



**2016
Annual Update
of the
Gender Research and Advocacy Project
Legal Assistance Centre**



2016 IN REVIEW

Despite the ongoing difficulties of accessing funding – a problem affecting Namibian civil society groups generally – in 2016 we were able to produce **25 new publications** on a range of topics including gender-based violence, marriage and gender equality in the workplace.

In 2016, new areas of activity included advocacy on **statelessness** and **road safety** and outreach to community members on the **Communal Land Reform Act**.

Ongoing areas of work included advocacy relating to **gender-based violence**, efforts to improve the implementation of the **Maintenance Act** and advocacy on much needed **family law reforms**.

We continued to work with various stakeholders, including **policy-makers** and **community members**. For example, we worked with the Office of the President, the Office of the First Lady, Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Standing Committees, line Ministries, the Law Reform and Development Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, international representatives, development partners, churches and other civil society groups, using a wide range of mechanisms such as **workshop presentations, publications, media outreach** and **advocacy activities**.

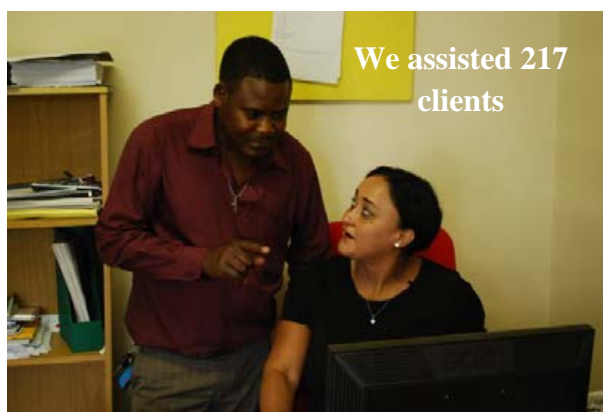


Publication launches: three research briefs (funded by the Embassy of Finland);
Namibian Law on Civil Marriage (funded by a grant from the United States Department of State);
Equal Opportunities in the Workplace (funded by the British High Commission)

REACHING THE PUBLIC



We distributed over 209 000 publications



We assisted 217 clients



We appeared in the media 86 times

PUBLICATIONS

In 2016, GR&AP produced 25 new materials: 9 research briefs, 5 comics, 3 comic posters created from existing comics, 5 factsheets, 1 new guide (plus Afrikaans and Oshiwambo translations of another guide which was produced in English in 2015), and 2 information pamphlets.

9 RESEARCH BRIEFS: maintenance, cohabitation, corporal punishment, stalking, stepchildren, domestic violence, road safety, statelessness and the International Criminal Court



5 COMICS: age of majority, parenting plans, mental health, speaking out about domestic abuse, and communal land rights for women



I am totally bowled over by the treasure of legal documents which LAC has made available via the internet! Well done!

Carola Engelbrecht,

Director, Citizens for an Accountable and Transparent Society (CATS), Windhoek

5 FACTSHEETS: communal land, the “Red Line Marriage” Bill, the Marriage Bill and statelessness



3 POSTERS: links between HIV and GBV; domestic violence, HIV and the cycle of violence; and safety in schools



2 PAMPHLETS: informed consent to sterilization and equal opportunities in the workplace



1 NEW GUIDE AND 2 NEW TRANSLATIONS: civil marriage (English) and Afrikaans and Oshiwambo translations of the English summary of the Child Care and Protection Act



Some of the feedback from the public

*These comics are actually great! Makes understanding for everyone perfect and really creates awareness!
Jolly well done!*

*Brilliant comic. I just got myself a copy from The Namibian.
Well done, your hard work has paid off.*



Additional photos from the launch of the Namibian Law on Civil Marriage

“Stunning work!”

John M Kowalski, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy, Windhoek

ADVOCACY

In 2016, we conducted advocacy on a wide variety of legal issues, both nationally and internationally.

National

From a gender law perspective, the **biggest advocacy issue** that we worked on in 2016 was **input into the debate on proposed legislation on Namibian citizenship** in the wake of a Supreme Court judgement interpreting “ordinary residence” in the Constitutional provisions on citizenship by birth more broadly than this concept had been applied in practice by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. In response to this ruling, the government considered overruling the Supreme Court through legislation, in a move that the LAC argued would violate the independence of the judiciary and the separation of powers. We are pleased to report the government withdrew the proposed Bill. The advocacy took the form of a newspaper opinion piece, submissions to the National Council and communications with key policy-makers, members of the legal profession and civil society.



