

Righting Wrongs

The LLM in Human Rights & Democratisation in Africa
Alumni Association Newsletter
Issue No 2 - 2011

DEFENDING
with Excellence,
ADVOCATING
with Ubuntu



From the Heart of Africa

Alumnus touches the lives of populations in most remote areas of Sierra Leone



Sonkita Conteh (Sierra Leone, 2006)

Project Coordinator, Open Society Justice Initiative's Legal Empowerment of the Poor Project in Sierra Leone

The Open Society Justice Initiative is working with the Government of Sierra Leone, Timap for Justice (a local paralegal NGO) and the World Bank, to develop a national approach to justice services, one that includes a frontline of community-based paralegals and a small corps of public interest lawyers. The project, which started in 2009, aims to scale up basic justice services across the country, based on Timap's model, working in partnership with Timap and other CSOs.

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Key objectives of the project include the adoption of new legislation to recognise community-based paralegals as providers of justice services; the establishment of oversight mechanisms and accredited training programmes for paralegals; funding, coordinating and overseeing the provision of primary justice services by new and existing paralegal organisations in rural areas; the development of a joint funding mechanism for basic justice services; and the development of appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating of the work of justice service providers.

So far, the project has coordinated an informal network of CSOs to successfully advocate for the recognition and inclusion of paralegals as justice service providers in the draft legal aid legislation which has been approved by cabinet and will soon be enacted into law. The project has also conducted both initial and continuing training programmes for 41 new paralegals, which expanded access to paralegal services to 8 out of 12 districts in the country or an estimated 36% of the population and is in the process of getting a tailor-made course for paralegals accredited by one of the universities. It provides financial and technical support to the paralegal offices mostly in rural areas and is involved in efforts to create a joint funding mechanism for basic justice services. The project is developing mechanisms for meticulous monitoring and evaluation of the work of paralegals, to ensure quality and responsiveness to community needs including a national paralegal database.

Editorial

No 'Arab Spring' Wind in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Horace Adjolohoun
(Benin, 2007)
Alumni Coordinator



There must be something wrong with this continent; and we all remain in the shadow as if the common people living in Cameroon, Eritrea and Zimbabwe were less entitled to democratic governance than their counterparts in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. It is right that many of you are standing for rights-watchers in those countries. Yet, not much has happened south of the Sahara despite dramatic regime changes spearheaded by our fellow Africans from the Maghreb. I concur that we are not as 'fellow' as one would be inclined to believe. However, do our people enjoy better socio-economic welfare than North Africa's Mohammed Bouazizi-s? Would you say they do? Or, would you say: even if they do not, it makes no difference because "we rather die poor in dignity than live emancipated under imperialism"? So, "as long as our saviours are from the outside, let's remain in domestic slavery"?

If you plead that those who sparked the Arab revolutions are just as African as us, then why this radio silence in our countries where leaders you have known all your life (25-45 years) are still running in the next elections? I guess some of you will fiercely disagree with this and contend that while you were suffering callous abuses under decades-long military regimes, our North African brothers enjoyed the highest rates of employment and religion-dictated social peace; that while we shed blood in the 1990s to write liberation constitutions, they were concerned with identifying themselves with their neighbours on the other side of the Mediterranean. I join you on this but still reserve my comments for our next session. This is because I believe insidious tiny thunderclouds of hunger, frustration and exasperation are gathering over our heads in Dakar, Yaounde, Banjul, Addis Ababa and even Lilongwe. In fact, I challenge you to prove that rights-watchers are hand-crossed in those jurisdictions. The only difference is that post 1990s' popular revolutions will be more dramatic and more effective than ever when they break out in Sub-Saharan Africa. Watch ...

