

STUDENT VOICES AND EXPERIENCES – CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION (CLE) EXTERNSHIPS

As part of the experiential learning offered at Makerere University School of Law (SoL), our students are sent out on externships in legal settings including courts of law, police, prisons, remand homes among others where they get to see what happens in the real world of legal professional work. We share students' voices about their experiences.

***Apica Angela Area**



Apica Angela Area (second right) with team members

My name is Apica Angela Area, a student of CLE class 2023. I am honoured to have been part of the team going to Mengo Chief Magistrates Court. The experience has been

enlightening for me, especially in the area of criminal justice. During the first weeks of the externship, we were able to attend several court sessions and this exposed me to a lot of irregularities in practice in our court systems. Having freshly studied Criminal Procedure I was able to relate the theories learnt in class, that is, what is supposed to be taking place, visa vie what the practice is, that is what is actually done in court. In line with this, we were able to realise that very many accused persons are ignorant of the simpler remedies that even they can employ to the end of achieving justice for themselves. These include self-representation and knowledge of the bail application. It is on this note that my team has undertaken to help raise awareness on bail applications for our project. I also learned to use the Electronic Court Case Management Information System (ECMIS), which is the electronic way of filing cases and management of court information being used in the Ugandan court system now. This is an upgrade of the manual system and it is surely a great improvement in the judicial arena of this country. All in all, the externship has been a great experience for my team and I, and we look forward to executing our project, with the hope that it will impact many lives in this country.

***Prudence Adee Lodou**



Prudence Adee Lodou (second left) with team members

My name is Prudence Adee Lodou, and for my externship, I was privileged to work together with a phenomenal team at the LDC Courts. While at it, I learnt that more often

than not, there are slight changes when it comes to the practicability of the work, the different judicial officers acknowledge that what we learn in the books may slightly vary from what is actually practiced. Therefore, while at the course of work, one has to be pragmatic. I was also able to understand the various challenges that are faced by different court users in a bid to attain or to execute justice. From impeded access to justice for the people living with disabilities to limited work space among others. Generally, the externship period was a time to go beyond the confines and comfort of classroom theories, to get a chance to appreciate the nature of the justice system in Uganda.

***Mellissa Ankunda**

My name is Mellissa Ankunda and I have been doing externship with Naguru Remand Home. The experience was highly educational. I got to learn about juvenile Justice and the challenges that affect child offenders. I realized that it is not just in theory that these children are ignorant about the law, but that it is what happens in practice. From this experience, I learnt how to make slide that we had for our presentations at the remand home. I also learnt how to communicate to children, while using friendly language that they understand. My highlight for this experience is the teamwork that we exhibited as a team. There is no day we didn't work jointly to put up the best presentations. I am looking forward to executing the project that we proposed.



Mellissa Ankunda (first right) with team members

***Susanne Kaguta**

My name is Susanne Kaguta, and my place of externship has been the Luzira Group of Prisons. This is a description of my experience in my own words. During my time at Luzira, I was given an opportunity to give legal advice on issues of bail, plea bargain, and self-representation. By doing this, I experienced a bit of what it is like to have clients and how to put all I've learned during my three years of study into the practical area. I got to understand the different prisons within the group of prisons, which include Kampala Remand, Murchison Bay Prison, Upper Maximum Facility, and Luzira Women's Prison.



Susanne Kaguta

I also learned the different dynamics in each of these prisons, especially when it came to differentiating the Upper Maximum Facility from the rest of the prisons. There, we were not even allowed to speak to any of the inmates. We drew questions from our observations, and the officers tried to answer all the questions. One of the most important things I picked from my time there was how much the system of public defenders is overwhelmed. The inmates on remand are very many in comparison to the number of public defenders available, and this ratio has caused a big lag in the trial of every accused person. I appreciated the legal aid clinics within the prisons that have assisted the inmates with issues of bail applications, file tracing, educating inmates on conduct during trial, among other things. I worked with an amazing team of 9 people who brought their best from day one. I am also grateful for the supervisors who made this experience an amazing one through the guidance we received and to PILAC for the opportunity. Since we were not allowed to take any photos around the Prisons premises, below is one taken during transportation from the Prisons.

***Namakoye Joyce**

I had the opportunity to have my externship at Naguru Remand Home. My experience at the remand home had me questioning all that I knew. We were confronted with the realisation that there is a gross gap between legislation and implementation. All that we knew to be the law was just in theory and not in practice. Children were being held on remand for more than the statutorily prescribed time, children were being forced in to admitting crimes they had not committed just to quicken their period of incarceration among other gross inadequacies. From this I learned that the law is not a stand-alone. It must be complimented with efficient structural mechanisms. This hammered the need for advocacy to bring about such substantial change. The highlight of the experience for me has been the execution of our project. We hope to create awareness on these discrepancies in implementation which we hope will go a long way to reform the situation.