An opinion piece by Dianne Hubbard & Toni Hancox in The Namibian

We started working on a **new advocacy issue** through the release of **proposals for enhancing road safety in Namibia**. This resulted in interest from stakeholders and coverage in print and television media. We hope that other civil society groups will take up this issue in order to strengthen the voices calling for effective change to address problems in this area.

Another **new area of advocacy** was our work on **statelessness**. We engaged with policymakers, spoke about the issue in the media and produced a research brief and two factsheets on the topic. The issue was also discussed at a small seminar for civil society and other stakeholders.

We worked on the **ongoing advocacy issue** of **addressing gender-based violence in Namibia**. We particularly thank the Office of the First Lady for taking a co-ordinating role in 2016 which has assisted civil society to work together more effectively. The most innovative activity we participated in around this topic was giving advice to groups participating in a “hackathon” to design an app to address GBV, hosted by the Namibian University of Science and Technology.

We also **continued our advocacy** to address the need for **family law reforms in Namibia**. Again we engaged with policymakers, spoke about the issue in the media, produced materials and engaged with community members. We continued our fruitful cooperation with the Law Reform and Development Commission and the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration in this area. There has been movement on a number of law reforms and we hope to see the impact of our input reflected in the bills that are presented for tabling in Parliament in 2017.

Overall, throughout the year we were involved in meetings, presentations and workshops with the **Office of the President**, the **Office of the First Lady**, **Parliamentarians** and **Standing Committees**, several line **Ministries**, the **Law Reform and Development Commission**, the **Office of the Ombudsman**, and many other **stakeholders**. High-level interactions including speaking at a workshop on the CEDAW and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations on gender (hosted by the Namibian Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentarian Union), facilitating a workshop for the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender and Family Laws organised by the donor FES and offering written comment to the Office of the President about how family law links to the goals of the Harambee Prosperity Plan.



Girl child advocate Zuriel Oduwale presented First Lady Monica Geingos with a 'Dream Up, Speak up, Stand Up (DUSUSU) Award' at State House. Dianne and Rachel were in attendance, February 2016.

International

GR&AP gave **input to various reports to UN committees** including comments on the civil society response to Namibia's Universal Periodic Review and on the civil society response to Namibia's report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We also regularly met with **visiting diplomats to give briefings on the gender and family law situation** in Namibia.



Women's Land Rights Research Consortium meeting in Rome

GR&AP was represented at an **expert group meeting on establishing a Women's Land Rights Research Consortium** (hosted by Resource Equity in Rome), spoke at a **workshop on LGBT rights in SADC** (hosted by Southern Africa Litigation Centre in Pretoria) and attended a **workshop on statelessness** in SADC (hosted

by UNHCR and Lawyers for Human Rights in Pretoria). The statelessness workshop led to GR&AP being given a small grant to address the problem of statelessness in Namibia.



Yolande at a workshop on LGBT rights in Pretoria with colleagues Gabes Augustus and Hira Katjepunda



UNHCR representative Matthias Reuss speaking to human rights activists on statelessness in SADC

We also lobbied the government to remain a member of the **International Criminal Court** through the preparation and distribution of a question-and-answer publication about the topic and the publication of an opinion piece in *The Namibian* (by Toni Hancox).

TECHNICAL WORK ON LAWS, REGULATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

We were engaged by the **Ministry of Justice** to draft **technical amendments to the Combating of Domestic Violence Act and the Maintenance Act**.

We continued to provide **technical assistance for the finalisation of the regulations for the Child Care and Protection Act**. At the beginning of 2017, these were with the legal drafters at the Ministry of Justice. The regulations must be finished in order for the law to come into force. We were also funded by UNICEF and by the Finnish Embassy to produce a **Guide to the Act** in separate chapters organised by topic. These are in development and will be finalised in 2017. We also finalised the production of a **Summary of the Child Care and Protection Act** in English, Afrikaans and Oshiwambo.

We gave comments on a range of draft legislation including the **Uniform Matrimonial Property Bill**, the **Land Bill**, the **Marriage Bill**, the **Divorce Bill**, the **Electronic Transactions and Cybercrime Bill**, the **Whistleblower Protection Bill** and the **Witness Protection Bill**.

