

AERG LEGAL AND COUNSELLING HELPLINE November 2016

Established in: August 2013
Total Number of Legal Clients supported: 778
Total Number of Counselling Clients supported: 172
Total number of cases resolved to date: 327
Total number of individuals sensitized and educated on legal rights and trauma: 39,762
Total estimated land value of resolved cases: 520,600,000 RWF or approximately US\$ 650,000

The helpline was established to fill the gap in support for young survivors with legal and mental health challenges, so that they can access support regardless of where they are located. The helpline was launched with the intention of being primarily phone-based support. However, since its establishment in August 2013, the helpline has grown from a small pilot telephone based service to an innovative, all-encompassing legal and counseling support service. By providing legal and counseling support services country wide, the helpline has filled a necessary gap in support for vulnerable young survivors suffering from trauma or outstanding legal disputes. This is one of the only free and accessible services for young survivors incapable of affording to take their legal cases to court or lacking the confidence or ability to find someone to talk to about a mental health issue. In addition to providing phone-based support, the helpline also has field staff who provide support to clients through legal education and orientation, advocacy and representation in court.

With matched funding from Puebla Charitable Trust and DFID, the helpline now also includes two legal officers based in the Southern and Eastern provinces of Rwanda. These legal officers support young women and men who have dropped out of secondary school. The inclusion of these legal officers has dramatically scaled up the helpline impact and AERG's ability to support young survivors to resolve legal disputes across Rwanda.

Statistics from the Regional Legal Officers:

Number of legal cases documented: 205 individuals (152 women and 53 men)
Number of legal cases oriented to other service providers: 111 (81 women and 30 men)
Number of legal cases resolved: 12 (9 women and 3 men)
Total estimated land value of resolved cases: 2,000,000 RWF or approximately US\$ 2,500

This brings the overall total number of legal cases received through helpline and ELE project to **983 legal cases**.

Some examples of the results

UWAMAHORO Solange

UWAMAHORO Solange is 24 years old and an orphan of the genocide. She lives and studies in Kigali, but her family land is in Muhanga district in the Southern Province of Rwanda. Solange needed to go to court to establish her parents, as they were not legally married by the time they died. Only after that, she was able to claim her rights to the land of her parents. Besides Solange and her little sister, her step-grandfather and aunt were the only relatives that survived the genocide and her step-grandfather had registered all the family land in his name. The legal support Solange got through the Helpline made it possible for her to get the guidance and tips she required during her court procedure, which she won. After that, it was decided not to go to court immediately to claim her land, as that would have ruined the relationship with her few remaining relatives. Instead, the Helpline staff was able to mediate between Solange, her step-grandfather and her aunt. Solange got back the land of her parents, with an estimated value of 5,000,000 RWF and intends to keep it in her parents' memory.



UNYIBUTSA Eulalie



UNYIBUTSA Eulalie is 23 years old and an orphan of genocide. Her parents had land in Ruhango district in the Southern Province of Rwanda. After the genocide, the land was illegally taken by her cousins. In 2007 she started to try to get the land back, but despite having proof that the land belonged to her father and despite looking for help from a variety of institutions, she didn't succeed until she called the Helpline. The Helpline supported her with all the necessary legal proceedings, so that in the end the case could be settled amicably. The Helpline staff mediated between Eulalie and her cousins and they agreed to give her back the land. The

value of the land is estimated to be around 4,000,000 RWF, and Eulalie intends to use it to get a mortgage from the bank to start her own business after she graduates from university.