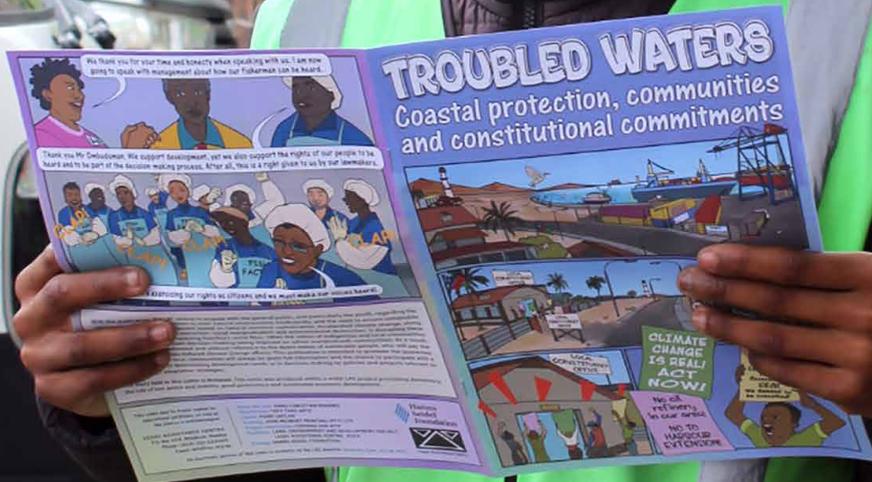


LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



FIGHTING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NAMIBIA SINCE 1988

35 YEARS



354 INTRODUCTION TO THE LAC

VISION

Namibia is a human-rights-based democracy founded on equality, justice and dignity.

MISSION

We, the Legal Assistance Centre, being a public interest law centre, collectively strive to make the law accessible to those with the least access, through education, law reform, research, litigation, legal advice, representation and lobbying, with the ultimate aim of creating and maintaining a human rights culture in Namibia.

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FACEBOOK  LAC Namibia

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LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE

MAIN ACTIVITIES

The LAC carries out its mission through three main activities:

- /// **Legal advice and litigation**
- /// **Education and training**
- /// **Research, advocacy and lobbying**

These activities are carried out through the LAC's three main units:

Social Justice Project (SJP)

Works directly to fight human rights violations.

- /// Human rights and constitutional test-case (impact) litigation – particularly in relation to socio-economic rights
- /// Human rights educational materials
- /// Legal advice
- /// Training of candidate legal practitioners, government officials and law-enforcement agents
- /// Refugee rights

Gender Research and Advocacy Project (GR&AP)

Works to promote gender equality and to empower women through legal research, law reform and related advocacy work.

- /// Gender research for law reform and public debate
- /// Advocacy and lobbying for law reform
- /// Educational materials on family law issues with a focus on issues that affect women and children
- /// Education and training for communities and policymakers on legal issues related to gender

Land, Environment and Development Project (LEAD)

Works on land, environment and rural community empowerment issues.

- /// Test case litigation on land disputes and access to land rights
- /// Legal support to community conservancies and community-based organisations
- /// Focus on wildlife crime
- /// Climate change and extractive industries
- /// Research and policy formulation on land rights
- /// Education and training on land rights and land administration

LAC DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD



The Legal Assistance Centre works to attain its vision by focusing on the following:

1. **Addressing inequality** – encompassing issues of discrimination, marginalised communities, LGBTQIA+, HIV, gender, children, disabilities and inheritance.
2. **Socio-economic rights** – emphasising health, education, refugees rights and water and sanitation, and also incorporating issues of disabilities, land, environment, poverty, and wildlife crime.
3. **Rule of law / Access to justice** – encompassing matters of public education, police brutality, due process, Namlex (online database of all laws in force in Namibia – ‘the Wikipedia of Namibian law’), governance, watchdog role, court process, elections, and litigation.
4. **Emerging rights issues** – to allow us to respond to topical issues quickly.

Another year has passed. Again it is time to reflect on how many of our fellow Namibians live: without a roof over their heads and without access to proper sanitation, healthcare, education, etc. Namibia's Constitution, hailed as one of the best in the world, protects an overriding right to dignity, which includes all of these basic human rights. The rights promised are sadly not reflected in reality. The burgeoning extractive industries may have the potential to right some of these wrongs. This is only possible if we consider all positives and negatives. This is our country. We have the right to make informed decisions about the elements found within and beneath our soil. To expand our legal advice programme, we have established a Mobile Legal Advice Clinic, which enables us to reach people all over the country. The clinic allows for all LAC staff members to be involved in disseminating information and materials on human rights, and gives clinic attendees tools for taking the messages further into their communities. Despite world events having had a negative impact on the extent of our interventions, our resolve remains strong. We will continue “making human rights real”.