We continue to consider how to address the Constitutional problems associated with the **Research, Science and Technology Act**.

We were engaged to provide **technical assistance to MGECW for the development of an action plan for the concluding observations made by the Committee that monitors CEDAW** following the presentation of Namibia's combined 4th and 5th report.



WORKSHOPS

Service providers

During 2016 we gave **presentations and training to a range of service providers**. We received several requests for follow-up training, indicating that our presentations are well-received. For example, following a presentation to social work students at the University of Namibia, we subsequently received an invitation to give a similar presentation to police commanders. We also gave presentations to teachers, staff at magistrates' courts and private social workers. We also facilitated training on mental health and the law for Ministry of Social Services and the Correctional Service, and provided training to candidate pastors on maintenance. We presented at various meetings and conferences, including a conference organised for International Women's Day. Again, in many of these instances, a presentation at one workshop led to an invitation to present at another.



Community members

In 2016 we also continued our work with **community members**, conducting week-long workshops in the north and south of Namibia to **introduce and encourage community advocacy on proposed new family laws**. We continued our work with youth by **conducting screenings with learners of our movie *A Betta Way* (on alternatives to corporal punishment)** and facilitating specific training sessions such as a **presentation on drugs and the law for teenagers** at the Soccer House in Katutura.



CLIENTS, PUBLICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Clients

Overall we assisted 217 clients in 2016. The most common queries related to maintenance and divorce. We assisted clients in person as well as by email and telephone. Many clients contact us by email with queries, which allows us to provide a faster and more flexible response service. It also allows us to assist clients from all over the country – and allows us to reply from all over the country, whether we are conducting training in the Oshakati or attending a conference in Swakop.

In addition, we responded to public comments and queries sent via our SMS line. We received an average of 2 messages per weekday in 2016, rising to as many as 10 messages per weekday after popular radio shows or distribution of one of our comics as a newspaper insert.

Feedback from clients

“Thank you for your answer and for sending me info about this issue. I will closely read them both!”
“Thank you once again for your attention and availability.”

Publications



Overall we distributed over 209 000 publications. Our materials are requested by service providers, civil society and members of the public and continue to prove extremely popular. We were very pleased to add 25 new publications to our list this year and look forward to continuing to distribute our materials throughout the country. We continued to promote access to our materials by **rotating the placement of our display stands** at a range of venues. This helps to make our materials known to members of the public who might not otherwise be reached.

We were very pleased to continue the service of distributing comics in the newspaper, either as separately-printed inserts or as full page adverts. This is the most effective way of ensuring widespread, rapid and accessible distribution throughout Namibia.



“I commend you for this initiative. The drawings bring out the will for one to read, I can't give it enough credit as it deserves ...”