For now, let us mind our family business. Indeed, there is evidence of an 'LLM human rights baby-boom' in various headquarters. There is no reason to complain since our human rights 'mafia' is expanding. I will not call names but I can still exercise with discretion my right to remain silent. Please, hold whatever you read here against me in the court of your conscience. During August-September, Patricia Atim (Uganda, 2009) was delivered of twin boys after having twin girls two years ago; Tom Musila (Rwanda, 2009)'s wife blessed him with a boy; and their senior, Francis Nadjita Ngarhodjim (Chad, 2005) became the father of a baby boy. The least to say is that human rights lawyers of the 2009 Class are not inactive. Just a bit earlier this year, in July, Marie Sylvie Kawera (Rwanda, 2009) was blessed with her second son. Chinedu Nwagu (Nigeria, 2009) reported that "the mothers are doing well, the little ones are healthy, their older siblings are excited and the fathers are recovering from their tremendous involvement over the past months". As you may notice, those are not my words; I have stuck to the academic writing rules accordingly. Over to you now ...?

I hope you will see some of the changes brought to this second issue of our newsletter. I have tried as much as possible to widen the editorial scope to cover our diverse thematic fields of interest more comprehensively. I thank the editorial team for their continued support and look forward to more stories from you when we unveil this end of year issue around our graduation day, on 10 December.

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, Ubuntu!

The Centre's Word



Dear friends & colleagues

Norman Taku
Assistant Director,
Centre for Human Rights

What a delight and privilege to have been asked by Horace to write a few words of introduction and greeting from the Centre's side for this edition of *Righting Wrongs*.

My first words must be to express to him our collective gratitude for his devotion to his duties as pioneer Alumni Coordinator, and for the positive and encouraging results he has produced in such a short time. The fact that he has managed to 'enrol' so many of you is testimony of his polite persistence, among other admirable qualities.

Thank you to all who have been receptive and cooperative in this regard. We do not doubt the loyalty of the few stragglers, but we encourage them to take a moment to register online and to share with us news of yourself and your work.

Last month, I met the Chairperson of the African Commission who said she had had dealings with 4 alumni in the same meeting although from separate institutions, who caused stirrings with the depth of their contributions.

Last week the Secretary to the Commission spoke passionately of the consistent high standard of work produced by the scores of graduates who have and continue to work at the Commission as legal officers.

Not a week goes by that we do not encounter news of one of you, from the UN, through national institutions, to the grassroots. Truly, everywhere you go in Africa today where human rights are on the agenda, you will find a graduate of the programme. Now referred to as "the Pretoria Mafia", we are proud of the change you are engineering at home for Africa in Africa.

In this regard, I would like to challenge and encourage each one of you to put your shoulder to the wheel and to be as faithful to your past as you are to your future. I ask specifically:

- that before 31 July 2012 you **headhunt and recommend one candidate for admission to the LLM programme in January 2013**. Like the ANC prisoners on Robben Island did with their 'each one teach one' initiative, because they had no access to education, this will be our 'each one bring one' initiative. You are the ultimate talent scouts because you know precisely the calibre of student who can enrich and endure the course and then go on to make a positive difference somewhere on our continent;
- that those of you who live in partner cities and countries **make time to meet the students who are there for the second semester**: invite them to your home for a meal, take them out for a drink or whatever you can to make them feel welcome. Offer them what most of you, as pioneers, did not have.

I am writing these words from Venice, Italy, where I am attending a meeting on the future of EU support to all regional human rights master's programmes. This will depend in no small measure on the outcome of the evaluation, which took place a few months ago.

Gill used to say that this is no time to be modest and so, whatever the actual EU decision on continued funding is, the evaluation is clear: we have done incredibly well these past 13 years, setting a high standard and bringing excellence and innovation to our work.

Thank you to all who responded to the questionnaire. You are the measurable impact of the LLM, the indicators of its success.

Whatever you are doing, it is not small or irrelevant. Share it. Stay in touch. Support the Alumni Association. In this simple way, you are helping to strengthen the Centre and to perpetuate the successes that have been built on the dreams of a few and the efforts of many.

Until we are together again,
and with very warm regards,

Norman

Alumni in the Field

Alumnus wins first Constitutional Court case as junior Advocate



David Simonsz
(South Africa, 2007)
Advocate of the High
Court of South Africa, Cape Bar

After graduating from the Centre at the end of 2007, I had the good fortune to be chosen to work as a researcher for Justice Yvonne Mokgoro at the South African Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court is the stage on which many of South Africa's greatest human rights dramas play out, and I was inspired by the advocates litigating in these cases to apply to join the Cape Bar when my year at the Court was over.

