

The Executive Director of the Legal Aid Board, Ms. Fatmata Claire Carlton-Hanciles and other staff of the Freetown Office have paid an on the spot visit to the Legal Aid Board Office in Waterloo where they interacted with clients. There were twenty-two clients with women accounting for the majority.

Ms. Carlton-Hanciles spoke to some of the clients about their complaints majority of which were maintenance cases. She also touched on the quality of service provided by the staff. She assured that they will received the same quality of service as clients in the Freetown Office and other parts of the country where the scheme has got an office. 'You have to be patient with us because we do not have enough staff to service you all at the same time but we will continue to do our best with the resources at our disposal,' she assured them.

The Defence Counsel, Lawyer Tholley and Paralegals Arnold Dixon and Gibril Jalloh briefed the Ms. Carlton-Hanciles and team on the volume of cases received per day. Ms. Carlton-Hanciles assured that steps are being taken to improve the office with furniture, computers, fan and air conditioners. 'There is need to improve the working environment for you and our clients as the numbers accessing the scheme continue to increase,' she said.

She underlined the need to work closely with the police, the Magistrate Court and stakeholders in the justice sector noting that the successes of the scheme are linked to the relationship with these institutions.

Carlton-Hanciles and team also interacted with the Magistrate for the Waterloo Court Ms. Macauley, staff and police prosecutors. She stressed the need for collaboration to decongest the Correctional Centers. 'The Pademba Road Correctional Center has over two thousand one hundred inmates as we speak and this is not good for us in the Justice Sector,' she said.

She encouraged the Magistrate to refer minor cases to the Board's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Waterloo to decongest the court. She also observed that some accused persons granted bail cannot find sureties because the conditions are stiff. 'This is an area you should also look at,' she stressed

LAB tours operation and court in Waterloo

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Ms. Carlton-Hanciles floated the idea of setting up courts in the Correctional Centers as part of a strategy to decongest them. 'These courts will ensure those who are due for release are released and those who should go to court do so without any waste of time,' she said.