The Legal Services Facility (LSF), a non-governmental organization that promotes and protects Human Rights particularly for marginalized women and other vulnerable groups by providing Access to Justice through funding on an equal opportunity basis to organizations providing Legal Aid and Paralegal services around Tanzania, has its mid-term evaluation report on its Access to Justice Programme which has been implemented since 2016.

The report sheds light on the evaluation of the second phase of the five-year programme supported by DANIDA, DFID and the European Union, through a basket fund. The middle point of its implementation was June 2019, a period of two and a half years, after which the LSF commissioned a Mid Term evaluation of the Programme.

Speaking at the official release of the report in Dar-es-Salaam, LSF CEO Lulu Ng’wanakilala said, “LSF’s Access to Justice Programme has been successful in inculcating a culture of seeking legal redress among local communities in matters relating to justice and human rights. “

One positive result to date is that most ordinary, everyday people are now more aware of their legal rights and available channels of obtaining justice. This has been evidenced by the increasing number of reported cases including those which have existed for a long time. She added, that, there is significant consensus among stakeholders that access to Legal Aid services has improved since the implementation of the programme, and that, in all the regions that were visited there was a functioning Legal Aid system and, in every district, visited there were active Paralegals units.
In essence, the programme responds to the national agenda enshrined in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania 1977. In addition, its interventions are also aligned to existing national frameworks such as, the Legal Aid Act, 2017, the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children 2017/18-2021/22 and the National Gender Policy. The program also addresses the sustainable development goals in their entirety.

LSF maintains a vital working relationship with the government through various ministries such as TAMISEMI, the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Ministry Of Home Affairs (Police) and the Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs (MOCLA) both on the mainland and in Zanzibar. “Our role is to compliment government efforts in fostering access to justice which is a catalyst for economic development and poverty reduction. Our implementing partners have admitted to receiving adequate cooperation from government officials at regional and council levels,” added Ms. Ng’wanakilala.

Speaking on how the collection of the data for the Access to Justice Programme was carried out, the LSF Monitoring, Results and Evaluation Manager, Said Chitung, said,” Interview guides were developed for each specific category of key informants from the national to the community level. Key informants were strategically and randomly selected from wards in identified districts of the 28 regions of both Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar and in total 287 key informants were interviewed”. Chitung added that the selection of two districts in a region involved one district at the headquarters of the region and another situated in rural areas. In each of the selected districts the purposive sampling technique was used to identify one ward where there is an LSF intervention.

LSF’s Access to Justice Programme approach aims at empowering communities to know, use and shape the law through the provision of Legal Education and Legal Aid services. The programme has strengthened Legal Aid systems through capacity building of Legal Aid providers including Paralegals, enabling them to address Human Rights and Legal Aid issues as well as offering them a set of skills to establish income-generating activities for their own sustainability.