The Cape Bar is the society of advocates based in Cape Town. South Africa, like many former British colonies, has a "split bar" system comprising both attorneys and advocates. Attorneys are general legal practitioners, whereas advocates are litigation and research specialists. Since starting my practice as an advocate in 2010, I have handled a fairly wide variety of cases – as all junior advocates must – but I have most frequently worked on refugee- and immigration-related matters.

I have also recently won my first case in the Constitutional Court, in *JASA v President of the RSA*, where I appeared as a junior to Advocate Anton Katz SC. This case raised the politically-fraught question of whether the Chief Justice of South Africa may have his or her term of office extended by the President, or only by Parliament, and under what circumstances.

The case was both a great victory for the rule of law and, with hindsight, perhaps a mistake. It was a victory because the Constitutional Court's judgment laid down stringent requirements for the extension of a Constitutional Court Judge's term of office.

Consequently, there is much less incentive (or perceived incentive) for a Constitutional Court Judge to pander to the executive in the hopes of receiving an extension of office. There is also less capacity for the executive to retain the services of Judges whom it favours, and thereby to create a Court which does not

hold them to account.

The JASA case may, however, have been a mistake because it forced the retirement of Chief Justice Ngcobo, a highly respected and experienced jurist. In his place, President Zuma has chosen the relatively unknown Mogoeng Mogoeng. Chief Justice Mogoeng deserves, as he begins his tenure as the leader of the judiciary, the support of the legal profession, but it is worrying that President Zuma chose him – a new Constitutional Court judge with no great track record as a jurist and questionable judgments on issues such as gender violence – over the heads of his more experienced, and probably more appropriate, colleagues. After all, the Chief Justice must be a person of unimpeachable integrity, commitment to the Constitution, and intellectual rigour.

Critics will see in the appointment of Mogoeng as Chief Justice as an attempt by President Zuma to restrain the judiciary, which is the last major state organ not dominated by the African National Congress. It is probably a bit too early to leap to this conclusion. However, it is to be fervently hoped that Chief Justice Mogoeng will use his ten-year tenure to entrench, rather than undermine, the Constitutional Court's history of developing progressive jurisprudence and holding the government to account.

Current Year

Human Rights LLM Students welcome you to Dakar, Senegal



Ella Scheepers (South Africa, 2011)
Kevashinee Pillay (South Africa, 2011)
On second semester at Université Gaston Berger,
Saint Louis, Senegal

We are here, and it is hot. Arriving in Dakar airport was like Chandra Bose in Kolkata India. We are struck by the bustle of life at 5 in the morning. It's the

beginning of Ramadan. The month of fasting and prayer has created a peaceful cloud over the famously 'jazzed' city.

Our first outing was to the famous Gorée Island, the main slave trading post for West Africa. The short ferry trip in the Atlantic provided a picturesque view of the island, with its turquoise blue waters and rich colonial architecture. But after setting foot on the island, we could feel the weight of history. It was chilling, even in the sweltering heat. We felt a strong connection between the histories of Robben Island and Gorée Island, injustice etched into the walls.

We had our first experience of the famous bouyé (Baobab juice) on this island. Delicious! We have been overwhelmed by the friendliness and kindness of the Senegalese people. Communicating in French and Wolof has been a challenge, but that hasn't stopped people from taking us into the bosom of their society and families.

Kevash was automatically amalgamated into Seneglese society with her exotic looks which she has been told are like women of the Pular ethnic group in Senegal. Ella, on the other hand, has been 'married off' as second wife to a devoted Muslim Senegalese man, whose sister is adamant to teach her all she knows about Senegalese cooking. (It is bound to be a disaster). Talk about local integration!

You'd have thought our lives couldn't get any crazier but then we went to the local market for our groceries, and in our infinite wisdom we decided to buy what we thought were popcorn seeds only to discover later that it was chicken feed.

We have been adopted into a crazy household with all sorts of characters. We have the ominous grandfather, who we never see or hear apart from the occasional cough. Then we have the dominating grandmother, who screams at the maids. They think she's crazy (and so do we). Then there is the cat with a queer cry who keeps getting physically abused by the housekeeper and still keeps coming back.