This Annual Report is not an exhaustive document that details all LAC activities in the period under review, but rather it provides an overview of the work of each LAC unit and the organisation in general during that period. More information on any topic can be made available on request.

The LAC Legal Advice Clinic in Otjomuise, Windhoek, in 2023 – see details on page 13.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

LITIGATION

In 2023 the SJP focused on finalising all litigation matters taken up on behalf of individual clients. All of these matters involved access to healthcare, and police brutality. As noted in our previous Annual Report, the LAC strategy of individualising litigation can no longer be supported, thus the SJP is no longer taking on litigious matters unless they are in the public interest and affect a group of persons rather than only one. Apart from public-interest litigation, the SJP is now concentrating on public education and research.

To add fuel to our public-interest litigation strategy, we will apply to the High Court for the ability to entertain class actions whereby one applicant can take a matter to court on behalf of a certain class of persons (e.g. those suffering as a result of medical negligence). Currently this is not permitted in Namibia; the law states that an applicant must have a direct interest in a court suit. We are also considering applying to the Court to allow the LAC as an applicant to litigate in the public interest to raise matters that affect many (e.g. access to healthcare).

Healthcare

Access to healthcare is an issue of major concern. The state hospitals are unable to provide the quality of care required. In some instances the patients have to purchase their medication elsewhere, and conditions in the wards are all too often extremely unfavourable (e.g. broken ablutions, insufficient beds and a lack of cleanliness). Given that Namibia has an unemployment rate of over 50% and there is no Basic Income Grant, the demand for state healthcare is very high. Those with private medical aids do not make use of state services, despite the costs being much lower.

Furthermore, it seems that there is little or no proper planning or collaboration between departments of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. One indication of this is that students are sent on bursaries to pursue qualifications to work in specific healthcare/medical professions which are absent in Namibia or in which qualified professionals are lacking in this country, but they are sent without any assurance that the study focus is indeed the particular focus required, and that the necessary equipment will be available for the returning graduates. Some reporting in *The Namibian* newspaper in this regard:

- ▮ www.namibian.com.na/health-ministry-coughs-up-n32-million-for-medical-negligence
- ▮ www.namibian.com.na/one-doctor-per-1-000-patients
- ▮ www.namibian.com.na/unfair-burden-on-nurses-midwives-exposes-govts-lack-of-accountability

As an aside, the writer was so appalled at the current state of the accommodation for nursing personnel at the State Hospital that she felt compelled to take photographs and send them to the local newspapers for reporting on this matter. See one report at www.namibian.com.na/nurses-home-dilapidated. This is another indication of the deterioration of the overall situation within the Ministry.

Police brutality

The remaining civil cases of police assault were settled in our clients' favour.

Police assault is still a matter of concern. There are many suggested reasons for it, ranging from officers' frustrations about their disadvantageous working conditions to the current social ills causing increased crime and violence in our society. Some reporting:

- ▮ <https://economist.com.na/77320/speak-your-mind/ar-movement-deeply-concerned-over-high-number-of-police-brutality-cases-reported-locally>
- ▮ www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad635-namibians-see-police-falling-short-of-professional-conduct-and-respect-for-citizens-rights

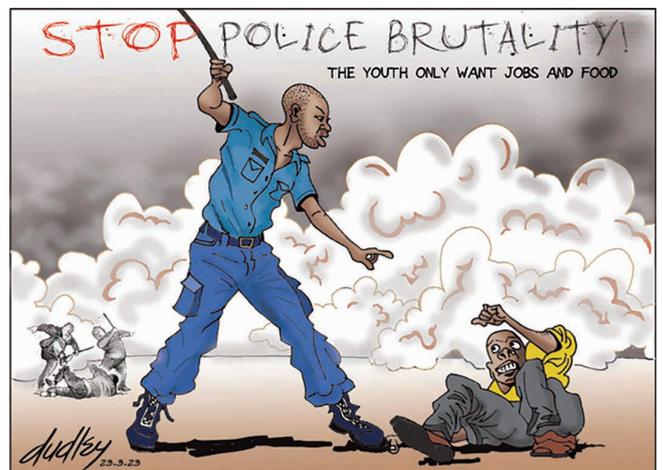
PROJECT (SJP)



The LAC was the winner of the JP Karuaihe Trust Legal Excellence Award for Human Rights in 2023 - the sixth time that the LAC has won this award. The LAC has also been a winner of the JP Karuaihe Trust Legal Excellence Award for Social Responsibility, in 2013.