Photos sent to us of our materials being used in a march held in Grootfontein

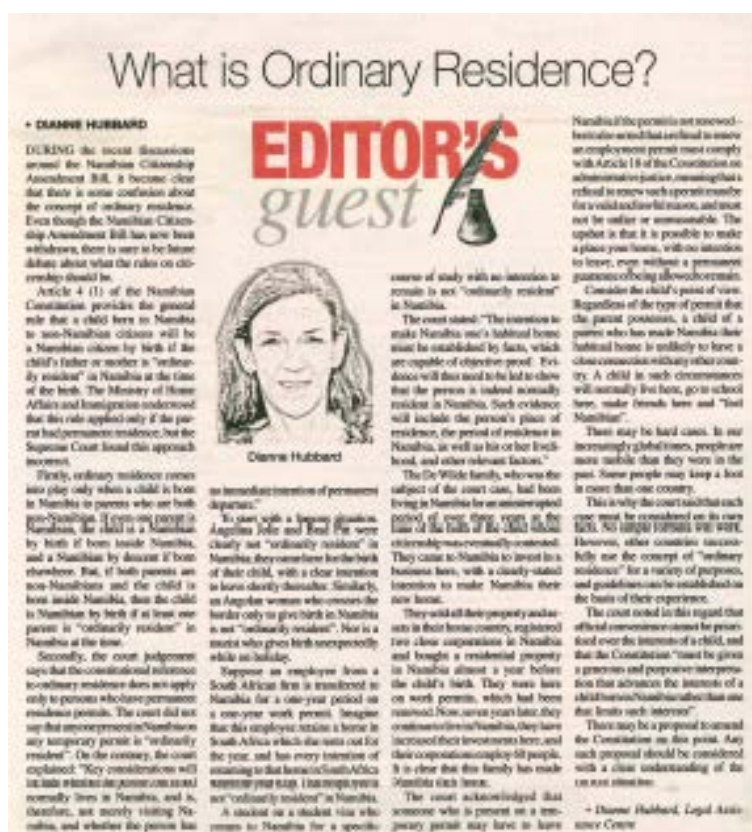
Media

We appeared on radio 35 times, in print 27 times and on television 24 times. A new activity in 2016 was our production of a series of radio shows on the Communal Land Reform Act, with a particular focus on how women can have access to communal land, through the support of the donor KAS.

"I always enjoy seeing you early in the morning on GMT like today on your latest comics and the challenges of free education and rights and responsibilities of parents and schools!"

"Thank you so much you were fantastic."

Our print coverage took the form of providing quotes and information to journalists, as well as providing opinion pieces and articles to the newspapers and to local magazines such as *OYO*, *young, latest and cool* and *Sister*. We thank our partners for providing the space to allow information on legal issues to be widely disseminated. We also continued to maintain our Facebook and Twitter presence.



An opinion piece by Dianne Hubbard published in The Namibian

[@LAC_Namibia](#)
Couldn't agree more. Great piece.
Feedback from Twitter

I am very impressed by the excellent work that LAC is doing!

Marina Reyskens, Senior Policy Officer, Political Affairs, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

STAFF AND INTERNS

Full-time staff



Dianne Hubbard-Coordinator (dhubbard@lac.org.na)

Dianne is a graduate of Harvard Law School. She also has degrees in English from the University of North Carolina in the USA and Stellenbosch University in South Africa. She has been the Coordinator of GR&AP since its inception in February 1993. In 2010 Dianne was invited to take up a 3-year term on the Law Reform and Development Commission, where she served as Deputy Chairperson.



Rachel Coomer-Public Outreach Manager

Rachel is a graduate of the University of Oxford and has a Master's degree in Child and Family Studies from the University of the Western Cape. Her role in the department is to manage all outreach functions including the development of educational materials, the dissemination of advocacy material and research findings, various trainings and media liaison.

Rachel will be leaving the LAC at the end of the year after nine years with the LAC. We wish her all the best.
--



Yolande Engelbrecht-Paralegal (yengelbrecht@lac.org.na)

Yolande joined GR&AP at the beginning of 2009, having worked at the Ministry of Justice for a number of years. Yolande takes the main responsibility for running workshops on behalf of the department as well as developing training programmes and providing information to clients.



Grace Kapere-Project Assistant (gkapare@lac.org.na)

Grace rejoined GR&AP in 2013 having taken a career break. Grace takes responsibility for office administration and manages the logistics of publication distribution, as well as assisting with public outreach.

Consultants



Thank you to **Perri Caplan**, our designer, who does the design and layout for all of our publications. She is indispensable to our work.



Following a stint as a volunteer at GR&AP in 2014, **Felix Lüth**, an experienced German lawyer practicing in Switzerland, has continued to provide pro-bono services to GR&AP – particularly in the area of international law which is his field of expertise.

Interns



Katie Krafchick, a lawyer with the Canadian Bar Association's Young Lawyers International Program.



Sam Forsyth is a student in a master of laws degree program at the University of London. His internship was funded in part by Wolfson College, Cambridge.



Roojin Habibi is a law student from Canada, funded by the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law and selected through the organisation Level.



Aneesha Lewis is a lawyer with the Canadian Bar Association's Young Lawyers International Program, funded by Global Affairs Canada.



Kaity Cooper is a lawyer with the Canadian Bar Association's Young Lawyers International Program, funded by Global Affairs Canada.



Reon Cloete is a Namibian graduate of Harvard Law School, now a law clerk at Fried, Frank, Shriver & Jacobson LLP in New York.



Kennedy Kandjii is a 2nd year Bachelor of Administration student at University of Namibia.

DONORS

OSISA
Embassy of Finland
US Embassy and PEPFAR
British High Commission
Konrad Adenauer Foundation
Association of Diplomatic Spouses
Pupkewitz Foundation
UNHRC



Core donor to the Legal Assistance Centre