Finally, the most recent additions to our family include Binu (the daughter of our host mother) and her three children who arrived from France. The older two are a mixture of Seneglese, Creole and Indian, and then baby Julian who is half French and Senegalese but very Jolo (a Senegalese ethnic group). He's adopted us as his surrogate aunts and wanders into our rooms chatting away in French. Watching him behave as though we've been there all our lives makes us feel that maybe we have!

Human Rights LLM Students discover replica of Benin's 'Touche Pas à Ma Constitution' in Senegal

Ella Scheepers (South Africa, 2011)

Kevashinee Pillay (South Africa, 2011)

On second semester at Université Gaston Berger, Saint Louis, Senegal



Prior to our arrival in Dakar we were aware of events transpiring that were pivotal to the future of democracy in Senegal. Our internship with RADDHO has placed us at the apex of intense debates around current constitutional developments within the country and on the continent.

RADDHO was instrumental in mobilisation for the June 23 demonstrations against President Wade's proposed constitutional amendment bill. The bill aimed to allow him to stand for president for a third term. President Wade's actions resulted in this storm of protest from the Senegalese people setting a new stage for the future of Senegalese constitutionalism and presidential power.

As South Africans we have been most intrigued by a phenomenon of unusual partnerships between civil society and opposition parties. This trend is not encouraged in South Africa because there is a view that if NGOs get too involved with specific political parties (as opposed to causes, or various components of democracy) then they would become defunct when their party loses an election. For us the purpose of human rights NGOs stretches beyond mere political terms of office.

[Continue on next page]

However, in certain African countries, where the executive becomes too powerful, it seems that this trend can be used as a tool to protect the rule of law and constitutionalism. It has been very interesting to witness RADDHO's collaboration with opposition parties. Having had discussions with various role players it seems that this phenomenon is not uncommon in the rest of West Africa.

Moreover, the system has proved valuable because during the June demonstrations the collaboration between civil society, religious groups, youth and opposition parties were able to stop President Wade's constitutional amendment bill from passing in Parliament.

Nevertheless, the future of Senegalese politics remains uncertain. The 2012 elections will prove whether Senegal can uphold its status as one of Africa's strongest democracies.

LLM Student successfully pushes for 'Disability Rights' inauguration in Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

*Esau Mandipa
(Zimbabwe, 2011)*



"The first of its kind at a law school in Zimbabwe: The Disability Rights Module"

Having soldiered courageously through a heavily tiresome yet highly inspiring first semester, I was not that much aware of what the second semester was holding for me. The internship placements for the second semester were finally confirmed in June. My place was confirmed as Midlands State University (MSU), Zimbabwe. The task was put very clear. It was to introduce and teach a new module called Disability Rights at the Faculty of Law, to continue with the unforgettable French classes and of course, dissertation writing.

A lot of fear grasped me. Was the Disability Rights Module going to be acceptable by both the university authorities and the students? This question kept on troubling my mind for some time.

News finally came to me that the University authorities had finally given a go ahead for the Module. Disability Rights was duly registered among the other sub-

stantive modules at the Faculty and was offered as an elective (Disability Rights, Code LB 323). I breathed for a while. One bridge has been safely crossed but what about the students? Given the fact that the Human Rights Module is compulsory at the Faculty, who among the students was going to elect Disability Rights? This was another question to which I had no answer even after 40 days of thorough research!

I sat down to prepare class notes, unsure who was going to take down those notes. There came the 25th of July 2011, the first day in class. I walked shiveringly to the class. I was not confident and did not expect to see any one student waiting for the Disability Rights Module. I entered the class while closing my eyes. The thought of how was I going to meet the Dean and tell him that not even a single student had attended the newly initiated Disability Rights Module flooded my mind.

Suddenly, I opened my eyes. I almost fainted on what I saw. The class was packed with almost twenty or more students eager to take down notes on Disability Rights for the first time at a law school in Zimbabwe. My fear turned to joy. I nearly ran out of words when I began to introduce the Module and to distribute the module outlines.

Disability Rights became the first highly-attended elective module at the Faculty. As a reminder to my publishable friend Enoch Chilemba (Malawi, 2011), I say "I am always having publishable lectures with my students".

