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2019 ended on a high. LAW worked in partnership with the international community to bring **three Rohingya survivors of the Myanmar military’s “clearance operations” of 2017** to The Netherlands to bear witness to the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar relating to the Genocide Convention and the Rohingya at the **International Court of Justice**. The survivor’s stories were featured in scores of international news outlets including the BBC and the Guardian newspaper.

2019 has been a year of continued growth and consolidation. LAW drafted “Strategy 2022” – a four-year plan that adjusts the focus of the organisation to reflect key lessons learned over the past six years. Our original goals remain unchanged. **LAW always asks survivors and victims what justice means to them.** That simple question ensures survivors and their needs remain at the centre of our legal approach.

The Middle East office made a big impact in 2019. The Lebanon team provided legal assistance and representation in 738 cases, with a 95% successful completion rate, the majority involving civil documentation for Syrian families. Without this vital assistance, their children wouldn’t have access to education, medical services and humanitarian assistance. **LAW is also representing domestic migrant workers in Lebanon who have been subjected to serious human rights abuses, including slavery.** LAW’s Syria programme commenced in earnest this year. We are working with local partners to support victims and survivors of gendered crimes and I’m eager to shepherd this vital work throughout 2020.

In South Asia, LAW continues to work with the women’s group “Shanti Mohila”. **We submitted a victim impact statement to the International Criminal Court (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber on behalf of men and boys subjected to sexual violence.** In Sri Lanka, LAW trained 69 state prosecutors. As a result of our training and advocacy, **victim impact statements are now admissible in Sri Lankan courts.**

The Africa office continues to build on the **landmark case against the Government of South Sudan** for use of sexual violence by its army during the country’s 6-year conflict. Meanwhile in Somalia, we’ve received **800 complaints** from internally displaced persons.

We are delighted that 2019 marked LAW’s fifth year of partnership with Harvard University, whose fellowship programme has enriched our organisation. A special thank you also goes to Justice Rapid Response for the support they provided with LAW’s victim statement submission to the ICC.

I am extremely proud of LAW and the lengths our lawyers go to represent vulnerable communities. I continue to be humbled by the bravery and resilience of our clients and our staff.

Antonia Mulvey, Founder and Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide
LAW is a unique organisation and one that I am delighted to play a small part. 2019 was a great year for LAW - across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, innovative programmes conducted by LAW have empowered thousands of at-risk women and girls, secured the rights of victims of sexual and gender-based violence, increased access to justice, and supported the Rule of Law.

LAW’s creative interventions – the ground-breaking case against the Government of South Sudan on behalf of survivors of sexual violence, or the inspirational work supporting Rohingya refugees in pursuing international justice for their experiences in Myanmar – always place the survivors of serious human rights violations and international crimes at the centre of their work.

LAW is now in its seventh year and has changed considerably over the last six years, from working in one country to working in ten, from working with one partner to working with 38, and assisting more than 1000 survivors of human rights violations and abuses.

LAW’s growth and impact continued in 2019, where in Somalia, work undertaken with police has resulted in perpetrators of domestic violence being brought to justice and reforms in police conduct. LAW’s work in Lebanon has assisted hundreds of refugees and migrant domestic workers, facilitating access to essential services. In Sri Lanka, LAW’s programme helping the country deal with its tumultuous past and past atrocities was recognised when LAW was awarded a commemorative plate by the Attorney General’s Department for its delivery of training on the prosecution of sexual offences. These are just some examples of the innovative ways that LAW continues to work to secure justice for survivors, ensuring absolute dedication to their clients at every level of the organisation.

I am so proud of the vital work LAW undertakes, and I look forward to seeing what is in store in 2020.

Ingrid Gubbay, President and on behalf of the Legal Action Worldwide Board.
Vision and Approach

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is an independent, non-profit organisation comprised predominantly of female human rights lawyers, who work in fragile and conflict-affected areas in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. LAW’s focus is on increasing access to justice, improving Rule of Law and addressing human rights violations and abuses, with a particular focus on gender and discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, natural resource exploitation and transitional or transformative justice.

How LAW works

Legal Empowerment and Legal Aid
LAW provides legal information, assistance and representation to individuals and communities to facilitate their meaningful access to justice thereby empowering them to assert their legal rights.

Strategic Litigation
LAW uses strategic litigation as a method for precipitating significant changes in the law, practice or public awareness by taking carefully selected cases. LAW utilises domestic, transnational and international justice and human rights mechanisms for this purpose.

Technical Assistance
LAW works with justice institutions, law faculties and national partners to strengthen their ability to deliver survivor-centred and effective justice and uphold human rights.

Advocacy
LAW conducts strategic advocacy with decision makers and supports national champions to promote human rights and the rule of law.
Achieving gender equality requires an active commitment to reducing discriminatory laws and practices, tackling harmful gender stereotypes that assign roles based on socially constructed identities or biological sex, and combatting all forms of violence that target, or disproportionately affect, women and girls. In armed conflict, the struggle for gender justice must begin with the recognition that conflict impacts differently on women and girls than it does on men and boys. Gender equality also means being responsive to the distinct needs and experiences of LGBTQI survivors.