A very concerning situation arose in Windhoek on Independence Day in 2023. Youth leaders applied to the Namibian Police (NamPol) for permission to hold a peaceful march highlighting the problem of youth unemployment. Permission was refused. On appeal to the High Court, NamPol's decision was upheld, on the grounds that the march could cause civil unrest. The fact that it should be a right of any citizen in a constitutional democracy to raise issues of concern, particularly on Independence Day, was not considered important enough. By the time the judgement was handed down, many had already gathered for the march. The youth leaders were in the process of informing the marchers that they had to disperse when the police engaged and injuries were sustained. The heavy-handedness of the police was unnecessary. See one report at www.namibian.com.na/police-unleash-force-on-unemployed-youth.



Research rescue

Many years ago the LAC opposed Namibia's Research, Science and Technology Act on the grounds that its definition of "research" was overly broad. Even a high school student doing research would fall foul of the law and be subjected to a criminal charge. The Government finally agreed to settle the matter on our terms. See one report at www.namibian.com.na/govt-agrees-to-change-contested-research-law.

REFUGEE SUPPORT

Since 2018 the SJP has provided legal support and advice to the refugees and asylum seekers living in the Osire Refugee Settlement near Windhoek, as a vulnerable community. In March 2023 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) informed us that it could provide only a small sum for this LAC intervention as from 2024, and that the only funding available for the Osire community for the remainder of 2023 would be utilised for food packages. The time and inputs required for continuing this service in 2024 would exceed the funds available, therefore 2023 was our last year of serving this community. This is a very unfortunate state of affairs. These refugees and asylum seekers are in dire straits; they require a lot of legal support and will suffer greatly from the loss of our services. The UNHCR has said that should the financial constraints be lifted, they would be pleased to engage us again. Our experience has shown that to fully do justice to the needs of the Osire community, a full-time employee or consultant would be needed.

In 2023 the SJP visited Osire five times. We made presentations on matters affecting asylum seekers and refugees, and consulted with specific clients who had personal matters to be dealt with. We also met with officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security and other stakeholders on security issues; with the Osire Primary School principal on issues relating to corporal punishment; and with the Namibian Police who were refusing to assist clients with declarations. Concerns were also raised about the eligibility of persons who have refugee status in another country, such as South Africa, but who flee from that country due to, for example, xenophobia. It was explained that such persons would be eligible for refugee status in Namibia in terms of Namibia's Refugee Act. This is an indication of the links that Namibia has with South Africa and its other neighbours.

During these visits we also made presentations on domestic violence and rape (including marital rape) and corporal punishment. These social ills are unfortunately ongoing.

In June 2023 we attended the International Refugee Day celebrations in Osire. Over 300 people attended the half-day programme. Thereafter we had courtesy meetings with the new Commissioner of Refugees, Ms Josephine Nghimtina, the Head of the UNHCR Office in Namibia, Ms Fafa N'Konou, and the NamPol Station Commander.



Osire residents at an SJP presentation

In 2023 the SJP produced two posters for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers: “Namibian Laws on Marriage” and “Namibian Laws on Refugees and Asylum Seekers”. The posters summarise:

- ▣ the marriage laws applicable to refugees and asylum seekers;
- ▣ the question of derivative status (who qualifies and who doesn't, with some tips for applying);
- ▣ the rights of refugees and asylum seekers;
- ▣ the refugee application process steps; and
- ▣ the criteria for status granting and for the loss/or withdrawal of an individual's status.

The English versions as well as Swahili translations have been placed at meeting points in Osire, and we hope that they will indeed provide some valuable support to the residents.



International Refugee Day celebrations in Osire in 2023

GENDER RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY PROJECT (GR&AP)



GR&AP training for service providers in Outapi, northern Namibia, on the Child Care and Protection Act

Since its inception in 1990, GR&AP has contributed enormously to new legislation to help ensure that the laws concerned conform to human rights standards. GR&AP's other core functions have been to provide extensive training on matters affecting women and children, advocate for women's and children's rights and protections, conduct research and produce research reports and a wide array of other types of publications to inform/educate/assist women, children and the public at large, and service providers, policymakers and legal practitioners. Following is a brief overview of GR&AP's work in 2023.

The LAC thanks **Dianne Hubbard** for her 30 years of service as GR&AP Coordinator, and for exemplifying excellence in leadership and all aspects of our work. We miss your daily presence in our lives, Dianne, and we wish you well in your retirement – or rather, the next chapter of your working life!

Yolande Engelbrecht, a GR&AP staff member since 2009, was appointed as the new Coordinator in July 2023.



