

CONCEPT NOTE

#Law2Go!

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A. Overview of #Law2Go:

#Law2Go proposes to be a website and mobile application that will provide free access to -

1. a digitized library of human rights law in Nigeria;
2. a directory of human rights lawyers with their areas of expertise and their location across the country; and
3. access to legal services (including paralegal, psychosocial and emergency services) that will assist victims of human rights abuses to seek assistance and remediation.¹

B. Rationale for #Law2Go:

#Law2Go seeks to leverage on the extraordinary growth in the use of smart phones in Nigeria. By the end of 2017, there will be 18 million smart phone users in Nigeria² with 38 million smartphones projected to be in used in Nigeria by 2018 – a growth like no other on the continent. This platform can be utilised to address one of the most crucial problems in Nigeria’s justice sector which is access.

Access to justice in any society is critical and fundamental. Indeed, it is not only the most basic requirement of any system of justice but also the hallmark of any sane and civilised society. The relationship between access to justice and human rights protection stems from the fact that it is only when individuals have access to legal information and representation, that they can advance towards obtaining adequate protection of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Nigerian Law school (the country’s qualifying institution for legal practice) admits more than 4,000 lawyers into the Nigerian Bar every year, (which is a fair number for a country of 180 million

¹ This will include information about NGOs and the services they provide; emergency contacts and address such as the police stations; emergency fire service, road safety corps, primary health centres and hospitals; embassies and high commissions (for foreigners) and religious and welfare relief centres. Also like a “peer-to-peer” service, this application seeks to link victims of human rights abuses with the closest and most appropriate legal professionals (and services) available to them.

² For the Number of smartphone users in Nigeria from 2014 to 2019 (in millions) see:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/467187/forecast-of-smartphone-users-in-nigeria/> accessed 7 June 2017.

Further information: The number of smartphone connections across the continent almost doubled over the last two years, reaching 226 million. According to a report published by GSMA (GSM Association) on “Africa’s mobile economy”, selling prices have also drastically dropped. For Nigeria, the 2015 profiling of countries that love smartphones by *eMarketer* (eMarketer is a market research company that provides insights and trends related to digital marketing, media and commerce), showed that Nigeria ranks 17th in the world despite being a “developing country”. The country was said to have 23.1 million smartphones in 2015, a figure projected to increase to 34 million in 2018.

people) but, 72% of Nigerians are unable to access legal services for human rights issues.³ Due to hard restrictions on advertisements by lawyers,⁴ finding legal representation has also been one of the most critical challenges for people who need legal representation.

Public knowledge on human rights law and their usage in Nigeria is still very low. This is due to so many factors, one of which is the literacy level in Nigeria. (Only about 9% of Nigerians make it into university). Also, with most legislation and case law produced majorly in hard copy books, access to legal information is hardly open source. (Many law libraries are still privately owned e.g. by law firms). As mobile technology grows exponentially in Nigeria and permeates both classes of the rich and poor, this knowledge gap and access gap is still problematic for human development especially on issues of human rights which affects the day-to-day lives of people. #Law2Go seeks to utilise mobile technology to reduce this gap.

C. Service components of #Law2Go:

- Law
- Lawyers
- Legal Services

D. Innovations of #Law2Go:

Law	The will be the first digital library of human rights law in Nigeria. ⁵
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³ A field research conducted in 2015 by the Lawyers League for Minorities in Nigeria (LLMN), a local NGO, revealed that in the capital, only 28% of citizens who suffered human rights abuses in the sample year of study could locate or find legal services. The percentage is even much lower for minorities and vulnerable populations such as LGBTI individuals and women living with disabilities. (The research was conducted in the country’s capital where access to legal information and representation should be best).

⁴ **Rule 39** of the Nigerian *Rules of Professional Conduct in the Legal Profession* provides that lawyers cannot solicit professional employment either directly or indirectly by circulars, handbills, advertisement, personal communication or interview; or even by furnishing, permitting or inspiring newspaper, radio or television comments in relation to their practice of the law; or by procuring photographs to be published in connection with matters in which they have been engaged; or concerning the manner of their conduct, the magnitude of the interest involved or the importance of their positions as lawyers; or by permitting or inspiring sound recordings in relation to his practice of law. **Rule 41** also provides that lawyers or law firms may display signs or notices of legal practice which may contain the lawyers’ or firm’s name at the entrance or outside the building of the office but such sign or notice must be of reasonable size and sober design. Lawyers may however engage in any advertising or promotion in connection with their practice of the law, provided it is fair and proper in all the circumstances such as publishing in a reputable law List or Law Directory etc.

⁵ To enable citizens, understand their rights better, especially the indigent and uneducated, #Law2Go will also simplify the entire **Chapter IV** the Nigerian Constitution which is the Human Rights Chapter of the Constitution. This is the apex and most relevant human rights document in the country as it is in the *grund norm* of the land. #Law2Go will also translate same to pidgin English (common street lingua) and serialized to enable more people use and utilise the legal information easily.

Lawyers	This will be the first digital directory of human rights lawyers . More so, a directory that provides information on the areas of expertise handled by the lawyers and their location of practice. ⁶
Legal Services	This will be the first online “peer-to-peer” human rights legal service that will link victims of human rights abuses with the appropriate legal professionals (and services) ⁷ according to their expertise, availability and proximity. ⁸ (Lawyers and other professionals will use different interfaces from the users. ⁹ Lawyers will be regulated and will pass certain criteria to be enlisted on #Law2Go as a legal service provider). ¹⁰

⁶ This interface will give users the option of selecting their state of residence or current location as well as the specific area of human rights intervention they need help in (if known). This will help users create a short list of lawyers corresponding with their state and scope of human rights intervention. (Lawyers should be able to send a command to remove, suspend or reinstate their availability to provide legal services on **#Law2Go**). Additionally, **#Law2Go** can also provide a one-site directory of contact information (emails, physical addresses, phone numbers and websites) to relevant public institutions and offices, police stations, primary health care centres and NGOs that provide similar human rights services. (Nigeria has no universal emergency number like “911” for all emergency cases, but some public institutions have contact numbers. These “emergency numbers” are not collated in one platform) **#Law2Go** may be able to include this as an addendum to the lawyers’ directory.