In April 2019, the United Nations Security Council adopted landmark Resolution 2467, adding another major pillar to the Women, Peace and Security architecture. The Resolution strengthened the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) through justice and accountability, and affirmed, for the first time, that a survivor-centred approach must guide every aspect of the response of affected countries and the international community. LAW can rightly call itself a leader in its field when it comes to placing empowered survivors at the forefront of tackling CRSV and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. It will heed the Security Council’s call to action by continuing to improve and expand its model for addressing the diverse needs and priorities of survivors through creative justice solutions and an expansive approach to accountability. LAW will pursue every opportunity to ensure that survivors’ voices are heard in the most important fora where the global response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is debated and defined, particularly when international courts and tribunals adjudicate on matters that will shape the prevailing approach to SGBV for years to come.
“I’ve received legal assistance and representation in the courts for my divorce and to gain access to my three children. The lawyer also attained a protection order against my husband. He was very frightened by it and hasn’t hurt me since. Without LAW I don’t know what would have happened to me.”

Nour, a client from LAW’s Lebanon office.

“It was first time I went to police station in my life to file a complaint, I never thought I would go there but thanks to LAW for helping out through the entire process I was able to. I hope they arrest and detain the men who destroyed my dignity”

Zeinab,* a client of LAW’s Somalia programme. The perpetrator who raped her was detained and sentenced to five years in prison.

“They raise their voice for our justice and rights. It is great what they are doing”

Rohingya survivor, speaking of Shanti Mohila, the Rohingya group supported by LAW.

*A pseudonym has been used to protect her identity.
50 staff members work with 38 national partners across 10 conflict affected countries.

1043 individuals represented by LAW.

1591 lawyers and human rights defenders trained.

3546 members of the community educated about their rights.

46 panel discussions, roundtables and workshops arranged and attended.
MIDDLE EAST
In Lebanon we provide legal information, assistance and representation to Syrian and Lebanese refugees, many of whom have no civil documentation, are stateless or suffer from family violence. LAW identifies gaps in access to justice and uses strategic litigation and policy drafting to close those gaps and provide access to justice for sexual violence survivors and stateless persons.

In 2019, LAW commenced its work on Syria with our partners EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI), who focus on increasing women’s participation in decision making whilst LAW works with survivor associations, survivors of human rights violations and improving the ability of Syrian lawyers to address those violations and abuses.

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2019 saw the establishment of a permanent presence for LAW in Palestine at our partner’s offices, Al-Haq, and LAW’s project “Addressing Corporate Complicity in International Law Violations Committed in the West Bank” began with the support of the Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Resource Centre.

AFRICA
LAW’s activities in South Sudan focus on conflict-related sexual violence, ensuring accountability for crimes committed by security forces and other parties to the conflict and empowering women and girls to be fully involved in the transitional justice and peace processes. LAW represents victims in the first ever case against the Government of South Sudan for rape, mass rape, and sexual slavery committed by members of the South Sudan Army, lodged with CEDAW in Geneva.

LAW offers assistance to national authorities in Somalia to improve national policy, legislation and practice in regards to sexual violence and natural resource exploitation and displacement. In 2019, LAW supported the establishment of a new police outpost to investigate GBV cases, and works to support survivors to access healing services and legal justice.

SOUTH ASIA
LAW supports women, men and transgender survivors of the Rohingya crisis in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. In December 2019, LAW supported Rohingya survivors to attend a hearing before the International Court of Justice, which resulted in a landmark court order directing Myanmar to prevent further acts of genocide against the Rohingya community.

The LAW team in Sri Lanka support Sri Lankan justice actors and institutions in dealing with complex and gendered crimes, and support grassroots communities around Sri Lanka in learning to deal with the past, peace and reconciliation. LAW and the Sri Lankan National Peace Council have used an innovative ‘training of trainers’ approach to spread information about addressing the past to rural areas of the country.
More than 900,000 refugees are located in camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, having fled from northern Rakhine state in neighbouring Myanmar. Many are survivors of serious international crimes perpetrated by the Myanmar military (the Tatmadaw) during 2016 and 2017 ‘clearance operations.’

LAW works closely with the Rohingya community located in Bangladesh to secure justice for crimes experienced in Myanmar, to ensure survivors of those crimes regain agency and empowerment, and to support the healing of the wider refugee community. LAW provides legal information, assistance and representation to Rohingya survivor associations, while supporting international justice processes and identifying creative strategies for accountability of those responsible for international crimes.

LAW represents Shanti Mohila (‘Peace Women’) an inspiring group of more than 400 Rohingya women and girls displaced from northern Rakhine state, Myanmar to Bangladesh following ‘clearance operations’ by the Tatmadaw in 2017. Many are widows and witnessed their children killed. Many are survivors of brutal sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, mass rape and sexualised torture.

LAW supports Shanti Mohila in providing support to survivors of sexual violence within their communities. Through these activities, survivors have regained agency and have seen their psychosocial wellbeing improve. In 2019, LAW began working with a group of Male Survivor Advocates, trained to provide support to male survivors of sexual violence.

- **50 survivor advocates** trained
- **More than 100 survivors of sexual violence supported**, including survivors of rape, and sexualised torture.
- **More than 20,000 refugees engaged by survivor advocates** since November 2018.
- Working across **14 camps**
- Submission to the **International Criminal Court** including statements from **83 survivors prepared by LAW**
- Survivor advocate missions to The Hague for **International Court of Justice hearing** and Geneva for the **Human Rights Council**
- Established a support group of **Hijra (transgender) survivors**.
Victim Submission to the International Criminal Court

In October 2019, LAW prepared and filed a victim submission to the International Criminal Court on behalf of Shanti Mohila and the Male Survivor Advocates (in total more than 450 individuals), calling for the court to authorise a full investigation by the ICC Office of the Prosecutor. The submission included the statements of more than 80 survivors and witnesses of international crimes and detailed legal argumentation in support of an investigation.