CONSULTATIONS WITH SAN

GR&AP visited the town of Gobabis in Omaheke Region in eastern Namibia for three days to consult with San women and girls as part of an information-gathering project aimed at facilitating further interventions relating to Indigenous Peoples' Rights and particularly the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of women and girls in the communities targeted. The indigenous San people in the areas around the national parks in central and eastern Namibia were the focus of this particular drive to improve access to SRHR. They are among the most marginalised and most vulnerable groups in Namibia. GR&AP's report on this visit was delivered to four government offices, namely the line ministries responsible for gender, education and health, and the Office of the Ombudsman, to inform further policymaking.



ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

Training workshops: GR&AP facilitated 11 training workshops for a total of 795 participants (394 male, 401 female) on issues related to gender-based violence, family law, the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) and laws affecting asylum seekers. This outreach mostly targeted community members, schools (teachers and learners), religious leaders and social workers. One such workshop was conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture's Khomas Directorate of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, which hosted several workshops for communities and schools in Windhoek on gender issues as part of the Directorate's Khomas Capacity Building Project (KCBP). These workshops focused on Namibia's laws on domestic violence, rape and maintenance, and the CCPA. Participants noted that this GR&AP/KCBP workshop was the first of its kind for them, and emphasised how important the information was.

Law reform on family issues: We provided to the relevant ministries research and input on the Marriage Bill, Divorce Bill and Uniform Matrimonial Property Regime Bill, including discussing these Bills in numerous workshops and information sessions. Some groups worry that the proposed change to a **no-fault system** may encourage divorce, but research shows that, in many cases, making divorce difficult does not keep a couple together, but rather just pushes the spouses to separate informally while remaining legally married, creating difficulties down the line, e.g. when one partner dies. Moreover, making it hard for spouses to separate in a context of widespread domestic violence amplifies the danger for vulnerable women. GR&AP also opposed the idea of retaining "**forfeiture of patrimonial benefits**" under the new Divorce Act, because this often disadvantages women who typically earn less. We favour a system that would give the Court discretion to adjust the division of property where appropriate, in light of the contributions of each spouse (taking into account financial contributions as well as the work of child-rearing and caring for the household).

Panel discussion: Birth registration without the father's particulars remains a major issue in Namibia, especially in remote parts of the country, because of a cultural belief that a child should not be raised without a father's name. Given GR&AP's expertise on such matters of family law, it was fitting that GR&AP was requested to be on the panel for the **dialogue on "Fatherlessness in Namibia"** organised by the Hanns Seidel Foundation in August 2023. The discussions invited a good dialogue both face-to-face and on social media.

Gender-Based Violence: “Over 10 000 GBV cases reported between 2020 and 2022” was the headline of an article in Namibia’s *New Era* newspaper (<https://neweralive.na/posts/over-10-000-gbv-cases-reported-between-2020-and-2022>), published on 28 September 2023. In the same week, Namibia’s annual Readathon Week for school learners was observed under the theme “Read Namibia: Take Action to Stop Gender-Based Violence”. The LAC provided comics, pamphlets and posters on GBV for the event.

DONATION

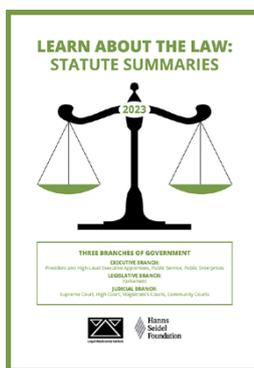
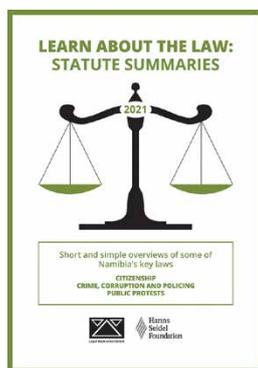
GR&AP attended the handover of a paediatric ward at the Black Chain Clinic in Katutura, Windhoek, by University of Namibia final-year law students as part of their Pro Bono Legal Aid Projects. The LAC donated cupboards and chairs to the clinic.



Attendees at the event included the Acting Executive Director of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Dr Theo-Ben Kandetu (circled).

PUBLICATIONS

The **second volume of Statute Summaries** was printed and launched in January 2023. Dr Sacky Akweenda, representing the Judicial Services Commission at the launch, spoke very positively about how accurate and useful he finds the **legal databases on the LAC website** – see more about the databases on page 14 herein.



Examples of feedback on the two volumes of Statute Summaries

“The summaries is very much useful, it makes easy to understand, i therefore encourages if you can add more topics.”

“Fantastic work! Inspired by passion of accessible information.”

“Very important publication on the separation of powers in Namibia.”

The first volume of Statute Summaries (2021) covers three topics: **Citizenship; Crime, Corruption and Policing; and Public Protests**. The second volume covers the **Three Branches of Government: Executive, Legislative and Judicial**. (Click thumbnails to upload PDFs.)

