

25th Birthday of the Gender Research & Advocacy Project of the Legal Assistance Centre



25 Years of Advocating for the Rights of Women and Children

In February 2018, the Gender Research & Advocacy Project (GR&AP) turned 25, having been established within the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in February 1993. **GR&AP's specific task is "to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women through legal research, law reform and related advocacy work"**.

GR&AP has produced several major **research** studies and given **input into legislation** on a wide variety of issues relating to women and children, including gender-based violence, family law and child protection. One key aspect of GR&AP's work is to explain existing and proposed laws in accessible language, and it has produced a host of **educational materials** ranging from guides to specific laws for service providers to films, animations and comic books aimed at the general public.

GR&AP has good **working relationships** with the NGO community in Namibia, and often works on lobbying and advocacy campaigns alongside a range of other groups. It also regularly works in partnership with government on specific projects and has a particularly close working relationship with the Law Reform and Development Commission, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Justice. GR&AP also regularly works with development partners such as UNICEF.

GR&AP manages to produce a huge volume of work with only a **very small staff of three full-time employees**, but it has been assisted over the years by more than 100 volunteers and interns from Namibia and countries around the world, producing a cadre of visitors who return to their home countries as ambassadors for Namibia.

GR&AP has since its inception been under the leadership of **Dianne Hubbard**, who is also marking 25 years of employment with the LAC this month. Hubbard, in addition to serving as GR&AP's coordinator, has during the last 25 years served for several years on the boards of Sister Namibia and OYO, served one term as the Deputy Chairperson of the Law Reform and Development Commission and taught a course on Gender & the Law in the UNAM Law Faculty for two years. She holds a law degree from Harvard Law School and degrees in English from the University of North Carolina and Stellenbosch University.



Hubbard is currently assisted by **Yolande Engelbrecht**, who joined GR&AP in 2009, and **Ruth Murangi**, who came to GR&AP one year ago. Over the years, 14 other persons have been on the permanent staff of GR&AP at different stages. Hubbard says, “Working at the Gender Research & Advocacy Project has been the most fulfilling career imaginable. Namibia as a nation has made great strides in the advancement of women’s and children’s rights since independence, although there is still much more work to do on gender-based violence and family law in particular. I have been fortunate to work with dedicated and committed staff and volunteers over the years, and I am proud to be a part of the Legal Assistance Centre.”

According to Toni Hancox, Director of LAC: “The work done by GR&AP over the years fills me with a great sense of pride. I know that any question dealing with women’s and children’s rights will be very ably addressed by Dianne and the staff of GR&AP. The input they have provided in regard to these issues cannot be emphasized enough and I personally wish to thank them for their energy, enthusiasm and hard work over the years.”



Yolande Engelbrecht, Dianne Hubbard and Ruth Murangi