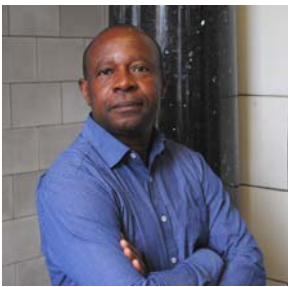


Linus Malu - Malawi September 2020

Head of Legal Department & Access to Justice Programme Manager
CCAP Synod of Livingstonia
Church & Society Programme
PO Box 112
Mzuzu, Malawi.



Dear Friends,

Greetings from Mzuzu, Malawi. I hope you are doing well during the pandemic. In Malawi we are still battling the pandemic, but are hopeful that the situation will improve soon because the country is recording more recoveries than infections. The government has put in new preventive measures, but generally life is running relatively well. We have a new government after the successful court-ordered presidential election held on 23rd June. Thank you very much for your prayers.

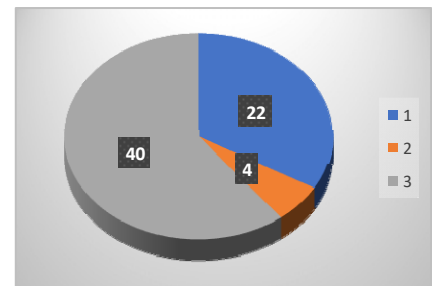
Malawi recorded its first case of COVID 19 on 3rd April, with the new preventive measures in place this has slightly changed the way we work at the Legal Department. We have been able to keep our offices open and have continued to run the offices as normal as possible. We have ensured that each day, an officer is available to attend to clients. However, we have put in place measures to protect ourselves and our clients, such as compulsory wearing of masks and maintaining of social distance. The number of clients we see has remained stable. We have stopped all projects and activities outside of the office, such as visiting the “One Stop Centre”, schools and communities. We have postponed our proposed radio programme on gender-based violence (GBV) which would have started in June this year. On a positive note, the courts in Mzuzu are open and we still attend court sessions during important hearings.



Our women empowerment programme for victims of GBV is doing very well. We have continued to provide assistance to our clients by monitoring what they are doing and providing financial help to some of them. In this period of paucity of funds, we have stood with our clients. In June, we disbursed the sum of £1,500 to four women at a reduced interest rate

because of the difficulties of doing business at this time. It is extremely difficult for most people here who depend on a daily income to feed themselves and their families. Business activities have drastically slowed down and incomes have also substantially reduced. The project is supported by the Church of Scotland.

The pandemic has not affected our legal and mediation services drastically and people still visit our offices for these services. We have not witnessed an increase in the number of cases reported for mediation, but we have mediated some COVID-19 related cases. The core areas we



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are working with are employment disputes, GBV, contract and tort. In my last report in March 2020 I noted that we had fifty- six cases in court and that twenty-eight cases were filed in court in 2019. The number of cases we have in court in 2020 has now risen to sixty- two. Forty are in progress, twenty are concluded while four were referred to lawyers in Mzuzu who are providing pro bono assistance to our clients.



We are currently writing the second edition of our booklet on GBV in northern Malawi. The first edition was published in December, 2018. This edition will focus on three districts of northern Malawi we did not cover in the first edition, and will also discuss other GBV problems we did not cover in our first edition. In late 2019 we visited Chitipa, Rumbi and Likoma and held awareness programmes on GBV and also conducted surveys on GBV.

The reports of these awareness programmes and surveys are included in this new edition of the booklet, which we expect to publish in December, 2020.

The courts are open in Mzuzu, and we have helped our clients to access the courts for remedies. We have continued to pay for some of the court related fees for some clients who cannot pay for these fees, and who have an urgent need to access the court. During the period March -August this year we filed eight cases in court on behalf of our clients. The cases are on GBV and employment disputes.

A part of our GBV programme is suspended because of the pandemic. We have temporary stopped attending to clients at the “One Stop Centre” at the Mzuzu Central Hospital because of the pandemic. The facility previously used by the “One Stop Centre” is currently being used as a COVID 19 centre at the hospital. The “One Stop centre” serves as an important facility for us to get information on GBV. We normally assist some of the victims at the “One Stop Centre” and “follow-up” on some of the cases at the court, the police or the social welfare office. Nonetheless, we have continued to provide other GBV assistance such as: providing mediation services for victims of GBV, assisting victims of GBV to access the courts, paying court fees for some of them, supporting and mentoring victims of GBV and providing loans to some of them.

Thank you very much for your prayers. In the following weeks, please pray for us on the following points:

1. For the government and people of Malawi for courage and God’s grace in the fight against COVID 19 in the country.
2. For those on the frontlines in the fight against COVID 19 in the world.
3. For humanity and all victims of COVID 19, and those experiencing difficult times because of the pandemic.
4. For all victims of gender-based violence in Malawi.
5. For all our clients at the Church and Society Programme who have limited access to justice, that the government will provide more mechanisms for them to access justice.

Sincerely,

Linus