

LAW WORKS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

THEME: PRO BONO DURING A PANDEMIC-
LEARNING FROM GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

PRO BONO AND RESOLUTION OF ISSUES DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT THE WOMEN'S LAW
CLINIC, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA

PRESENTED BY: STELLA UJU OJUADE
(Lecturer/Clinic Supervisor, Women's Law Clinic,
Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan, Ibadan)



ABOUT THE WOMEN'S LAW CLINIC

- The Women's Law Clinic (also referred to as "Law Clinic") is a not-for-profit organisation and a specialized Clinic set up primarily to offer pro bono services for indigent and vulnerable women.
- The Law Clinic provides free legal services to indigent and vulnerable women;
- It trains students of law and allied courses through the utilization of techniques of Clinical Legal Education; and
- The Clinic also documents cases and events, carries out research and intervention programmes.

STAFF STRENGTH

- The Law Clinic has about thirteen academic staff and three non-academic staff that handles the affairs of the Clinic.
- The student clinicians comprises of penultimate and final year law undergraduates and graduate law students.
- These law students are trained and exposed to societal responsibilities through client counseling, street law programmes and outreaches to communities within and outside the university.
- Interns are also part of the Clinic from various disciplines across the University, who wish to carry out research for certain periods at the Law Clinic.

MODE OF OPERATION PRE-PANDEMIC

- The mode of operation at the law clinic pre-pandemic was a walk-in basis.
- The Clinic provides free counseling and legal services to indigent women, educates women on their rights, collaborates with local communities within Oyo State, and encourages alternative dispute resolution methods that remedy wrongs while maintaining the harmony of the parties involved community. The legal services include all forms of human right abuses.
- These legal services are rendered by seasoned lawyers who are specialized in those particular areas of law that the client seeks intervention on.
- During the community outreach programmes, the law students create awareness by teaching the community members their legal rights using role plays, drama, songs and distribution of flyers containing adequate information about the Law Clinic and this in turn brings in the clientele the clinic has till date.

MODE OF OPERATION PRE-PANDEMIC CONT'D

- After the community outreach programmes to designated communities, the persons that have the most pressing issues usually turn up during the week following the outreach and those who were shy to consult our services at the venue of the outreach, also visit the Law Clinic.
- The Front Desk Officer receives the client and opens a case file after which the file is forwarded to the Clinic Administrator who further conducts a mini interview with the client to ascertain the area of law that her issue falls under. During this mini interview, the students are allowed to participate by preparing interview questions for the client.
- Next, the law students prepare a legal opinion on the matter and to which the Clinic supervisors intervene and schedule a meeting between both parties.
- Before the scheduled meeting, a letter of invitation is sent out to the respondent party inviting him or her for the scheduled mediation meeting.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

- During the lockdown season, clients who had visited the clinic pre-pandemic either made referrals or had our mobile phone numbers called for intervention cases.
- Particularly, domestic violence cases were on the increase during the pandemic as people were living closely within the same space for long periods of time and irritability was bound to set in.
- Cases handled by the Law Clinic include:
 - Domestic violence
 - Rape
 - Suicide attempts

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE LAW CLINIC DURING THE PANDEMIC

- There were collaborations between the Law Clinic and other human rights related institutions
- The Facebook page of the Clinic had information on how to reach out to the Clinic and some clients who could afford internet services reached out to us either through their cell-phones or through a friend's.
- The Law students made flyers and videos pertaining to domestic violence, rape and the services rendered by the law clinic on social media platforms across WhatsApp and Facebook.
- The mobile phone number of the Clinic was pasted boldly on the office door so that clients could reach out to the clinicians for immediate intervention.

ACTIONS TAKEN CONTINUED

- Case reviews were done online and the students were informed on phone to write their legal opinions on the cases and submit to the Clinic Administrator's email address for grading.
- Serious cases that needed immediate intervention were attended to but within open spaces and limited to a maximum of six persons in attendance.

WAY FORWARD AT THE LAW CLINIC

- **Online Dispute Resolution**
- **Partnership with the ministry of women affairs.** By partnering with the Ministry of women Affairs, the Women's Law Clinic can have an advantage to leverage on the influence and power that the Ministry has over some issues, policies and agencies for the interest of the clients.
- **Student Clinicians handling cases in their locality.** Furthermore, the escalating problems during lockdowns have made it imperative to have more hands-on deck to handle such situations. Trained student clinicians should be able to handle cases in their localities, in the event of a pandemic occasioning a lockdown.

○ THANK YOU
FOR
LISTENING