On 14 November 2019, the Pre-Trial Chamber of the ICC issued its decision authorising the Office of the Prosecutor to initiate an investigation into the Situation of Bangladesh/ Myanmar. In its decision the Court noted that: “According to the Registry, victims unanimously insist that they want an investigation by the Court.”

Hamida’s Story

Hamida Khatun fled Rakhine State, during ‘clearance operations’ in 2017. Her village was attacked by Tatmadaw and Border Guard Police forces and her uncle was killed. In the first week of September 2017, Hamida’s husband was detained by the Tatmadaw and has not been seen since. She walked for seven days before she reached Bangladesh.

Hamida was a founding member of Shanti Mohila, a survivors’ network now numbering more than 400 women and girls, who call for justice for the Rohingya and women’s empowerment.

In March 2019, Hamida participated in the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, with the support of LAW and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - the first Rohingya woman displaced by the 2017 ‘clearance operations’ to do so. Shanti Mohila was the only Rohingya women’s civil society group operating within the camps to participate. Hamida addressed the Interactive Session with the Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar and spoke on a high level panel and at media event. On 25 August 2019, Hamida Khatun was the only women to speak at a rally of more than 250,000 in the camps in Cox Bazar, commemorating two years since the 2017 clearance operations.
Mission to the International Court of Justice

In December 2019, LAW supported three Rohingya refugees to travel to the Hague for the International Court of Justice Case between The Gambia vs. Myanmar on provisional measures requested by The Gambia on the crime of Genocide (10-12 December 2019). The presence of the refugees in the court room was explicitly highlighted by the Gambian legal team during proceedings. H.E. Mr. Abubacarr Tambadou, the Gambian Attorney General and Minister of Justice, noted in his statement to the court: “I am also pleased that The Gambia’s delegation today includes members of the Rohingya community, including those who have travelled from the refugee camps in Bangladesh.”

Alongside hearings, the Rohingya participated in meetings with senior officials and diplomats. These include senior representatives from the Dutch government, attending a reception hosted by the Government of Bangladesh and attending a high-level roundtable, hosted and chaired by the Canadian Ambassador to The Netherlands, Lisa Helfand and Canada’s Special Envoy to Myanmar, Bob Rae. The Roundtable was attended by senior governmental representatives of a number of member states and international organisations.

On 23 January 2020, the ICJ unanimously ordered provisional measures be undertaken. Myanmar was ordered to prevent acts of genocide against the Rohingya in Rakhine State, to prevent its armed forces and aligned groups from committing acts of genocide, take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations and to submit a report to the Court on compliance with the measures ordered. More than 50 Rohingya gathered in LAW’s office near the camps in Cox’s Bazar to watch the Court’s decision be announced.
Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka’s complex recent history has been characterised by decades of armed conflict and internal division. Despite a recent period of peace and a commitment by the Government of Sri Lanka to establish mechanisms to address allegations of human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations, society remains deeply fractured.

In Sri Lanka, LAW supports national justice actors, civil society and grassroots networks embedded within local communities in dealing with the past. In doing so, LAW has empowered beneficiaries and stakeholders to meaningfully engage with justice for past crimes and to build a more resilient and transparent model of governance for the future.

Supporting Sri Lanka’s Justice Institutions

LAW supports Sri Lankan justice actors and institutions in dealing with complex and gendered crimes. These have included the Department of the Attorney General, The Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms and the Office for Missing Persons. In 2019 LAW facilitated trainings for 69 state prosecutors on the and prosecution of sexual violence crimes. LAW aimed to improve survivor experiences in the criminal justice system by reducing risks of re-traumatisation, demonstrating to the participants how this improves prospects of conviction.

Key highlights include training on:
- International best practices in the prosecution of complex sexual violence cases;
- The psychology of vulnerable witnesses and sexual offenders and strategies for dispelling rape myths at trial.

As a result of LAW’s support, training and advocacy to the Attorney General’s office, **victim impact statements are now admissible in Sri Lankan courts.** This is a crucial step forward in seeking justice for victims. In April 2019, LAW was awarded a commemorative plate by the Attorney General’s Department for its delivery of training on the prosecution of sexual offences.

KEY FACTS

- **69 state prosecutors** trained by LAW
- **90 law students** trained by LAW
- **50 master trainers** spreading knowledge on dealing with the past
- **538 community leaders** working with local communities
- 2,240 people who have participated in awareness programmes on dealing with Sri Lanka’s past
- **1652 community members** reached with essential knowledge about the dealing with the past in Sri Lanka
Dealing with the Past

LAW supports grassroots communities around Sri Lanka in learning to deal with the past, peace and reconciliation. This is especially important in the south and centre of Sri Lanka where enthusiasm for effectively dealing with the country’s past is low.

LAW and the Sri Lankan National Peace Council have used an innovative ‘training of trainers’ approach to spread information about addressing the past to rural areas of the country. Under LAW’s leadership, 50 specialists were trained in helping communities deal with the past. These master trainers have gone on to educate more than 500 local leaders. Equipped with both knowledge of how to deal with the past and an awareness of local knowledge and attitudes, these leaders spread awareness to their communities. As a result, 1652 community members learned about the importance of effectively dealing with Sri Lanka’s recent past.

Supporting Future Human Rights Lawyers

LAW partner with Sri Lankan universities to prepare students to become effective human rights advocates. LAW worked with Harvard International Human Rights Clinic and the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka's conflict-affected North, to design a human rights clinic at the University's Department of Law—the first such programme in Sri Lanka. LAW staff have collaborated with Jaffna law faculty to develop the objectives and structure of the planned clinic and to prepare curricula and syllabi for clinical courses.