In 2023 GR&AP secured a spot in the **National Archives Library** for one of the publications stands which are stocked with publications for viewing, reading and take-home purposes. The Library was very appreciative of our publication stand and the publications themselves.

NUMBERS OF COPIES OF GR&AP PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTED COUNTRYWIDE IN 2023

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6 400	3 000	5 900	700	5 625	11 025	10 600	20 700	4 100	6 670	1 500	N/A	76 220



National Archives Library



Police in the north receiving our publications



Launch of the Ministry of Justice's Customer Service Charters



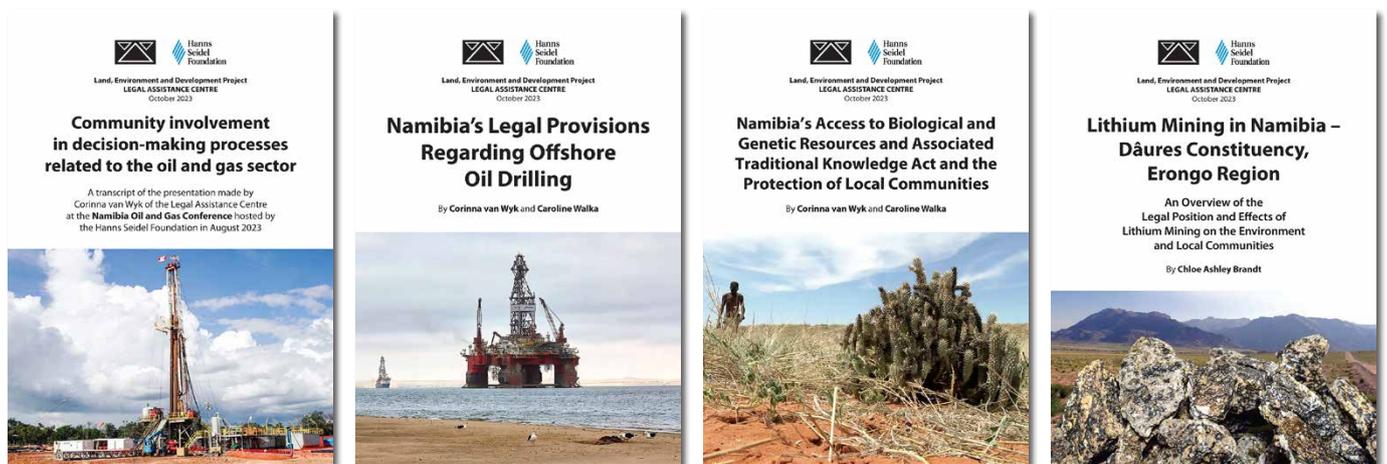
Feedback from a young fan

LAND, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

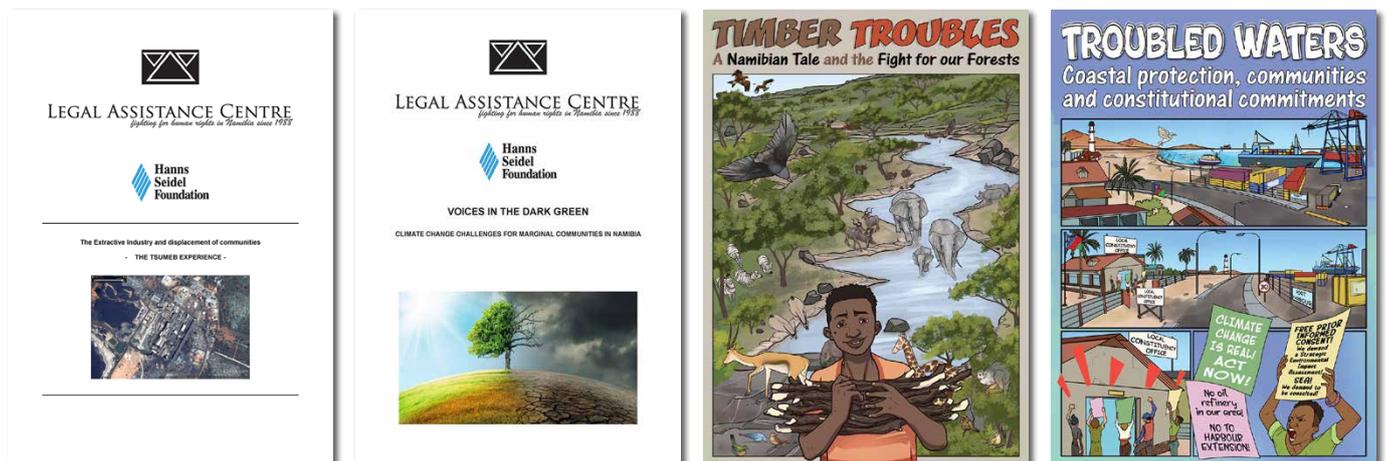
PUBLICATIONS 2023

LEAD produced **eight new publications** in 2023:

- ▤ a transcript of the **LAC presentation to the Namibia Oil and Gas Conference** in August 2023;
- ▤ **3 research briefs** – outlining Namibia’s legal provisions regarding offshore oil drilling, lithium mining, and protection for local communities in respect of biological and genetic resources and traditional knowledge;
- ▤ **2 policy briefs** – on Namibia’s extractive industry and climate change adaptation; and
- ▤ **2 comics**, on protecting Namibia’s forests and environmentally sensitive coastal areas.



