

CSF II supports Ethiopian CSO to bring reform in Public Defender Office

The recent engagement of the Ethiopian Lawyers Association (ELA) in addressing the issue of public defenders is a reminder of the value addition of 'Ethiopian' CSOs and their expanding role in raising issues that are off the public radar.

The ELA with its partner the Ethiopian Young Lawyers Association organised a one-day workshop on 8th of August, Addis Ababa, with representatives of federal and regional supreme courts, public defenders offices, police commission and prison administrations to generate adequate information on the legal and institutional environment within which the Public Defenders' operate throughout Ethiopia.

The CSF II supported project of the ELA focuses on "Engaging the Justice Sector for Good Governance: Enhancing Justice Sector stakeholder's capacity on Rights information, Legal aid and Legislative Advocacy". One core activity deals with conducting a national research that will lead to a reform on Public Defender's Office (PDOs), one of the key actors in the Criminal Justice Administration in the country.

The workshop representatives came from all the 9 regions, plus Harar and the 2 city administrations and candidly noted that at the regions extremely few public defenders currently exist. The numbers are indeed staggering. SNNPR has 6 Public Defenders; Benishangul, Tigray, Gambella has 3 each and Amhara and Oromia has 2 public defenders at regional level. Besides the inadequate staffing, problems of excessive case loads and low salaries plague many of these public defenders' offices.

According to Ato Abate Dejene, acting director of the Addis Ababa Public Defenders Office the office represent cases of corruption, homicide, rape, terrorism and money laundering with 19 staff, which illustrates the challenge. Ensuring access to legal service to citizens contribute towards their constitutional enshrined right to access justice, which is also the specific objective of the ELA project funded by the CSF II.

Such unique engagement of the ELA in close interaction with the government to solicit reform in the country's justice system shows the unique position of the Civil Society Fund programme in supporting 'Ethiopian' CSOs to actively engage in their mandated areas while ensuring citizen rights.

For more information about the ELA project, contact [Abera Haile Mariam](#) Project coordinator, Tel. [0920324890](#)



EUROPEAN UNION
CIVIL SOCIETY FUND II

located across the junction opposite SOS Children's Village

Phone: +251 (0) 11 618 55 29

Email address: eccsftau@gmail.com

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of GOPA

and do not reflect the views of the European Union.