Anoma’s Story

Anoma* is a community leader from the south of Sri Lanka. In 2006, members of her family were killed in a bomb attack on a bus, allegedly by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which killed 60 people. While she was initially angry, her attitudes have since changed: “I had hatred for Tamils. But during the training I saw that there was no point in hating. I saw that what had happened to us had happened to Tamils also. I realised we need to address the root causes.”

Anoma’s story illustrates that attitudes towards the past and other communities can be changed. Master trainers envisage Anoma becoming an inspiring agent of change in her community.

* A pseudonym has been used to protect her identity.
Lebanon fell into a deep economic decline at the end of 2019. The economic crisis was the latest in a long list of shocks for the small country that is bearing the brunt of the Syria crisis. The Government estimates there to be 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon, which is in addition to 18,500 refugees from Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan and other countries, as well as more than 200,000 Palestinian refugees, according to the UNHCR. The Lebanon office provides legal information, assistance and representation to domestic migrant workers, Lebanese and Syrian clients, and builds the capacity of Lebanese lawyers to provide these vital services.

**KEY FACTS:**

- **738 cases with a 95 per cent successful completion rate**
- **15% were cases of gender-based violence**
- **75% relating to civil documentation**
- **90% of clients were female**
- **30 lawyers trained on gender-based violence and international law**
- **194 attendees at a legal information session on civil documentation and gender-based violence.**
My name is Nour and I come from the mountains of Lebanon.

I lived in an abusive marriage and my friend called the LAW hotline for help.

My husband had been in a relationship with another woman and when I confronted him about it he assaulted me in my car in front of my 9 year old daughter. He tried to strangle me with his legs and pulled out my hair. I decided I couldn’t bear to live in the marriage any longer.

A bystander witnessed the assault and told my husband “if you want to kill your wife, kill her away from your daughter.” This is the mentality of men in Lebanon.

I’ve received legal assistance and representation in the courts for my divorce and to gain access to my three children. The lawyer also attained a protection order against my husband. He was very frightened by it and hasn’t hurt me since. Without LAW I don’t know what would have happened to me.
My name is Rima and I travelled from Syria to Tripoli in 2013. I had my three young children in Lebanon and wanted to register their births with authorities. I went to the UNHCR three times for help but there wasn’t space for me. I called other agencies for help but no-one called me back.

LAW was the only group that helped me. It made me so happy once the process was done. I was worried that I couldn’t move around Lebanon without my children having valid papers. It is too dangerous for me to go back to Syria because my village was targeted by the regime during the war. The houses have been bombed and many of my family were killed. When I got help from LAW it was a huge relief. My life in Lebanon is hard because my husband doesn’t make much money as a janitor. The devaluation of the Lebanese lira also means things like baby formula have become much more expensive.
Approximately 250,000 migrant workers primarily from Ethiopia, the Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are deprived of any legal rights or protection in Lebanon due to the ‘Kafala System.’ The system is inherently discriminatory and subjects individuals to the following violations: slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, torture, food deprivation, unlawful deprivation of liberty and exploitation, thereby violating myriad regional and internationally recognised human rights obligations.

LAW represents 28 domestic migrant workers in Lebanon. In 2019, LAW assisted five Ethiopian women who were subjected to serious human rights abuses including slavery; forced labour; rape and sexual violence to return home. Our lawyers are challenging the Kafala system to first, precipitate change in the system; second, to obtain compensation for the individual domestic workers that we represent; and third, to raise public awareness and promote public condemnation of the Kafala system.

**Makdisa’s story**

Makdisa,* 37 years, an Ethiopian domestic worker was subjected to conditions which prima facie constitute slavery. She was locked in her employer’s home for 6 years; not paid; not allowed contact with her family and was subjected to physical assault. Following initial action by LAW, she managed to escape home to Ethiopia in 2019.

*A pseudonym has been used to protect her identity.
In October, LAW and it’s partner EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) commenced a Syria programme. EFI focus on increasing women’s participation in decision making whilst LAW works with survivor associations, survivors of human rights violations and improving the ability of Syrian lawyers to address those violations and abuses.

In December, LAW and EFI held two workshops in Turkey and Lebanon bringing together 75 Syrian lawyers and activists. During the workshop participants discussed gendered crimes and conflict related sexual violence; how victims of human rights violations can increase their access to justice and how they can have their voices heard in national, regional and international forums.

Participants engaged in thought-provoking discussion about the role of religion in gender discrimination and brainstormed solutions to housing, land and property issues.

One participant said “I was inspired by hearing about the stories of the Gambia vs Myanmar case at the ICJ relating to the Rohingya. I thought if it can be done for the Rohingya, then surely it can be done for Syrians.”

A number of delegates from member states participated in the final session of the roundtable in Lebanon. One of the delegates noted that it was an important opportunity to work on a collective action plan for legal change and was impressed by the bravery of the Syrian lawyers and activists present.
Palestine

LAW’s project “Addressing Corporate Complicity in International Law Violations Committed in the West Bank” began this year with the support of the Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Resource Centre. 2019 also saw the establishment of a permanent presence for LAW in Palestine at our partner’s offices, Al-Haq.