Click on each thumbnail to upload each publication. All other LEAD publications are available at <https://www.lac.org.na/index.php/publications>.



Comic competitions: In 2022 LEAD launched a comic competition as part of its outreach to the youth on environmental issues and wildlife crime. The competition attracted much interest, and in 2023 LEAD reproduced and published the winning comic, titled *Timber Troubles*, won by Suiderlig High School in Keetmanshoop (see our previous Annual Report for details). The competition run in 2023 was won by Naftal Amupolo, a learner at **Ontana Combined School** in Oshikoto Region, with a comic titled **Water Smuggling: The borehole water business councillor**. The prize was N\$30 000 for the school. See details at www.lac.org.na/index.php/projects/land-environment-development-lead/wildlife-comic-contest.

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (LEAD)



Training in human rights vis à vis natural resources and the protection of indigenous peoples' rights - Bwabwata National Park

THE SEARCH FOR OIL AND GAS IN THE OKAVANGO DELTA

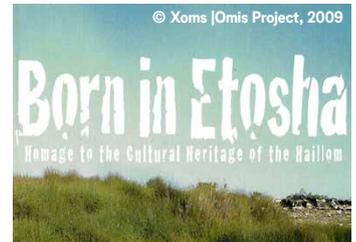
RECON Africa continues exploiting the Okavango in its search for commercial oil and gas without properly consulting the community forests and conservancies in the area. As a result, the management committees of the Ncumcara Community Forest, Muduva Nyanagana Communal Conservancy, Katope Community Forest and Kavango Communal Conservancy and Committee Forest Association, requested the LAC in 2022 to bring an appeal against the Environmental Commissioner's decision to allow RECON to clear additional land and drill additional wells under an existing Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC). Our clients argued that RECON needed a new ECC to drill in areas not referred to in the existing ECC. Applying for a new ECC means going through the entire process, including proper public consultations, which would include our clients.

In a separate application to the Minister, filed at the same time, our clients requested him to stay RECON's activities under the amended ECC, pending the appeal outcome. The Minister never acknowledged this application despite many requests for a response, so our clients approached the High Court for an order to stay the activities pending the outcome of the appeal before the Minister. The Court rejected the application for a stay, on the basis that it did not have the jurisdiction to make such an order, because the application ought to have been brought as a mandamus asking the Court to order the Minister to make a decision as to a stay of activities. The Court also slapped our clients with a cost order for almost N\$1 million.

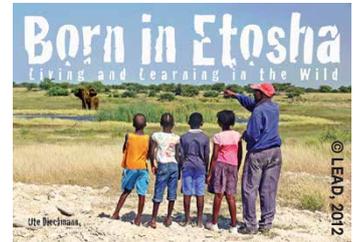
The appeal was finally heard in April 2023, but the Minister did not address the stay application during the hearing, and has not delivered his judgement on the appeal filed in April 2022 against the Environmental Commissioner's decision to amend the ECC, hence the drilling of more wells in more conservancy and forest areas continues, causing people to be displaced and limiting their use of much-needed natural resources.

ETOSHA CASE: ANCESTRAL LAND RIGHTS

LEAD's application to confirm representation of the **Hai||om San community** in order to bring an ancestral land rights case was unsuccessful in the High and Supreme Courts. We were directed to find another remedy. Following this judgement, we convened a meeting with members of the various San communities and all legal counsels from Namibia and South Africa. The focus was to fully explain the ramifications of the judgement and confirm instructions for the way forward. The decision was made to draft a constitution for the Hai||om Association and to use this body as the applicant in a new matter. A constitution was drafted, workshopped with our clients and amended. This constitution is now in the hands of our clients, who are to engage with their individual communities around the proposed constitution and confirm their desire to continue with litigation in the proposed manner. For litigation to be meaningful, the clients must buy in to the process. No litigation is negative, as all litigation provides guidance for future claims. However, litigation may be negative for the specific applicants concerned.