A lot of appreciation for the success of this Module goes to the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), for having introduced the Disability Rights and Law Schools Project. Now I am enjoying my internship and hope everyone is riding high throughout the African continent and not forgetting my 'idle son' at The Hague, Thompson Chengeta (Zimbabwe, 2011).

LLM Students intern with Centre for Public Law Litigation in Accra, Ghana



*Frank Mchomvu
(Tanzania, 2011)*

The group consists of four members namely: Jean Rubagumya (Rwanda), Christine Umubyeyi (Burundi), Frank Mchomvu (Tanzania) and Diana Salewi (Tanzania). We arrived in Ghana on 2 August 2011. So far we have all enjoyed a lot and are still enjoying our stay in this beautiful land with very nice people. We have had some excursions around Accra that have enriched us both socially as well as intellectually.

For instance we had a group visit to Accra city centre where we were able to visit some important places including the Castle, the Art Centre, and the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Centre. We also visited the Supreme Court of Ghana, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana (CHRAJ) and of course the beach of the Atlantic Ocean. Some of us also had the opportunity to visit the legendary Ghanaian football player Abedi Pele. We also plan to have more excursions in November upon completion of our dissertations.

Academically, we are all making progress. We started our internships several weeks ago at a local NGO called the Centre for Public Interest Law (CEPIL) and the Arc Foundation. We go twice a week. We also have seminars every week. Regarding thesis writing, we have all submitted chapter two to our relevant supervisors and are now finalising our third chapters.

Catholic University of Central Africa based LLM student speaks of second semester in Cameroon



*Victor Ayeni
(Nigeria, 2011)*

“The only challenge we have is Internet access.”

We arrived in Cameroon on 31 July. No one came to the airport to meet us. We had to find our own way

to the university. This was really hard. Apart from the initial language difficulty, the airport taxi took advantage of our lack of familiarity with the terrain. For instance, we didn't know how far the university was from the airport. So we paid about 15 000 FCFA to get to the school instead of 5 000 FCFA.

On arrival at our residence, we met a number of their members of staff who were enthusiastic to receive us. By any standard, the accommodation is okay. Electricity and water have been more regular than we had contemplated. French classes are ongoing and meeting with the supervisor has been regular.

The only challenge we have is Internet access. When we arrived, we had access to the Internet from the Centre's library. But some time in the middle of August, the Internet facility stopped working. Since then we have had to go off campus to use the Internet. Apart from being very expensive, Internet access in cyber cafes here cannot be said to be readily available. Most of the time we have to wait for hours before any computer becomes available for use. These days we check our email only once or, at most, twice a week. This certainly has had significant impact on our research. This is why we were late in responding to your email. For several days after the email was sent, we had no knowledge of it because we could not check our emails daily.