The Context

Israel, as the occupying power in Palestine, has a range of obligations towards Palestine and its protected population. However, it has exploited this status and committed a litany of international humanitarian law and human rights law violations. In some instances, multi-national corporations have assisted them in the commission of these violations. Until recently, Israel has provided at least procedural legal recourse for Palestinians. Israel has instituted changes to the law, policy and practice under the influence of hardliners and the settlement enterprise, which have curtailed opportunities for Palestinians to delay demolition or requisition of their homes by challenging orders in Israeli courts. Following a needs assessment in the West Bank and Gaza, LAW explored ways in which civil society could be supported in maximising opportunities for success of their transnational cases. This not only informed LAW’s mentoring of civil society in their submissions to the Office of the Prosecutor, but the content of LAW’s programmatic activities in 2019. This included the identification of an opportunity to partner with Al-Haq to hold a multinational corporation complicit in war crimes committed in the West Bank to account and the creation of an agenda for LAW’s 2019 Palestine Litigation Roundtable that directly responded to the needs of national and international lawyers in bringing effective claims.
Palestine Litigation Roundtable

LAW’s annual Palestine Litigation Roundtable in November 2019 was described by one participant as “the best one I have attended”. “Inspiring” was a common comment, with one participant describing the two-day brainstorming and information-sharing event on litigation and casework relating to Palestine as “inspiring, illuminating and purposeful.” The success of the event can be attributed to a combination of the calibre of the 28 international, Palestinian and Israeli lawyers in attendance, the meticulous preparation of the thought-provoking and topical agenda, and the candid discussions instigated by the co-chairs of LAW and Al-Haq. Topics included Palestine at the ICC, intimidation of human rights defenders working on occupied Palestine, and business and human rights including civil litigation and public procurement relating to enterprises doing business in the settlements. The roundtable culminated in a brainstorming session producing a collective action plan, the implementation of which LAW will spearhead. This included the establishment of a working group on the EU public procurement policy and the establishment of an on-line forum for participants to coordinate their work.
LAW's work in Africa centres on Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Mali, where LAW provides innovative legal information, assistance and representation to address human rights abuses and violations, increase access to justice and uphold rule of law. The work focuses on gender equality and sexual and gender based violence, transitional justice and the women, peace and security agenda.

KEY FACTS:

- Operating in **4 countries** across Africa;

- **31 staff, 25** of whom are women;

- **Over 925 documented complaints from IDPs of human rights violations**;

- An **average 10 cases per month** referred to the formal justice system;

- **1,348 CSO's, lawyers ad paralegals trained** since the start of

Somalia

LAW supports state efforts to align national policy, legislation and practice with international human rights standards through the provision of legal advice and drafting of policies and legislation in Somalia. In 2019, LAW's work has focused on Internally Displaced Persons, with programmes that aim to build their **legal agency** and **access to justice**.
A police officer at Deyniile police station noted, “since we started working with the COB a lot has changed in our station. A tangible achievement is the way we treat detainees when arrested and locked up.”

Civilian Oversight Board

In 2018 LAW established a Civilian Oversight Board to monitor the conduct of police in Dharkeynley police station in Mogadishu. The board is comprised of lawyers, former police officers, two male and four female elders and members of civil society, and is tasked with reviewing and reporting on conditions in detention centres, arrest and detention procedures and allegations of police misconduct. The Board ensures that both police officers and detainees understand detainee rights, monitors detainee treatment and investigates allegations of ill-treatment. The impact of this project continued to grow in 2019 when in June, the Dayniile District Administration established a new police outpost to serve IDP camps in the area. This particular outpost has three female police officers who assist in handling cases of gender based violence, after it became clear that survivors of this kind of abuse were struggling to reach other police stations.
LAW’s Impact on Arrest and Detention

**Arrests**
- Police are in uniform;
- Detainees and family members are informed of why they are arrested and their right to contact a lawyer;

**Detention**
- Detainees not held more than 48 hours without being taken to court;
- Accuser no longer forced to pay for food for the accused;
- Cleaner conditions in the jail;
- Detainees referred to health services as needed;
- Reduced use of inappropriate force in detention and investigation.

**Civilian Oversight Board Reported Outcomes of Police Reforms**
- GBV survivors accompanied by a COB member and interviewed by female officers;
- Improved knowledge, prison conditions, and redress for detainees;
- Fewer young people (suspected of being a member of Al-Shabab) detained without evidence. Intelligence detention facility has been closed;
- Improved job satisfaction for police resulting from professionalism;
- Improved trust by communities - more people coming to the

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**Somali Legal Aid Network**

LAW helped to establish the Somali Legal Aid Network (SLAN), which brings together 21 legal aid NGOs across Somaliland, Puntland, Jubbaland and south central regions of Somalia. It is the first network of its kind and the only forum to bring local NGOs working on justice issues together across all regions of Somalia. The SLAN provides a forum through which legal aid providers can share information about common challenges and successful strategies to provide marginalised groups with access to justice, keep updated on changes in the legal system and receive trainings and technical support.
During a community awareness visit in March 2019, paralegals met with the elders and camp managers in one of the camps. One elder welcomed that women are finally getting access to justice stating: “We would like to thank the paralegals for creating this strong and much needed connection between us and the police station. Women and girls who suffer from sexual violence and domestic abuse can now report their complaints.”

Somalia

In 2019 LAW and its partner Witness Somalia established the first Independent Complaints Mechanism for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in six IDP camps in Mogadishu (Geedole, Dhagaxweyn and Midnimo) and Kismayo (Maanamuufo, Halgan and Dharkeynley). The programme is supported by the Somali Legal Aid Network (SLAN) and is run by ten female and six male volunteer paralegals. Throughout 2019 the project conducted weekly community awareness sessions, raising awareness of the formal justice options for victims of gender based violence, providing a safe and secure means of reporting rights violations and abuses. During 2019, LAW received and processed more than 800 complaints, supporting victims to access psycho-social support, medical care and to formally report crimes.

