



5 March 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Child support & maintenance issues to be tackled head on at Legal Aid SA hosted Colloquium

Child support and maintenance are at present some of the most contentious areas of family law, with regulation governing them always a subject of debate.

Critics cite the apparent lack of priority given to the legal enforcement of women's and children's rights under the Maintenance Law Act.

As part of on-going efforts to help children that are most disadvantaged by the systemic challenges of the current child support and maintenance regime, the issue of child maintenance will be put under the spotlight during a Child Support and Maintenance Colloquium to be hosted by Legal Aid South Africa's Impact Litigation Unit.

To be held at the organisation's Braamfontein head office in Johannesburg on Tuesday 6 March, 2012, the meeting will bring together key stakeholders and decision makers in the justice system, to discuss the challenges and evident loopholes in child support legislation.

Participants include representatives from NGO's, academics, government actors, claimants, etc. who will discuss and contribute to an open forum and strategy workshop, on issues relating to child support and maintenance.

"Through the colloquium, the Impact Litigation Unit hopes to initiate a multipronged strategy to confront and address challenges in child support and maintenance, highlighting the dynamic methods that the legal community and civil society can employ in protecting the rights of women and children," says Legal development Executive, Patrick Hundermark.

He adds: “Our vision as an organisation is for the implementation of a child-centred justice strategy that ensures the best interests of the child in all legal matters.”

To drive home the gravity of the issue, the day will commence with personal accounts by two Johannesburg mothers who have been unable to access child support and maintenance, and the detrimental impact this has had on their livelihoods, particularly the lives of their children.

The first-hand accounts by the women will highlight to the stakeholders in the justice system, the grim reality of the situation, as experienced by women and children.

-Ends-

Notes to editors:

- Participants in the colloquium include representatives from the Department of Justice, the Market Street Maintenance Court, Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, the South African Law Reform Commission and the Centre for Child Law, the Women’s Legal Centre and the Legal Resources Centre.
- This is the second Colloquium focusing on children, to be hosted by Legal Aid SA. The first was held in 2009 and focused on Child Law.
-
- With children being a key area of focus for Legal Aid South Africa, the organisation has established dedicated children’s units in some of its justice centres. These units focus exclusively on providing representation to children in both criminal and civil matters. Based in these units are specialist child law practitioners who have had advanced training and research background in child law. In very complex matters, our Senior Litigators provide support and advice to practitioners that need it.