⁷ This includes but not limited to lawyers, paralegals, etc. Also, volunteers (like the Nigerian Red Cross).

⁸ A victim of human rights abuse can personally or by proxy (through anyone who has access to **#Law2Go**) scout for immediate legal assistance and legal services close to them (with a map and locator) to pursue appropriate means of getting recourse.

⁹ Lawyers should also be able to report the cases they are handling on the app and can through the professional interface seek collaboration with other lawyers such as to ‘Refer case’, ‘Get support’, ‘Drop case’ or ‘Report misuse.’ Users of the app (citizens) may also be able to “follow” and see the indicators of progress made on publicly reported cases and be informed of the human rights abuses that have taken place around them and see the action steps that has been taken on these cases. The app may also provide an option for users to support other users (citizen-to-citizen support).

¹⁰ a) Qualification to practice law in Nigeria;
b) Knowledge and proficiency in the use and application of human rights law;
c) Interest and experience in human rights advocacy;
d) Willingness to carry out pro bono legal services;
e) Commitment to professional ethics and standards; and
f) Ability to diligently report app usage and case work to administrator.

<i>Others:</i>	Human rights reporting tool; ¹¹ Online data collection tool ¹² ; Public poll facility ¹³ ; Frequently Asked Questions ¹⁴ ; Legislative Bills Tracker; ¹⁵ Case Law Summaries ¹⁶ and more.
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E. Jurisdiction:

The 36 states of Nigeria¹⁷ including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

F. Areas of human rights intervention

Women Rights [e.g. Domestic violence, sexual assault, discrimination at work, human smuggling]

Children Rights [e.g. Forced labour, defilement, harmful traditional practices]

Disability Rights [e.g. Exclusion from public spaces, Discrimination]

Environmental rights [e.g. Environmental degradation, bush burning]

LGBTI Rights [e.g. Blackmail, extortion, hate speech, discrimination]

Civil and Political Rights [e.g. Arbitrary arrests, kidnapping, torture]

¹¹ With proposed partnerships with the Nigerian Police Force, National Human Rights Commission, Public Complaints Commission (Ombudsman), the Nigerian Legal Aid Council, Journalists, University Law Clinics and NGOs, A human rights reporting tool here will provide an opportunity for users to report human rights abuses on #Law2Go with the ability to describe the situation by typing letters, posting pictures, videos or voice recordings which can be tracked by professionals and referrals made.

¹² #Law2Go will serve as a Data Collection Tool for human rights cases and reports. The collection of such data will inform research, advocacy and reform. This can be used to support law enforcements with facts, evidence and data to work with.

¹³ #Law2Go can be used as a platform to run opinion polls on current human rights issues and other public issues of concern.

¹⁴ This is to educate citizens about the laws that protect them and do so easily, #Law2Go will provide FAQs and answers on various human rights issues (where possible, through pictures and video animation) e.g.:

How do I engage the police at a stop-and-check?

How do I respond when asked for a bribe?

How do I fill out a statement at a police station?

What constitutes sexual assault in Nigeria?

I have just been raped, where do I go to make a report? – (can I take a shower – will that be eliminating any evidence?)

Where can I report a domestic violence issue?

Can I be arrested because of my sexual orientation?

Do I have to identify as male or female?

What can I do in the instance of a kidnap?

Am I qualified for legal aid services from the government?

How do I know that I am not enslaved?

Where I can report a human smuggling issue?

What are my rights as a foreigner in Nigeria?

What are my constitutional duties as a citizen and how do I fulfill them?

On the general interface, “suggestions” and “tips” can also constantly pop up. E.g. tips on how citizens can protect themselves during a terror attack or threat; or short blurbs that could be beneficial to users (continuous human rights awareness and education).

¹⁵ A tool for users to get clear, concise summaries of human rights related bills going through the National Assembly, see what others think, and how to act.

¹⁶ Providing short, simplified and easy-to-read summaries of recent human rights and public interest cases that are adjudicated before superior courts of record in Nigeria.

¹⁷ Abia, Adamawa, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Edo, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara States.

Socioeconomic Rights [e.g. Forced evictions, healthcare disenfranchisement]

G. Conclusion:

The central aim for #Law2Go is to create a digitized library of human rights law in Nigeria and a directory of human rights lawyers. #Law2Go will contribute towards promoting good governance and accountability; encourage public awareness and education on human rights issues; provide tools for public engagement and support; create a platform for research and documentation; create the avenue for collaboration in law enforcement and remediation; and will provide opportunity for lawyers to gain retainership – pro bono (and probably otherwise, subsequently).¹⁸

#Law2Go will include and emphasize human rights protection for Nigerians who are most-at-risk to discrimination and abuse, especially people living with disabilities with emphasis on women, children and vulnerable youth.

¹⁸ Lawyers and law firms who may not want to represent clients on pro bono (on free) basis, can explore retainership on contingency basis. This can apply to litigation and settlement cases only. Lawyers who provide legal services under this retainership will get a percentage of the damages awarded to the client, and only if the outcome of the case is in the client's favour. #Law2Go is primarily for pro bono services especially for indigent Nigerians to access to human rights services from legal professionals.