Independent Complaints Mechanism

In 2019 LAW and its partner Witness Somalia established the first Independent Complaints Mechanism for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in six IDP camps in Mogadishu (Geedole, Dhagaxweyn and Midnimo) and Kismayo (Maanamuufo, Halgan and Dharkeynley). The programme is supported by the Somali Legal Aid Network (SLAN) and is run by ten female and six male volunteer paralegals. Throughout 2019 the project conducted weekly community awareness sessions, raising awareness of the formal justice options for victims of gender based violence, providing a safe and secure means of reporting rights violations and abuses. During 2019, LAW received and processed more than 800 complaints, supporting victims to access psycho-social support, medical care and to formally report crimes.
Salma

Salma* is a 20-year-old young woman who lives in an IDP camp in Garasbaley. In July 2019, she was abducted by two men armed with a dagger while walking to her mother's home. One of the men gagged her while the other raped her, but she managed to shout for help. One man fled the scene, but Salma held onto the man who raped her while still shouting for help. Fortunately, people arrived and detained the man and called security agents who subsequently arrived and arrested him, taking him to Dharkenley Police Station.

When the case was referred to the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) the investigator assigned to the case attempted to force Salma to accept an out-of-court settlement, threatened her mother and brother to accept and instigated her unlawful arrest and detention at Dharkenley Police Station for three nights. Salma sought legal assistance from Witness Somalia whose lawyers made representations to the Attorney General's Office and the Director of CID on behalf of Salma. Two members of the project's Civilian Oversight Board, who monitor police investigations into sexual violence cases, accompanied her throughout the process and in September 2020, Salma's rapist was prosecuted by the Regional Court in Mogadishu, convicted of rape and sentenced to five years imprisonment.
Widespread sexual violence, including rape, gang rape and sexual slavery, perpetrated against civilian women and girls has been a hallmark of the ongoing armed conflict in South Sudan. UN and civil society reports have indicated that the commission of sexual offences has become a significant feature of the conflict, and has been used as a military tactic in all ten states by government and rebel forces alike. LAW works closely with survivors and justice institutions in the country in the pursuit of legal redress for victims and accountability for perpetrators.

**CEDAW**

LAW currently represents 30 South Sudanese women and girl survivors of sexual violence in their pursuit of legal redress for the serious rights violations and crimes perpetrated against them by state security forces. In December 2018, LAW filed the first case against the government before the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2019 LAW continued to advocate on behalf of the 30 survivors to ensure that their abuse is recognised and the perpetrators brought to justice.

**Capacity Building**

In 2019 LAW trained 60 South Sudanese lawyers and human rights activists on documentation and collection of information and evidence on human rights violations and abuses with a gender sensitive approach.
In July 2019, LAW conducted a field mission to further engage South Sudanese sexual and gender based violence survivors, listening and documenting their views, concerns, demands for justice and reparations for the violations they suffered. Survivors emphasised their demand for justice and comprehensive reparations that take into account their daily challenges, such as medical care and education. One survivor said: “I want my issue to be taken seriously. The right steps should be taken to bring justice for what the government and the soldiers have caused me.”

Another survivor stated: “the government of South Sudan should be brought to justice for what happened during the war and the soldiers held accountable.”
On 4 December 2019, LAW, with the support of Amnesty International, cohosted a side event at the International Criminal Court Assembly of State Parties: ‘Justice for Survivors of South Sudan’s conflict.’ The event included a discussion with a South Sudanese rights advocate and survivor, together with international experts on justice. The event centred around the need for continued pressure on the government of South Sudan to establish the Hybrid Court, which was agreed upon between parties to the conflict and the African Union as a part of the peace process, to hear cases of past atrocities committed against the Sudanese people and facilitate a sustainable peace in the country. LAW and its partners will continue to advocate for justice in South Sudan and will maintain pressure to set up the Hybrid Court, while pursuing other options for accountability.
LAW’s **groundbreaking CEDAW complaint**, lodged on behalf of 30 women and girls for the brutal sexual violence, slavery, torture and gang rape perpetrated by the Army of South Sudan, has already had an impact well beyond the filing of the complaint. The survivors, now displaced in Uganda, have formed an **advocacy and support group** that meets regularly, and their unofficial leader, Joycelyn Ayer (pseudonym), has become an **outspoken defender of human rights**. Through the pursuit of justice, they have found healing, and **through their community they have obtained empowerment**.

**Mali**

In 2019, LAW remained committed to targeting female genital mutilation and bringing an end to the cruel and inhumane practice. In 2016, UNICEF estimated that at least 200 million girls and women had undergone FGM in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Mali has a particularly high rate of FGM, where it is estimated that 91.4% of women have undergone the procedure. Consequences include severe pain, excessive bleeding, genital tissue swelling, wound healing problems, infections, urinary problems, increased risk of childbirth complications, HIV, psychological problems including PTSD, anxiety disorders and depression, and death. Misconceptions fuelling the procedure revolve around ideas that female sexual organs are unclean, female sexuality needs to be controlled and that FGM preserves virginity for marriage. Yet, lifelong implications on survivors’ physical and mental health ensure that control of women and their bodies extends far beyond the procedure itself.