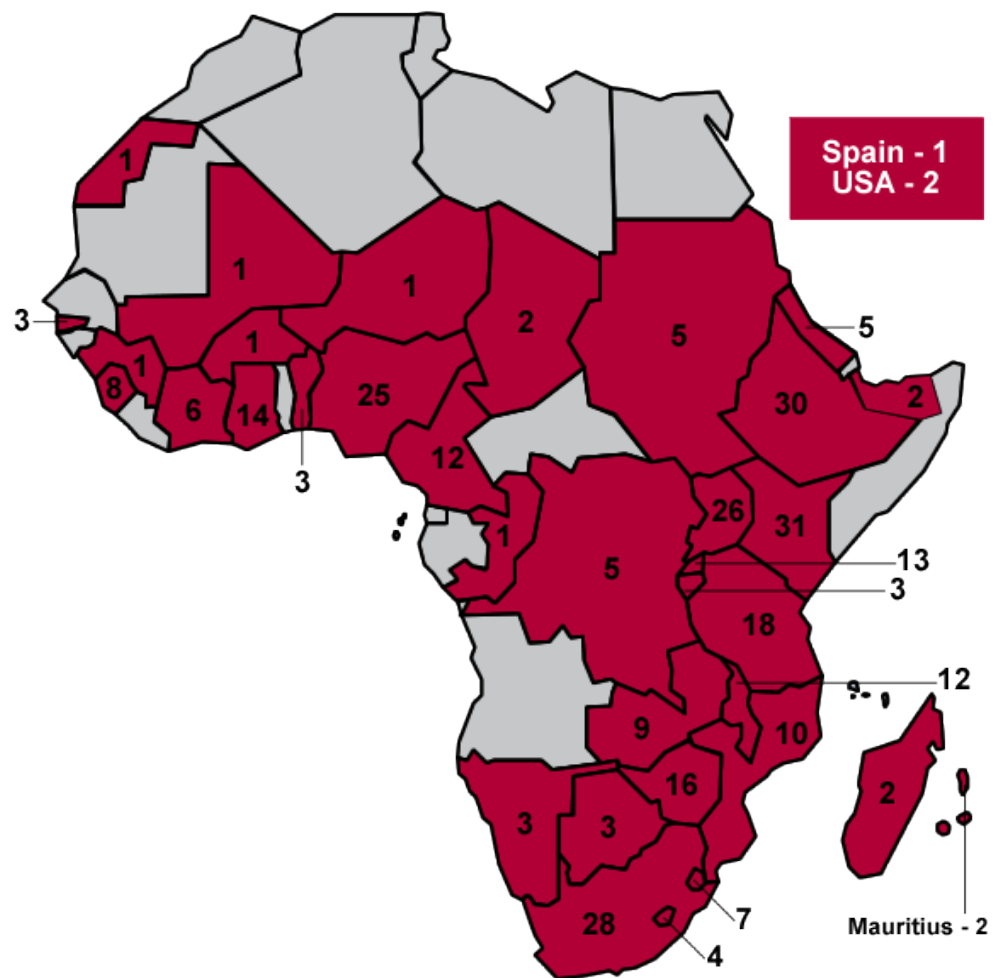
Apart from the challenge associated with Internet access, I should say we are okay. The Centre's staff have been very supportive.

Countries Represented on the LLM Programme

Since 2000, the LLM (Human Rights & Democratisation in Africa) programme has seen 316 students graduate: 142 (45%) women and 174 (55%) men.

Countries represented from 2000 to 2010:

Benin	3
Botswana	3
Burkina Faso	1
Burundi	3
Cameroon	12
Congo Brazzaville	1
Chad	2
DRC	5
Côte d'Ivoire	6
Eritrea	5
Ethiopia	30
Gambia	3
Ghana	14
Guinea	1
Kenya	31
Lesotho	4
Madagascar	2
Malawi	12
Mali	1
Mauritius	2
Mozambique	10
Namibia	3
Niger	1
Nigeria	25
Rwanda	13
Sierra Leone	8
Somaliland	2
South Africa	28
Spain	1
Sudan	5
Swaziland	7
Tanzania	18
Uganda	26
USA	2
Western Sahara	1
Zambia	9
Zimbabwe	16



Takele Bulto

(Ethiopia, 2003)



Australian Research Council Laureate Post-doctoral Fellow, Australian National University. LLB (Addis Ababa), MA International Relations (Addis Ababa), LLM HRDA (Centre for Human Rights, Pretoria), PhD (Melbourne). Winner of Best Student Medal (Addis Ababa University), Co-Winner of 2003 Keba Mbaye Prize for Best Research (CHR, Pretoria), Best Senior Thesis of 1999 (Addis Ababa University).

Previously, Legal Officer, Institute for Human Rights and Development, Banjul, Gambia; Programme Coordinator, Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office, Addis Ababa; Judge, Oromia State Supreme Court, Ethiopia.

Alumnus Takele Soboka Bulto recently presented a “no changes required” PhD thesis at University of Melbourne Law School, in Australia.

This year, Takele had his PhD dissertation examined and achieved the remarkable result of “no changes required”. His examiners have said that this “represents the top work in the field” and recommend immediate publication as a book.