LAC books documenting the history of the Hai||om San in the Etosha area



[Click on thumbnails to download PDFs.](#)

ZAMBEZI CASE: COMMUNAL LAND RIGHTS

If requested, LEAD supports communities/groups who face challenges in engaging with a Communal Land Board. These boards make decisions as to the proper use and protection of communal lands. One such case was *Samudono Affected Group v Zambezi Communal Land Board*, which concluded in 2023 with the appeal judgement handed down in favour of our clients. We received the following response from our clients:

“Well received madam. Our thankfulness goes to LAC for representing us in the matter. As far as we are concerned, we viewed the case as existential as it related to the land from which we derive our livelihood. Please pass our appreciation to the entire LAC leadership for the assistance extended to us.”

CONSERVANCY CASE: ILLEGAL OCCUPATION AND FENCING

The **N̄a Jaqna Conservancy**, in the Tsumkwe Area, Otjozondjupa Region, requested the LAC's assistance to remove illegal fences from the Conservancy and forest (wildlife zone) area. More and more such fences are being erected in the area, encroaching on the land rights of the conservancy members (who are !Kung San people), and even threatening their livelihood and peaceful establishment. The owners of the illegal fences leave their cattle herders behind to herd their illegal grazing, which makes it very difficult to serve court papers on the owners personally. After the Otjozondjupa Communal Land Board (CLB) and the !Kung Traditional Authority (TA) failed to abide by a court order to remove the illegal fences of eight illegal settlers, the LAC suggested that the conservancy members be allowed to assist the CLB and TA to do this. Meanwhile the LAC is considering bringing contempt of court applications to have the fences removed, as well as new cases against the erection of new fences. The illegal fences cause disputes between the legal occupants and the illegal settlers. In an attempt to protect their right to harvest at certain times of the year, the San often face death threats from the illegal intruders.

The forest is under enormous strain due to a lack of capacity in many respects. All of the Conservancy Committee members are founding members who have worked at establishing and maintaining the forest for 16 years without any remuneration whatsoever, and now the fruits of their careful custodianship practices are being stolen. Illegal fences place more pressure on the environment, and many trees are randomly cut for fencing material without regard to forest conservation practices. Fruit trees and other food-producing trees and plants are being destroyed, particularly by illegal settlers' cattle in the forest area.

LEAD is providing support to the Conservancy to find alternative methods to enforce the removal of the illegal fences. The area's vastness makes it very difficult to reach perpetrators, and a further complication is that fences are continually being erected and removed. This matter indicates the difficulty of enforcing judgements with a lack of capacity of the local police services in the context of the specific challenges.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE LAC IN 2023



The LAC Legal Advice Clinic in Mondesa, Swakopmund, on 9 December.

A NEW APPROACH: LAC LEGAL ADVICE CLINICS

The LAC hosted two very successful Legal Advice Clinics in 2023, in Windhoek (Otjomuise, 17 November) and Swakopmund (Mondesa, Woermann Brock parking lot, 9 December). The community members were very curious, excited and engaged, and received the LAC well. This will be an ongoing project that provides a popular and highly effective platform for engaging with communities in their own environment, and also allows for ALL staff members of the LAC to become more involved with those we serve.

DAILY SCREENING SERVICES

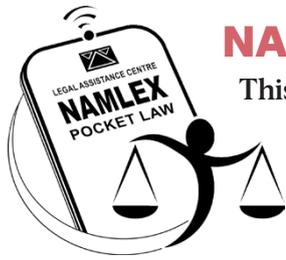
The LAC's open-door policy provides that a paralegal is always available to give legal advice or refer clients to the relevant service providers. The daily screening services assist walk-in clients and serve to identify possible areas of future intervention. In the first instance, legal advice or appropriate referrals seek to assist these clients. Any matters of potential public interest are referred to the lawyers' meetings for consideration.

NEW PROJECT TO EMPOWER SAN

On 15 November 2023 the LAC launched “Empowering the San: Legal Capacity-Building for Human Rights Access”, a project funded by the European Union with a budget of €330 000 (approximately N\$6,5 million), to be implemented by the LAC in collaboration with other stakeholders over a period of three years. (For further details see the launch press release at www.lac.org.na/news/pressreleases/press-32_2023-11-16_Empowering_the_San.pdf.)



The San project launch at the LAC on 15 November

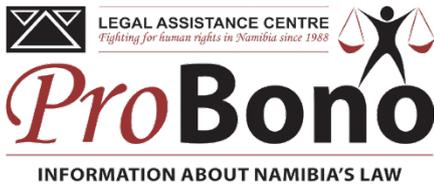


NAMLEX POCKET LAW

This cellphone app provides easy access to Namibian legislation at a cost. It is challenging to sell this project due to the same information being available for free on the LAC and NamibLII websites. The idea is to make the app subscription-based to raise funds for the maintenance of our legal databases – Namlex, Namlex Appendix, and Annotated Statutes and Regulations – while access to the databases on our website will remain free. The databases are kept up to date and are appreciated in various quarters.