LAW’s body of work on FGM includes a groundbreaking research project and report on redefining FGM as a crime of torture and in some circumstances, a crime against humanity. This year, LAW conducted a mission to Mali to engage with survivors of FGM, local legal aid and psychosocial and medical practitioners who work to support the recovery of survivors. **One person that LAW spoke to is a father whose daughter was subjected to FGM against his will. She died as a result of the procedure.**

LAW is working on a project with its local partner **to provide survivors of FGM with a referral system for medical and psychosocial treatment, and legal information regarding FGM.**
In 2019 LAW featured in 28 articles and interviews across 20 outlets.

Myanmar: Rohingya refugee recalls 'horrific' mass killings

Hasina Begum says 10 of her family members were killed when the Myanmar military set fire to their village and opened fire on the community.

She travelled from refugee camps in Bangladesh, where over 700,000 Rohingya are living, to attend a court case in which genocide allegations have been made.

Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi has defended her country against the allegations at the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Hasina says she hopes the refugees will get justice.

Interview by Raiaac Oo Hlauchko

Cambrilp by Kevin Kim

13 Dec 2019

International court hears of Rohingya horrors as refugee calls Suu Kyi 'a shield' for Myanmar's military

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Rohingya refugee who claimed she was gang-raped and beaten by Myanmar's military said Monday she has no hope of justice as the International Court of Justice considers the country's role in its brutal anti-Muslim crackdown.

Al Jazeera

Has the US failed rape victims in wars?

US threatened to veto a UN Security Council resolution on rape in conflicts over wording it said encouraged abortion.

25 Apr 2019 20:20 GMT

Washington threatens to veto a draft resolution presented by the United Nations on the 25 February which calls for the protection of women and girls in conflict zones.

The US has criticized the wording of the resolution, saying it encourages the use of abortion, which is illegal in the United States.

The resolution was adopted by the UN Security Council on 25 February, with 11 votes in favor, one against and three abstentions.

The US has threatened to veto the resolution if it is not amended to remove provisions that it considers too broad.

The resolution calls for the protection of women and girls in conflict zones and for the provision of medical, psychosocial and legal support for survivors of sexual violence.

The UN has said the resolution is aimed at preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflicts, and that it does not encourage the use of abortion.

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The Guardian
Aung San Suu Kyi impassive as genocide hearing begins

World’s failure to act over Myanmar is ‘stain on collective conscience’, UN court told

Owen Bowcott in The Hague
Tue 10 Dec 2019 15.35 GMT

Aung San Suu Kyi has sat impassively through graphic accounts of mass murder and rape perpetrated by Myanmar’s military at the start of a three-day hearing into allegations of genocide at the UN’s highest court.

Among those in court were several Rohingya survivors who had flown in from Kutupalong refugee camp, the largest in Bangladesh outside Cox’s Bazar.

Hasmida Khatun, Younus Ali and Hasina Begum were supported by the human rights organisation Legal Action Worldwide, which was founded by a former UN investigator of the violence, Antonia Mulvey.

“This is a momentous occasion. They have travelled a long way to be here,” Mulvey said outside the court. “They are seeking justice and this is the first and most important step.

“Aung San Suu Kyi did nothing to stop the killing. She could have asked for help from the international community at the time. And now, as the final insult, she’s defending the army’s behaviour in court.”

Aung San Suu Kyi to face international court

Myanmar’s de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, will appear later today at the United Nations’ highest court to defend her country against accusations of genocide.

Her appearance comes after the west African nation of Gambia filed a lawsuit accusing Myanmar of carrying out mass murder, rape and destruction of Muslim Rohingya communities.

Many Rohingya survivors have travelled to the Hague for the three-day hearing and are being represented by the international human rights group Legal Action Worldwide.

Guest: Antonia Mulvey, founder and executive director, Legal Action Worldwide
‘Making Technology Work for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence’ Roundtable in Geneva

FEBRUARY

The expert roundtable brought together leading minds from law, gender and technology to explore how technological innovation could be used to address sexual and gender-based violence. Key areas of dialogue included the use of technology to prevent violence occurring in the first place, improving security for survivors and rights defenders, interviewing survivors and the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

Hamida Khatun addresses the Human Rights Council in Geneva

MARCH

In March, Rohingya woman Hamida Khatun became the first person directly affected by the Myanmar Army’s ‘clearance operations’ in 2017 to appear before the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Legal Action Worldwide was proud to support her in this historic occasion. Hamida described her experience fleeing Rakhine state following the attack on her village and the murder of her family. She emphasised that her experience was not unique and set out three requests from her victims group the ‘Shanti Mohila’: justice including compensation; to return home in safety and secure citizenship; and access to education.

Youth Champions Event Colombo

APRIL

In April, LAW participated in a Youth Peace Champions Event in Colombo. The event was organised by LAW’s partner, the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka. Students from 12 universities across Sri Lanka came to share their ideas on reconciliation and transitional justice. LAW’s three ‘champions’ were selected from the University of Colombo.

LAW at UN Women Event in New York

APRIL

Antonia Mulvey addressed a panel discussion at the United Nations in New York on sexual violence in conflict. Speaking about her experience as a former investigator to the UN Independent Fact Finding Mission in Myanmar, she highlighted:

“When I interviewed survivors, they said ‘we want justice … Many of them cannot read or write, but they know what justice is and they wanted accountability.”
Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Crises Oslo MAY
At this conference LAW’s Executive Director Antonia Mulvey chaired a panel discussion called “Moving from a culture of impunity to a culture of deterrence.” It brought together leading experts in conflict, healthcare and international law to discuss ways to improve access to justice for survivors of these crimes. LAW and Human Rights Watch issued a joint statement for increased funding and support to local women-led and survivor-led civil society groups.