Takele’s topic was: “Rights, Wrongs and the River Between: Extraterritorial Application of the Human Right to Water in Africa” and he completed his dissertation at University of Melbourne Law School under Carolyn Evans. The thesis analyses the immediate implementation problems triggered by the newly declared human right to water, given the shared nature of scarce water resources in regions such as Africa. The principal aim of the study is to evaluate (the scope of) the legal obligations of foreign co-riparian states to let flow water that would be of adequate quality and quantity for the realisation of the human right to water in other co-riparians (third) states. The central question is whether states owe extraterritorial obligations (to respect, protect and promote and fulfil) directly to individual and group right holders in a co-riparian state’s territory for the realisation of their human right to water. After analysing the corpus of relevant international and regional human rights treaties, the rules and princi-

ples of international water law and related case law (which may be relied upon as ‘inspirational sources’ of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights) it answers this question in the affirmative.

Patrick Eba

(Côte d’Ivoire, 2004)



Presently, Human Rights and Law Adviser, UNAIDS, Geneva.

Member of the newly established Committee on the Protection of the Rights of People Living with HIV and Those at Risk, Vulnerable to and Affected by HIV of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

Education: Maîtrise de Droit Public (Abidjan-Cocody), LLM HRDA (CHR, Pretoria), Diplôme Universitaire de Juriste International de Terrain (Université d’Aix-Marseille III, France), European Master in International Humanitarian Action (Aix-Marseille III – Universidad de Deusto, Spain), PhD Candidate (CHR, Pretoria); Guest Lecturer at the University of Aix en Provence (France).

Awards and prizes include, Best French Oralist and Finalist, 10th African Human Rights Moot Court Competition (Pretoria), EVO Dankwa Prize for Best LLM HRDA Student ‘African Human Rights System’ (CHR, Pretoria), Best Student and Winner of Dean’s Prize (European Master, Aix-Marseille III) .

Currently advises governments, civil society organisations and UNAIDS Country Offices around the world on ensuring that their responses to the HIV epidemic uphold human rights and guarantee access to HIV services for all those who need them.

Over the past years he has successfully held the following positions: HIV/AIDS Legal Researcher, Parliament of Malawi; HIV/AIDS Research Associate, University of Malawi; HIV/AIDS Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, Centre for the Study of AIDS, University of Pretoria; HIV/AIDS and Human Rights Consultant,

UNDP-RSC for Eastern and Southern Africa; Head of AIDS and Human Rights Research Unit, Centre for the Study of AIDS, Pretoria; Human Rights and HIV/AIDS Consultant, UNAIDS Regional Support Team for Central and West Africa, Dakar, Senega; Human Rights and Law Adviser, UNAIDS, Geneva.

Marie Saine

Firdaus

(Gambia, 2005)

Permanent Representative of The Gambia to the United Nations, New York, United States of America. LLM HRDA (CHR, Pretoria with distinction); Diploma in Regional Trade Policy, World Trade Organisation (Nairobi); LLB 2nd Class (Upper) Honours (Islamic University, Malaysia). Several certificates include UN Women and UNOWA on Mediation for Women in Leadership Positions; Good governance; Election observations; International visitor's programme US Judicial System.



From 2006, she successively held the following positions: State Counsel; Senior State Counsel; Principal State Counsel; Acting Deputy Director Public Prosecution; Technical Advisor, Office of the President; Attorney General and Minister of Justice; Ambassador Designate to Switzerland. Currently, Private Legal Practitioner and Human Rights Advocate. Major professional achievements include ratification of CRC two optional protocols; Legal Aid Act; preparation and submission of 1st, 2nd and 3rd combined periodic reports to UNCRC Committee; Revival of the National Council for Law Reporting (It is now publishing law reports locally and regularly); Revival of the Law Reform Commission. It now has a permanent chairperson and adequate budgetary allocation to execute its mandate); Revision of all Laws of the Gambia (after 20 years of backlog) and putting them online for the first time.

Professional Prospects

Alumni attend 30 years of African Charter Round Table at Wits



Linda Ayanda Mtshali
(South Africa, 2010)

Associate Legal Advisor, International Commission of Jurists, Africa Programme, Johannesburg

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom" – Martin Luther King Jr

These words spoken by Martin Luther King Jr many years ago still ring true for the African continent today. Africa has made noteworthy strides to independence and the recognition of human rights but this was not based on the wheels of inevitability. Years of continuous struggle for a better tomorrow have resulted in some of the great achievements that some parts of Africa boast of today. One such achievement is the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ("African Charter"). However, this does not mean that the struggle for human rights and democracy has ceased. On the contrary it has intensified and Africans are once again awakening and straightening their backs to work for freedom.