Feedback from Adv. Deon Obbes: **“BRILLIANT! Many thanks indeed. Much appreciated and well done.”**

We are wrestling with the idea of requesting some compensation for the use of Namlex, but this would go against the goal of access to law. Discussions as to how to request at least the legal fraternity to provide support to this product are ongoing. The Law Society AGM was addressed, and it was stressed that without support the LAC may not be able to keep Namlex updated.



PRO BONO NEWSPAPER COLUMN

Since 2017 the LAC has produced a column titled *ProBono* for publication in *The Namibian* newspaper, to inform the public about various aspects of Namibian law. All *Pro Bono* articles are also posted on the LAC website. We produced eight columns in 2023:

COLLABORATIONS

- ▣ **Action Coalition:** The LAC remains a member of this body that advocated for access to information legislation, citing freedom of expression as a human right without which true democracy is impossible. The Access to Information Act has now been passed but has not yet been implemented.
- ▣ **Change Project:** The LAC Director continues to serve on the Project Team. This project of the Law Society of Namibia is doing extensive research on the practice of law as it currently stands and what can be done to make the law a proper tool for substantive change. It is also looking at current realities for the legal profession, recognising that change must take place for the profession to remain relevant and viable.
- ▣ **BIG Coalition:** The LAC remains a member of this body which is advocating for a universal basic income grant in Namibia.
- ▣ **CIVIC+264:** The LAC is a founding member of this body which is working to become a central point listing civil society organisations (CSOs) with their contact details. The idea is to provide civil society with regular funding opportunities and information that could affect them. CIVIC+264 also provides contact information for those seeking to engage with particular CSOs.
- ▣ **Namibia Media Trust:** The LAC Director is a Trustee.

EXAMPLES OF OTHER LAC INPUTS IN 2023

- ▣ The LAC Director was interviewed on **radio and television** on several occasions, on issues such as the same-sex marriage judgement (<https://namiblii.org/akn/na/judgment/nasc/2023/14/eng@2023-05-16>), the freedom to demonstrate and police powers to suppress this, and the state of legal aid and health care.
- ▣ The Director attended the **South African Embassy Human Rights Indaba** with both Ministers of Justice.
- ▣ The LAC was invited to a meeting with **Correctional Services** to discuss an independent oversight body.
- ▣ The LAC made a presentation to the **National Council Standing Committee on Constitutional and Human Rights** regarding the High Court and Magistrates' Court amendment bills.
- ▣ The LAC was interviewed for a forthcoming **Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia (EPDN) Programme** documentary on the importance of CSOs and the Government/Parliament working closely together and the importance of access to information in general.
- ▣ The Director attended the **Southern African Human Rights Defenders Summit** where the work of the LAC was acknowledged and commended.
- ▣ The LAC gave input into the **Human Rights Committee Shadow Report**. As a result, the Director was invited to make an oral presentation at the Human Rights Committee in Geneva in March 2024.

OUR DONORS IN 2023

**We extend deepest thanks to our donors
for supporting our work in 2023.**

Africa Groups of Sweden

American Bar Association (ABA)

British High Commission

Brot für die Welt

European Union

Hanns Seidel Foundation

Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)

**Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource
Management (CBNRM) Support Organisations (NACSO)**

United National High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

LAC staff members at the office celebrating Namibia's 34th Independence Day on 21 March 2023



CONTACT US

A large volume of information about the Legal Assistance Centre's activities (projects, cases, publications, etc.), donors and finances, as well as digital versions (PDFs) of most LAC publications, are available on our **website** (www.lac.org.na), and hard copies of many of our publications are available at **our office** (4 Marien Ngouabi Street, Windhoek) – but first contact us for confirmation of current availability of a particular hard copy.

You can also follow us on **Facebook** (LAC Namibia), **Youtube** and **X** (@LACNamibia).

The LAC Director and the Coordinators of the LAC units can be contacted by **telephone** (061-223356) or at the following **email** addresses:

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The **LAC Financial Manager, Vasisee Kuvare**, oversees our accounts office. In so doing, she deals with the financial reporting to donors and facilitates the annual audit of the LAC. These primary duties include:

- /// engaging with each donor;
- /// providing financial updates to the LAC units vis-à-vis their donors;
- /// overseeing the input required by the auditors; and
- /// providing the final financial statements to our Board of Trustees.

Vasisee can be reached by telephone (061-223356) or email: vkuvare@lac.org.na



Toni Hancox



Yolande Engelbrecht



Corinna van Wyk



Vasisee Kuvare