LAW’s 5th birthday in Beirut JUNE
In June, LAW celebrated its fifth birthday and the launch of the Lebanon office. The event was held on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, to bring attention to LAW’s work in that very important space. The celebration was attended by one hundred guests from embassies, non-governmental organisations and journalists. The speakers included the EU Ambassador to Lebanon, Christina Lassen, who spoke about LAW’s important work in Lebanon with domestic migrant workers. The UK Ambassador, Chris Rampling, told the gathering that LAW as an organisation was ‘strengthening justice for survivors and shattering the culture of impunity.’

Justice for the Survivors of Gendered Crimes - The Case of Myanmar - at the Human Rights Council in Geneva SEPTEMBER
LAW organised a side event to the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, co-sponsored by the UK Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Canada and the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN. The event was attended by almost one hundred representatives from across the world and brought together members of the Independent Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar. The main discussion centred on how survivor-centred justice can be secured for gendered crimes.

ICC Assembly of State Parties on justice for survivors of South Sudan’s conflict in the Hague DECEMBER
LAW worked in partnership with Amnesty International to host a panel discussion. The speakers included Yasmin Sooka, the UN Commissioner on Human Rights for South Sudan and Netsanet Belay from Amnesty
LAW will pursue an ambitious legal advocacy program in 2020.

Victims of sexual and gender-based violence remain at the core of LAW’s work. Next year, LAW will work on growing survivors associations and groups that empower people to come forward and seek justice. In Rohingya, LAW will continue to support the “Shanti Mohila” – a group of women survivors of the 2017 military “clearance operations” in Myanmar. LAW is also helping a fledgling male Rohingya survivor group, at the same time as it provides direct legal representation for these men through the International Criminal Court.

The Africa office will continue to build on the landmark case against the Government of South Sudan filed at the end of 2018. Survivors have formed an advocacy and support group in Uganda which regularly meets and their unofficial leader, Joycelan Ayer (pseudonym) has become an outspoken defender of human rights. Through the pursuit of justice, they have found healing and through their community they have obtained empowerment.

In 2020, LAW will also focus on dealing with the troubles of the past. This is relevant to the work on the Syria crisis, as well as Sri Lanka and Lebanon, which will mark the 30th anniversary of the end of the civil war later in the year.

The recent social uprising in Lebanon represents an unprecedented opportunity for civil society to finally explore the extent of gendered crimes committed during the conflict and to seek justice for the families of the missing and the forcibly disappeared.

LGBTQI communities will also be a key focus into 2020, particularly in Syria and Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka, LAW has established a gender justice network to provide direct legal representation and assistance to victims of gendered crimes. It’s an innovative legal model that LAW hopes to role out globally in the coming years.

LAW will also expand its direct legal representation. In Lebanon, it’s rising at a staggering rate of 100 cases a month, focusing on gender-based violence within the community and domestic violence. LAW will appear before the courts in The Hague on behalf of the Rohingya, as well as in Syria on missing persons cases and housing & property disputes.
**LAW Finances**

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<tr>
<td>Total Income in 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure in 2019</td>
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<td>Increase since 2018</td>
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LAW anticipates funding of USD 3.5 million in 2020
Support for LAW

LAW recognise that without our donors and partners we could not reach the individuals and communities that we support. We want to extend a sincere thank you to those organisations that make our work possible.


LAW was founded in Switzerland, Geneva, where it is registered as a not-for-profit organisation. LAW is registered in the United Kingdom as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, and in the Netherlands as a Dutch Stichting. LAW has registered offices in Sri Lanka and Kenya and is in the process of registration in Bangladesh. LAW has joint headquarters in the UK and in Switzerland. LAW’s Swiss committee, UK Board and Dutch Board are comprised of senior international lawyers, with wide-ranging experience. LAW is supported by an Advisory Council comprised of experts in a number of fields, whose advice, LAW draws upon as needed. LAW’s Swiss Committee, UK Board, Dutch Board and Advisory Council are profiled below. LAW’s Executive Director oversees the operation of LAW globally, and is supported by LAW’s senior management team; including LAW’s Regional Heads of Office, located in the regions in which LAW operates.

LAW wishes to sincerely thank our Swiss Committee and UK Board Members for their oversight and management of the organisation; and to members of LAW’s Advisory Council for their programmatic input.

**LAW’s Swiss Committee and UK Board**

- Alexandre Davidoff (MDFH)
- Dr Shamsul Bari (Research Initiatives, Bangladesh)
- Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC (Bindmans)
- Simon Black (Lexical Labs)
- Raj Chada (Hodge, Jones & Allen)
- Andre Collomb (Swiss Life)
- Ingrid Gubbay (Hausfeld)
- Yusuf Abdi Hassan (MP for Kamunkuji Constituency, Nairobi, Kenya)
- Daniel Machover (Hickman & Rose)
- Christine Van Nieuwenhuys (Formerly World Food Programme)

**LAW’s Advisory Council**

- Professor John Dugard (University of Leiden and the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria in South Africa)
- Serena Gates (Red Lion Chambers)
- Professor Guy Goodwin Gill (Oxford University)
- Peter Haynes QC (St Philips Chambers)
- Michael Mansfield QC (Nexus Chambers)
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GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

To contact LAW about any of our programmes, please email: info@legalactionworldwide.org
Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is an independent, non-profit organisation comprised of a network and think-tank of prominent human rights lawyers and advisors. LAW provides innovative legal assistance to those who are least represented and most vulnerable in fragile and conflict-affected areas of the globe. **LAW uses a survivor-led approach throughout all its projects and programmes.**