kana waliinis ragaa namaa akka qabdu addeessitee, ragaa barreeffamaa adda addaa immoo himannaa ishee waliin walqabsiisuun dhiyeeffatteetti.

Mana Murtii Aanaa Horroo

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Fuula 11

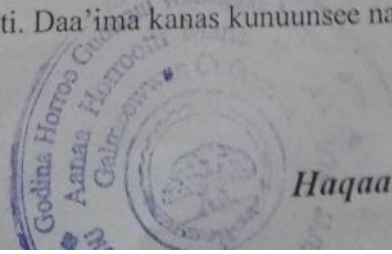
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Gyyaa 12/08/2015

Galagalchi himannaa himatamaa qaqqabee deebii isaa akka itti kennu ta'ee, deebii isaa kan gaafa 28/06/2015 barreeffamaan mana murtii kanatti dhiyeffateen, umuriin himattuu kanaa waggaa 14(kudha afu)idha isa jedhu kuni sobadha umuriin ishee waggaa 18(kudha saddet)ii olidha. Umuriin ishee waggaa 18 ol ta'uu isaa qorannoo mana yaalaan naaf mirkaneessuun ni danda'ama. Himattuun kun nan si fuudha jedhee na sossobee saalquunnamtii ana waliin raawwateen ulfi uumame jette malee na dirqisiisee kana ana irratti raawwate hin jenne. Kun immoo umuriin ishee gaa'elaaf akka ga'ee jiruu fi heerumuufis fedhii akka qabdu kan argisiisudha. Kana irraa kan ka'e gaa'ela ana waliin uumuufis kakaanee waadaas waliigallee waan jirruuf akka hiriyyaa tokkootti murteeffanne waliin turre. Himannaa ishee keessatti nan si fuudha naan jechuun na gowwoomse kan jedhus fedhii keenyaan waliin jiraachuuf kan murteeffanne malee ishee hin gowwoomsine. Himattuun kun mucaa kana deenyaanis dhaqee ishee dubbisee harka fuudhaas kenneera. Daa'imni dhalattee jirtu kun maqaan ishee Hinseenee Misgaanaa kan jedhamtu kun umuriin ishee yeroo ammaa kana baatii 2(lama) taatee kan jirtu kun dhala kooti. Daa'ima koo kana kunuunsadhee na guddifadha. Himattuun umuriin ishee waggaa 18 ol taatee jirtu kun yaada ishee jijjiirrachuu yoo baatte waadaa koo otoo hin cabsiin fuudhee ishee waliin jiraachuuf, daa'ima kiyyaa kanas guddifachuuf murteeffadhee waanan jirruuf bu'uura kanaan murtiin naaf haa kennamu jechuun deebii isaa dhiyeffatee jira.

Deebii isaa kana waliin ibsa rgaa dhiyeffateen ragaa namootaa akka qabu addeesse jira. Kana itti aansuun falmii afaanii bitaa mirgaa gaggeeffameen karaa bakka bu'aa himattuutiinis ta'e karaa himatamaa dhagahameen gama lachuun kanuma barreeffamaan dhiyaatee jiru karaa cimsuu danda'uun falmii isaanii gaggeessaniiru.

Manni murtii kunis kana irraa ka'uun himatamaan kun abbaa daa'ima Hinseenee Misgaanaatii? Moo miti? Himatamaan kun abbaa daa'ima kanaati taanaan daa'ima kanaaf gatii qallabaa kaffaluuf dirqama qaba moo hin qabu? Kan jedhu firii ijoo dubbi hundeessuun himannaa dhiyaate deebii barreeffamaan kennamee fi falmii afaanii bitaa mirgaan gaggeeffame seera rogummaa qabu waliin wal bira qabnee yommuu qorannu, xiinxalluu fi madaallu, himattuun daa'ima Hinseenee Misgaanaa jedhamtu yeroo ammaa kana umuriin ishee ji'a 2(lama) kan taatee jirtu himatamaa kanaafan daheera, gatii qallaba ishee akka naaf kaffaluuf murtiin isa irratti naaf haa kennamu jettee himatamaa kana kan himatte yommuu ta'u, himatamaan kunis daa'imni kun kan kooti. Daa'ima kanas kunuunsee nan guddisa jedhee abbaa daa'ima kanaa ta'uu isaa



Haqaan Haqaaf Hojjenna!!!

Mana Murtii Ol'aanaa Godina Horroo Guduruu Wallaggaatti



Mana Murtii Aanaa Horroo

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Fuula 12

Lkk.Gal.24753

Guyyaa 12/08/2015

himannaa isa irratti dhiyaatee jiru guutummaa guutuutti amanuun daa'ima kanas guddifachuuf fedhii akka qabu deebii isaa dhiyeeffateera.

Kana irraa ka'uun himatamaan abbaa daa'ima kanaa ta'uu isaa amanee deebii isaa waan kenneef bu'uura S/D/F/H/H/L - 242 fi S/M/O/K - 142(2) ajajuun bu'uura amanee jiruun himatamaan Misgaanaa Olliqaa abbaa daa'ima Hinseenee Misgaanaati jechuun murtoo kennineerra.

Darbee himatamaan kun abbaa daa'ima kana ta'uu isaa iddoo amanee, daa'ima kanas guddifachuuf fedhii qabu iddoo ibsee, murtoo mana murtii kanaanis iddoo mirkanaa'ee, himatamaan kun guddina daa'ima isaa kanaaf kan barbaachisu akka humna isaatti isheef guutuuf waan dirqamuuf, daa'imni kunis qallabaa fi kunuunsa barbaachisaa ta'e abbaa ishee kana irraa argate guddachuuf mirga guutuu waan qabduuf, himatamaan kun gatii qallaba daa'ima kanaaf oolu bara 2015 irraa eegalee hanga daa'imni Hinseenee Misgaanaa jedhamtu umuriin ishee yeroo ammaa kana baatii 2(lama) taatee jirtu kun hanga umuriin ishee gaa'elaaf ga'utti qallabaaf kan ta'u, 1ffaa xaafii kg. 100(dhibba tokko), 2ffaa qamadii kg. 50(shantama), 3ffaa boqqolloo kg. 50(shantama), atara yookaan baaqelaa kg. 25(digdamii shan), gatii mi'eessituu qarshii 2000.00 (kuma lama) wagga waggaadhaan harka himattuu aadde Kennaa Dhinsaatti haa kaffalu jechuun S/M/O/K - 214 fi 215 irratti hundaa'uun murtoo kennineerra.

Ajaja

- Murtoo kenname kana irratti namni komee qabu yoo jiraate mirgi ol iyyanno eegamaadha.
- Baasii fi kasaaraa bitaa mirgaan of haa danda'an jenneerra.
- Galmeen kun murtoo argatee waan jiruuf cufameera, mana galmeetti haa deebi' jenneerra.

Awareness creation at Nekemte prison administration



.Training on PSEA and HLP





