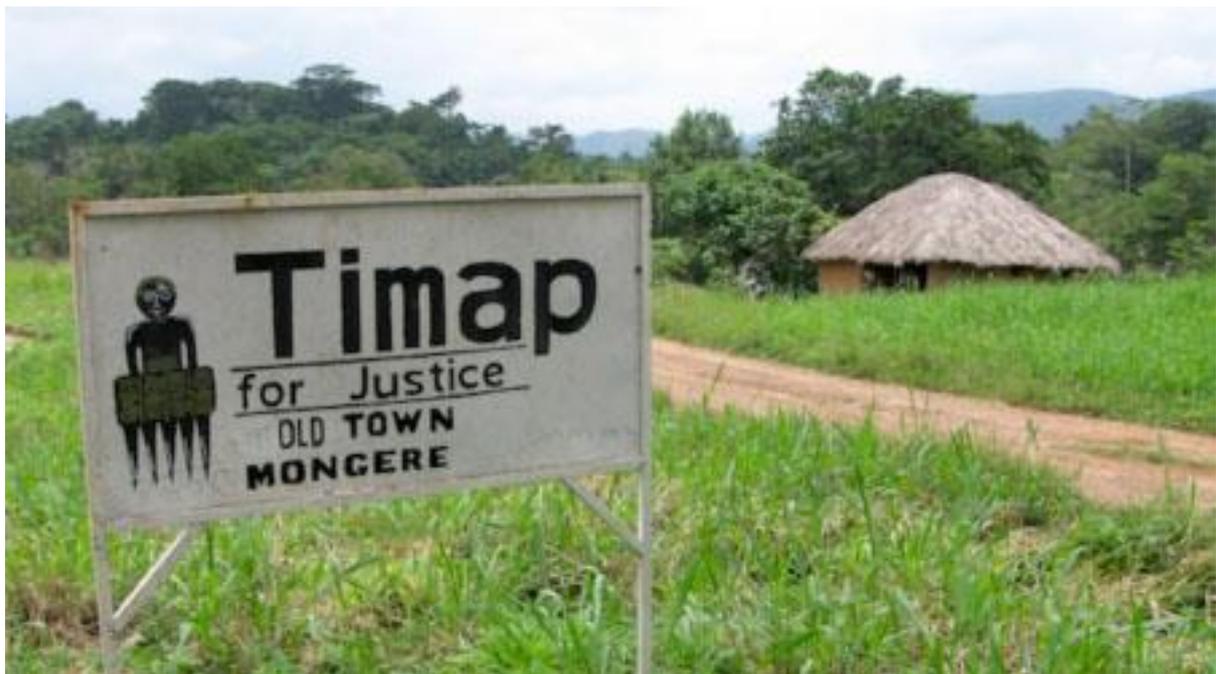


Excerpt from:

**PARALEGAL MANUAL
2012**



**A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO PROVIDING BASIC JUSTICE SERVICES
IN SIERRA LEONE**



Financial Management

Paralegals are expected to keep continual track of their running costs, operating costs and other funds. Money allotted to running costs, for instance, should be used to pay for transport when distributing letters, conducting follow-ups, hosting community meetings, and attending to other paralegal-related activities. In offices with motorbikes or cars, the running cost fund should include fuel.

In addition, paralegals in offices without motorbikes are supplied with funds to pay for a meal and transport to mobile clinic sites. Paralegals with motorbikes or cars only receive money for a meal on mobile clinic days. Money allotted to running costs and mobile clinics should not, under any circumstances, be used for personal ends. Any misuse of funds for purposes not related to the organization work invites disciplinary action. Running cost funds should be kept in a locked cash box in the office at all times, and should not be carried when travelling.

Documenting costs in the Ledger

Every time program money is spent in a transaction, it must be documented on a Running Cost Form. For those paralegals that can obtain receipts, receipts must be written and attached. All costs are monitored against the paralegal's activities in the Ledger to check for consistency. Likewise, offices with motorbikes should keep track of their fuel purchases. All repairs or vehicle maintenance are undertaken by the Lead Paralegals or other designated persons (Paralegal Office Managers), who also handle the provision of office supplies.

If a paralegal prematurely exhausts their running costs due to increased activity or a case requiring particularly large amounts of travel, he or she can request more money by sending the completed Running Cost Form to the Lead Paralegal as evidence of the legitimate expenditure of the funds. Once the expenditures are verified by the Finance Officer and Director, reimbursement for extra costs will be disbursed by the Lead Paralegal or other designated person.

If a paralegal has money remaining for running costs at the end of the month, only a top-up to meet the original amount will be given.

Handling Clients' Money

As the neutral party in many mediated arrangements, Paralegals often must handle and delivery clients' money for payment of medical bills, maintenance fees, paid back loans, school fees, house rent, etc. These monies are as sacred as the collection in the mosque and church. Don't play with them, even if you desperately need money. Simply don't touch client money for any reason, and certainly do not borrow from it. It will cost you your job.

What to do:

- Put client money away in a separate envelope, seal it and write the name of the client on it. Do this as soon as you receive the money. Hand it to the client as soon as he/she comes to the office.
- Issue a receipt to the person paying the money. And make the client sign for the money before collecting it.
- Keep client money in the office and do not take it to your house.
- Don't keep client money too long, for fear of temptation
- In a case where the client does not show up for the money, follow up and invite him/her to come to the office to collect the money.
- Please don't play with client money; it is against the policy of our organization.

Rejecting Gifts and Money from Clients

Remember, our services are free of cost. Don't accept gifts in any form from clients or their relatives. The gifts some people give are bribes in disguise. Even when they aren't intended as such, gifts can amount to bribes that may still influence you, especially if a relevant case/matter is still on-going. As soon as you accept a gift from any party to a matter, you tend to do things in favor of the gift-giver. Accepting gifts is strictly against the policy of the organization.

What to do:

- Paralegals should be absolutely firm on this policy from the beginning and be prepared to reject all gifts/money. Be aware of the date and time of such incidents.
- When introducing yourself and the office, you should be able to openly tell the clients and/or those accompanying him/her that accepting gifts is against our policy.
- Tell people you will be sacked if you take a gift or money in return for services.
- To prevent this, in your opening statement during your first meeting, make it clear with strong emphasis that our services are totally free of cost and that it is against the organization's policy to take money for anything.

For more information, see the full document: [Timap for Justice Community Paralegal Manual](#)