



Timap Litigation Corps

Calling: *Lawyers in private practice who have an interest in social justice.*

Opportunity: *Become part of a movement to advance justice in Sierra Leone. Use your skills and talent for the poor and disenfranchised.*

Timap for Justice is a pioneering effort to provide basic justice services in rural Sierra Leone. Because of a shortage of lawyers in the country and because of Sierra Leone's dualist legal structure, Timap's frontline is made up of community-based paralegals rather than lawyers. We presently employ 25 paralegals who work in thirteen paralegal offices in the Northern and Southern provinces as well as in the capital Freetown.

We have developed a creative, flexible model to advance justice, one which combines education, mediation, negotiation, organizing, and advocacy. Our paralegals' efficacy stems from a confluence of 1) a knowledge of, and facility with, formal law and government, and 2) a knowledge of the community and facility with more community-oriented, social movement-type tools. Few social agents in Sierra Leone possess both types of capacity.

Timap strives to solve clients' justice problems—thereby demonstrating concretely that justice is possible—and at the same time to cultivate the agency of the communities among which we work. We adopt a synthetic orientation towards Sierra Leone's dualist legal structure, engaging and seeking to improve both formal and customary institutions.

Our program has succeeded in achieving solutions to more than a thousand justice problems of poor Sierra Leoneans. We have been recognized by independent observers for developing a creative, effective methodology for providing justice services in the difficult and complex context of rural Sierra Leone.

Seeking Capable, Committed Lawyers

Our program is directed by two lawyers who train, supervise, and support the paralegals in their work. The directors employ litigation and high-level advocacy sparingly and strategically to address cases in which a) a paralegal is not able to achieve resolution on her own, b) the harm or injustice is severe, c) there is a possibility of social or legal impact, and d) the client is unable to afford counsel. Because litigation or even the threat of litigation carries significant weight in Sierra Leone—word spreads like wildfire when a lawyer visits the countryside—our capacity to litigate adds strength to our paralegals' ongoing work as advocates and mediators.

As our caseload has grown, so has our need for litigation capacity. We hope to recruit a cadre of Timap-affiliated lawyers to litigate, on a semi-voluntary basis, those severe cases which meet our litigation criteria. Of the hundreds of cases we receive every month, these cases are selected for their severity and importance. We can assure you that they will be cases which appeal to your sense of justice.

Here are a few examples of cases we are presently working on:

- A mining company severely damaged the land of 50-60 farmers in the Southern Province, without the consent of the farmers and without providing compensation. The company departed from the area without a word, leaving behind massive pits in the ground, blockages across the local river, a broken bridge, and unfulfilled promises to rebuild two local schools. When community leaders tried to approach the mining company's office in Bo, they were thrown off the premises.
- Seventeen junior workers from a provincial secondary school were retired in 2004 without being paid 48 months of wages or their retirement benefits. The principal of the school and the then District Officer advocated on their behalf with the Ministry of Education to no avail. Six of the workers have died waiting.
- A 67-year-old pedestrian was run over on Kissy Road by a truck. She sustained permanent injuries to her head, teeth, and legs, which have disabled her and rendered both walking and working nearly impossible. The driver was convicted of careless driving and paid a Le. 50,000 fine to the state. The woman received next to nothing in compensation.

If we don't stand up with people like these, the forces of power will simply run them over. We see victories in such cases as an essential part of reversing the pattern of injustice and exploitation that has plagued the country.

Timap is not a "project" or a donor experiment. It is a Sierra Leonean organization, which hopes to have a permanent presence in the country.

Lawyers in the Timap litigation corps will have a formal affiliation with Timap. Though Timap will provide costs and extremely modest fees, we will ask our corps members to litigate on a semi-voluntary basis.

As lawyers, we enjoy significant power in society. Our qualification allows us to participate in an exciting profession and to earn a decent living. We believe that it also comes with a responsibility to devote a portion of our skills and talent to the advancement of justice.

Inspiration

In the United States in the twentieth century, the Legal Defense Fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People played a pivotal role in achieving basic civil rights for African-Americans and other minorities. Thurgood Marshall and other lawyers across the country used their legal skills—at great personal sacrifice—to advance

the movement for black freedom in America. Over decades and hundreds of cases, they achieved a legal revolution, culminating in *Brown v. Board of education*, a Supreme Court case overturning the Jim Crow system, and the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act of 1964 and 1965, respectively. Lawyers with the NAACP LDF helped to create a permanent shift in the American social structure.

Timap aspires to catalyze an analogous movement here.

We hope you will consider joining us!

For more information or to express your interests, please contact us at litigationcorps@timapforjustice.org.