On 17 August 2011, the School of Law of the University of the Witwatersrand, hosted a roundtable discussion that celebrated and looked at the past 30 years of the African Charter. Not only was the session reflective in nature, it also examined the role of the African Charter in the current challenges facing the African continent and its role in the coming years.

The discussions were vibrant, engaging and challenging with the purpose of ensuring that the African Charter is upheld, and where necessary, amended to shape the future of African human rights in African societies. The various panels were made up of astute members of

the legal fraternity, civil society organisations and members of the South African government - with extensive knowledge of human rights law, democratic principles and politics.

The discussions were enriched by the presence of the honourable Justice Bernard Ngoepe (judge of the ACHPR), Professors Michelo Hansungule (CHR) and Barney Pityana (former member of the ACHPR and chairperson of the SAHRC), Ms Judith Cohen (SA Human Rights Commission) and many others. Discussions centred around the history of the African Charter and the its promotional and protective mechanisms; the role of stakeholders in advancing human rights in African societies; and the future of human rights in Africa.

The Centre for Human Rights (CHR) was well represented by members of the HRDA alumni who actively participated in the discussions with the various panellists: Adem Kasie (Ethiopia, 2009), Horace Adjolohoun (Benin, 2007), Linda Mtshali (South Africa, 2010), Clément Mavungu (DRC, 2006) and Lloyd Kuvuya (Zimbabwe, 2006). It was indeed a moment of great pride amongst the alumni to observe how the knowledge gained in the HRDA LLM has contributed to the shaping of human rights and continues to do so.

The effectiveness of the African Charter on the African continent is dependent on the active compliance of African states. Human rights defenders and civil society play an important role at encouraging State compliance. However, much is still required for the growth, stability and respect of African human rights in African societies. Let us therefore, continue to straighten our backs as we work for our freedom, for Africa is ours!

News: Social

Twin boys' mother congratulates Class and alumni network

Patrica Atim
(Uganda, 2009)



My dearest Pretoria/
African family!

I must say I am blessed to have and know each one of you and I hope you are all fine and doing well. Today marks three weeks since my operation and the delivery of baby Jordan and Joshua. Since then I have been recuperating and could hardly find the time or strength to

use the computer. Honestly, am at the moment writing to you while Jordan is lying on my lap and breastfeeding to his satisfaction ... while he looks at me and smiles ... hahahah ... the joys and challenges of motherhood!

My dearest brothers and sisters ... this is to simply say merci tre tre beaucoup ie thanks a lot (am not sure about the spelling! with all the breastfeeding and pamper challenging plus sleepless nights am sure i have lost the little French I returned with) each and everyone of you for the prayers to see me and the boys through the surgery and all the congratulations messages and phone calls that I received from all over Africa ... Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Kenya, East Africa ... ohhhhh how I felt so loved and cared for.

Now, just like the saying goes "even the best dancer leaves the dance floor" I must say I am leaving the play ground for Mercy, James, Maria, Mitiku and all of you ...

Sylvie and Tom ... I am reliably informed there are baby booms over there too. Congratulations x 100 to you both. May the good God see you and your families through the parenting phase. To the rest of the family may God/ Allah be with you and bless you.

Chinedu, please wish the little girl a happy birthday and God's blessings for many years ahead of her, from Uganda, East Africa. Our warm regards to Madam too, we are counting on and awaiting the news from West Africa.

Love and warmest regards to all of you and your families!

Pat - mama twins

Contact details

Email: hrda.alumni@up.ac.za

Website: www.chr.up.ac.za/hrda

Editorial Team: Horace Adjolohoun (Benin, 2007), Benson Olugbuo (Nigeria, 2003), Ismene Zarifis (USA, 2009), Christopher Mbazira (Uganda, 2003).

Advisory and Review Team: Prof Frans Viljoen, Norman Taku, Martin Nsibirwa, Yolanda Booyzen.

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