

THE LEGAL AID BUREAU

Quality legal aid services to the nation



How can I access legal aid service?

Office walk-ins, Referrals from courts, NGOs, Police stations and Other Government institutions, Bureau's visits to prisons.



Background

The Legal Aid Bureau is established under section 3 of the Legal Aid Act of 2011 to provide legal services to people who cannot afford private lawyers. It is one of the social services government provides to its citizens such as health, education, food and water. It is the only such institution in Malawi.

Mission

The Legal Aid Bureau strives to be a lead actor in providing accessible, ethical, and high quality legal aid services to vulnerable people in Malawi; and to provide civic education and information about the law to the public.

Objectives

The Legal Aid Bureau's core objectives are;

- To provide legal aid, legal advice, legal assistance, including representation in any court, tribunal or similar body to the indigent in Malawi.
- To provide civic education and information about the law to the public.



Role of legal aid

Legal Aid Bureau plays an important role to ensure that poor people have access to justice and legal remedies as provided for under section 41 of the Constitution. Legal Aid Bureau provides legal aid services to persons of insufficient means to hire private lawyers. Priority for legal aid is given to vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and the sick. Legal aid is mainly in four areas:

(a) Legal aid criminal matters, (b) Legal aid in civil matters, (c) Legal advice and assistance, (d) Public legal education.

(a) Legal aid in Criminal Cases

Legal aid in criminal matters is provided to persons who are charged with or are under investigation for various criminal offences such as murder, rape, theft and any other offences under the law. The services include legal advice, bail applications and representation on court.

(b) Legal aid in Civil Cases

Legal aid in civil matters is granted to all persons involved in civil proceedings either as a litigant or an interested party. Civil matters include; Affiliation and Maintenance proceedings, Matrimonial cases, Adoption of children, Land disputes, Personal injury claims, Contract disputes, Deceased Estates and Labour matters.

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(c) Legal Advice and Assistance

Legal Aid Bureau also provides general legal advice and assistance in all legal matters. This may include advice on how the law applies in particular circumstances, legal assistance in preventing and settling disputes and advice in court.

(d) Public Legal Education

The Legal Aid Bureau also provides public legal education to members of the general public on various legal issues and legal procedures. Particular focus is also placed on educating the public on the existence and functions of Legal Aid Bureau.

Procedures

In order to apply for legal aid the following procedure is followed:

- Once at our offices, the client or his or her relatives are directed to meet a legal officer to give their statement.
- If the client did not come in person due to his incarceration a personal interview is arranged at the place of detention to seek further information.
- The client must then complete a legal aid application form applying for legal aid.
- The client must give details of his financial position on the legal aid application form.
- The statement, legal aid form and supporting documents are then submitted to the authorizing officer for approval.
- Decision on whether legal aid is granted or not is made.

- The decision of the amount of the financial contribution to be made by the client is also made by the authorizing officer.
- The matter is then assigned to handling officer.

Office Establishment

Currently Legal Aid Bureau has four offices which are; the headquarters in Lilongwe located in 1st Floor Shire Building, Off Paul Kagame Highway and it caters to the Central Region.

In Blantyre the offices are located in Government offices, lower Victoria Avenue and it provides legal services to Southern region.

In Mzuzu the office is in Osman Gani house and it provides legal services to the Northern Region of Malawi.

Finally, in Zomba the offices are located in High Court Buildings (Old Parliament buildings) and it caters to the Eastern Region.

Email: info@legalaidbureau.org

Address all communication to the Director



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