Foreword

This is our first issue as an organization and we are proud of the small steps that we are making towards Justice, Equality and Dignity.

Centre for Public Interest Law has been in operation for over six years and our mission is to protect and promote public interest by fighting all forms of injustice and inequality through the use of legal processes and advocacy. We believe in identifying ourselves as persons of integrity, who are professional and excellent in what we do.

In the month of September under our land rights project we had consultative meetings with two clans in Acholi land to discuss how they can legally protect their land through forming corporate entities.

During the same month and subsequently in October we hosted a number of dialogues under the judiciary project to discuss the landmark judgment delivered by the Supreme Court of Kenya annulling the Presidential Election.

We also partnered with Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda to host a dialogue on access to justice on a broader scale.

Under our media freedom project, we held a dialogue in Tororo to discuss the role of the media in resolving conflict. In this issue, we highlighted a success story from one of our media freedom cases.

We have had a successful journey and would like to share these updates from the last two months and upcoming events to look forward to.

We hope you will take great pleasure in reading our very first Issue.

Sincerely,

Diana Angwech
For Executive Director

///UPDATES

Land Rights Project

Promoting customary tenure as a means of protecting land rights in Acholi Land

On 30th September, we had a consultative meeting with the elders in northern Uganda where CEPIL is currently working with key stakeholders to offer legal advisory services to clans in the northern part of Uganda to enable them protect their land through forming corporate entities.

This idea was born out of the necessity to strengthen the law on customary tenure and advocate for the rights of the people of northern Uganda to own and deal with their land legally.
The Country has suffered from weak laws that govern customary tenure, additionally, the northern part of Uganda suffered a period of insurgency that saw many people living in camps for years. This left the land vacant for years and a number of bodies and persons took advantage of the weak laws and created titles for these pieces of land leaving the owners displaced with nowhere to return to.

Under this project CEPIL is pioneering the reorganization of local institutions as viable legal vehicles for promotion of land rights.

**Key miles stones**

1. Incorporated Bwobo Development Trust as a cooperate entity to protect communal lands belonging to the clan members. We supported the process of their set up and application for land title. We are currently giving them legal aid to fight land grabbers who with the support of the District Land Board have purchased communal land and allocated it to individuals without the consent of the clan.

2. As a result of this prototype, CEPIL has been approached by the Puranga clans and the Lamogi for legal aid and to support the incorporation process. Internal meetings have been held and we are developing the trust model for both clans.
The Court delivered judgment in favor of the petitioners annulling the recently concluded election. This judgment was the first of its kind in the region of Africa and has a bearing on the legal jurisprudence. These discussions enlightened the participants on the lessons for Ugandan Judiciary.

**Recommendations**

1. There is need to strengthen the legal framework to accommodate the use of technology and other policies to achieve a free and fair elections.

2. Advocate for the independence of the judiciary in administering justice. Elections are a process rather than an event which means that various actors play a great role in ensuring that there is a free and fair election which include a well-equipped and unbiased judiciary.

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**Dialogue on the Access to Justice**

On the 29th of September, CEPIL in partnership with Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda held a national dialogue on the theme “Restoring Transparency and Trust in the Court Process.”

Presentations were made in regard to what hinders access to justice for the indigent people as well as court procedures and systems that hinder access to justice.

**Recommendations**

1. The process of recruiting judicial officers should be made transparent and give the public a chance to provide information on the caliber of judicial officers appointed to the bench. We will engage the Judicial Service Commission on methods of recruitment.

2. The judiciary needs to be more involved by educating the public on court processes and requirements in order to avoid middle men that facilitate corruption. This feedback was conveyed to the Judiciary.

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**Media Project**

**Dialogue on the role of the media in resolving conflict held in Tororo District**

Advocacy initiatives to achieve and free press and an independent responsible media

CEPIL in partnership with East African Media Institute (EAMI) held a dialogue on the 18th of October, with the aim of discussing the role of the media in resolving conflict and how media can function independently, and report quality news while promoting peace.

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This dialogue was necessary to find an amicable way in which the dispute between the Japadhola and the Itesot’s over boundary lines could be resolved using media as a tool. The community members assessed the performance of the media and provided feedback on ways they thought the media could better be used as a tool in promoting peace amongst the people.

Recommendations

1. There is need to re-define the powers of the Uganda Communication Commission who have in the recent years closed small radio stations and issued directives to media houses, which directives interfere with the freedom of expression. This should be done by amending the UCC Act.

2. There is need for an overall unifying media body to judge and govern the quality of stories being put out by media as well as define who qualifies to be a journalist.

///HIGHLIGHTS

Mulindwa Mukasa V Julius Caesar (Misc. Cause No. 58 of 2014)
(Represented by the Ag)

CEPIL provided legal support to a journalist Mulindwa; who was brutally assaulted by officers working under the orders of their supervisor; Julius Caesar during a riot that the police were quelling. The Journalist’s counterparts had been arrested by the police and he had followed them to the police station recording the events. The police officer being in charge of the station, ordered that Mulindwa be detained. He was beaten by police officers, his phone was removed from his person and searched, erasing all his data collected during the riot. He was later released but had suffered some injuries.

Mulindwa sued Julius Caesar in his personal capacity. The court asked both parties to try and settle the matter out of court. CEPIL facilitated the mediation where the police officer consented to having committed the acts and agreed to compensate the victim as well as formally apologize for the behavior of the police in handling journalists while carrying out police duties. A consent judgment was entered on the 15th of August 2017 at the high court.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Launch of Judiciary Score Card
Anti-Corruption Week
Launch of the Media project
Land Symposium in the North

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